



# DEVIL'S LOYALTY

WRITTEN BY  
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# DEVIL'S LOYALTY

DEVIL'S DISCIPLES

BOOK 5

A.F. MONTOYA

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# CHAPTER 1

LACEY

“I’ve warned you too many fucking times. I’m done. Pack your shit and get out.”

Of course, because when I thought my life couldn’t get any worse, the universe took it as a fucking challenge. I glared at my now ex-boss, crossing my arms defiantly.

“I’ll leave when I get my paycheck.”

He stepped up to me, puffing out his chest to make himself look bigger. I didn’t give a shit how big he looked, though, because I wasn’t going to be intimidated out of my pay. I worked the hours, he owed me the money. I knew if I walked away now, I’d never see a penny.

“I’m real tired of you mouthin’ off to me.”

“And I really don’t give a shit. Paycheck.”

We glared at each other for a bit, but he knew I wasn’t the type to back down. If he didn’t cough up the money, I’d make a scene and lose him a hell of a lot more than what he owed me. His lip curled up into a snarl, but when I didn’t even flinch, he spun and ripped open his desk drawer, pulling out the cash. I made sure to count it before giving him the middle finger and storming out.

As I stomped into the back room where the dancers got ready each night, I didn’t bother to hide the expression on my face. This was the third job I’d gone through in a year. No one wanted to hire the single mom who’d miss days randomly when the babysitter called out. As I shoved my stuff into my duffle, I thought about my son. He really got the short end of

the stick, ending up with a mama like me. Luckily, he was too young to be embarrassed about what his mama does for a living, but that would change one day. It was unlikely I'd be able to escape the hole I was in any time soon.

“So, he finally gave you the boot, huh?” Vanessa, another dancer I couldn't stand, sneered at me from her spot leaning against the door jamb. I ignored her, tugging a sweatshirt over my head. I'd change later. Me and a few of the other girls were convinced there was a camera in here somewhere that filmed us getting changed between sets.

“Can't say I'm surprised. You're not that good anyway. Why waste his time with someone like you?”

I huffed out a laugh as I pulled on my sweats. “Do us all a favor and just suck his dick already. Maybe then you'll shut the fuck up for once.”

Why she'd be interested in Lorenzo, I had no clue. He was a fat, lazy piece of shit who liked to steal our tips and was constantly scratching at his junk. I wouldn't be surprised if he had a few STIs. But Vanessa flirted with him constantly, probably as a power play. She thought if she slept with the manager, she'd get treated better than the rest of us. She'd learn eventually that Lorenzo didn't give a shit about any of us, and her bending over for him wasn't going to change that.

She pushed off the wall, sauntering closer, an evil smirk on her face. “At least men are interested in me. Unlike you. Your baby daddy left the minute you popped pregnant. Probably didn't want to attach himself to a pathetic piece of shit like you.”

Normally, I didn't let her slimy words get to me. She was a bitch, and she liked to cause trouble for me. But she struck a nerve talking about Mass.

Fucking Mass.

He'd promised me up and down that he'd be there and help support our kid, but then he up and disappeared without a word. Even hid like a coward when I went looking for him before Diego was born. I should've known better. The only



man on this planet who was actually worth something was my son. The rest could all go fuck themselves.

“I bet it hurts to know those bikers are starting to pair off and settle down, and your man still hasn’t given you the time of day. So much for it being too dangerous to bring you around,” she drawled.

There were rumors that a few of the officers of the notorious MC the next town over were settling down. I’d secretly hoped Mass was being honest when he said it was too dangerous to bring me to the MC, but those hopes were dashed when a few of the dancers who went to their parties said they were starting to claim old ladies and my phone never rang.

The only reason Vanessa knew any of this was because she was a nosy bitch who loved to eavesdrop. No one here liked her enough to actually gossip with her. She’d throw in her opinion even though nobody asked for it, then act all high and mighty, saying she was too good to hang out with any of us.

“Who’d want the ugly spawn of a whore anyway?”

Swinging around, I leveled her with a glare. I could ignore her venom about me, but no one talked about my son. No one.

When she sneered again and opened her mouth to say more, I drew back my fist and punched her in the tit. She screeched, clutching at her chest, her eyes wide and angry.

“Do you have any idea how much I paid for these?”

I smirked. “Yeah, and they still came out lopsided. Talk shit about my son again, and your ass is grass, pinche vieja.”

When she lunged at me, I saw it coming. I had plenty of lessons under my belt in self defense, so I wasn’t worried about a fight. I blocked her pathetic punch and clocked her in the mouth, grinning when blood went flying. She screamed, grabbing my hair because she didn’t actually know how to fucking fight. I elbowed her in the side, twisting her arm back until she released me. My scalp burned like a bitch, but I ignored it.

Before I could truly wreck her, we were pulled apart. The club bouncer, Nate, had been dealing with shit like this for

years. He pushed Vanessa away, but he knew I wouldn't settle that easily, so he caught me around the waist and dragged me out of the room without a word.

Once we were outside the club and out back, he released me. I shoved away from him, stomping a few feet away before coming back.

"Enough, L. You know you can't be fighting. You gotta get back to Diego."

With a frustrated growl, I turned away from him, taking a few deep breaths to get my temper under control. Like most Latin women, I had a fiery temper and a short fuse, which got me into trouble a lot. This sure as hell wasn't the first time Nate pulled me out of a fight.

His big hand rested on my shoulder, gently turning me around. When I looked up at him, he raised his eyebrows, waiting for my side of it. That's why we all loved Nate. He didn't jump to conclusions or take sides. He was patient and calm, even in the most volatile situations. Most of the women here were thirsting after him hard. Only I knew he had the same taste in men that I did. He didn't tell anyone that, though. The only reason I knew was because I'd seen him on a date the next town over while visiting a friend.

"Wanna talk about it?"

I sighed, exhaustion hitting me hard. "I got fired, Vanessa overheard and decided to mess with me about it."

His brows drew together tight, and he looked confused. "Fired? Why? You're the best dancer here."

"I'm flattered, but it doesn't change the fact that I miss work more than everyone else combined. The babysitter keeps flaking on me and I've got no backups," I replied, the defeat clear in my voice. Being a stripper with an infant was almost impossible, especially when babysitters were tools who couldn't stick to the schedule.

His face softened, edging dangerously towards pity. When I glared at him, he wiped it away and shook his head. "Damn. I'm sorry, L. Is there anything I can do?"

I waved my hand towards the doors of the club. “You can grab my stuff so I don’t have to go back in there. If I see Vanessa again, I’m going to throat punch her.”

Pursing his lips to hide his smile, he nodded. “Yeah, I’ll get it. Wait here.”

While he disappeared inside to grab my things, I leaned against the wall of the building and scrubbed my hands over my face. I couldn’t keep doing this. I was barely making ends meet, and I didn’t have anything in savings to cover job turn over. I needed a better option, or Diego and I were going to end up on the streets.

My mind flicked back to Mass, and I silently seethed. I shouldn’t be doing this alone. It takes two people to make a kid. And I would’ve seriously considered an abortion if he didn’t swear on his life that he’d help us. I couldn’t regret keeping the baby since Diego was beyond perfect, but I regretted having him with a piece of shit who ran away from his responsibilities.

Determination burned through me like fire. I was done letting him hide like a coward. If he didn’t want to be a father, that was his loss. But I wasn’t going to let Diego suffer because of it. First thing tomorrow, I was going down to that stupid MC and getting Mass to pay what he owed us. Even if I had to go through the stupid courts to do it. I was done being pushed around by pieces of shit men. I didn’t care if I had to take on the whole damn MC. I would do it for my son.

## CHAPTER 2

BREWER

“You’re up early.”

My gaze shifted over my shoulder, even though I knew who it was. The First Lady kept odd hours because of her shifts at the hospital. Her being up before sunrise wasn’t a surprise. She was already in her scrubs, her short brown hair braided to stay out of her face. She plopped onto the stool next to me, letting out a long sigh.

“Tired?”

She hummed, propping her chin in her hands, elbows resting on the island. “Yeah. Between work and the party life here, I barely sleep anymore. I swear, if Croy doesn’t choose a house soon, I’m going to hurt him.”

I shook my head slowly. Prez had been planning on getting a place to himself, not in the MC, so he could have privacy with his old lady, but he was dragging his feet on finding the place. He didn’t trust the MC to function if he wasn’t around to oversee everything. Riley had gotten particularly surly about it when the rest of the old ladies got their own houses and she was stuck here.

“What about you? Why are you up so early?”

Lifting a shoulder, I took another sip of my coffee. “Had some shit to do. It’s too late to go back to bed.”

She huffed out a laugh. “I wouldn’t care if it was noon. I’d go back to sleep if I could. Instead, I get to tackle a thirty-six hour shift at the hospital, then come home and argue with Croy again about how I work too much.”

I slid my coffee towards her without a word. Sure, I worked shit hours sometimes, but thirty-six straight sounded fucking terrible. She shot me a grateful smile, taking a sip and letting out a sigh.

“You need a ride?”

She made a face. “Considering the last time I drove by myself, Croy lost his mind? Probably.”

I raised an eyebrow at her. “I thought you two loved fighting with each other.” I overheard the women talking before. She and Prez liked to pick fights because of the wild ass make up sex afterwards. Based on the exhaustion in her face, though, Riley might be getting tired of the game.

She frowned down at her coffee, looking like she was deep in thought. I didn't interrupt her. I wasn't known for my expertise in all that feelings bullshit. If she was looking for that kind of chat, she'd be better off with the other old ladies.

I made another cup of coffee, taking my time, so she had her minute to think. Riley wasn't wrong. If she went to work without an escort, Prez would take issue with it. And if he knew I'd been with her right before she went off on her own, he'd kick my ass for not going with her. Now that Hammer was finally dealt with, there was no active threat on the MC, but we always had enemies. Rival MCs who wanted what we had. Pigs. We always had to be on alert.

Her alarm went off not long later and she sighed. “Alright, well, I better get going. I'm taking my car, though, so you can follow behind me.”

Nodding, I swallowed the rest of my drink before putting the mugs in the sink. The prospects would handle those later. There was nothing wrong with Riley taking her own ride. Croy hated the damn thing. It was old and didn't always start the first time, but I wasn't going to be taking the First Lady's freedom away by arguing about it. If he wanted her to stop driving it, that was his problem.

I was waiting for Riley to gather her things when someone started pounding on the door of the MC. I pulled out my piece

automatically, moving to stand in front of Riley. The sun was barely up. We didn't get visitors this early.

“Mass! You stupid son of a bitch! Get out here!”

My eyebrows shot up and when I looked over my shoulder at Riley, she looked just as stunned as me. The pounding was so loud, the door rattled. It felt like a trap, and I jerked my chin towards the stairs.

“Go wake Prez. I'm gonna go around back and see what I can see. Don't open that door. Got me?”

She nodded once, following behind me and taking the stairs two at a time when we got close. She might argue about a lot of shit, but Riley knew when to follow directions and move her ass. After she went upstairs to wake Prez, I went through the back door and around the building. I'd expected a group of people. I'd heard some shit about some MCs being ballsy enough to attack a place head on, but there was just one woman. She pounded on the door again, her face flushed and angry.

Tucking my piece into my jeans, I came around the building. She didn't notice me, too busy screaming.

“Goddamnit Mass! You owe me!”

I had no idea who the hell this chick was, but she was screaming for someone who wasn't around anymore. It made no fucking sense. I studied her, tipping my head. She wasn't a sweetbutt. I didn't recognize her from any of the parties we'd had. She was hot, though, even in jeans and a t-shirt. Curves for days, a trim waist, nice ass. It wouldn't surprise me if she was a sweetbutt looking for a claim, but she was calling after the wrong guy. Mass had been dead for over a year now.

The reminder hurt and I fought to keep my face straight, focusing instead on the woman screaming her head off. She was completely oblivious to the fact that I was standing a few feet from her. Her dark brown, curly hair was piled on top of her head in a messy bun, her bronze skin was free of any makeup. Definitely not a sweetbutt. They'd never show up here looking anything less than flawless. Not that this chick

needed any of that. It was a little distracting, just how effortlessly hot she looked.

Shaking my head to force myself to focus, I cleared my throat to draw her attention. She whipped her head over her shoulder, glaring at me. If looks could kill, I'd be dead on the ground instantly. I fought back a grin, lifting my eyebrows.

“Problem, sweetheart?”

Apparently, the term of endearment was the wrong way to go. All her furious energy turned to me and her eyes widened with fury.

“I am not your sweetheart! Where's Mass? I'm so sick of his shit! He can't keep hiding from me!”

Putting up my hands, I frowned at her. This chick was either insane or she didn't know what literally everyone else did.

“He ain't here.”

She rolled her eyes, storming down the stairs and barreling straight for me. When she poked me in the chest, there wasn't an ounce of fear in her eyes. Most people would think twice before messing with us, but not this chick.

“Bullshit! He told me about your stupid biker club! I know he's here!” Spinning around, she started shouting at the door again. “Mass! Stop hiding, tu hijo de puta!”

Fuck, she really must be crazy. “Lady! Mass ain't here! He's dead!”

She froze, her shouts falling silent instantly. Her eyes darted between me and the door, and she started shaking her head slowly.

“No. He's just hiding. You're lying to protect him. He can't—” Her eyebrows furrowed, and she took a step back. “He promised he'd be there.”

“Be there for what?”

The front door had opened and Prez and Riley stepped out, followed by a few of the other guys. Riley was the one who

asked, but the chick just kept shaking her head, denial and confusion all over her face.

“Where is he? I can’t— He said he’d help.”

Whatever relationship Mass had with this chick, he’d obviously promised her something that he didn’t have a chance to follow through on. Mass was a good man. He didn’t make bullshit promises. Stepping closer to the woman, I took her elbow, trying to get her to look at me. She just kept staring at the building.

“Help with what?” I lowered my voice, trying to calm her. She was in shock and she was looking really pale.

A cry came from the car nearby and she blinked a few times before taking a few steps back. She opened the back door, ducking inside for a second before pulling out... a baby. It hit me like a ton of bricks. She was here, screaming that he owed her, saying shit about how he’d promise to be there. The kid looked at least six months old. If she got pregnant right before he died, the kid would probably be around that age.

“Holy shit...”

She cradled the baby close, and when she looked up, the fury was back. “I know you’re lying for him. He promised he’d be there to take care of us. He can’t just drop us. I’ll go through the courts if I have to.”

Riley stepped down the front stairs, her eyes locked on the baby. “Is that...”

She couldn’t finish the sentence. Hell, none of us could believe what we were seeing. The woman was claiming that Mass had a kid. Mass, who’d died over a year ago protecting Riley and the other old ladies from Hammer when he rushed the building while we weren’t around. Mass, who’d never once mentioned having a woman or getting her pregnant. It didn’t make any fucking sense. Where was she when he died? She wasn’t at his damn funeral. I would’ve remembered her.

Skepticism and anger filled my chest. There’s no way Mass would’ve kept that shit to himself. Whoever this chick was, she wasn’t connected to him. There was no fucking way.



“Where’s your proof?”

## CHAPTER 3

LACEY

They were all staring at me like I was insane. I felt a little crazy, honestly. There was no way that Mass was dead. Someone would've told me or it would've been announced in the paper or something. I didn't actually read the paper, but my mind couldn't comprehend what they were saying and I refused to believe them. He talked a lot about his 'brotherhood'. No doubt, they were making stuff up to protect him from me.

"Where's your proof?"

The one closest to me, who'd shown up first when I was shouting for Mass, looked angry. I narrowed my eyes, glowering at him.

"What do you mean?"

He jerked his chin toward Diego, scowling. "Where's the proof that it's Mass's kid? You could just be some sweetbutt looking for a claim."

This bastard was lucky I had my hands full, or I'd slap him for calling me a... "What the hell is a sweetbutt?"

He didn't seem interested in answering me, folding his arms over his chest and glaring at me. Rolling my eyes, I pulled out my phone. Whatever. They wanted proof that Mass and I were together? I had plenty. Mass was an idiot, said he wanted evidence that he'd hooked up with 'a gorgeous latina', so post-sex pics were his favorite thing. I always figured he wanted to brag that he hooked up with a stripper, but I didn't care enough to argue with him. He sent me a few that he took, usually as a precursor to asking if he could come back over. I

still had his messages. Mostly because I couldn't be bothered to go through my phone while trying to take care of a new baby, but also because I planned to use them to go to court for child support. I waited, remembering his warning about it being unsafe, but now I knew better. He dragged this out long enough. I needed that money to take care of our kid.

Handing my phone with the messages pulled up to the jerk who was glaring at me, I shifted my attention momentarily to Diego. He was a good baby. He didn't even flinch with all my screaming, even though I'd had all the windows to the car open. The only reason he fussed was because he was tired of being in the car seat. Now, settled on my hip, he leaned his head against my shoulder, watching the surrounding group without a care.

“What is it, Brewer?”

The woman, who'd come out the front door, was frowning as she stepped closer to the glaring man she called Brewer. He was scrolling through the messages, his frown deepening with each minute that passed. When he glanced up at me, he still looked suspicious.

“Why didn't you come sooner?”

Scowling, I shifted Diego higher on my hip. “I did. The bastard who answered the door told me to fuck off and threatened to hurt me if I didn't. I was six months pregnant. I couldn't risk a fight.”

That one had been a cruel bastard. And if he hadn't been staring at my belly when he threatened me, I would've kicked him in the nuts. Since I wasn't willing to let him hurt the baby, I walked away. Stubbornness was a huge problem in my family. I thought I could do it on my own. But then I lost my good paying job in the city, and no one wanted to hire a pregnant woman. I had to move somewhere cheaper, and things just kept falling apart. I came back because I was out of options. Mass needed to step up.

“Baby? She tellin' the truth?” The man who'd come outside with her spoke, his eyes narrowed on the woman. She glanced over her shoulder at him and dipped her chin once in

confirmation. Something flashed over his face before he descended the stairs and moved closer. I shifted Diego away from him, the promise of pain in my eyes. If any of them laid a finger on my son, I'd kill them. I had a gun in the glove box for protection, and I knew how to use it.

When he stopped in front of me, I lifted my chin. "Where is he?"

He shook his head, his expression dark. "Mass died a little over a year ago. Gunfight on our turf."

Making an irritated sound, I took my phone back when it was offered to me. "Stop lying to me. He said he'd help. He should help."

A muscle twitched in his jaw, and he looked toward the woman. She sighed, coming to stand beside her man.

"He's telling the truth. I was targeted by a rival MC, and they were headed here to kidnap me. We snuck out the back to escape, but Mass stayed behind to keep the focus on the MC instead of me and my friends. I'm sorry, I know this must be a shock but—"

"No! You're lying, just like the other one did! He's here, and he's hiding like a coward! He owes me! I can't—" I shook my head helplessly. I didn't want to believe them. Because that would mean my last resort was gone and I was going to end up on the streets with my son. It hurt to admit, but I couldn't do this on my own. And I was scared of what would happen to Diego if we really wound up on the streets.

"I'll show you."

The glaring man's voice was gruff and quiet, and when I whipped around to face him, his expression was shuttered and dark. He stuck his hands in his pockets, locking eyes with me.

"Show me what?"

He tipped his head towards my car. "Where he is. You can follow behind my bike."

He was the only one offering to show me where Mass was hiding, so I carefully tucked Diego back in his seat, handing

him a pacifier when he complained. After settling him, I climbed into my car, waiting for the man to pull up beside me on his bike.

The one who seemed glued to the ‘Mass is dead’ bullshit locked eyes with the man, his voice gruff.

“We’ll be waiting when you’re through.”

He nodded once, glancing at me to make sure I was ready before pulling away from the MC.

We drove in silence towards the city. I didn’t know where he was taking me, but it seemed unlikely that Mass was hiding so close to where I lived. If he was that close, why wouldn’t he come the hundred times I called? He seemed so stupid excited about the baby. Why wouldn’t he come see his own son?

A sense of foreboding settled in my stomach as we got closer to the city. I didn’t think he was leading me anywhere dangerous, and he never took any detours on side roads I was unfamiliar with, but he was heading in the direction of the cemetery. The closer we got, the harder it was for me to breathe. We passed through the iron gates of the cemetery, driving down the lanes until he pulled off to the side and parked his bike. I parked behind him, but I didn’t get out. I didn’t want to. This had to be a lie.

The man didn’t rush me, leaning against his bike with his arms crossed until I could summon the nerve to step out of the car. I went around the back and pulled out Diego, propping him on my hip. Leaving him in the car earlier was necessary, since I didn’t know if people at that MC would threaten to hurt me again. But it was getting hot and I couldn’t leave him in the car, even with the windows down. It wasn’t safe.

When I came closer to the man, he straightened and started walking without a word. I followed behind him, my eyes trailing over the different headstones. I hated cemeteries. They creeped me out. The man stopped a few rows in and gestured to a headstone underneath a big tree.

“There.”

My feet felt heavy, like my shoes were filled with cement, and my lungs were so tight, I felt like choking. I edged closer, praying that this was some kind of sick joke. But what I saw under that tree broke me.

*Andrew 'Mass' Massimino - Beloved son and brother*

And underneath his name was an etching of that stupid club logo. The headstone was still newer than the surrounding ones, and someone kept it clean of leaves and dirt. All the denial left me in a rush, and I sank to my knees, staring at the headstone.

“Can you... Can you take Diego? Just for a second.” My words were choked and quiet, but I was going to lose it in a second and I couldn’t fall apart with my son in my arms. The man came closer, gently taking Diego from me right as the tears spilled over my cheeks.

This wasn’t right. It wasn’t fair. He said he’d be there for us. He was so excited, too. The headstone said he died only a few days after I told him I was pregnant. That was why he disappeared. And I never knew. I’d been hating him, cursing his name, for almost a year and a half. Shame, regret, pain, fury, indignation. It all hit me at once, and a wail ripped past my throat.

“You... You bastard! You fucking bastard! You said you’d be there! You said you’d take care of us! You promised!” Big tears spilled down my cheeks and I stupidly ripped out a handful of grass, throwing it at the headstone. Like that would do anything. Like it would change just how far I’d fallen. “What am I going to do now? You promised!”

If he could hear me from wherever he ended up, he didn’t give any signs. Big sobs threatened to choke me and I buried my face in my hands, giving in to the pain. It wasn’t fair. Mass had been the target of my fury for months. I blamed him for where I ended up, blamed him for all the struggles I went through. And now that I knew that he never actually ditched me like I thought, I hated myself for cursing a dead man. I hated myself for still being pissed at him, for leaving before he

could keep his promise to me and Diego. And I hated myself because where I ended up was my fault.

I only got so long to cry before Diego started fussing. It was getting close to time to feed him. I couldn't sit here and wallow for hours. I had a son to provide for. And it was only going to be me. I knew better now than to hold hope that I'd get any help. Even if I had to sell myself on the street corner, I'd do it for my son. I was all he had.

Wiping my face on my t-shirt, I forced myself to my feet and sucked in a shaky breath. Diego was too little to care about his mama crying, but I still didn't want to upset him. I pushed my feelings aside and turned around, forcing a smile when he reached for me.

"Okay, mi amor. We'll go get breakfast. Come on." Taking him from the giant man's arms, I cuddled him close. I didn't know what was going to happen next, but I'd figure it out later. Right now, I had to feed my son. Glancing at the man, I nodded once.

"Thank you. For showing this to me."

His brow furrowed, but before he could say anything else, I turned away from him and carefully walked back to my car. I was buckling Diego in when the man showed up again.

"Wait. Where are you goin'?"

"Home. I need to feed him." My voice was resigned, exhausted, and I hated myself for being so emotional in front of this man I didn't know. This wasn't who I was. I was tough, no matter the circumstances. Yes, it sucked that Mass was gone, but I'd been doing this on my own so far. I could keep going. I had no other choice.

"Hold on, we need to talk--"

Shutting the door, I flashed him an irritated look. "No, we don't. You made yourself clear. He's gone. There's nothing else to say. I need to get going. Goodbye..." I frowned. I couldn't remember his name. Remembering names wasn't exactly a priority while I was pounding on the door of the MC looking for a dead man.

“Brewer. But—”

“Okay, Brewer. Thanks again for—” I waved my hand towards the cemetery without finishing my sentence. It still hurt to think about. “I need to go. Goodbye.”

Dropping into the driver’s seat, I ignored his protests and put the car into drive. I didn’t have time to stand around and chat. I had a baby to take care of. I needed to find a new job and a new babysitter since I couldn’t trust mine to stick to the schedule. I was already behind on rent. Diego had another doctor’s appointment coming up that would cost a pretty penny since I had no insurance. The list went on and on. I didn’t have time to dwell on dead baby daddies or their club of biker buddies.

It was just me. It was always going to be just me.



## CHAPTER 4

BREWER

When the woman started screaming at Mass's grave, I wanted to stop her. He didn't leave her behind on purpose. He was protecting the girls, and he died honorably. But I got the feeling that wouldn't mean much to her. She looked heartbroken, and the sobs that wracked her body felt like daggers to my insides. He never said anything about being in a relationship, but things were fucked up right before he died. It could've been that he didn't get the chance. I had no idea the shit the woman had gone through on her own. She kept saying he'd promised to help them. I didn't doubt that for a fucking second. If Mass knew he had a kid coming, he would've moved heaven and earth for them both. He was good like that.

A sense of responsibility settled in my gut. Mass wasn't around to keep his promise, but he was a brother in the MC. It was my job as his friend and his brother to follow through. It was the right thing to do, and I knew he'd have done the same thing for me if the situation was reversed.

The baby fussed in my arms, his face twisted as he whimpered. I didn't know shit about kids, but I bounced him lightly, trying to quiet him. His mama obviously was going through some shit and needed a damn minute.

She must've heard him though, because she sucked in a breath and wiped her face. All the anguish got wiped away, and she forced out a smile as she reached for her son.

“Okay, mi amor. We'll go get breakfast. Come on.”

She plucked him from my arms and cuddled him close, breathing him in for a second before her spine straightened out

and her chin went up. I was stunned at just how strong this woman was. It was obvious she cared about Mass, if her reaction to his death was anything to go by. But she shoved all those feelings down and looked at me with fierce determination in her eyes.

“Thank you. For showing this to me.”

Without giving me a chance to speak, she spun on her heel and stalked off. I stupidly stood there for a second, staring after her, before my brain kicked back on and I hurried to catch up to her. She was putting her kid in the car seat when I caught up to her.

“Hold on, we need to talk—”

Irritation flashed across her face as she shut the door. “No, we don’t. You made yourself clear. He’s gone. There’s nothing else to say. I need to get going. Goodbye...”

“Brewer. But—”

She wouldn’t let me get a word in edgewise, heading around the car to the driver’s side. “Okay, Brewer. Thanks again for—” She waved her hand towards the cemetery, a flash of pain crossing her face before she masked it again. “I need to go. Goodbye.”

“Wait, you can’t just—”

Yeah, she didn’t give a shit what I had to say. She dropped into her car and took off, leaving me in the dust. Frustrated, I rushed to my bike, revving the engine as I sped off to catch up to her. We weren’t done talking about this. She said more than once that Mass owed her. If she needed help, then I was going to help her. Just as soon as I could get her to listen to me.

I didn’t spend much time in the city. I preferred open roads to city congestion. I wasn’t familiar with the layout or anything like that, so when we headed to a more run down part of the town, it took me a minute to figure it out. The houses all had bars on the windows. The roads were cracked and riddled with potholes. And what few residents were hanging outside all looked like they were part of a gang, watching me suspiciously. My hackles went up. I was hoping she’d go

straight through or maybe that she was fucking with me to try and get me to back off, but she pulled up in front of a dilapidated apartment building on the edge of the city and didn't even look my way when she got out and grabbed her kid from the back seat.

Parking my bike next to her car, I looked around warily. The whole building looked like shit, with what looked like mold climbing up the bricks on the outside and very obvious bullet holes. The building was actually two lines of apartments facing the sidewalk between them. People here hung out on their front steps, smoking and talking while music played from a radio a few doors down. Mass's baby mama stalked past them without a word, heading for one of the apartments in the middle. I stopped her with a hand on her elbow, trying not to let my opinions of the place show in my face.

"We need to talk about this."

She ripped her elbow away from me, seething. "No, we don't. You said your piece. Stop following me!"

She stormed away again, and I fought back a growl. Stubborn woman was getting on my nerves. I wasn't going to just let her walk away. I owed it to Mass to see that she and his kid were okay. Based on this place alone, it was obvious why she came looking for help.

"Will you wait just a damn minute?"

She ignored me, sifting through the giant bag on her shoulder and pulling out her keys. I didn't trust her not to lock me out before I had a chance to talk to her, so I hovered close, holding the screen door open for her. She shot me a dirty look, shifting the baby away from me, and opened her mouth, probably to shout at me some more, but she was interrupted by a rough voice a few feet away.

"Lacey? Everything okay?"

An older woman stood nearby, watching us with a frown on her face. Nosy old ladies wouldn't have bothered me, but we seemed to have caught the attention of all the neighbors, and a few of them looked like they were packing heat. I didn't

want to draw that kind of attention near Mass's kid, so I leaned close, whispering into Lacey's ear.

"Mass was my friend. He said he'd help. Let me fucking help."

Something crossed her face as she looked over her shoulder at me. She seemed pensive, studying me for a second before swinging her attention to the woman.

"I'm fine, Aggie. He's a friend of Mass's."

The woman made a face. "That no good deadbeat baby daddy of yours?"

I had to work to keep my face blank. I didn't like them talking shit about Mass, especially since it wasn't his fault he couldn't be here to help, but I wasn't about to start arguing with every damn person in Lacey's life. Until today, that story was true for her and I wasn't sure how much she wanted to share with her neighbors.

Lacey didn't seem inclined to share anything at all. She nudged her door open, waving at the older woman. "I need to feed Diego. I'll talk to you later."

The woman opened her mouth to argue, but like before, Lacey didn't stick around to listen. She disappeared inside, and the only reason I felt alright with following was because she left the door open for me. I ducked into the apartment, shutting the door behind me. It took a minute for my eyes to adjust. It was dark inside the little apartment, but when I finally could see, my mouth fell open.

I'd seen a lot of shitholes in my life, but this one took the cake. The wallpaper was peeling off the walls, the furniture was falling apart, there was obvious mold in the corners, and the carpet was stained in a few places. The only shit that looked decent in the apartment was a few baby things here and there. A bouncer that looked older but well cared for, a little swing that looked clean, that kind of thing. All the baby stuff was situated as far from the moldy walls as possible, like she was trying to protect her kid from a shitty situation the best she could.

She moved around the kitchen, completely ignoring me while I took in the place. I couldn't stomach the thought of Mass's family being in a place like this. I pulled out my phone, dialing Prez immediately. He picked up on the first ring, and it took work for me not to bark at him.

"I need the girls to make up the guest room."

"She interested in stayin' with us?"

I glared at the moldy walls, trying to keep my voice even. "I'm not askin'. This place is a fucking shithole. No way in hell is Mass's kid being raised here."

"What's the baby mama got to say about that?"

My fist clenched at my side, and my gaze shifted back to Mass's baby mama. The woman outside called her Lacey. She was talking to the baby as she moved around. I couldn't see him anymore, but she said she had to feed him, so he was probably in a high chair or some shit.

"I'll deal with her."

He grunted his agreement and hung up after agreeing to send a few guys for security. I didn't trust the fuckers who were watching us outside. They looked like trouble and with a baby involved, I'd rather be overcautious.

When I moved into the kitchen, I had to take a few deep breaths to settle myself before I spoke to Lacey. The kitchen was just as bad as the living room. The laminate flooring was peeling or missing, the wall paper was stained, and the appliances looked like shit you'd find at the dump. My eyes drifted over the place, almost grimacing at the baby sitting on the floor playing with a toy.

"You sure it's safe for him to play there?"

Lacey shot me a dirty look before turning back to the stove. "I can't carry him all the time. He's fine. What do you want?"

I resisted the urge to pick up the kid. I got the feeling she'd take exception to that, even though I was worried about the kind of shit he might get into. Even the clubhouse wasn't this

bad, and we had parties almost every weekend. Granted, we had prospects to keep it clean and shit, but still. You'd think a house full of rough bikers would be worse than a single mom and her kid.

"You said Mass promised to take care of you. I wanna help keep his promise."

Annoyance flashed over her face as she flicked on a burner. She made an irritated noise and tried again a few times before it turned on. The unease about this joint only increased watching her try to make food for her kid. Clink's old lady went on and on about faulty wiring and fires when she was fixing up the joint. What were the chances with shit this old that it'd be in good working order?

"I don't need you to keep his promise. You're not Diego's daddy. It's not your responsibility."

"What do you need, then?" I got the feeling that getting her to accept my help was going to be more than half the battle. She brought stubborn to a whole other level.

Flicking the burner off once she was done, she dumped the scrambled eggs onto a little plate and set it at the table before scooping up her son. She sat at the table, handing him little bites while she glared at me.

"None of your business."

"Lacey, I—"

She leveled me with a dark look, cutting me off. "Were you the one who killed him?"

It was like she slapped me across the face and I jerked back automatically. "What the fuck? No! Riley already told you how Mass died!"

She raised her eyebrows. "Then you're not responsible. And I'm not interested in dealing with you or your grief. I've got too much shit on my plate to add anymore. I'm assuming you can find the door."

The dismissal was beyond obvious, and she turned her attention back to her son, giving him an encouraging smile

when he tipped his head up to look at her. The vast difference between the angry woman who glared every time she looked in my direction and the softness that overtook her face when she looked down at her son was disconcerting. There was no way those two personalities belonged to the same woman.

When I didn't immediately walk away, she flashed me another scowl. "Did I not make myself clear?"

My patience was running thin, and when she pointed to the door, I snapped. "I'm not going anywhere. You obviously need fuckin' help, and you're too damn proud to admit it. There's not a chance in hell I'm letting Mass's kid be raised in a place like this."

## CHAPTER 5

LACEY

I knew I shouldn't have let him inside. I should've left him out there for the gangs around here to have at him. The Devil's Disciples were a notorious biker gang, and I didn't doubt for a second that they had enemies around here. He was an idiot walking into this area with no backup. The only reason I let him in was because... I wanted to say it was because I was going to let him give me money, since he obviously felt obligated to do something for his friend's kid. But if anyone knew me, they knew I didn't do charity. I would never agree to taking any money that I didn't earn.

I let him in because I felt bad. Which was stupid. I was the one left in the lurch with a baby I had to strip off my clothes to keep happy and healthy. But the look on Brewer's face at the cemetery kept flashing through my head. He looked like he was in pain, like it hurt him to think of Mass, and I stupidly felt bad for him. I should've known better.

"If you think for one fucking second, I'm going to let you take my kid from me—"

He scowled, rolling his eyes. "Ain't nobody said anything about takin' away your kid. I said I want to help."

"And I said I don't need your fucking help!"

I was getting loud, and Diego didn't like it. He started fussing, twisting in my arms until I could cuddle him properly. I cupped the back of his head, taking a second to press a kiss to his hair. I dropped my voice to a harsh whisper, my teeth clenched so hard it was painful.



“I don’t need your god damn charity, so do us both a favor and get the hell out of my apartment.”

His glare never faltered. “No.”

Without a word, I got to my feet. Brewer’s questions about the safety of the floor weren’t unfounded. I didn’t like Diego on the floor, either. I couldn’t hold him all the time though, and he didn’t like it when I left him in another room when I was cooking. I took a minute to make him a bottle, handing it to him as I laid him in his portable crib. It was close to nap time anyway.

When I turned around to walk away, I came up short, nearly running into Brewer. He was taking in the room and his expression only seemed to darken the longer he was in here. I knew this place was shit. I knew that when we moved in. Most of the place was a hazard, and the bedroom was just a mattress on the floor and Diego’s portable crib I got for cheap at a thrift store. It wasn’t a great place to raise a baby. But it was a roof over our heads and all we could afford. Between the bills from the hospital when I gave birth and for each doctor’s visit, things like rent and utilities, and formula after the stress got to me and my milk dried up, I was drowning. I couldn’t afford to be picky about housing, even if the place had cockroaches and mold. It was better than being on the streets.

“You’re sayin’ you’d rather stay here than accept any help from us?”

Shoving past him, I moved back to the living room. Diego wouldn’t go down for a nap if I was close by and not holding him. He liked to be held and would only sleep if I wasn’t in the same room. I went to the kitchen to clean up, knowing if I didn’t right away that more bugs would show up before noon. This place was disgusting.

When Brewer grabbed my elbow again, I spun around and shoved him. Not that it did me much good. He was massive. He wasn’t overly tall, maybe six feet, but he was wide like a linebacker and, from what I could tell when I shoved him away, he was mostly muscle. His hair was shaved on the sides, longer and slicked back on top. He had piercings in his ears,

one on his eyebrow, and another on his lip. Full sleeve tattoos peeked out from under his shirt and vest all the way down to his hands that had fat rings on each finger. His facial hair was lighter than the hair on his head, dusting over a firm jaw and framing his mouth. Not quite a beard, more like he'd not bothered to shave in a few days. His eyes, that always looked suspicious and angry, were sky blue and there was a line between his eyebrows that said he frowned too much.

I was doing my best not to stare. He looked like a typical biker, including the foul temper and a pack of cigarettes sticking out of the pocket of his jeans. He wasn't my type, no matter how much my body seemed to disagree.

"I don't want your help."

"Too fuckin' bad. Shoulda thought of that before you showed up at the club."

Definitely not my type. Asshole. "I showed up looking for Mass, not looking for you. I don't--"

"You're not stayin' here, Lacey. Best you come to terms with that. Unless you're that shit a mother that you wouldn't take a clean place to raise your kid because you're fuckin' stubborn."

My hand flew automatically, cracking across his cheek so hard his face turned to the side. Angry tears blurred my vision, and I bared my teeth.

"Fuck. You."

He didn't fight back like I'd expected him to. Sure, Mass wasn't the type of guy to hit a woman, not in any of the interactions I had with him, but that didn't say shit about the guys in his crew. I waited, my fists balled up and ready, but when Brewer slowly turned back to face me, he didn't move to hurt me back. He spoke low, barely banked fury laced in his words.

"Mass was my brother. That's his kid. We take care of our own. Why the fuck would you show up if you didn't need help?"

Stubbornness and pride warred with the truth. I did need help. The landlord wasn't a patient man and what I brought home last night wasn't enough to cover what I owed him. I just didn't want it from Brewer or the crew. Mass had an obligation to take care of his kid. Brewer didn't. And I didn't want to owe another man anything.

Before I could come up with something to say, someone pounded on the door too damn loud. It startled Diego, and he started crying from the bedroom. A growl tore through me and I pushed away from Brewer so I could go check on my son. It took some work to soothe him, and luckily, no one knocked again, but when I came back out of the bedroom, there were more bikers than when I'd left standing around.

Three new guys stood in my living room, looking around with frowns on their faces. Embarrassment ate at me and I fought to keep my temper in check, nearly losing it a second later when one of them spoke.

“Who the fuck let you live in a shithole like this?”

I made a serious fucking mistake going looking for Mass.

---

Like he didn't give a shit about any opinion but his own, Brewer turned to face me, gesturing to the room. “Point out the shit you wanna keep. We'll pack it up.”

My mouth fell open, and I just stared at him. “Excuse me?”

One of the men behind him snorted, lacing his fingers behind his head. “Didn't get to that part yet?”

Brewer shot him a dirty look. “Shut the fuck up, Clink. Start loadin' the baby shit. And watch out for those assholes outside.”

Incredulous, I moved forward to block them. “No fucking way! Don't—”

Brewer apparently was done arguing with me. He strode up to me, dipped low, and tossed me over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. I screeched, pounding my fists against his back, but he didn't even flinch, marching towards the bedroom. He was decent enough to stay quiet when he stepped inside, but he dropped me on the mattress unceremoniously, leaning his back against the door to block it.

“You can't just force me to leave my home! This is kidnapping!”

He scoffed, jerking his chin to gesture to the room. “Considering the shithole you live in now, this ain't kidnapping. It's rehabilitation. You need some fuckin' therapy if you think this is better than stayin' with us.”

Shoving myself off the bed, I stared him down. “I didn't ask for your help.”

Something in his expression softened, and he shook his head. “No. You didn't ask for my help. You asked for Mass's. He ain't around to do right by you, so I will. Now, hurry up. If it was me, I'd throw all this shit out and start fresh. If you wanna keep anything, I suggest you pack it up and point it out to my crew or we'll leave it behind. Don't wanna bring back mold and shit to the clubhouse.”

I just stared at him, my mouth hanging open. He was strategic, bringing me in here. He knew I couldn't start screaming at him when Diego was sleeping a few feet away. Not that it really mattered what I said to him. He wasn't listening to me and he could throw me around without a care in the world. What the hell had I gotten myself into by showing up at that stupid MC?

## CHAPTER 6

LACEY

I only started packing when Brewer tried to do it for me. I shoved him away from the one battered dresser in the room, pulling out my luggage from the closet and tossing it onto the bed with a huff. Since I was doing what he demanded, he didn't argue anymore, leaning back against the door with his enormous arms crossed over his chest. I grumbled to myself, tossing clothes into the luggage without bothering to fold them. I shook them out first, to make sure there weren't any roaches hiding in them. It was a habit by now, after putting on clothes and finding one crawling on me one too many times. It didn't matter how many times I cleaned the place, I couldn't get rid of them. They were in the walls by now. You could hear them crawling around late at night when everything was quiet.

I heard footsteps in the hall. Before they could knock on the door and wake up Diego, Brewer stepped out of the way and cracked it open, shushing whoever was on the other side.

“How much of this shit are we taking, exactly?”

Brewer looked around the room again before looking back at the man in the hall. “Just the newer shit. I'll replace the rest.”

Since most of the furniture in the apartment I found abandoned by the dumpsters, I wasn't attached to it. It still pissed me off that he'd make the decision for me, though.

“Excuse you! Shouldn't you ask me first before making that decision?”

I caught a glimpse of the guy in the hall, who shook his head and walked away, clearly not interested in getting in the

middle of this.

“You really attached to this shit?” Brewer growled.

“Whether or not I am isn’t any of your business! It’s my stuff and I should be allowed to choose what I keep!”

He huffed out a breath, shaking his head as he held the door open a little wider. “Go on, then. Show them the shit you want to bring.”

Shit. He was basically calling my bluff. I knew there wasn’t anything out there that I really wanted. The only stuff that was important to me was the stuff I got for Diego. Most of it was newer, people giving it away online when they were done with it. I sold most of the stuff that mattered to be able to afford the rent.

When I didn’t move, a smug look flashed over Brewer’s face before his mask of stoic indifference came back. “Quit your bitchin’ and hurry up. We gotta get back.”

I seriously considered throwing something at him, but I only had so much time to get this done before Diego woke back up. If he ended up spending most of the day in his car seat, he’d never sleep tonight. I angrily tossed the rest of our clothes into the luggage, slamming it shut with a little too much force. Luckily, it didn’t wake Diego, but it did startle a few cockroaches that were hiding along the side of the bed against the wall. They skittered across the floor and another wave of embarrassment slammed into me. It was humiliating that these rowdy assholes were in my piece of shit apartment, judging me for what I had to do to survive. Spinning around, I waited for Brewer to talk shit again, but he kept his mouth shut for once, moving past me to zip up the bag and pick it up, and taking it out of the room. I followed him, grabbing the things I needed from the kitchen and tossing them into an empty diaper box. Another one of the guys grabbed it as I finished, giving me a polite nod as he walked away.

All that was left was Diego and his crib. I went back to the room, lifting him gently into my arms so I didn’t wake him. I was attempting to fold up the bed one handed when Brewer brushed past me.

“Let me do it.”

An evil thought crossed my mind, and I stepped back, pursing my lips against a grin as he frowned at the thing. When a few of the other guys came in to help, I had to bite my lip in an attempt to not laugh. None of them seemed to know how to fold the thing and it wasn't making it out of the bedroom door still put together.

It wasn't until the quiet one came into the room that something happened. He tipped his head, stepping past the rest of them to pull the mat out of the bottom. Without a word, he grabbed the handle in the middle, tugging it lightly. The crib folded in on itself, and he wrapped the mat around the outside with the velcro before looking at me.

“Is there a case?”

I shook my head. I got it at the thrift store for cheap because it didn't have a bag or the infant attachments. I made do with what I had.

Nodding, he picked it up and tucked it under his arm, walking away without acknowledging the other guys who were looking at him like he'd grown another head.

“How the fuck did he know how to do that?” One of them asked. None of them had bothered to introduce themselves, so I had no idea who was talking.

Brewer made a face. “Fuck if I know. Let's go.”

He shot me a pointed look, and I knew he wouldn't move until I did. I glared at him and stormed out of the room. I did one last check of the apartment, but they got all the important bits. When I stepped back outside, I couldn't help feeling just the smallest bit of relief that I didn't have to bring Diego back here. At least not until these guys got tired of screaming babies and sent us home. Tonight would be one hell of a wake up call for them. Diego was a good baby, but he wasn't always a quiet one.

I was locking my front door when I heard my name being called. I sighed heavily, turning to face my landlord, Jed, who was barreling toward us with a feral look on his face.

“Where the hell do you think you’re going? You owe me rent!”

Brewer never gave me a chance to respond. He grabbed my elbow, moving me behind him, and blocked Jed’s view of me.

“She ain’t payin’ shit. This place should be condemned. Who the fuck pays to live like this?”

Jed was a disgusting man who only ever wore stained wife-beater tank tops straining over his enormous hanging gut and dirty jeans. He marched up to Brewer like he wasn’t afraid of the consequences of threatening a biker because he was a few crayons short of a full box.

“She signed the contract. She owes me. If she can’t pay in cash, then she can get on her knees and—”

I was used to Jed’s threats and disgusting talk. I never reacted to it. But apparently, Brewer didn’t appreciate the way the ogre was talking. He pulled a gun out of the waistband of his jeans, pressing it underneath Jed’s jaw.

“Keep talkin’. I fuckin’ dare you.”

Stunned, I curled myself protectively around Diego. A hand on my arm gently pulled me back and when I looked over my shoulder, the quiet one from before tipped his head towards the parking lot.

“Come on. Brewer can handle this.”

Not willing to stick around for a potential shooting with my son in my arms, I followed him without argument. I could hear Jed’s protests, still arguing that I had to pay him to live in the piece of shit apartment, but I didn’t stick around to find out what happened.

When we got to the parking lot, another man stood by a truck next to my car. He had on a vest like the rest of them, but his didn’t have the club logo on the back. He’d been leaning on the driver’s door before we arrived, but he snapped to attention when the man leading me approached.

“Any trouble?”



The new one shook his head. “Nah. Had some looks, but no one came close.”

The quiet one nodded. “Good. Bring that stuff back to the clubhouse. Guest room should be ready by the time you get there.”

He nodded once and spun around, hurrying to do what he was told. The quiet one glanced over his shoulder at me at one point and when he noticed my frown, he lifted a shoulder.

“He’s a prospect. It’s his job to do what he’s told.”

I made a face. “That sounds like slavery. What’s a prospect?”

“He ain’t a slave. He’s more like an intern. A prospect is someone lookin’ to join the crew. They gotta earn their patch, same as the rest of us. Gunner’s goin’ on a year, he’ll get his soon enough.” Brewer came up behind me, nudging me towards my car with his hand on my lower back. He didn’t look any worse for wear, and I didn’t hear any gunshots, so I figured he got through to Jed with just his words.

I stepped out of reach of his hand, shooting daggers at him over my shoulder as I moved to put Diego in his car seat. If we were going all the way back to the MC, it was at least thirty minutes, and Diego would probably wake up before we got there. I needed to hurry if I didn’t want to listen to him squalling the whole way.

While I strapped Diego into his seat, careful not to wake him, I heard the bikers talking outside my car.

“Bring it back without a scratch or I swear, I’ll knock you out.”

I lifted my head just in time to see him toss his keys to the quiet one, who rolled his eyes and loped away without a word. Without asking, Brewer walked around my car and dropped heavily into the driver’s seat. I stared at him from the back, my mouth hanging open.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

“I’m drivin’. You’re a flight risk. Let’s get goin’. I fuckin’ hate cages.”

Grinding my teeth, I closed Diego’s door quietly before storming around the car. I ripped open the driver’s door, glowering at the stubborn biker.

“Get out! I don’t need you driving my car!”

He just flashed me an annoyed look. “Woman, get your ass in the car before I make you.”

I lifted my chin defiantly. “I’d like to see you try, asshole.”

Brewer was bigger than me, sure, but I wasn’t a pushover. I knew how to handle myself. He sighed, pushing out of the seat and moving to stand in front of me. His dark gaze swept over my face, and I waited for him to lash out. His hand came out, and I blocked him automatically, but it didn’t look like he was trying to hurt me. His eyebrows went up slowly, and he reached again, threading his fingers into my hair. When I opened my mouth to ask what the hell he thought he was doing, he dipped his head, claiming my lips with more care than I was used to.

## CHAPTER 7

BREWER

She was looking for a fight. It was in her posture. I got the feeling she had at least some training in self defense. I was curious just how much she knew, but I wasn't looking to fight a woman. That's just fucked up. Instead, I went for what she wouldn't expect, silencing her bitching with my tongue in her mouth. She stiffened, surprised, but she didn't automatically push me away.

It felt wrong, kissing Mass's woman, but I couldn't help myself. She was an enigma, a mashup of strong and sweet, that made me hungry for more. The more she fought me, the more I wanted to figure out how to tame her. She softened a little, kissing me back, and all the blood rushed below my belt. It'd been a while since I got lucky, too busy dealing with shit at the MC. Plus, the sweetbutts weren't doing it for me anymore. Not after watching the rest of the officers claim their old ladies. I was starting to think it might not be so bad to settle down.

I couldn't do that with Mass's woman, though. I pulled away from her, my free hand coming up to stroke her chin.

“Get in the car.”

She blinked slowly and looked up at me. She looked soft, and I wanted to feel smug, but that smugness was wiped away when she spoke, her voice quiet but strong.

“I will. When you get out of my goddamn way.”

I couldn't help it. I started laughing. She was like fire and ice, and I could see why Mass liked her. A woman like that was hard to find. Lucky bastard.

She didn't look like she appreciated my mirth, but I didn't really give a shit. I crossed my arms over my chest, my shoulders still shaking on repressed chuckles. "Woman, get your ass in the car. We ain't got all day."

That familiar fury flashed across her face, but I was done arguing with her. I leaned closer, lifting my eyebrows in warning. "Either you get in or I throw you over my shoulder again. The choice is yours."

Her fists clenched at her sides and she stood seething for a minute before she let out a frustrated growl. She took a few steps back, jerking the back door open and sliding inside to sit next to her kid. Whatever. It made me feel like a damn chauffeur, but it was better than her bitching at me.

I discreetly readjusted my reaction to her before dropping into the driver's seat. She was taller than the other old ladies, but I still had to throw the seat back to make room for myself. This was one reason I hated cages. Never enough damn leg room. I settled myself, taking a second to readjust the mirrors, and pulled out of the parking lot. I could see her glaring at me in the rearview mirror, but I ignored it for now. She'd thank me later for pulling her out of that damn place.

The baby woke up about halfway through the drive, and he was none too happy about being stuck in the car. Lacey didn't look phased, sliding closer and leaning over the car seat to whisper to him. She was speaking Spanish, and her soft tones seemed to settle him a little. But by the time I pulled up in the MC parking lot, her voice wasn't doing it for him and he was wailing like a banshee.

Chase, Gunner, Aero, and Bear were already back, unloading the shit from Nevada's truck. I was gonna go help them, but I could see the exhaustion on Lacey's face. She had one hell of a day, coming here at the crack of dawn hoping to find her baby daddy, only to figure out he was dead. Then her entire life was being tossed upside down because I was as stubborn as she was and wouldn't back down. I would feel guilty if it wasn't for her own good. Her and Mass's kid deserved better than that shithole she was living in.

When she pulled the baby out of the car, I stepped up to her with a frown. “Want me to take ‘im?”

She gave me another death glare, bouncing the baby on her hip to quiet him. “No. I don’t need your help.”

Resisting the urge to roll my eyes, I tipped my head towards the clubhouse. “Fine. Let’s go inside.”

She followed me, her focus on the baby as she shushed him. Most of the guys were here now, including the rest of the officers. Word must’ve spread about what was going on because we barely got in the door before all eyes swung our way. Lacey noticed and hesitated, glaring suspiciously at the room.

Since she was going to be staying here a while, at least until I could find her a better place nearby, I figured introductions were necessary. She wasn’t happy the last time I tried to lead her with a hand on her back, so instead I gestured towards the kitchen.

“Come on. You gotta meet Prez.”

For the first time since we met, I saw a flash of unease cross her face. She hugged the baby closer to her chest despite his cries. She didn’t trust us and I didn’t hold it against her. Bringing her kid into the heart of a crew of bikers was probably putting her on edge. I put my hand on her shoulder, lifting an eyebrow when she looked at me.

“You’re safe here, Lacey. You and him both. We’re here to help.”

The annoyance came back, and she rolled her eyes, jerking her shoulder away from me. “Sure. Kidnapping us is such a huge help.”

Someone snorted, but I ignored it, pushing her closer to the group of officers. Riley was still here, surprisingly, since she had a shift she was supposed to get to. The other old ladies stood beside her, aside from Sam. She had work to get to, and she was diligent. I wasn’t surprised she was gone already.

The baby was still screaming, but I had no fucking clue on how to help with that. When we came up to the group, Nevada

didn't even ask before putting his arms out for the kid.

"Lemme take 'im. You've had a long drive."

Lacey looked ready to argue, but Nevada wasn't really waiting for permission. He plucked the kid out of Lacey's arms and settled him against his chest. I saw Lacey's frustration, the way she ground her teeth together, but when the baby went quiet, looking up at Nevada with wide eyes, Lacey froze. We all waited with bated breath, and I was sure that kid would start screaming at being held by a strange and probably terrifying biker. They stared at each other for a minute before the baby's attention shifted to Nevada's beard. He grabbed at it and Nevada leaned back against the island, seeming content to let the kid play.

Lacey looked between them with a frown. "How'd you do that?"

Nevada raised an eyebrow. "Do what?"

She rolled her eyes, gesturing at her son. "That! When he gets worked up like that, it takes me ages to get him to settle. How'd you do it?"

Nevada lifted a shoulder, but his old lady Cleo snorted, shaking her head. "He's always been able to do that. Babies just like him. We got two of our own, and I can't tell you how much it pissed me off that they loved him more than me. I spent months carrying them and they only wanted him."

Nevada just smiled, completely at ease holding the baby. Lacey still looked suspicious and a little uncomfortable, but Riley stepped up to distract her. "I'm glad you're back. I'm sure the news came as a bit of a shock, but—"

"Let's stop pretending I'm here by choice. I'm here because this one wouldn't take no for an answer." She shot me a dirty look before turning back to the group, her displeasure written all over her face. I fought back a smirk. She acted that way, but she'd be singing a different tune once I got her a new place and decent furniture. She just needed time to come to terms with it.

Riley rolled her eyes, nodding. “Yep. They’ll do that. You’ve been claimed by the MC and they don’t take no for an answer. Once you’re settled in, I’ll tell you about how this one decided to pursue me.” She jerked her thumb over her shoulder at Croy, who just looked smug.

I figured she’d need some time to come to terms with things, so when Quinn offered to show Lacey up to her room, I took a step back. She grabbed the baby and followed without another word. I didn’t trust her not to run off, though, so I kept an eye on the stairs as they disappeared. Croy stepped up beside me, frowning after them.

“Mass give you any clue?”

I shook my head. “None. Might want to ask Clink, though. Him and Mass hung out a lot.”

That was putting it lightly. We just found out recently that Mass was Clink’s surrogate sponsor while he was getting clean. When Mass died, Clink spiraled and, after being exposed to the product, ended up falling off the wagon. It took his old lady showing up to pull him out of it. He went to rehab after Hammer was finally dealt with. He wouldn’t leave until Hammer was handled, since he attacked Sam and forced drugs on her, but he made her a promise that he’d get clean and he stuck to it for her. Still pissed me off that the sick motherfucker did that shit to get back at Clink. Hammer had always been a pussy though, going after the women instead of facing us like a man. Died like a bitch, too.

After updating Prez on what happened with the landlord, I sat on the couch and pulled out my phone, scrolling through the ads for rentals in the area. I had enough that I could buy her a house, but I seriously doubted she’d let me. Lacey was as stubborn as they come, and I knew the only reason she showed up this morning was because she was desperate. Seeing where she was living with her kid, and that she was behind on rent, I could see why she’d show up looking for Mass. I got the feeling she pushed as long as she could to do it on her own, and only came looking for him because he had an obligation and taking his money wasn’t charity. He owed her. She’d only

see my help as charity until I got her to agree to let me take on his debt.

Considering who I was dealing with, that was easier said than done.



## CHAPTER 8

LACEY

The women introduced themselves as they showed me upstairs to my room. It wasn't a huge room, and I'd have to share the common spaces like everyone else, but it was clean, there was an attached bathroom, and there were no bugs. It was an improvement, though a very small one. I wasn't ready yet to admit that it was more. Setting Diego down on the bed, I set to work changing his diaper and his clothes for the day. He'd need a bath eventually, but I'd have to figure out how to do it in the little bathroom sink because there was only a shower in the attached bathroom. No tub.

“How old is he?”

“Seven months. Almost eight.”

Sometimes it surprised me that I kept him alive this long. I never thought much about having kids. It'd been a complete accident with Mass. I'd been on birth control and everything. I had no idea what I was doing when they handed me that baby, and my life was already falling apart when I left that hospital. I somehow managed to keep this sweet baby alive and happy for the most part, despite where we were living. I'd need to figure out a way to get Brewer to back off so that I could find a new job and get back to work. Pretty sure there was a club not far from here. It wasn't the best joint and in small towns, I wouldn't be making much, but it was better than taking more charity from Brewer and the rest of the guys here.

“Do any of you know any good babysitters? My last one was so flaky that I lost my job. I need to find a new one and a new job, ASAP.”

Riley, who introduced herself as the club president's woman, sat down on the edge of the bed, holding out a little toy over Diego's face so he could play with it. I didn't comment on it because she was distracting him, which meant he wasn't trying to grab the contents of his diaper or his junk like usual. "I don't. None of us have kids yet. But I'm sure the guys here would be willing to watch him. He's Mass's baby after all. There are plenty of bodies around here to take turns with childcare."

My brow furrowed. "And they know how to take care of babies?"

She grimaced. "Okay, maybe not. We could ask Nevada and Cleo, though. They have kids."

Yeah, that wasn't going to happen. As nice as it was that Diego's upset ended so quickly, it bugged me that a rough and tumble biker like Nevada was the one to settle him instead of me. I was the one who went through hell carrying him and taking care of him. I was the one who was supposed to fix it when he cried.

After I finished changing him, I let him sit up, wrapping the diaper up and tossing it into the bathroom trash can. The floor was crowded with his things, and I'd need to rearrange a bit in order to be able to walk right, but at least he could touch the walls without me worrying about him ingesting mold.

"What do you do for a living?"

Quinn's question was innocent enough, but I knew the minute I said something, they'd judge me. I plucked Diego off the bed, lifting my chin stubbornly.

"I'm a stripper."

Though that was more out of necessity than a dream job. Once upon a time, I had big dreams of becoming something worthwhile. It was such a cliché storyline. Start stripping to pay for school, realize it's harder than it looks to take classes while working long nights and weekends, and shit falls apart from there. I dropped out of school to keep a roof over my

head, then I got fired from the first place after punching a guy who started groping me. The list went on.

I waited for their judgment, the looks that people had when they found out about my job, but Riley looked at Quinn with a smirk. “Your mom says you’d be a good stripper and now you meet one for real. Coincidence?”

Quinn rolled her eyes, her cheeks flushing. When she noticed my confused frown, she bit her lip and shrugged. “I do some dancing as a hobby. Mostly modern ballet, but I can do some other stuff. Everyone came to watch my recital a few weeks ago, and my mom made the offhand comment that I’d be a good stripper. She used to be one until recently. She was only joking, though.”

That was a surprise. It wasn’t at all what I was expecting and I could only stare as they teased each other. They seemed really easy going for being part of a biker gang or whatever, and I relaxed after a bit. Riley brought us back downstairs after a little while, so I could get to know the people here. I had no real interest in getting to know them, I was only here because Brewer was being a tool, but it wasn’t as crowded downstairs as it had been before, so I could let Diego scoot on the floor a bit. He wasn’t quite crawling, since I couldn’t let him practice while we were at home and the babysitter kept him in a playpen for the most part, but he was getting close. I was dreading him crawling before now. I didn’t want him touching the walls.

While sitting on the floor with him to make sure he didn’t find anything to stick in his mouth, I looked around the clubhouse. The first floor was mostly one big room, with little sections spaced out where different people could hang out. A pool table on one side, a bar, an open kitchen separated from the room by a massive island. We were hanging out by the seating area. It sort of resembled a living room, but there were way more couches than a normal living space, and not all of them were facing the massive television. The entire space was very man-cave, and I almost rolled my eyes when I first saw it.

“How are you all comfortable living in man-cave heaven?”

Allie snorted, tipping her head to make a face at Diego when he tried to climb into her lap. “The only old lady who lives here is Riley.”

When I lifted my eyebrows at Riley, she scowled so deep, she looked close to hurting someone. “We’re working on it.”

Allie just lifted an eyebrow. “Uh huh. And how do you think it’s going to work for you if Croy sees a baby hanging out here and nothing goes wrong? He’s going to use it as a reason to keep the two of you here.”

Leaning dramatically against the side of the couch, Riley groaned. “I didn’t even think about that. Seriously, I’m dying here. I get no sleep with all the freaking parties and just how often they interrupt us for ‘club business’. I can’t keep living like this!”

I didn’t know a lot about motorcycle club dynamics outside of the gossip I’d heard at the club, but I knew plenty about manipulating men. And since these women seemed to be kind, and I hadn’t had girlfriends in a while, I figured it wouldn’t hurt to add something to the conversation.

“Why not leave?”

Riley whipped her head around, her eyes wide. “Woah. I wouldn’t go that far.”

I waved my hand dismissively. “I didn’t mean to break up with him. You’ve got people here with homes. Say you need a few nights of decent sleep and you’ll be staying in their guest rooms. A few nights without you will have him singing a different tune.” I’d used it at the club before, when one of my regulars started getting handsy. I spent a few days ignoring him and he was on his best behavior from then on out. It helped that I was better at lap dances than anyone at that club. He missed me enough to change his ways.

All three of them looked contemplative, and Quinn frowned at Riley. “Would that work on Croy?”

Riley’s eyebrows drew together, and her eyes narrowed. “Possibly. It might lead to a fight, but when are we not

fighting anymore? At least using Lacey's idea, I might get some uninterrupted sleep."

Quinn rubbed Riley's arm soothingly. "You can come stay with me, if you want. Me and Zayne like quiet nights after hanging out here, so you'd definitely sleep better."

Allie made a face. "As long as you two don't wake her up with your fucking. I've passed your room upstairs before. I swear, I had nightmares."

Quinn's face flushed dark red, but Allie's teasing wasn't cruel, and Quinn gave as good as she got.

"We'd be quieter than you and Knox! At least we go to our room instead of commandeering the downstairs bathroom!"

Riley looked amused, watching her friends argue. When she shifted her gaze and saw me watching her, she tipped her head.

"What?"

"Not going to join in?"

She rolled her eyes. "Nah. I've heard anything and everything about how Croy and I are too loud. At this point, I just don't care. It feels too good to worry about what other people are thinking."

She said that, but she still had a slight pink tinge to her cheeks. I was betting that her confidence was newer and still a work in progress. Good for her, though. No one should be kink shamed.

"I mean, nothing we do is anything compared to Clink and Sam," she finished. Both her friends stopped arguing and nodded in agreement before Allie shuddered and made a face.

"She's so nice. It's crazy knowing she's into stuff like that."

I frowned. "Stuff like what?"

Riley filled me in on their newest old lady, an electrician named Sam whose boyfriend was apparently into exhibitionism and she had no issue taking part. When Riley

mentioned them almost fucking on the couches, my eyebrows flew up.

“In front of everyone?”

Riley nodded. “She was staking a claim. One of the sweetbutts was hanging around her man even after everyone already knew they were together. To get her to back off, Sam climbed into his lap in front of everyone and things went from there. It was kinda hot, actually.”

“Right?” Allie agreed. “Almost made me want to try it.” She thought about it before shaking her head. “Almost, but not quite. People hearing us is one thing. Watching is just weird.”

Well, at least this group wasn't judgmental about each other's preferences. Honestly, they weren't judgmental about much. They seemed to accept each other's differences without more than a shrug if they weren't into the same thing. There was only one particular thing that they all seemed to judge with fervency.

“What's a sweetbutt?”

## CHAPTER 9

BREWER

Running my fingers through my hair, I glared at the map in front of me. Prez wanted me to organize another run. Other than the one to celebrate Hammer's demise, it'd been a while. We used to have runs at least once a month. I agreed everyone needed it, but I couldn't decide on where. Normally, this shit came easy to me, but my mind kept flicking back to Lacey and the baby. If we left for days on end, would she still be here when we got back?

Frustrated, I pulled a cigarette out of the pack in my pocket, lighting it and leaning back. I was working outside to avoid running into the woman who I couldn't get off my mind. She'd been here for three days and she never failed to complain about something. I knew she was looking for a reason to get out of here. If I went on the run, she'd have nothing to stop her. Leaving behind the prospects and a few others to watch over the joint wouldn't be enough. Lacey needed a strong hand to keep her under control, and even if there was someone else I thought could handle it, the idea of anyone else taking care of her pissed me off.

I hated thinking that way. She was Mass's woman, dead or not. I wasn't going to be touching her. It was fucked up to think of my brother's woman like that. Didn't stop me from fucking dreaming about her, though. I was pissed at myself and everyone else and coming up with a plan for a run wasn't something I had the patience for.

Like she was summoned from me thinking about her, she stepped outside with the baby, a dark look on her face. Which meant she was looking for a fight and she only ever directed

her attention onto me. She resented me for keeping her here, even though we were taking care of her.

When her eyes locked on me, they narrowed and she stormed over, a deep scowl on her face. I blew the smoke away from her, watching her approach.

“What’d I do now?”

“I need to go out. And since you’re so determined to keep me here, you need to watch Diego. Put that out. You can’t smoke around a baby.”

Surprised, I did as she asked, scraping against the ground and storing it back in the box. No need to waste the damn thing. I’d barely tucked the box back in my pocket before she plopped the kid in my lap. I carefully put my arm around him to keep him upright, frowning at her.

“I don’t know shit about kids. Why me?”

She rolled her eyes. “I already told you why. You wanted us here so bad, then you have to help. I’ve got somewhere I need to be.”

She spun on her heel without another word, leaving me with a kid in my lap. She was doing it on purpose, knowing I’d struggle, in hopes of what? Scaring me off? Letting her go back to that shithole of an apartment? I made an irritated sound, picking the kid up and following her inside.

“Where the hell are you going?”

She didn’t look back, calling over her shoulder as she headed for the stairs. “None of your damn business!”

At this point, everyone knew about Lacey and her temper. The guys didn’t even glance in my direction as I followed her up the stairs. The only people she was nice to were the old ladies. Everyone else she saw as her enemy and didn’t hesitate to let them know. Her face was permanently locked in a scowl that only softened when she was looking at her son.

Chasing her down only irritated me more. “Dammit, Lacey!”



I caught up to her in her room, but she slammed the bathroom door closed before I got a chance to say anything. The shower started a second later, and as much as I wanted to bust in there just to catch a glimpse of her, I wasn't that much of an asshole. She didn't invite me, so I wasn't going anywhere near that. I sat on the bed instead, setting Diego down with a sigh. I grabbed a few toys off the floor and handed them to him, dropping onto my back while I watched him play. I wasn't against watching him for her, but I didn't know shit about kids, for one thing, and I didn't like her going out by herself.

By the time she came back out, Diego had abandoned the toys in favor of going after my piercings. I let him crawl on me, gently moving his hands whenever he reached for a piercing. The first time I let him hurt like a son of a bitch, so I learned fast not to let him grab them.

My gaze shifted to where Lacey stood in the open bathroom door and my tongue turned to lead. She was hotter than sin, with a skin tight mini skirt and a tank top that hugged her curves and showed off her assets. With a full face of makeup and the heels she was pulling onto her feet, she looked a lot more like the sweetbutts. Scratch that, she was way hotter than the sweetbutts. I almost started drooling at the sight of her tanned, mile long legs. I was so focused on her, I didn't notice Diego grabbing at my face again until he got a fistful of my lip, lip ring included, and pulled hard. I grunted, wincing when he tightened his little grip.

Lacey snickered, appearing above me as she gently pulled Diego away from me. He released me for her and I let out a breath, rubbing my face roughly.

“That kid has one hell of a grip.”

She hummed, snuggling him close and smiling when he grinned at her. He looked a hell of a lot like Mass whenever he did that, and it always made my stomach twist uncomfortably. That baby was a permanent reminder that Lacey was Mass's woman, and I was a piece of shit for lusting after her the way I was.

I closed my eyes for a minute, scrubbing my face until a crinkle caught my focus. When I opened my eyes, Lacey was holding out a piece of paper inches from my face. I took it with a frown, turning it over to look at the neat writing.

“What’s this?”

“A list. On how to take care of him. It’s not that hard. Just follow the schedule and you’ll be fine.”

It was a first, her being helpful like that. I kind of figured she’d leave me to squirm. I should’ve known better. When it came to Diego, she wasn’t just going to leave it to chance. She was fierce about him, and already kicked Clink in the nuts when he made a joke about him. It was technically directed at Mass, since even he didn’t know Mass had a kid or a woman. But Lacey took offense, and she wasn’t the type to sit around and let people talk shit. She took Clink to task and stormed off. Now Clink hides behind Sam whenever she comes into the room.

“Okay. Thanks.”

“My number is on the bottom, in case you need anything. Don’t smoke around him. And don’t let other people watch him without you being there. I don’t trust them.”

That made me pause, and I looked up from the list. “You trust me?”

She rolled her eyes, ignoring me and giving her attention back to Diego and rubbing noses with him. “He’ll have his supper in thirty minutes. There’s a few jars on top of the dresser. He takes a bottle when you put him to bed. Don’t leave him alone. I don’t have a baby monitor, so you have to stay in here with him while he’s sleeping. There are extra diapers in the dresser.” She smiled when Diego babbled, grabbing a fistful of her dark curls. “As for you, mi amor. Give ‘em hell.” She kissed him soundly before prying her hair free and setting him back on the bed next to me. She looked uncomfortable and hesitated to step away until I shook my head.

“I’ve got ‘im. Promise. Where are you going? I’ll send a prospect with you to—”

She sucked her teeth, waving me away. “Don’t start with that shit. I know what you make the other women do, and I’m not part of all that. I don’t need a guard. I’m leaving. He better be as perfect as he is right now when I get back, or I’ll make you regret it.”

Her threat didn’t phase me. Her refusal to take someone with her did, and I wasn’t stupid enough not to realize she was purposely evading telling me where she was going. I picked up Diego again, following her downstairs and out the front door. The sun was going down, which meant there was a higher chance of something bad happening to her.

“Lacey—”

“If I wanted a boyfriend, I’d go looking for one. I don’t need a man to protect me. I can protect myself. What I need is for someone to watch Diego who won’t make my life more difficult. If you can’t do that, then there’s no point in staying here. At least at my apartment, I could find a babysitter.”

Frustration burned under my skin, and I scowled at her. She loved throwing it in my face that she hated being here. I thought I was stubborn, but it was nothing compared to Lacey.

“I’ll be back later. Call me if Diego needs anything.”

Without a backward glance, she dropped into her car and left. If I didn’t know just how much she loved her kid, I’d be worried about her never coming back. Letting out a heavy sigh, I glanced down at Diego.

“Do me a favor and go easy on me. I don’t know shit about kids.”

He grinned, just like Mass would’ve done, and I groaned internally. If he was anything like his daddy, he was going to make my night a living hell just because I said something.

## CHAPTER 10

LACEY

The club in town was rough. You almost couldn't tell what it was from the outside. It was just a brick building, with no windows, and a bouncer at the top of a set of metal stairs. I didn't really have room to complain, though, so I went inside and asked the bartender for the manager.

It was poorly lit, with tacky floors and a crappy sound system. There were only a handful of men sitting around the one stage in the middle. Not surprising since it was the middle of the week. None in vests, thankfully, so I didn't have to hear it from Brewer. None of the old ladies mentioned my job to any of the men so far, but I got the feeling Brewer wouldn't be happy about it. It was a good thing I wasn't looking for his permission.

An older man came out of the back, a suspicious look on his face when he walked up to me. Masking my distaste for the place, I gave him a polite smile.

"Heard you were askin' for me?"

"I was. I'm Lola." I didn't give out my real name at clubs, and managers rarely gave a shit. It was a stage name, to protect myself.

"Wade. What do ya need, gorgeous?"

"I was wondering if you had any openings. I'll take whatever shifts I can get."

He made a face, his eyes trailing over me. "You? Why? A gorgeous chick like you could get a job in the city in a blink. Why the hell would you wanna work here?"

His reaction was a little surprising. Most managers saw us as dollar signs. They didn't give a shit about why we wanted to work there. If we were hot enough, all they usually cared about was when we could start. And considering Wade complimented me several times already, I didn't think he had a problem with my looks.

“The manager in the city was a chauvinistic asshole.”

It slipped out before I could stop it, and I regretted it instantly. I usually gave it a few weeks before showing off my temper. Being a bitch wasn't going to help me get a job.

Wade snorted. “Well, at least you're honest. Go ahead and change. Let's see what you've got.”

He showed me to the back room, where another woman was getting ready. She was older than me, but still looked good with her bright red hair and her smokey green eyes. After Wade walked away, she leaned in her stool, offering me her hand.

“Stella.”

“Lacey,” I replied, taking her hand.

“You here for an audition?”

I nodded, pulling my costume out of my bag. When I looked around warily, Stella shook her head and pointed to a curtained area behind her. “Change in there. No cameras, you don't gotta worry about that. Wade's decent.”

Well, that was a first. I slipped behind the curtain, changing into the costume I brought with me. Stella didn't seem to have the same issues I'd dealt with in the past. She wasn't worried about competition and talked to me through the curtain while I got dressed.

“First time?”

“No. I used to work in the city.”

She huffed out a laugh. “Yikes. How'd that go?”

I pushed the curtain aside, moving to join her at the long table she sat in front of. There were mirrors along the wall for

getting ready, and I checked my makeup while I replied to her.

“Like shit. This place any good?”

She lifted a shoulder. “It’s not the worst I’ve been at. There isn’t a huge bustle, but the clientele is steady. Haven’t had a young one like you in a while, so they’ll love that.”

There was nothing wrong with steady clients, as long as the money came in. It might mean I’d need a backup job to afford shit for Diego. The club wouldn’t be housing me and Diego forever, and he’d need a new babysitter soon.

I almost smirked at the thought of Brewer watching my son. It was a punishment, since he ignored me every time I mentioned leaving. I wouldn’t have trusted him, but the girls constantly said that he was a decent guy and I didn’t have many other options. I needed to work and I couldn’t sit around all day waiting for Brewer to change his mind and let us leave.

“You ready?”

Wade was back, leaning against the doorframe. His gaze trailed over me, but it felt more like an assessment than anything like the disgusting looks Lorenzo used to give me at my last club. When I nodded, his gaze flicked to Stella.

“You hittin’ the floor or goin’ on stage?”

She pursed her lips thoughtfully. “I was supposed to go on stage next, but let her do her audition first. I’ll follow.”

He nodded once. “Appreciate it. You get cleared by the doctor?”

A smile tugged at her lips, and she rolled her eyes. “I already told you I did. It wasn’t that bad a fall.”

“Don’t matter. It was still a fall. Take it easy tonight. We’re not busy. You don’t need to bust your ass. I lose any more girls and this place will shut down.”

She waved him off, and I followed him out, frowning. “Are you losing a lot of girls?” That could be a red flag, depending on the reasoning. I needed this job, but I wasn’t so desperate that I’d put myself in danger. I had to get home to

Diego, and whatever job I took wasn't going to put that in jeopardy.

“Just two. One had an alcohol problem, went to rehab and decided she wasn't comin' back. The other moved out of state. Can't really blame her for movin' on.”

Well, those reasons didn't bother me. There would always be turnover. People had lives outside of the club that interfered. At least he didn't say anything about drugs or being forced to leave.

The other woman finished up her set and Wade gestured for me to take her place after I gave the DJ my request. He looked curious, and when I handed him a few bucks, he grinned and nodded. It wasn't standard to tip the DJ for an audition, but they didn't get paid outside of tips, so I wasn't going to stiff him. Climbing onto the stage, I took a deep breath and let my mind go blank.

The music started, and I sank into it, letting my body do the talking as I writhed and danced. I gave my focus to one man in front, shooting him a sultry look when he grinned at me. By the end of the song, the four men who sat in front of me were all smiling, and there was a pile of cash on the floor in front of me. I winked as I gathered it and sauntered off the stage to make room for Stella.

Wade was waiting on the sidelines, and he looked impressed when I walked up to him. And confused. “You sure you belong here? With skills like that, you could make a lot more in a big city.”

And rent, childcare, and house fees would skyrocket right along with it. I couldn't afford to move. “I'm sure. I'll take it I passed?”

He smirked. “Yeah, but you knew you would. House fee is forty. You starting tonight?”

I lifted a shoulder. “For a few hours, if you're alright with it. Is there a house mom?” If there was, I'd need to meet with her and discuss tips because, like the DJ, she didn't get paid outside of tips.

Wade shook his head. “Nah. Last girl who did that job left a few years back. The others mostly do the job themselves. There’s only the three of you, so I’m sure you can work through it.”

That meant there was one less person I shared my money with. A few house moms I’d worked with were real bitches, and it was kind of refreshing to just work with the other girls without the hierarchy thing.

Since I left Diego with Brewer, I knew I couldn’t work a full shift. He said multiple times that he didn’t know anything about taking care of kids. I didn’t get any calls from him asking for help, which was a little surprising. Diego never went to bed easy, and I doubted Brewer listened to the warning I wrote down to hide from him so he’d settle for the night. I couldn’t exactly call him and check in since I didn’t have his number, so after a few hours, I headed home for the night.

I wasn’t really surprised when the house was still active. In the few days I’d been here, it was like a constant party. There were always guys hanging out, listening to music, and drinking. I understood better why Riley was so pissed about having to live here. Her and Croy’s room was across the hall and there were people knocking on their door all hours of the night. She was working a lot, but she said she was going to take my advice that weekend just so she could catch up on her sleep.

What did surprise me was the fact that Brewer was downstairs. He was sitting on the couch with Diego on his chest, his big hand covering all of Diego’s back easily. When I came up to him with a frown, he lifted a shoulder gently.

“He fell asleep and I sure as shit wasn’t gonna move ‘im. I was worried he’d start screamin’ again.”

I fought back a grin. The fact that Diego did exactly what I told him to do and made Brewer suffer a little was hilarious. And a decent distraction from the fact that Brewer relaxing with a baby asleep on his chest was the most adorable thing on the planet. The image made my ovaries do a little dance and that freaked me out a little.



When I reached for my son, Brewer shifted away from me with a scowl. “Don’t. You’ll wake ‘im.”

Rolling my eyes, I gently picked Diego up, cuddling him against my chest. Diego’s eyes fluttered open for only a second before he went back to sleep. I flashed Brewer a smug look before heading upstairs. I was laying Diego in the portable crib when Brewer spoke behind me.

“You never told me where you went.”

After settling Diego, I straightened and shot him a dry look. “You’re not in charge of me. I don’t need to tell you where I’m going. How’d it go?”

He crossed his arms, glaring at me, but he wasn’t going to get what he wanted from me. I dealt with enough pissy men in my life. I knew never to give in. If you gave them an inch, they’d take a mile, and I didn’t give them shit. I just raised my eyebrows and mimicked his stance, waiting him out.

“Went fine,” he finally growled. “Except for the part where he screamed his head off because he didn’t wanna go to sleep. Only way I could get ‘im down was walking around until he passed out. Getting my ass onto the couch took fuckin’ work.”

The image of such a big dangerous looking man walking around bouncing a baby to get him to sleep was hilarious and I couldn’t hold back my snicker. Brewer rolled his eyes, but there was a smile tugging at his lips. His smile was rare. Even around his own crew, I noticed he was usually stoic and quiet. The fact that he was smiling at me lit a fire in my insides that I quickly had to douse. I was not letting myself get attached to another biker. Last time was lesson enough.

“Well, thanks for watching him. I’m sure you have things you should be doing and I need to get ready for bed so—”

He didn’t leave like I’d hoped. Instead, he stepped farther into the room, coming so close I could feel the heat coming off him. I lifted my chin, stubbornly refusing to back down, and fought back a tremble when he cupped my chin in his hand.

“Where’d you go, Lacey?” His voice was low, quiet, like he didn’t want to wake up Diego. I appreciated that part, but

not the demanding part, and I scowled at him.

“Out.”

He shook his head slowly. “Try again.”

“I’m not trying shit, you—”

He cut me off by dipping his head and capturing my lips. The alarms went off in my head. I tried to push him away, but his big rough hands resting on my hips kept me up against him and when I protested, he took advantage and slid his tongue into my mouth.

It’d been a while since I kissed someone. It was a little difficult to think about hookups while I had a baby in the next room, or a sitter waiting for me to pick him up. Long dormant feelings welled in my middle, creating a steady pulse between my legs the longer he explored my mouth. I didn’t want to give in. I didn’t want to give him the satisfaction. But my body wasn’t listening to my brain and when he pulled me closer, I felt myself step into him, letting my body plaster itself against his.

I stretched onto my toes, letting my hands slip up his chest. He lacked any sort of softness, his chest and shoulders all muscle. Even the way he held me wasn’t soft. Like he was worried I’d run, he kept his grip tight, one hand on my hip, the other cupping the back of my head. I felt like my skin was on fire, and when his erection pressed against my belly, I shivered.

His phone buzzing in his pocket was what knocked us both back into reality. I jerked away from him, taking a few big steps back. He looked just as confused as me, his brow furrowed. He didn’t answer his phone, but he did back away from me, what looked almost like regret on his face.

“I shouldn’t have done that. I’m sorry. I’m gonna...” He jerked his thumb over his shoulder before spinning and marching out. Even in his haste to get away from me, he still closed the door quietly.

The room was plunged into darkness when he shut the door. I hadn’t turned the light on, so I didn’t wake Diego.

Standing there in the dark, staring at the door, I could only blink. Why the hell did he seem to regret that more than I did? And why did his reaction piss me off so much?

## CHAPTER 11

BREWER

That call from Croy couldn't have come at a better time. I was an idiot to go after Lacey like that. She was Mass's woman, and I shouldn't have gone near her. She was a beautiful temptation, but it felt wrong to go after her when she and Mass had a thing. He was gone, but not forgotten, and you don't poach another brother's woman. Even if he wasn't around to make a claim. I needed to remember that and stay the hell away from her. I lost my head when I was near Lacey. I needed to steer clear.

Croy was waiting for me when I got downstairs. He looked annoyed, which was a usual look on him. It wasn't aimed at me, and when I raised an eyebrow at him, he shook his head.

"How we doin' on the club run?"

I sighed. "I'm workin' on it. Got put on babysitting duty when I was workin' on it earlier. I'll figure it out."

For once, he didn't look irritated at me. He was a rough dude, but he'd chilled a little after Riley showed up. And he chilled a hell of a lot more once Hammer was six feet under. That asshole was screwing with us for years.

"How's she doin'?" Riley said she's not happy about bein' here."

I rolled my eyes. "She'll get over it. I need to find her a place nearby so she's got more space, but—"

"Why are you doin' this?"

His question surprised me, and I frowned. "What do you mean?"

He scrutinized me, his eyes narrowed. “You got a thing for her or somethin’?”

Shit. Was I really that obvious? I played it off with a quick shake of my head. “Nah. She’s Mass’s woman. I know that. I just don’t like the idea of Mass’s kid living in squalor. You didn’t see the place, man. It was one of the worst places to raise a kid. Fuckin’ roaches and mold up the walls. And she didn’t even blink, like she was fuckin’ used to it. No one deserves to live like that.”

He nodded slowly, but he was still staring at me like he was trying to read me. It put me on edge, and when I scowled at him, he smirked.

“Mass ain’t here. Her connection to him makes her part of club life, but as long as you don’t treat her like a sweetbutt—”

“Don’t. I’m not goin’ for Lacey. She’s the mother of Mass’s kid. That’s all. Besides, don’t you have some other shit to be worrying about? Riley’s been complaining more often about living here.”

His expression darkened, and he glared out over the clubhouse. It was a weekday, so it wasn’t that busy. A few guys playing poker or pool. The sweetbutts generally showed up more on weekends, so those looking to get lucky were at the bar or club.

When Croy didn’t say anything, I figured I got away with the subject change. I wanted him as far away from that as possible. “Was Lacey why you called me down here?”

His gaze snapped to mine, and he scowled. “No. Clink’s just gettin’ back on his feet and I don’t want him around the product anymore. Knox is taking over counting for him, but I want you there to supervise. He’s still young.”

Knox was the youngest of us, aside from a few of the prospects. He came in fresh out of high school, and quickly ranked into officers because he was almost as good with numbers as Clink was. But Clink was newly sober and the job switch was a good one.

“What’s Clink got to say about it?”

Croy huffed, shaking his head. “Fucker actually thanked me. I was stunned shitless.”

That actually made me smile. Clink had been determined not to tell anyone about his drug problem and he tried to take care of it on his own. I thought for sure that he’d struggle and relapse a few times in those first few weeks. But unlike the previous times he’d tried, this time around he had someone to stay clean for outside of his brotherhood. I asked him once if doing it for her was enough, but he said he was doing it for himself, to prove to himself he was good enough for her. He’d grown a lot since she came into his life. It was him more than anyone that made me want to settle down, to have what he had. Not with Lacey, though. No matter how much I wanted her.

“Seems like rehab did him good. Alright. Is the new batch coming in tonight?”

“Yeah. They should already be there prepping for it. Make sure you’re packing. I don’t trust Eduardo. He’s a slimy motherfucker.”

True. We used to only deal with his old man, but he was getting on in years, so his son took over. Eduardo was still new and I wouldn’t put it past him to try and screw us over to prove himself. He wouldn’t live long to enjoy it if he did, but hopefully, with me hanging around, he’d be smart enough not to try. I was older than both him and Knox, and while I wasn’t as terrifying as Reaper, I wasn’t the friendly type, and people knew not to fuck with me.

“Alright. I’m headed out. I’m not updating you unless something goes wrong, though. I don’t want the First Lady on my ass in the morning.”

That made Croy snort, and he shook his head as he waved me off. “Fuck off. I’ll deal with her.”

“Good luck with that.”

With Riley, he’d fucking need it. And yet, I was still fucking jealous. This was bullshit.

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When I showed up to the site where we were meeting Eduardo to pick up the product, Knox and a few other guys were already there. He lifted his chin in greeting, leaning against his bike and playing with his phone. I pulled up alongside him, kicking up the stand and killing the engine right as an old refrigerated truck pulled into the lot. Just in time. Thank fuck for that.

Knox and I waited in front for Eduardo while the rest all went to the back to unload the product. Exchanges like this were usually quick. We didn't want to draw attention from the pigs. Eduardo's old man knew that, but when Eduardo slid out of the cab, he didn't look like he was in a fucking hurry. He grinned, walking up to us with a stupid swagger.

“You're new. ¿Dónde está Clink?”

Not interested in sharing the inner workings of our crew, I just raised an eyebrow at him. “You got the product?”

His gaze had been locked on Knox, sizing him up, but when it flicked to me, he hesitated. It was only a second, he was too damn cocky, but he couldn't hide his reaction that well. Good. I wanted him to be cautious around me.

“Sí. It's here. Just as requested. My money?”

We used to pay in cash. That was the way things worked. But cash was harder to hide crossing the border and too easy to trace. Once Neo was initiated, we joined the twenty-first century. All our money ran through shell companies and some other magic computer shit to keep it off the pigs' radar. Knox only had to open his phone and send a message to Neo to get him to send the money. Eduardo's phone alerted a few seconds later, and he grinned at the numbers on the screen.

“Papá always said you guys were prompt. We work well together.”

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. Fucker was laying it on thick, and I didn't give a shit about what he thought about us,

as long as he kept the product coming.

“We should hang out. Spend more time together. Have you been to my side before? We have the best parties and—”

The sound of the door to the truck closing interrupted him, and Bear gave me a signal that they were all finished unloading. Time to send this guy packing.

“Looks like they’re through,” I grumbled.

Eduardo didn’t seem inclined to leave, even after I said something. He started listing off things they had at their parties, from women to drugs, and he leaned against the cab of the truck like he had all the time in the world. It irritated me. I had better things to be doing right now, and I had to grit my teeth to keep my tone polite.

“We’re not crossin’ the border. We got work to do. You should get gone before the pigs start sniffin’ around.”

Eduardo scoffed. “In my town, the policía know to stay away if they want to live. Is that not the same here?” His tone turned condescending as his gaze drifted over me. If he was looking to rile me up, he was going to be disappointed. Out of all the officers, I was the least likely to blow a fuse. The only person so far who could rile me up was Lacey. And Eduardo lacked her sex appeal.

Raising an eyebrow, I crossed my arms. He looked like he was waiting for my reaction and the longer I went without giving him what he wanted, the more uncomfortable he seemed to get. Finally, he forced a smile, thrusting his hand out at me.

“You are correct. There are many things to be done. Perhaps next time I will come for a longer visit. I will drive separate, so there will be no problems.”

When I took his hand, he stupidly tightened his grip, like he wanted to intimidate me. The dude seriously lacked situational awareness. I had at least six inches on him. I squeezed back until he flinched and pulled away. Keeping my face blank, I jerked my chin at the truck, dismissing him.



Annoyance crossed his face. He didn't miss me not outwardly inviting him to hang. That wasn't how this worked and I wasn't sure how Croy would feel about it. I'd run it by him later. Eduardo's old man never hung around past the exchange, but Eduardo might do things different. There wasn't anything particularly wrong with him stopping by if done right, but I didn't trust the guy. Let Croy be the deciding factor on how to handle him.

After he loaded up and finally left, I followed Knox over to the pallets the guys were moving into the back of another truck. They'd cart it across town and we'd count it out there. We didn't need Eduardo knowing where we stored our shit before it went out. Like I said, I didn't trust the fucker.

## CHAPTER 12

LACEY

I was still irritated with the kiss from the night before, even after a full night's sleep. Luckily, Diego slept through the night most nights since we moved out here, but it did nothing to soothe my mood. I got dressed for the day, with torn shorts and a tank top, before plucking Diego out of his crib.

Wade said I could start work tonight. I wasn't going to ask Brewer again to watch Diego. I didn't like how I felt around him. He was distracting, and I kept losing focus. I needed to concentrate on getting my life steady for Diego. Hopefully starting with a more stable income and a decent babysitter. I headed downstairs, looking for the girls. They were the only ones I felt like I could trust. They were honest and didn't beat around the bush about what it was like here. I valued that.

Riley was in her scrubs, ready for her work day. The other two didn't live here, but they came by most evenings to hang out. They weren't here now, but that was fine. I wasn't asking for someone to watch him right now, anyway.

"Morning," Riley waved when we came to join her in the kitchen. She was kind enough to make coffee for the both of us and handed me a mug without even asking. She plucked Diego from my arms, settling him on her hip while she ate. Diego liked her. She pretended she understood him when he babbled at her, giving animated reactions, and he seemed to enjoy it.

"Are you working tonight?"

She shook her head, snagging a bite of her toast when Diego was distracted. "No. Just the day shift today. Why?"

I grimaced. I felt a little guilty asking her to watch him when she had to work all day, but I didn't know who else to ask. "I have to work tonight and I need someone to watch Diego. Would you or one of the other girls be able to watch him?"

Riley nodded slowly. "Yeah, sure. The girls will be here in the afternoon. We can all watch him. Four sets of eyes are better than one. Besides, I know hanging around him is giving Quinn baby fever, and it's fun to watch."

A smile tugged at my lips. That didn't surprise me. Not only was Diego incredibly charming and could make even the toughest give in to him, Quinn seemed like the mommy type. Whenever I handed her Diego, she lit up and refused to give him back unless she absolutely had to. It wouldn't surprise me if she got pregnant soon. Baby fever was a real thing.

"What does her man have to say about that?"

I'd been introduced to most of the crew. Some were more intimidating than others. Not that they scared me, but Quinn's man especially looked like he wanted to hurt people on the regular. The only person who out-intimidated him was Croy, and Riley seemed to keep him in check.

She frowned. "You know, I don't know. I never asked. Pretty sure it'd freak Allie out if I did. Reaper's her older brother and you wouldn't believe the shitshow that went down when she found he was claiming one of her best friends."

I grimaced. "Sounds like a pain in the ass. I'm glad I don't have any siblings."

"You're telling me," she snorted. "Allie and Quinn are like my siblings, and that's enough for me."

"Not Sam?" I tipped my head with a frown.

"No, not yet. Sam's new. She showed up a few months ago to work on the wiring in the building, and Clink claimed her not long later. She's great, though."

She explained that she, Allie, and Quinn had been friends since they were kids, which made them a little closer. But they were open and friendly enough that I never felt like you

couldn't breach their inner circle. They treated Sam and me like we were part of the group, regardless of how long we'd been here. They were decent people, considering most women were usually catty bitches.

"Well, I better get going. The night shift gets really crabby if we aren't on time to take over."

She got in a quick cuddle with Diego before handing him back and wiggling her fingers. Chase was already waiting for her by the door and he lifted his hand in greeting before following her outside. He was the quiet one who helped me move. I still didn't understand how they could stand having people following them around all the time. That would irritate the hell out of me.

Since my shift wasn't until the evening, I spent some rare quality time with Diego. It was the one thing I didn't hate about this place. At least while we were here, I wasn't stressing to the max about rent and affording food. When I'd asked Croy about paying him back, he outright refused. He said for me to consider the money coming from Mass, since he never got his cut that was owed to him that week. As much as I rolled my eyes, I appreciated the fact that he was willing to lie like that. It felt a little less like charity if I imagined it coming from Mass.

I was going to head out to pick up more baby stuff when I ran into Brewer again. He looked tired, his normally stoic appearance more grouchy and exhausted than usual. It looked like he was about to walk past me without a word, but he did a double take when he noticed my purse and took a few steps back, studying me.

"Where are you goin'?"

I rolled my eyes. "How many times am I going to have to say mind your business until you get the hint?"

He growled, moving to block me when I reached for the door. "I'm not playin' this game with you today, Lacey. Where are you going?"

Making an irritated noise, I shifted Diego to my other hip. “Out. I need to pick up some things. Do you mind?”

He let his hand drop so I could leave, but instead of going on with his day, he followed me and dropped into the passenger seat with a groan. I stared at him incredulously, and he shot me a dirty look.

“You aren’t going anywhere by yourself. Let’s get this over with. And if you stop for coffee, I’ll buy. I need it to get through the day.”

My first reaction was to argue with him, but the more I stared at him, the more I realized just how exhausted he was. He had dark circles under his eyes and his scruff on his face was getting darker. He looked ragged and worn out. Since I wasn’t going anywhere that I actually had to keep a secret, I dropped the subject and buckled Diego into his seat without a word. If he wanted to waste time coming with me when he could be taking a nap, that was his problem.

I didn’t really know about the places around here in terms of baby products. Instead of running around trying to figure it out, I headed for the city. Brewer grumbled about it, but it didn’t take long for him to slouch in his seat and fall asleep. With a smirk, I kept driving, keeping my voice low when I ordered us coffees through the drive through. I didn’t bother waking him until we got to the grocery store I knew had the formula Diego liked. I parked the car and glanced at Brewer.

He was significantly less annoying when he was sleeping. His face was relaxed and that stubborn look that irritated me to no end was gone. His lips were parted slightly, his arms crossed across his chest. I almost felt guilty waking him, but we lived in the desert. I couldn’t leave him in the car. And he was the one who demanded to come along.

“Brewer.”

He didn’t even stir, proving just how stubborn he was that he didn’t say home and rest. Shaking my head, I nudged his shoulder.

“Wake up.”

He groaned, shifting away from me. I rolled my lips between my teeth to hold back my smile, picking up his coffee and waving it under his nose. When he opened one bloodshot eye to look at me, I raised an eyebrow.

“I got your coffee. Are you going to wait in the car? You might swelter. I don’t have enough gas to run the AC for that long.”

He frowned, his eyes shifting to the dashboard. The gas light wasn’t on yet, but it was getting close with how often I was driving between here and the MC. It was more than a little annoying.

Handing Brewer his coffee, I got out and went around to pick up Diego. He’d fallen asleep too, but luckily he was still in an infant seat. I could just take the whole thing with me and let him sleep. I was dreading getting the upgrade. I knew he needed it. He was getting too big for the infant seat, but car seats were expensive and I didn’t look forward to having to move him when he was asleep.

Resting the seat in the crook of my elbow, I pulled the cover over it to block the sun from his face. Maybe while I was out here, I would stop at the thrift store to see if they had any car seats. I preferred to buy new for things like that, but until I got paid, I was fresh out of luck.

Brewer trailed behind me through the store, drinking his coffee. He was like my shadow, not saying anything but sticking close. And when we got to the register, he nudged me out of the way and paid for the items himself.

“I don’t need you to pay for me!”

He grunted, apparently too tired to actually use words. Big monkey. He loaded the groceries back into the cart and headed for the door without another word. Making an irritated sound, I followed him. I’d pay him back after my shift. Since it was a Friday night, hopefully I’d make a decent amount. Enough to cover expenses, at least.

After everything was loaded, Brewer opened the door to climb into his seat, frowning at me when I turned away.

“Where you goin’?”

I waved my hand across the street. “Thrift store. Diego is going to need a bigger car seat soon, and I can’t afford a new one.” I wasn’t going to drive there. It wasn’t far, and I didn’t want to waste gas when I had perfectly good legs to walk on.

Brewer started grumbling again as we walked off. I thought maybe he would wait in the car, but he showed up in the store while we were looking through what little selection they had available. They were all older, and probably close to expiring, which was unfortunate. I fought back a grimace as I turned over the least dirty looking one, searching for the tag that had the expiration date on it.

“That thing looks like it was made in the nineties.”

I lifted a shoulder. “So?”

“So, is that even safe?”

My spine stiffened, and I swung around to glare at him. “Are you seriously judging me right now? It’s what I can afford, asshole. And I—”

“I’ll buy him a new one.”

I jerked my head back, incredulous. “What? No! You’re not his daddy, Brewer. I don’t need you paying for things. This will work fine and—”

He wasn’t listening to me. Instead, he scooped Diego’s car seat off the ground where I’d rested it by my feet and walked away. I had no choice but to follow him as he stormed out of the shop.

“Brewer! What the hell do you think you’re doing? Give me my kid!”

I reached for the car seat, but Brewer grabbed my hand, tugging me back across the street to where my car was waiting. A string of curses in Spanish flew out of my mouth and I twisted my wrist to get away from him. He didn’t stop until he had the back door open and he was frowning at where Diego’s car seat would go.

“How’s this shit work?”

## CHAPTER 13

BREWER

Lacey was pissed. I could practically hear her grinding her teeth, and she was seething at me. I had to wonder what the hell happened to her that she couldn't take help when it was offered to her.

When I studied the car seat for too long, trying to figure out what the hell the plastic thing sitting in the car was for, she growled and pushed me out of the way. She settled the seat into the plastic part with a loud click and shut the door quietly, though based on the look on her face, she'd wanted to slam it. Only the fact that it was Diego's door kept her temper at bay. She moved toward the driver's seat, but I cut her off and put out my hand.

"Keys. I'll drive."

She crossed her arms and was about to argue until I pointed out, "You can't leave a baby in a hot car. Gimme your keys so I can turn on the AC."

It made her hesitate and with a furious shriek, she gave in and threw the keys at me, once again dropping into the back seat next to Diego instead of sitting next to me. Whatever. If she wanted to be a brat, then she could have at it. Now that I had more coffee, I wasn't at risk of popping off and saying something I'd regret.

I knew if I let her drive, she never would've gone along with my plan. She started protesting immediately when I pulled into the gas station. She said she was low on gas, but she was too stubborn to let me pay for it. She hopped out of



the car, trying to put her card in first, but I beat her to it and shot her a smug grin.

“Go sit with Diego. Not sure if rollin’ the windows down is a good idea with all the fumes in the air, but I don’t want him to get hot. Tell me if I need to roll ‘em down.”

“I swear to god, Brewer, you can’t just—”

“Lacey?”

Her frustration only grew, and she rolled her eyes hard as the woman who called to her approached. I stepped around her, using the distraction to my advantage so I could put the pump in while she spun around the glare at the woman.

“What do you want, Vanessa?”

The woman, a blonde with massive fake tits and clothes so tiny it bordered on indecent, sauntered up to us. “Nothing. I’m just surprised to see you here. I figured you’d be long gone by now, since you got fired. Nowhere around here is dumb enough to hire a tramp like you, right?” She looked smug as hell, and Lacey’s hands clenched into fists. Her gaze shifted over Lacey’s shoulder to me, and her demeanor changed on a dime. She reminded me of the sweetbutts, all venom amongst each other, until one of us walked up. She flashed me a sultry smile, cocking her hip. “Well, who’s this handsome snack?”

I didn’t reply, not interested in her pathetic power display. It was one of the reasons Chrissie never got her claws in me. I didn’t like shit like that. If you were so insecure that you had to act like a huge bitch to everyone around you just to make yourself feel better, then I wasn’t interested. I liked a confident woman who knew her worth.

When I didn’t respond, Vanessa slunk closer, biting her lip as she ogled me. “You’re too handsome to be hanging out with a woman like Lacey. Why don’t you come spend some time with me instead?”

I heard Lacey scoff behind me. “I wouldn’t let her touch you unless you want to catch something.”

Vanessa glared at her, but when I looked over my shoulder, Lacey seemed uninterested in what was happening. After

rolling down the windows for Diego, she leaned against the car and checked her nails, like they were more interesting than the bitch in front of us.

“Go fuck yourself, Lacey. You’re just jealous because I still have a job and you’re going to wind up on the streets with that little monster you call a kid.”

That caught Lacey’s attention, and she righted herself, barreling towards Vanessa with her hands clenched. It was easy to see what her next move was, so I caught her around the waist to keep her back and shot Vanessa a dirty look.

“Walk away or I’ll end you.”

Her eyes widened with surprise, but I wasn’t fucking joking. She was talking shit about a baby, trying to piss Lacey off, and I wasn’t having it.

If Lacey was bothered about me threatening the woman, she didn’t show it. She shifted, grabbing my cut and pulling me towards her until she could crash her lips against mine. I knew what she was doing, and I went with it, fisting her hair and tangling my tongue with hers.

I heard the frustrated shriek of the bitch as she stomped away, but every time I tasted Lacey, I wanted more. I sank into it, pushing her up against the side of the car. Feeling her curves pressed up against me made me hard as diamonds, and I couldn’t resist grinding my hips against hers.

A whimper from the car drew Lacey’s focus, and she pulled away, her breathing unsteady. I couldn’t even be cocky about it because I was just as messed up as she was. I forced myself to release her, readjusting myself after she slipped into the car to check on Diego. The bitch from before was pouting as she filled up her tank, and I felt pretty smug about it, putting the pump back and dropping into the seat again.

After our little run in with the bitch from before, Lacey was less argumentative. I didn’t know if it was because she wanted to prove something to that bitch or if that kiss knocked her on her ass as much as it did to me. She picked out the car

seat she wanted at the store and, other than glowering at me, she said nothing about me paying for it.

By the time we made it back home, Diego was pissed. Lacey said he didn't like being in the car seat and, given how scrunched he looked in the damn thing, I wasn't surprised. What did surprise me was when I pulled him out of the seat to help her out and he settled in my arms. Lacey's head whipped around and her mouth fell open.

“What did you just do?”

I shook my head. “Nothin’. I just picked ‘im up.” I glanced down at him with a frown. “How come you weren't this easy when I was watchin' you last night?”

Lacey snickered. “Because I told him not to be. I need to feed him. Since you're so determined to help, you can unload the groceries.” She put her hands out, smiling when Diego went to her without a fuss. He grabbed a fistful of her hair, chewing on his other hand without a care in the world. I'd probably be in that good a mood if I got to hold Lacey that much, too. Lucky kid.

Instead of unloading the groceries myself, I put two prospects on the job. The fatigue was catching up to me, and I needed a break from the sexy as sin woman determined to drive me insane. I had to find her a place and quick because she was busting through my resolve and I knew I'd feel like shit if I actually gave in to what I wanted to do.

She's Mass's woman. I needed to fucking remember that.

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After a quick nap, I woke up fucking determined. I'd find a place for Lacey and Diego nearby, check in on them every once in a while, and keep my fucking distance. I wasn't going to betray the memory of my friend by going after his woman. No matter how sexy she was.

I marched downstairs, hoping to talk to Reaper about it, since he found his place pretty damn quick. Or maybe Clink,

who was close to closing on a new place now that he was back from rehab. But when I scanned the room to look for them and noticed that Diego was in Quinn's arms and Lacey was nowhere to be seen, I felt my hackles go up. No way would she ask someone else to watch him so she could sneak out without me knowing.

Sam was making faces at Diego, making him smile, but she straightened and smiled at me when I approached. "Hey, Brewer."

"Hey, Sammy. Where's Lacey?"

"She went to work," Riley replied. She was standing nearby, looking at something on her phone with Allie.

I made a face. That bitch from earlier said Lacey was fired. It struck me that I didn't even know what Lacey did for a living. I never asked. I didn't think she'd be working while she was staying here. "Did she say where?"

Riley nodded, not bothering to even look at me. "Yep. She also told me not to tell you. So there's that."

Frustration boiled in my gut, and my normal level of patience disintegrated. I glowered at her, my lip lifting in a snarl. "I'm not fucking joking around, Riley. Where the hell is she?"

Riley's gaze lifted slowly. I knew better than to pick a fight with her. Not only was she standing next to the reigning champ of causing trouble and picking fights, she was no slouch in that department either. And these women always fought alongside one another. Allie's chin lifted defiantly and Quinn's eyes narrowed. Even Sam was scowling, her arms crossed over her chest.

"Try again, asshole," Riley hissed.

I wasn't interested in playing games with her and I was about to say as much, but I never got a chance.

"Dude. What'd you say to piss off a whole flock of women?" Clink's voice came up behind me and he slapped me on the shoulder in greeting. He was grinning, like usual, until he saw the dark look on my face. His brows drew down, and

he looked between me and the group. “What the fuck is going on?”

“He’s mad because we won’t tell him where Lacey works. She asked us not to, and we’re not betraying her because you’re a possessive asshole. Seriously, I thought you’d be better than the rest of them,” Riley snapped.

“Did she take security?”

Riley’s gaze flicked over my shoulder to where Croy and the other officers approached. When she crossed her arms and glared at him, he took that as an answer by itself. No, she didn’t, which put her at risk. She’d been here long enough that if anyone wanted to cause trouble with us, they’d know she was staying here.

“Tell him where she is,” Croy demanded. I wasn’t alone in this anymore, as the officers faced off with their old ladies. Apparently, the guys were on my side and Croy looked pissed that Riley refused to spill.

“Is her job dangerous?” Reaper asked, frowning hard at Quinn. At least she was willing to cough up some answers. She was the least combative of the group.

“No! My mama was a stripper for years and she wasn’t—”

Riley elbowed her side, shushing her, but we all caught what she said. I felt like I swallowed my tongue and the rest of the guys looked just as stunned.

“She’s a stripper?”

“Yeah. So what? You’ve got a problem with that and not the sweetbutts whoring themselves out almost every night?” Riley seethed.

Spinning on my heel, I stalked off. I didn’t care if I had to go to every strip joint in the goddamn state. I was going to find Lacey and drag her ass back home. There wasn’t a chance in hell I was going to let her take her clothes off for other men. That shit ended tonight.

## CHAPTER 14

LACEY

I was a few hours into my shift when I got a message from Riley warning me that Brewer found out about my job. I never asked them to keep my job title a secret from him, just where I was, but it was more than a little annoying that someone let it slip. Now I had to deal with him on top of everything else tonight. Apparently, word got around that there was a new girl in town, and the club was significantly more crowded. I would make a decent paycheck if Brewer didn't come in and screw everything up.

Sure enough, he marched in with a scowl on his face right before my next set. I didn't want him causing a scene, so I stomped over to him, grabbing his leather vest and dragging him out of the way.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

“I'm bringin' your ass home. Let's go.”

He reached for my arm, but I jerked away before he could grab me. “Like hell you are. This is my job, Brewer. I'm not letting your dumbass get me fired. I have a kid to take care of. Go away.”

He growled, stopping me before I could walk away. “You're seriously so desperate not to take anyone's help that you'd do shit like this? What the hell is Diego gonna think knowing his mama is taking her clothes off for money?”

That pissed me off. Based on the rumors about the Devil's Disciples, he didn't earn his wages through legitimate means, and yet he was judging me on what I did to take care of Diego. My fists clenched at my sides as I glared at him.

“I don’t need to justify myself to you and I don’t need judgment from a drug pusher without a clue. Do me a favor and go fuck yourself.”

Spinning on my heel, I marched away. I couldn’t stand people like that. He didn’t survive what I did. At least here, I earned a legit wage without putting myself or my son in danger. With the crowd that had gathered, tonight was shaping up to be a good night. And my wages were legal. It wasn’t a glamorous job and there was a lot of negativity about it, but it was better than working the street corner to keep a roof over our heads.

I took my spot on stage, letting my anger fuel me. No one got to judge me about my job. It kept us alive and off the streets. Anyone who had anything to say about it wasn’t worth my time. No matter how attractive they were.

The music pumped through the small club, and I followed the beat as I strutted across the stage. When I reached the pole, I did a quick spin before leaning against it and dropping low. The guys in front especially loved that move, but my eyes drifted over to Brewer, who still stood in the corner. With the lights on the stage, I couldn’t see him that well, but I could feel his eyes on me. I wanted to say that I hated it, that I didn’t want him to watch, but his gaze made my skin burn and every move I made, I wondered if he liked it. It was stupid, and I wasn’t going to let myself get involved with him, but that didn’t stop me from showing off a little.

I ended the dance with a controlled slide on the pole, tossing my hair back. The floor in front of me was littered with money and I felt a few roaming hands tuck bills into my thong. When I lifted my head to smile at the tipper, I froze when Brewer’s eyes locked on me. His fingers drifted for a half second down my thigh before he stepped back.

As hot as people think it is, stripping does not turn me on. It was a job, just like any other. I danced, earned my pay, and went home. I didn’t get hot from shaking my ass for strangers. But for some reason, dancing for Brewer set me on fire. The next two songs I did, every time a hand brushed against me, I wondered if it was him and had to bite my lip to hide my

reaction. I couldn't hide all of it, like the fact that my nipples were standing at attention. The crowd seemed to enjoy that, but I was too busy burning up from the inside out to really pay attention to them.

I finished my set and slipped into the back to change. I liked to walk the floor after my sets. Men were always hyped and wanted to shell out more for private lap dances. I slid on some sparkly lingerie and checked my makeup before heading back out, only to be waylaid by Wade.

“You’ve got a request. Private dance. You up for it?”

Private dances could be lucrative. Rich guys wanting a private show will buy out a room in the back so they could play pretend that I was only there for them. I didn't know the area though, or what they'd expect. Some guys thought those private rooms meant strippers would have sex with them, and that wasn't going to happen. When I shot Wade a wary look, he shook his head.

“No funny business. I don't have a bouncer yet, haven't needed one in a while, so I stand guard outside. If he tries shit, you call for me. I'll kick his ass.”

I pursed my lips to hide my grin. Pretty sure I'd be better at kicking someone's ass than him. He wasn't a huge dude, a little on the heavier side, but he looked serious. And he'd been kind so far, checking in with each of us between sets to make sure we were handling the crowd alright. I nodded.

“Okay. Which room?”

He snorted. “There's only one in this joint, honey. Here, I'll show you.”

He led me through the crowd, past the stage where Stella was capturing the audience with some complicated moves. They were downright dangerous if not done properly. I hoped she was getting paid well for shit like that, because one wrong move and she'd get seriously hurt.

The back 'room' was a booth in one dark corner that had thick curtains that could be pulled closed for the illusion of privacy. That made me feel better, since walls and doors might



muffle a cry for help. Not that I needed to worry when I saw who was sitting there waiting for me.

I rolled my eyes when Brewer looked up. He was sitting with his arms crossed, studying the crowd with a scowl. Of course, he'd be the one to demand a private dance. Probably to keep other guys away from me. I thought about refusing him, but if he wanted to be stupid and shell out money to chat, then that was his damn problem.

"I'll be close by if you need me," Wade murmured.

I waved him off, and he shut the curtains behind me, muffling some of the sounds of the club. Crossing my arms, I lifted my chin defiantly.

"What do you want?"

Raising an eyebrow, he dragged his gaze down my body and back up. I hated that I felt it like a physical touch. His face was still a stoic mask, like he was unaffected, and that only pissed me off more.

"Thought I paid for a dance?"

This asshole. "If you're hoping to embarrass me, then you're going to be disappointed."

He didn't say anything, just shot me a look, a challenge in his eyes. Making an irritated noise, I decided to call his bluff. I wasn't embarrassed about what I did. Once a new song started over the club speakers, I moved to stand in front of him, letting my hands trail down his front. His eyebrows jumped just a little, and I felt a smirk overtake my face.

His eyes trailed down me again, watching my body writhe to the music. When I spun, putting my ass in his lap, his hands moved to my hips automatically. You weren't supposed to touch while getting a lap dance, but he wasn't trying for anything, so I allowed it. Besides, I liked feeling his rough hands against my skin.

There was no hiding his reaction when I was sitting in his lap, rolling my hips suggestively. That hot tingly feeling I had throughout my set came flooding back, and I had to drag myself off him to clear my head a little. I didn't normally get

so into it. I could run through bills in my head and plan out how much I'd have to work to afford shit while still giving a hell of a show. But here, with Brewer, I sank into it and my mind was solely on the man in front of me. I felt his hands slide up my thighs as I leaned closer, resting my hands against the booth behind him so I could roll my body without touching him. His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed hard, his breath a little shallow, little hints that he was just as affected as I was.

I was almost desperate for the song to end. With the way I was feeling, I was getting really close to actually climbing into his lap and full-blown riding him. Especially when I leaned close enough for my tits to brush against him and he groaned. It was low, quiet, like he didn't do it on purpose. The only reason I heard it was because I was so close to him.

The song ended with us both breathing heavily. The stoic mask was gone and the look in Brewer's eyes was pure fire and lust. I wanted to lean in, to let him kiss me like he did this afternoon when I was trying to make Vanessa jealous. But the curtain opened, and I straightened as Wade looked into the room suspiciously.

“Lola?”

Sucking in a breath, I stepped back, giving Wade a nod. I refused to let myself look back at Brewer. I couldn't handle seeing that look on his face. Full of want and heat, leaving me trembling for the first time ever. I couldn't let myself be affected by him. There may be chemistry between us, but that didn't change the fact that he was an overbearing asshole who wanted to control my life. He already tried demanding I quit. I didn't want to think about what he'd try for if he thought he had a shot.

## CHAPTER 15

BREWER

I came in here to bring Lacey home. I should've hauled her ass over my shoulder and walked out. Then I wouldn't be sitting here practically busting my zipper after she called my damn bluff. The manager shot me a look, and I had to force myself to my feet to leave the little private booth. If my jeans were any tighter, I wouldn't have been able to walk.

Fuck my life. I kept trying to keep Lacey at a distance. It was like she could hear the thought running through my head. Every damn time I shored up my determination, she threw me for a loop and left me panting after her like a damn teenager. I was well past the age of drooling after a woman like that. There were plenty of sweetbutts to keep me happy if I really wanted it. But I didn't. I wanted her. Which made me a fucking asshole.

I stood by the bar nursing a whiskey for the rest of Lacey's shift. She wouldn't leave without making a scene, so figured I'd let her finish, but it was like pure fucking torture watching her writhe on that stage. It's no wonder this shitty ass club was so busy right now. This joint was complete shit, and not even my brothers would come here. They made the trek to the city if they wanted to see strippers. This place was mostly frequented by older dudes who were feeling lonely. Not tonight, though. It was a packed house, and I knew why. They all came for her.

It wasn't just because she was hot, though that was a huge part of it. Lacey was sin wrapped in a curvy package, with a killer ass and heavy tits that, from what I could tell, were all natural. No plastic fakeness to her. That was a novelty with

strippers, but Lacey was also fucking amazing at what she did. She took to that stage like she was born to it and had every man in here on his knees.

It was going to take a hell of a lot of work to get her to stop coming here. Especially when she came out of the back with a pile of cash so big she couldn't hold it with just one hand. She took a portion of it, splitting it between the DJ and the bartender, before waving and tucking the rest away. I stood by the open door, waiting for her, and she shot me a narrow-eyed look as she sauntered past.

Since she drove here on her own, I couldn't take her back on my bike. It would've been nice having her pressed up against me with the wind on my face, but it wasn't like she could just leave her car behind. She needed that to cart around Diego. Instead, I followed behind her, my thoughts locked on the temptress in front of me.

Since it was a Friday night, the house was pretty active, even though it was past two. The parking lot was crowded with vehicles, which meant the sweetbutts were still around. Lacey parked out front and I purposely parked in front of her so she wouldn't go anywhere without me.

Her brow furrowed when she heard the pulsing music, and I heard her mutter under her breath as she stalked inside. I was getting tired of chasing after her, but she was fucking quick, and she made it inside before I could say shit to her.

I found her in the kitchen, frowning at Reaper. "Where's Diego?"

"Upstairs. Quinn put him down a while ago. Last I checked, she fell asleep. If you're going upstairs, I'll move her."

She nodded and followed him up. I trailed behind them. I wasn't done talking to Lacey yet. She didn't need to be stripping to take care of Diego. I could take care of them both without her help and I didn't like her taking off her clothes in public. That shit should be private.

Reaper went inside first, and Lacey held the door for him as he carefully scooped Quinn up and brought her out of the room. I knew Lacey would slam the door in my face if she got the chance. So while he was leaving and Lacey was distracted checking on Diego, I stepped into the room, shutting the door quietly behind me. Lacey straightened, glaring at me over her shoulder.

“What are you doing here?” she whispered.

“We’re not done talkin’.”

She scoffed, kicking off her heels and grabbing a towel off of her dresser. “I don’t have anything to say to you. I’m going to take a shower. Go away.”

There were alarms going off in my head, telling me to back the hell off, because if I called her bluff again, she wouldn’t back down. But it was drowned out by the memory of her moving against me, of her body barely covered by those skimpy as fuck outfits. I went after her, following her into the bathroom, and grabbed her elbow, spinning her around to press her up against the door.

“I told you I’d take care of you. You’re dancing there just to piss me off.” I was lashing out, pissed off at the way she effortlessly drew me in. I didn’t want to want her, and yet I couldn’t fucking help myself.

“You wish, asshole,” she seethed. “You don’t even cross my mind when I make decisions. You’re not part of the equation. I do what I do because it pays decent money and I’m good at it. I don’t need your permission and I don’t need your money when I can make my own. I never asked for your help and I sure as hell don’t need you.”

Her words were like daggers in my gut. I was trying to take care of her, and she threw it in my face every chance she got. “If I didn’t step in, where the hell do you think you’d be right now? I met your landlord. He was about to start demanding you pay him rent on your knees. You act like you don’t need anyone, but without my help, you’d be on the street corner.”

She bared her teeth, glowering at me. “I’d do what I have to do to take care of my son. You’re not better than me, asshole. At least I’m not a damn criminal.”

I huffed out a laugh. “Nah, baby. You’re a sex worker.”

This time when she swung at me, I saw it coming and caught her wrist to stop her. She didn’t back down though, and she slugged me with a left hook I wasn’t expecting. I don’t hurt women, but Lacey was pissing me off, and I grabbed her wrists, yanking them above her head. She tried to knee me in the nuts, so I forced my legs between hers and pressed closer. She screamed, fighting with all she was worth to get free, but I had her trapped.

“Why the fuck won’t you let me help you?”

Her forehead hit my chin as she tried to headbutt me. I shifted my weight, keeping her wrists trapped in one hand as the other fisted her hair, yanking just hard enough to force her to look at me. The anger I got, I felt the same way, but if someone didn’t get through to her, she really would end up working the streets in a stubborn bid to keep everyone at a distance. And I couldn’t let that happen.

“Lacey! Stop!”

She fought hard against me, but with the position I was in, she couldn’t get anywhere. I pressed harder against her, trying to figure out some way to get her under control. The only way I could think of was my mouth on hers. It was dangerous, I lost my head whenever I kissed her, but if she kept going, she was gonna wake Diego.

She opened her mouth to scream at me again, and I shoved my tongue between her lips. She still fought, but her movements slowed little by little until I felt her give in.

Her tongue dueled with mine, still not willing to back down. I needed to control her. She was under my skin and I couldn’t think straight. I ripped my mouth away, dragging my tongue along her neck. She moaned, her chest rising and falling with her panting breaths.

I released her hands, dragging my palms down her arms and over her chest. Neither one of us seemed willing to take it slow, and clothes hit the floor without any bullshit preamble. The minute her skin was on display, I had to touch her. I ran my hands over her, cupping her tits and grabbing handfuls of that gorgeous ass. Miles of flawless tanned skin covered in a sheen of sweat and glitter.

“I fuckin’ hate how perfect you are.”

“Shut up,” she snapped, pushing her chest out to encourage me when I sucked one dusky nipple into my mouth. She’d gotten distracted when I started touching her, so I took off my jeans myself, smirking when she gasped.

“You don’t wear underwear?”

I lifted a shoulder, hiking one of her thighs over my hip. “That really what you wanna focus on right now?”

My mouth on her skin distracted her from answering, and I grinned to myself. If I needed to shut her up, apparently this was how I had to do it. And you wouldn’t find me complaining about it. I went back to her tits, making her cry out when I sucked hard on the one I’d neglected. The hand not wrapped around her thigh delved between her legs, and I almost shuddered at just how soaked she was.

She tightened around me when I pushed two fingers inside her. I groaned. She was so fucking tight and it took serious fucking self control to take the time to make sure she was ready. When her knees went weak, I picked her up and pressed her against the door, grinding my cock against her soaking folds. I was about to push inside her when she stiffened, pushing me away.

“Wait. Condom.”

I grimaced, shaking my head. “I want you raw, gorgeous.”

She pushed harder, but I could barely think through the pleasure shooting through my system as I dragged my cock through her arousal. It wasn’t until she fisted my hair and yanked my head back that my mind cleared enough to growl at her. She glared at me, tightening her grip when I moved.

“No. Condom or put me down. I was on birth control when I got pregnant with Diego. I won’t chance it again.”

Shit. I wasn’t looking to chance it either. I set her down long enough to pull a wrap out of my wallet and the minute the thing was on, I had her up against the door again. This time, she wrapped her legs around my hips, pulling me in closer. She still looked pissed, but damn if it didn’t turn me on when that anger melted into pleasure as I sank into her.



## CHAPTER 16

LACEY

It'd been a long time, the burn intense as he shoved his monster cock inside me. I barely got a look at him when he put me down to grab the condom, but he was a lot bigger than I was used to, and it took a second for my body to adjust. Neither of us were patient about it and he started moving as soon as I let out a breath. If the pleasure wasn't so intense, I'd complain. But as it was, the burn was delicious, and he was thick enough to drag along all my nerve endings.

All night, my body felt like it was on fire. I was finally getting some relief and all my arguments about giving in to him disappeared. I could only cling to him as he buried himself deep and stoked the fire inside until it consumed me. My mouth fell open, and I barely had time to yank him closer to muffle my scream. He groaned into my mouth, and to my surprise, he didn't slow down. If anything, my release only spurred him on, and he gripped my ass harder as he pounded into me. I had no time to come down. It was like one release ran into another until I couldn't tell if I ever really stopped coming.

My nails dug into his back, and I was almost relieved when he slammed into me a final time and shouted against my lips. My whole body throbbed with pleasure, and I knew the minute he set me down, my legs wouldn't be able to hold me. I gasped, trying to breathe through the intense pleasure, but with him still buried inside me, every aftershock felt like a direct caress to my clit.

“P-Put me down.”

He didn't argue for once. I had to shut my eyes when he pulled out, the slow drag threatening to rev me up for more. No dick should be that perfect. It should be a crime to make me lose my head like that. It's lucky that I remembered to force him to use a condom. If he would've pushed inside me even once, I doubt I would've been able to think straight enough to stop him. And I wasn't risking getting pregnant again. Women in my family were extra fertile, and even with a condom and the pill, I still worried about it.

Thankfully, my legs held my weight, despite the tremor in my knees. I leaned against the door, watching as he stepped away long enough to dispose of the condom. I don't know how we ended up here. We were screaming at each other, and then suddenly all the tension from the night exploded and we were all over each other. It was a little messed up. And really annoying just how good it was.

When Brewer came closer, resting his forearms against the door and caging me against it, I bit my lip, trying to put aside the post-coital bliss and remember why I couldn't stand him. It didn't help that he was being so sweet now. He trailed his fingers over my jaw and through my hair, dipping his head to sip at my lips. And I was too satisfied and relaxed to argue with him.

"I need a shower. I always wash up after a shift," I murmured when he started kissing down my neck. I didn't want him pushing for another round. I was already confused, and I didn't think I'd be able to say no.

He straightened, kissing me softly. "I'll watch the baby. Take your time."

See? So irritatingly sweet. Why couldn't he be like most guys and take off the minute he was finished? Then at least I'd regain my footing a little.

After pulling on his jeans, he slipped back into the bedroom while I got in the shower. My mind was racing, trying to figure out where the hell we went from here. I didn't like not knowing what he was thinking. I wasn't the kind of woman to sit around waiting for him to spell it out, though.

Either he spoke up and said something or I'd consider it a one off. We were both wound up and we scratched an itch. That was it.

Except that scratch didn't get rid of the urge. At least not for me. It made me want more, and that directly conflicted with the fact that I couldn't stand him. I wanted him and hated him at the same time.

When I came back out, Brewer was lying on the bed. I came up short when I realized Diego was awake and climbing on him. Brewer glanced at me and shrugged.

"He started fussin' while you were in the shower. I gave 'im his bottle. He seems alright now."

Pressing my lips together, I sighed. "Mijo. It's bedtime, not play time."

Diego turned to look at me, flashing me that grin that always melted me. I took a few seconds to grab some pajamas before climbing into bed and snagging Diego, pulling him against me. I tried not to let him sleep in my bed. I didn't want him to get attached to the idea and not be able to go to sleep without me, but sometimes I needed a cuddle and he was always happy to give me what I needed.

Brewer turned onto his side, his face softening as he watched us. I kept waiting for him to get up and leave, but he reached for me, tucking a few stray hairs behind my ear as he spoke low.

"Maybe that's why I can't get him to sleep. I'm not his mama."

A smile pulled at my lips, and I cuddled Diego closer, pressing a kiss to his forehead. He was fading, his tiny fist clutching my shirt as his eyes drooped closed. It was moments like these where instead of cursing Mass, I silently thanked him for the gift he gave me. When I didn't know what happened to him, at least I could say he did one thing right by helping me make something so perfect.

"What's it gonna take to get you to quit workin' at the club?" His words lacked judgment, but he still hadn't let go of

the idea, and I rolled my eyes.

“A lobotomy. I’m not quitting. I’m not going to be reliant on you or anyone else. Eventually Diego and I will leave and when we do, I want to stand on my own two feet. We’ve gotten this far on our own. We can survive anything.”

He sighed, his hand moving to run down my arm and rest on my hand over Diego’s little body.

“I’m not askin’ you to be reliant. I know you can take care of yourself. I’m askin’ you to let me help. Is stripping really what you wanna do for the rest of your life?”

I made a face. “No. But it pays well. I do what I have to—”

“To take care of Diego. I know. I’m just sayin’ you don’t have to. I can’t force you to quit. I get the feelin’ you’d run if I tried. But you’ve got a chance to go for something more if you want it. Hell, if you wanted to stay home with Diego for a little while and figure it out, you could. Just... think about what you want. I know takin’ help goes against your DNA, but Mass was our brother. That makes you family. And we take care of our own.”

My eyes drifted down to Diego while I considered what he was saying. I still didn’t like the thought of letting him pay for everything, but he had a point. They were already paying for the roof over our heads, utilities, the works. If I saved my money now instead of trying to force them to take it, I could prepare myself for when we left. Maybe save enough to get a real house with a yard for Diego to play in, and find a job that has consistent pay and wouldn’t require me to take my clothes off. I went looking for help when I came here. Brewer was offering me exactly what I wanted. I just wish it didn’t make me feel like I owed him something. I had to learn young not to rely on anyone. I wasn’t sure I could trust him.

After Diego fell asleep, I transferred him back into the portable crib. I’d had to push the bed against the wall in one corner to make room for everything, but it was better than before. At least being against the wall didn’t mean I was up against mold or being crawled on by bugs. Diego’s crib was

right next to the bed so I could get him without getting up if I needed to.

Brewer didn't look like he was in a rush to leave and I wasn't willing to argue with him. I crawled into bed, hugging my pillow as I frowned at him.

"I'm not going to quit. I want to earn my own money. But... I'll consider saving what I earn and looking for something new. I'm not sure how I'm going to do that without a babysitter, but—"

"I'll handle that. You just focus on you."

## CHAPTER 17

LACEY

Brewer was gone when I woke up the following morning. I wanted to say I wasn't surprised, but after our conversation last night, I'll admit it stung a little. I brushed it off, plucking Diego from his crib. His happy babbles kept my focus, and I refused to dwell on why Brewer snuck away. It wasn't like I wanted him to stay. I didn't have time for a relationship, and I wasn't interested in one with a dangerous biker anyway. Diego needed more than that.

After getting dressed and changing Diego, I headed downstairs. While the kitchen was communal, there seemed to be a general consensus that people didn't touch my things. Everything we'd bought before remained untouched, so I could make breakfast for myself and Diego without worrying about what was left. I put him down by my feet to let him practice his crawling, poking around until I found the items I needed.

I was making eggs for Diego when I heard a grumble behind me. When I looked over my shoulder, Allie had her head down on the island. It was obvious she wasn't quite awake and when I flashed a raised eyebrow at Quinn, who came around the counter to join me, she looked like she was holding back a smile.

"She was up late. I warned her about hanging out with the guys at parties, but she never listens."

Allie didn't respond beyond lifting one hand and giving the room the finger. She couldn't quite aim it at Quinn, since she refused to look up. I snickered, shaking my head.

“Where’s Riley?”

“She and Croy usually stay in bed until someone interrupts them or she has to work. They don’t get enough time together as it is with their conflicting schedules.” She frowned, her eyes shifting towards the stairs. “I think the time apart is getting to her. She’s been really testy lately.”

Allie finally lifted her head with a sigh. “I’ll say. She tries to play it off, act like she’s fine, but she’s frowning more often than not. It’s not like her. She used to be so happy. I’m a little worried about her.”

“When I got here, she said she hadn’t been sleeping well. Do you think she’s just tired?” I queried, turning off the stove as I finished cooking the eggs. Someone, probably Brewer if I had to make a guess, picked up a high chair for Diego. It sat in the corner by the fridge, out of the way until I needed it. Quinn grabbed it for me as I picked Diego up and got him settled.

“That’s true. She has been really tired. But it feels like more than that. Like she’s emotionally drained as much as she’s physically tired,” Quinn murmured, a deep frown on her face. You could tell this group was close, and they cared about Riley and her well being. I didn’t know her well enough to say what was bothering her, but when she came downstairs with Croy not long later, I could see the exhaustion on her face. She had dark circles under her eyes and when she slid onto a stool next to Allie, she immediately laid her head on her friend’s shoulder and closed her eyes.

“Didn’t sleep well?”

She wrinkled her nose, but didn’t open her eyes. “How can anyone sleep here? The parties go on forever and Croy gets interrupted all night long. If I didn’t love him, this might be a tipping point for me. I’m exhausted all the time. And I still have a shift tonight.”

People put too much stock in love. It wasn’t enough, in my opinion. Not to force myself to be unhappy. It’s why I never tried for relationships. What was the point? They’d always find something to complain about and the love would fade under the strain and things would end anyway.

“You could always stay at my place again. Get some real rest,” Allie offered.

Riley’s smile was more of a grimace. “I appreciate that, but I don’t sleep any better with him gone. That jerk made me addicted to him, and I feel off balance sleeping alone.”

“Might want to rethink the relationship, then. If you’re so reliant on him that you can’t function without him, is it really a healthy relationship? What if he gets killed on the job?”

They all looked at me with horror and I bit back a scowl. Sometimes I’ve been told I’m too callous. A habit I developed after years of struggling. I thought I was more of a realist than callous, but from the looks on their faces, I went too far.

“Sorry. Ignore me.”

I turned back to Diego, scooping more eggs onto his little tray before heading to the fridge for some veggies. He liked avocado, but it was usually too expensive for me to buy. Since Brewer was determined to pay for our food, I splurged a little. Diego went too often without fresh fruits and veggies. He needed a more balanced diet.

When Riley sidled up next to me, I waited for her to ream me out. This was why I didn’t get along with most women. I didn’t care for lovey dovey bullshit and when I dismissed their relationships, they got really offended.

“I’m sorry. Here I am, complaining about something stupid when you actually lost someone you love. I—”

I reared my head back, making a face. “Who said anything about love? Love isn’t real.”

Her brow furrowed tightly, and the others looked just as confused. “But... What about Mass?”

I just barely resisted the urge to roll my eyes. “Mass and I weren’t together. Not like that. We hooked up a few times, I got pregnant, he died. End of story. We weren’t in a relationship. He was a good man, said he wanted to be there for me and Diego, but that was because I was carrying his kid. He didn’t feel that way about me and I didn’t feel that way about him.”



God, if he'd pushed for a relationship just because of an accidental pregnancy, it would've been a disaster. I would never have agreed to it in the first place, but even if I had, we weren't compatible outside the bedroom. He was a goofball without a serious bone in his body. I'd been preparing myself to take care of two children when he disappeared. I wanted him to be a father to Diego, but I had the feeling I would've had to take care of both of them to make sure he didn't do something stupid with the baby. It was exhausting to even think about.

"Oh. I guess we just thought since you had his kid that you two were together."

I pressed my lips together, putting a few avocado slices on Diego's tray before straightening to look at them. "I try not to put this in the air, because I'm grateful for my son and I don't ever want him to think I don't love him. But I wasn't going to keep the pregnancy. I told Mass as a courtesy that I was pregnant and that I was going to have an abortion. He begged me not to, promised he'd take care of us, and I was stupid enough to believe him. I waited too long to go looking for him after he disappeared. He told me once that his work was dangerous and he might not always be able to answer his phone. I kept thinking he'd show up eventually once it was safe. By the time I accepted that he screwed us over, it was too late. I couldn't do anything about it. And I wouldn't change anything for the world now that Diego is here."

"But he didn't screw you over," Riley argued. "He probably would've asked for a relationship if he hadn't--"

She cut herself off, regret and pain written all over her face. She was closer to Mass than I was. His death made me sad, sure, but it was more about Diego than Mass himself. He was a good person, he didn't deserve to die, but I was sad for my son because he'd never get to meet his father. My relationship with my father was important to me. He made me stronger. I wanted Mass and Diego to have that relationship. I was also pissed that he talked me into keeping the pregnancy and I'd have to do it all alone. It was a complicated mix of emotions, but it wouldn't make this group feel any better.

“I wanted Mass to meet his son. I believe he would’ve made a good father. But a relationship between us was never in the cards. We were too different. I cared about him as my son’s father, but I was never in love with him. And he never loved me.”

## CHAPTER 18

BREWER

Croy texted me after I got back last night to handle the clubhouse issues for him so he could spend time with Riley. We all noticed how run down she was looking. It meant I had to leave Lacey before she woke up, but if the First Lady needed Prez, then I didn't mind stepping in. Nevada usually ran things in his absence, but I was on site and the only one without a claim. It just made sense for it to be me.

I'd come out of Croy's office after he came downstairs and was gonna grab a coffee when I overheard the girls talking. It was a fucking shock to me that Lacey and Mass were never in a relationship. Not only was the pregnancy an accident, but Lacey didn't feel that way about Mass. I was sure he'd have done right by her, asking her to marry him so he could take care of them both, but she was crystal fucking clear that it never would've happened.

I couldn't explain why that excited me so damn much. It was like a weight lifted off my chest and the guilt from hooking up with Lacey disappeared. We were still going to take care of her, whether she was in love with Mass or not, but I wasn't about to lie and say I wasn't happy they weren't together before he died. We all screwed around with whatever tail we could get our hands on. Diego wasn't the first accidental pregnancy in this crew. While the guys always stepped up for their kids, the amount of them who married and stuck with the baby mamas was low.

Lacey wasn't Mass's claim. She was a hookup who happened to have his kid. Which meant she was fucking mine if I wanted to claim her. And after last night, there wasn't a

fucking doubt in my mind. She'd fight me, but eventually, Lacey would be mine.

In a much better mood than I'd been in since Lacey first showed up here, I headed upstairs to finally make plans for our run. I'd need to figure out a sitter situation for Diego, because I wanted Lacey on my bike with me, but I'd deal with that later. For now, I had a good idea of a run that would make everyone happy and give me plenty of time to show Lacey around our territory.

I was marking the map with pit stops if we needed them when Lacey came upstairs. She was going to walk past my open doorway, but she did a double take and took a few steps back and came to join me instead. Diego sat on her hip, drooling on a toy and smiling. He was just like Mass, always smiling. It pissed me off a little less now.

“Morning, beautiful. Sleep well?”

She rolled her eyes hard. “Oh god, are you the kind of guy to get all sappy after sex? I find that hard to imagine since you snuck off this morning.”

A smile tugged at my lips. She sounded put out about me not being there this morning. I couldn't help feeling a little smug about it. This might be easier than I thought.

“Had some work to do. I was just downstairs. You ever been on a motorcycle before?”

“Uh, no. Why... No. No way. I'm not getting on a bike, so you can just forget that idea before you even say it out loud. No.” She stepped away from me, glaring at me like I was asking her to put Diego on the damn thing.

“Relax, beautiful. It's perfectly safe. I'm in charge of club runs and I'm putting together a good one to show you around. All the other girls do it.”

“Good for them. I'm not going to be one of them. I've got a kid to take care of. The answer is no,” she snapped.

“Didn't take you for a chicken,” I commented blandly. I could be more forceful about it, but by now I knew she'd double down and dig her feet in if I did. The amount of fight I

got just helping her get stuff for Diego was a huge pain in the ass. If I wanted to convince her to do anything, I'd need a new tactic.

The flat look she gave me made me chuckle. Now I knew why Croy loved pissing off Riley so much. It was fun.

“I'm not in elementary school. You're not convincing me to get on a death trap just by being an asshole.”

I put up my hands in surrender, but the grin on my face didn't waver. She rolled her eyes again, lifting her chin defiantly.

“I need a babysitter for tonight.”

My smile faded and my eyes narrowed. “Why?”

“I've got work. I told you, I'm not going to stop working just because you're pissy about it. Are you going to watch him, or do I need to find someone else?”

Grinding my teeth together, I considered my options. I didn't want Lacey to go to that stupid club, but I knew I wasn't going to be able to stop her. She'd already proven that she could sneak out to get away from me and I couldn't put her on lockdown just because her job pissed me off. I wanted to go with her as security, but I couldn't do that every night. I had my own shit to do. The easiest thing to do would be to send her with a prospect, but the idea of any of my brothers watching her strip pissed me off. There was only one guy on the crew I could trust to be fucking polite and avert his eyes.

“I'll watch him tonight, but you aren't going to the club alone.”

She opened her mouth to protest, but I cut her off before she could start complaining.

“Either you take security with you or you don't go. I got no problem tying you to the bed to keep you here.”

She looked indignant, but it wasn't a fucking threat. It was a promise, and she could see it on my face. She huffed and scowled at me, spinning on her heel and storming off. No

doubt I'd be chasing after her tonight to make sure she didn't sneak off. To avoid that, I went looking for Chase.

He was the only guy on the crew who didn't fuck around with sweetbutts. No one knew why, and I didn't really give a shit. He was protective of women, respected the hell out of them, and he was the first choice whenever we needed someone to watch over them. He wouldn't put his hands on any of them, so I trusted him to watch out for Lacey without being disrespectful and watching her strip.

I found him downstairs, leaning on his pool cue as he watched Clink take his shot. They usually assigned him as security, for either the girls or to watch the clubhouse, so this wasn't outside his range of experience. He lifted his chin in greeting when I joined him, tipping his head toward the game.

“You want in?”

“No. I need to ask a favor. I need someone shadowing Lacey at work. The joint is a fucking hole and I don't trust the asshole working there to protect her. I'd watch her myself, but I've got shit to do this week and baby duty on top of it.”

“I can do it,” Clink volunteered with a grin. “Who doesn't love a trip to the strip club?”

I shot him a dirty look, but before I could kick his ass, Chase interjected. “I wonder what Sam would have to say about that. I've got her number. I was security on a few jobs she felt uncomfortable at. I could text her right now and ask.”

Clink's face soured. “You play dirty, asshole. Stay the hell away from my woman.”

Chase just grinned, giving his attention back to me. “I can watch over Lacey for you. How much trouble am I looking at by going along?”

We used the old ladies as a reference to how much trouble we'd get on any given night security wise. It was an ongoing joke that the women knew about and ignored, unless the middle fingers we got whenever we brought it up were supposed to be taken seriously. Quinn was lowest on the scale. She was easy to handle and didn't argue much. Sam came

next. She had fire to her, but after being kidnapped by Hammer, she didn't fight having security very often. Riley and Allie vied for the top of the list. Riley's job required confidentiality, which gave her a little leverage, but she'd let someone stay by the elevators of the floor she was working on if she really thought there might be trouble. Allie was the worst. She resented any type of security. If we needed it for her, it always had to be Knox. The only one she'd listen to was her old man. Not even Reaper could keep her in line. Croy probably could, but he didn't have the patience for it. He'd rather assign Knox to keep her out of his hair.

“I'd say between Sam and the First Lady. She's pissed about it, but she's going to be working so she won't waste time trying to kick you out. Just keep your eye on the crowd and stay out of her way. And don't fucking watch her on stage. There aren't any threats up there.”

He gave me a bored look. “I don't need a lecture, man. I got it. I'll stay out of sight if I can pull it off. Less drama for me. Just tell me when and where.”

This was why I chose Chase. He didn't fuck around with women's safety, and he respected them too damn much to act like a fucking pervert. I still hated the idea of him seeing Lacey like that, but if I had to choose any of my brothers, it'd be him.

## CHAPTER 19

LACEY

It didn't surprise me when someone from the crew followed me to work. Just because I walked away didn't mean Brewer dropped the stupid security idea. Wade raised an eyebrow at my new shadow, but he didn't ask for an explanation. Whoever Brewer chose to follow me stayed by the bar, out of the way, and didn't cause trouble. It was the best I could hope for. Aside from Brewer getting his head out of his ass and leaving me the hell alone, but I doubted that would happen any time soon. I needed to get as much money as possible so I could get out of that clubhouse and away from him if I wanted my freedom.

The club was even more crowded tonight than it was the night before. At this rate, I would only need to work Friday through Sunday. I didn't want to work too much and burn out, and if I only showed up on weekends, the novelty wouldn't wear off as quickly and people would show up in droves on the days I was working.

With Brewer gone, I could dance without being distracted by the feeling of his eyes on me. I ran through the routine easily, capturing the attention of every man in the room. The dance itself got me a decent amount, but it was the number of private dances and lap dance requests that came afterwards that were the real money makers tonight.

There were a few tricks up my sleeves to keep the groping to a minimum, so I did my thing with no interruptions from my new security. I played the part, smiling and flirting, but it was just a job, and once I was through with one, I moved on to



the next without looking back. I was headed to my third private dance of the night when Wade stopped me.

“This one is double. You and Cherry together. There are a few guys in the room. They want a private show. You don’t have to do shit but dance. I don’t know these guys, but I’ve had assholes get pushy for dancers to get sexual with each other for them, and that ain’t happening here.”

Cherry was one of the other women who worked here. There were only four of us in total, which explained the small crowd when I first started. I was the youngest by at least a decade, sometimes two. Stella wasn’t kidding when she said they hadn’t had a younger woman here in a while. Cherry was the youngest before me and she was thirty-six.

“It’s alright. I can handle it. Where’s Cherry?”

“Dressing room changing into her floor costume. Go there together. I’ll be close by in case there’s trouble.”

I appreciated the fact that Wade was cautious. He spent most of the night on the floor, watching out for us. I never had a boss who cared that much before. Once Cherry was finished getting ready, he led us to the private booth, shutting the curtain behind him after shooting me one last look. No wonder the women were loyal here.

The four men waiting for us were in discussion when we got there and said nothing to us once we arrived. The one on the end just waved lazily for us to start without interrupting his conversation.

Cherry looked unfazed, and once the music started, she completely checked out. You could see it in her eyes. She wasn’t really here. She went through the motions and did her thing without truly being present. It worried me a little, which was why it took me so long to tune into the conversation the men were having. They spoke in Spanish, like we weren’t close enough to the border that half the state couldn’t understand them, and didn’t filter a damn thing of what they were talking about.

“How’d it go tonight?”

“Simple. Boss was right, they don’t all come during deliveries. We’ll have to split up to handle them.”

“Sounds like fun. What’d they do to him anyway?”

The one closest to me snorted. “It’s not about them. Boss wants to expand his territory. Why work with some fucking bitches when we can distribute it ourselves. If we get half the crew to take over this territory, then we’ll make bank from cutting out the Devil’s Disciples.”

I nearly froze when they mentioned the crew. It was only years of experience that kept me moving, running my hands down Cherry’s legs as I sank lower. Cherry didn’t even blink, writhing in place with a fake smile on her face.

“How many of them are there?”

“At least twenty. Maybe more. But they’ve got a good amount of women with them. Could fetch a decent price for them. I’d say it’s worth the risk.”

The song ended before I could hear any more. But I’d heard enough. Brewer went on and on about how the clubhouse was safe and they were going to protect me and Diego. He never said anything about being targeted by rival drug crews. I didn’t care if we ended up sleeping in my car. I was going to get my son out of that place before it was too late.

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I finished my shift because I would need the money to leave, but I didn’t stick around afterwards to change. I pulled my clothes over my costume and tore out of the club without waiting for my new shadow. He was quick to follow me, but I was too pissed to say anything to him. While I was working, I decided to go over Brewer’s head. He’d latched on to the idea of taking care of me, but it wasn’t his club. I would tell Croy I was leaving and he could keep Brewer the hell away from me. I sped towards the clubhouse, the fury and fear for Diego giving me a lead foot on the gas. The house was in a full swing

party when I got back, which was unsurprising at this point, but it meant it'd be easier to find the man in question.

Parking out front so it'd be easier to grab my shit and leave, I stormed into the clubhouse. The main room was crowded, but I spotted Croy at one of the poker tables with a drink in his hand and a scowl on his face. He didn't notice me until I was standing above him, seething.

"If you got a problem with Brewer, you gotta deal with him."

"You lied to me."

His head whipped up, and he scowled at me. "The fuck are you talkin' about?"

"You said it was safe here. That was a load of bullshit. I don't give a shit about your stupid club or the fact that Mass was part of it. I'm not keeping my son here to be killed because his daddy was part of this stupid fucking crew."

Croy's chair scraped loudly across the floor as he pushed to his feet, leveling with me a glare so intense it made me want to turn tail and run. I held my ground, glowering at him.

"Watch your fuckin' mouth about my crew, Lacey. You're our guest here. That don't gotta stay that way."

"Good. Then I won't have you assholes chasing me down when we leave. I'm not keeping my son in a place where he's gonna be sold off or killed. Do me a favor and keep your stupid crew away from me."

I spun around, intent on heading up to my room to pack, but a rough hand wrapped around my elbow, yanking me back.

"Try again," he snarled.

He was giving me a chance to correct my statement about calling his crew stupid. He would be waiting a hell of a long time. It was the truth.

"Go fuck yourself," I hissed back.

Croy's grip tightened, the muscle in his jaw flickering like he was fighting to hold himself together. I stared back without

flinching, only noticing when someone spoke that the room had gone quiet.

“Croy? What’s going on?”

He glared at me for a few more seconds before his eyes flicked momentarily to Riley. He tossed my arm away, sneering as he spoke.

“Nothin’, baby. Lacey was just leaving.”

I wanted to feel triumphant, he was finally doing what I wanted, but I was still pissed off. So, to punish him, I swung my attention to Riley.

“You should think about leaving too. No man is worth being sold into the sex trade. It’s not like he treats you well anyway.”

More chairs screeched as several club members pulled Croy away from me. I wasn’t sure what his intention was, but I was pushing my luck by saying anything more. I ignored his tantrum, storming towards the stairs, but Riley cut me off, blocking me at the bottom. She looked confused, and a little pissed off, and she wouldn’t budge an inch when I tried to go past her.

“Stop. Explain that. What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the threat I overheard at the club. This stupid crew will reap what they sow. I’m not sticking around long enough to see what happens.”

## CHAPTER 20

BREWER

I'd been scrolling through my phone while waiting for Lacey to get home when I heard the ruckus downstairs. I poked my head out of her room, and when I heard her screaming at someone, I shot one last look over my shoulder at the sleeping baby before booking it downstairs. He'd be fine for a few minutes on his own. He'd be less fine if his mama got into trouble with the crew while I wasn't there to watch her.

Riley was blocking her from going upstairs when I came down. Lacey was seething, Croy looked like he wanted to punch someone, and a few of the guys were holding him back. What the fuck did she do to piss him off that bad?

"Stop. Explain that. What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the threat I overheard at the club. I'm not sticking around long enough to see what happens."

"What threat?" I demanded.

If looks could kill, I'd be dead on the ground with the look Lacey shot me. "I'm not wasting my breath explaining it to someone like you. I'm taking Diego and we're getting out of here."

"She's not going anywhere until she answers the fucking question!" Croy snarled.

Lacey lifted her chin, fierce determination in her dark brown eyes. Before she could say something stupid and piss him off more, I moved Riley out of the way and tossed Lacey over my shoulder. She screeched, shouting strings of Spanish curse words at me, pounding and clawing at my back. I

ignored it, taking her straight to Croy's office. She could be pissed at me later. If there was a threat, we needed to know about it.

The rest of the officers followed me into the room. Reaper dragged a chair from in front of Croy's desk, putting it against the far wall. I deposited Lacey into it and jabbed my finger in her face.

"Don't fucking move."

"Or what, asshole!"

The sound of guns cocking was distinct and fucking loud. Loud enough that Lacey heard it over her screaming. I spun around, eyeing Croy and Clink like they'd lost their damn minds.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

"She's got information. She either gives it up or she gets a bullet between her eyes. That's what'll fuckin' happen, if you move, princess. Now start talking," Clink growled.

The rest of the officers were on the same page, all of them glaring at Lacey. I shifted my weight, blocking her from the path of the guns. She was upset, that much was clear, but that didn't make her our fucking enemy. But nothing I could say was going to change their minds, not when things had gotten this heated. The only option was for Lacey to talk.

Giving my back to the crew, I stood over Lacey, who was glowering at them, silent as the grave now that her life was on the line. I gripped her chin, forcing her to look up at me.

"What did you hear, Lacey?"

No cutesy talk, no sweet shit. We needed the truth and I couldn't treat her like my claim right now.

"I don't—"

"If you're about to fuckin' argue, I'd rethink it," Clink growled. I shot him a dirty look before turning back to Lacey.

"If there's a threat, we gotta know about it, Lace. There's people here we swore to protect. Including you and Diego.

What did you hear?"

Her eyes flicked back and forth between mine, searching for what, I didn't have a fucking clue. I just waited, ignoring Croy's frustrated snarl when she didn't answer right away. Whatever she heard scared the shit out of her. Under all the anger, I saw the fear in her eyes. She was like a wild animal in a cage, looking for an exit right now.

"During a private show, I heard the men I was dancing for talking. They're coming for the Devil's Disciples. They said they're going to kill off the men and sell the women into the sex trade. It's not safe here."

"Who said it?" Croy demanded.

Lacey rolled her eyes. "How am I supposed to know that? I don't ask for people's names when I dance for them!"

"Beautiful, keep yelling at Croy and I'm gonna put you over my knee. What exactly did they say?"

She glared at me, but she didn't fight anymore. "They were talking about a meeting they had. They said you didn't send everyone for the job, so they'd have to split into two groups to handle you. They said their boss was cutting out the middleman, and they'd make a lot of money with you guys out of the picture. One of them asked how many there are of you, but the other said it didn't matter because with the amount of women here that could be sold, it'd be worth the risk."

"How many were there? What did they look like?" Reaper asked, moving closer.

She shook her head. "I don't have time for this. I need to get Diego out of here."

She wasn't going anywhere without Croy's permission, but being so far from Diego was making her skittish. She needed to see her kid was safe if we wanted her to give us details. Spinning around, I pointed at Nevada.

"Go get Diego and try not to wake him. Took me fucking hours to get him down."

“No, I—” Lacey started, but Nevada didn’t wait for her permission. He pushed out of the room to get Diego while I blocked Lacey from leaving. She pitched a fit the entire time he was gone, cursing at us in Spanish and saying some really messed up shit about how she shouldn’t have said anything so we could all die and leave her the hell alone. I knew she didn’t mean it, she wasn’t that much of a bitch, but fear was a powerful thing. It’d motivate her to say whatever the hell that flew through her mind to get us to let her go.

Nevada came back with a sleeping Diego in his arms. He was careful when he handed the baby over to Lacey and she cuddled him close, almost curling around him protectively. I shot a look at Croy.

“Prez.”

He was still fucking armed. It was bad enough pointing that shit at a woman. He couldn’t point a gun at a baby. It was one of the reasons I wanted Diego down here. Croy was pissed, but he wasn’t about to put a kid in danger, especially not Mass’s kid. He made an irritated noise, clicking the safety back on and tucking it into his jeans. When I raised my eyebrows at Clink, he followed suit, a dark glower on his face. His crew was his priority. He made that fucking clear when he faced Hammer alone to get his location for us. He didn’t take kindly to people threatening us.

“I get that you’re scared right now. I need you to think of those women out there. You said they already knew they were here. If we want to keep them safe, we need to know everything.”

While I’d been trying to get the weapons put away, Nevada was speaking low to Lacey. He crouched beside her, his hand on the back of her chair, and his voice was calm and gentle. He was always the good cop to Croy’s bad. Not that either of them would appreciate being compared to a pig.

Lacey looked less jittery with Diego in her arms. She still looked wary, and I could tell if she got the chance, she’d book it, but at least she was listening to what Nevada had to say.



Kneeling in front of her, I put my hands on her knees. “Give us all the details you got, baby. Let us do our jobs.”

When her gaze locked on mine, she tempered a little. “It was dark. You know what it’s like in the private booth.”

I dipped my chin once to acknowledge her. It was dimly lit back there. Only bright enough to show the woman dancing. The people on the couch were in the shadows. It’d make distinguishing marks harder to decipher.

“They all spoke in Spanish. Didn’t even try to whisper, so they probably didn’t know I understood them.”

“Or they didn’t care,” Reaper murmured, mostly to himself. He listened intently as Lacey gave as much detail as she could. What they wore and how natural their Spanish sounded. They never spoke to her in English, but she made a guess based on how they spoke that Spanish was their first language. She kept an eye on them after their private dance, but they didn’t stay long. It was one reason she was so panicked when she got here. They left a while before the end of her shift and she was terrified they were just around the corner or already here before she could get to Diego.

While Reaper asked her questions, I crossed my arms and leaned against Croy’s desk. “Who do we think it is?”

He was still glaring at Lacey. I had no idea what she said to piss him off so bad, and he took a second to answer me.

“No fucking clue. I haven’t heard nothin’ about a threat from the guys. Whoever it is, they’re new.”

“What are we gonna do about her?” Clink jerked his chin at Lacey.

I scowled at him. “You aren’t gonna do shit. She’s terrified. Women say stupid shit when they’re scared.”

“You didn’t even hear what she said,” Clink snapped.

“I don’t give a shit. You come for her, you gotta face me first.”

“Enough,” Croy growled. He pushed away from his desk, coming to stand near Lacey. She glared at him, hiding the fear

so well it was kind of stunning. She'd face down the devil without flinching if it meant protecting her son.

"I need you to get us more information."

"I'm not part of your crew. Get your own damn information," she replied moodily. I almost rolled my eyes. That kind of sass was going to get her into trouble. Croy only had so much patience.

"If they were watching this place like you said, then they know you live here. They'll come for you if you leave. If you don't want yourself or any of the other women to get hurt, you'll get us that information. In exchange, the club will buy you a house. No need to raise a baby in a clubhouse."

"What? Fuck that. They find out she's selling information, they'll go after her!" I protested.

"Brewer, shut the fuck up. Until you claim her, you don't get a say. What'll it be, Lacey? Either you leave tonight and hope to outrun whatever threat is out there, or you help us out and get a house and protection out of the deal. Make your choice," Croy demanded.

Lacey narrowed her eyes at him. "I want the house now. I don't want Diego sleeping here when they could attack at any time."

"Done. We'll start house hunting tomorrow. In the meantime, stay the hell away from Riley. And try and come between me and my ol' lady again and I don't give a shit if you're a woman. I'll make you regret it."

The threat hung heavily in the air for a few moments before Lacey rolled her eyes and pushed out of the chair, stomping out of the room with Diego in her arms. When I turned with a snarl to Croy, he pointed a finger at me.

"Not a fuckin' word. She doesn't get special treatment. And if you're lookin' to claim her, teach her to keep her mouth shut. Now all of you, get the fuck out!"

## CHAPTER 21

LACEY

I wished I could say that was the first time someone pointed a gun in my direction when my mouth ran away from me. Unfortunately, in my life, it happened more than I'd readily admit. I took Croy's offer because there really wasn't much of a choice. There was no telling who these guys were or if they were still watching this place. I might not get more than a few miles away before they took me, and I'd have Diego with me. It wasn't safe. But as long as we weren't sleeping here, I might be able to avoid the danger that was coming for the crew. Either that, or living farther away from them would give me enough time to run if they attacked.

When I left the office, the party was pretty much over. I got a few dirty looks, but it didn't bother me. I wasn't looking for friends here. Riley stood when I came out, her face pinched with worry. I meant what I said earlier. If Croy wasn't going to treat her right, it wasn't worth the risk to stay here. But she was going to have to make that decision on her own.

"Lacey?" she murmured quietly.

"Riley," Croy growled, hovering in his open office door. He didn't want me near Riley since I pointed out he treated her like shit. Apparently, that started now.

I ignored him, heading upstairs to put Diego back to bed. I knew Brewer would be behind me, and since he was the one who talked them down from shooting me, I let him follow me into my room. I settled Diego carefully into the portable crib, putting my hand on his belly to calm his movements as he got comfortable. Once he relaxed, I grabbed a towel and went into the bathroom to shower. Brewer didn't follow, but he was still

there when I got done, sitting on the edge of my bed watching Diego sleep. He looked up at me and where I expected anger and frustration, I only saw worry on his face.

“You okay?”

“What part of this am I supposed to be okay with? The fact that multiple people pointed a gun at me tonight, or that I’m stuck here because of something that has nothing to do with me? How often do you get attacked at this place?”

“Almost never. The fight has only come to the clubhouse twice since I joined.”

Two times too many, in my opinion. I yanked on my pajamas, tossing my wet towel into the hamper with a huff. I didn’t want to be here. The urge to run was intense, like an itch under my skin that wouldn’t go away. I needed to get Diego somewhere safer. But even with the money I’d made the past two days, it wasn’t enough to get far. Even if there wasn’t a threat keeping me here, I wouldn’t be able to leave.

I was pacing, too riled up to go to bed, but too anxious to leave Diego for even a second. Brewer had to catch my wrist to stop me, pulling me into his lap and wrapping me in his arms. I fought him, still pissed that he was one of the reasons I was stuck here. He just waited me out, his arms tight but not overbearing, his breathing slow and steady. I gave in eventually, worn out from the adrenaline crash. Brewer tucked my head under his chin, rubbing my back lightly.

Still feeling combative, I couldn’t help but say something. “What? Are you waiting until I’m too tired to argue to yell at me?”

His chest rumbled against my cheek as he chuckled. “Would that work?”

“No,” I snapped.

He hummed, resuming rubbing my back absently. “Then I don’t think I’ll waste my breath.”

“You’re not mad? I find that hard to believe.”

“I am mad. You decided to piss off Prez, and he’s not a forgiving guy. That kind of shit can’t happen, Lacey. What the hell did you say to him that pissed him off so bad?”

With a scoff, I sat up. I didn’t leave the circle of his arms, but I wasn’t going to act like I regretted it either.

“I told Riley she should leave before they come for this place. She’s exhausted, living in a place she hates, and Croy doesn’t give a shit about how she feels. She’s going to burn out. No relationship is worth that.”

He sighed so heavily, his body sagged with it. I didn’t need him to spell it out to get the message from him. He thought what I did was stupid.

“Someone needed to say it. He made her reliant on him, and she’s suffering. It isn’t right to let her become a shell of herself just because of love. If he loved her so damn much, he would care about what’s happening to her. Have you seen the dark circles under her eyes?”

He made an irritated sound, his hand still absentmindedly rubbing my back. When I studied his face, he was frowning at the wall, his brows drawn tightly together like he was considering his words carefully. I liked that he didn’t get emotional. He was more logical than those other guys and he thought shit through before arguing with me.

“Alright, yeah. I’ve seen how tired she is. And I can mention it to Prez. But you gotta understand. A man’s claim is his property. You don’t fuck with another man’s ol’ lady, including getting in between the two of them. Croy loves Riley. He’d go to hell and back for her.”

“Love isn’t real. And even if it was, it’s not enough. Relationships take work. As far as I can tell, she’s putting in all the effort. He’s not doing shit.”

I wasn’t sure why I was so stuck on Riley and Croy’s relationship. Maybe I saw it as a reflection of my own with Brewer. Not that I wanted a relationship. But he did, and if he got his way, I’d end up like Riley. A shell of myself, always giving in to a man who didn’t care how I felt about any of this.

Hell, it was already like that. Brewer didn't care about what I wanted. He wanted me here, he wanted security with me, he wouldn't let me go anywhere alone. He got his way, and I was expected to deal with it. I wasn't going to live my life that way.

"I'm not makin' excuses, because I ain't in their relationship. I don't know what shit goes on behind closed doors. Croy ain't a perfect man. None of us can claim that shit. But there were a dozen ways you could've gone about that differently to let either of them know you were worried about her. And Lace, I need you to promise me you'll steer clear of Croy. You pissed off the devil tonight. I don't want you gettin' hurt."

"You don't have to worry about that. As soon as they get off my back, I'm out of here. I don't want to spend any more time with him than I have to. If I had anywhere else to go, I'd walk away right now."

Brewer's grip on me tightened just a little. Most people probably wouldn't have even noticed it. I did, because that kind of hold normally felt stifling. I didn't like being controlled and I liked being held captive by a man even less. But for some stupid reason, Brewer's embrace didn't piss me off like it normally would. He stopped arguing with me, too. He just held me, giving my body time to come down from the fear and adrenaline that had been coursing through my system since I overheard those men talking at the club.

When the night finally caught up with me, Brewer was in no rush to leave. He stripped down to just his jeans and climbed into bed with me without a word. I was too tired to argue with him. Instead, I gave him my back, putting one hand on Diego's crib so I would wake up when he did. Brewer pressed himself up against my back, one arm heavy over my waist, and the warmth coming off him lulled me to sleep before I could open my mouth to complain.

He was still there when Diego woke me up the following morning, snoring lightly. Now that the shock had worn off, I admitted to myself that screaming at the president of a dangerous MC was beyond stupid. I didn't regret saying

something to Riley, but I probably could've done it without being in front of Croy.

He said we'd go house hunting today, but I was going to suggest one last time that he let me leave. He could put anyone at the club to get him information. I wasn't going to change who I was, and he already had a problem with me. Maybe with an escort, I could get out of this stupid town before their enemies came after me. Brewer would probably fight me on it, but I had to think about Diego.

Determined, I plucked Diego out of his crib, smothering him with kisses until he giggled. The love I had for my son was beyond anything in the world. If I wanted what was best for him, I needed to figure out where to go next and what I'd do when I got there. There was always Vegas, but I heard some pretty horrible things about how dancers were treated on the strip. Finding a decent place to work would be like finding a golden needle in a haystack.

After changing Diego's diaper and getting us both dressed, I considered leaving Brewer alone to sleep in. But apparently I was feeling petty this morning, so instead I plopped Diego on the bed next to Brewer and watched in amusement as he grabbed handfuls of his beard and pulled.

Brewer grunted, opening one eye to look at Diego. "I've had a beard for years, but you're makin' me consider shaving it, kid."

Diego didn't care about that, grinning and babbling at him, bouncing on his knees. Brewer carefully dislodged Diego's grip before stretching, one arm around Diego to keep him on the bed. It was sweet, and he was better at taking care of babies than I expected. Still naïve, since he let out a massive yawn expecting Diego to keep his hands out of his mouth, but smart enough not to freak out when Diego shoved his hand in there. I burst out laughing when he choked, plucking Diego off the bed when Brewer glared at me.

"Mi amor, you give the best good mornings, don't you?" I nuzzled against Diego's neck, beaming at his little giggles.

“I’ve got a better good morning for you if you come back to bed,” Brewer growled suggestively.

I shot him a bland look. “Keep dreaming. I’m going to feed Diego. Do something useful and find out when we’re going to look at houses. If I’m going back to the club tonight, I want to be certain that we’ll be out of here soon.”

He made an irritated noise, throwing one arm over his eyes to block me out. “I’m sleeping, woman. Your ass can wait.”

Pursing my lips, I raised my eyebrows at Diego. He grinned at me, like he knew what I was going to do next. Giving him a wink, I picked up the wet diaper I’d changed him out of earlier and lobbed it at Brewer. It smacked him in the face and when he jerked his arm back in surprise, I leveled him with a stubborn look.

“Get up. Or I’ll go without you.”

He launched himself out of bed, but I ran before he could get me, snickering to myself. Brewer didn’t go any farther than the doorway, but he scowled at me as I walked away, flipping him off over my shoulder. Bouncing Diego on my hip, I whispered conspiratorially to him.

“If he goes back to sleep, you’ll have to give me a poopy one to throw at him next.”



## CHAPTER 22

BREWER

It was a toss up between smiling because Lacey was playing around with me and irritated as hell because her version of playing was throwing dirty diapers at me. I was grumbling to myself, pulling on my clothes, when the door across the hall opened and Croy snuck out, closing the door quietly behind him. It meant Riley was still asleep and if the crew didn't want an ass kicking, we needed to keep quiet. I finished getting ready, popping into the kitchen to grab coffee for me and Prez before joining him in his office. He was less of a bear to deal with if he was properly hydrated. Caffeine in the morning, alcohol at night to keep his temper down. He needed it less with Riley around, but yesterday was shit and I wouldn't put it past him to sneak some liquor into his coffee to get through the day.

When I handed Croy his coffee, he grunted his thanks, glaring at the paperwork on his desk. I'd snagged the map from my room before coming down, and I slid it onto his desk when I sat down across from him.

"Got a run planned out. Figured we could all use it. Just gotta check with the First Lady on her schedule."

That made him soften a little, and he plucked the map off the desk to look it over. "Territory run?"

I lifted a shoulder. "Haven't done one in a while. Might be smart to have a show of force if there are threats."

"And you're looking to make a claim by putting Lacey on your bike."

It wasn't a question, it was a statement, and not a happy one at that. After last night, I figured he'd have a problem with it, so I didn't let it bother me. Didn't mean I wouldn't fight for her, though.

"She was scared, Croy. Out of her damn mind. Still is. The shit with Riley wasn't even about last night. She's been worried, and instead of talkin' about it like a regular person, she lashed out. She's a damn woman. We can't expect her to act sane."

He grunted, but he still looked pissed. I let him sit with it for a minute, and we discussed the run and time frames. He had a general idea of Riley's schedule, but it wasn't always the same every week. It was a point of contention between the two of them, and probably one of the issues that was making her so exhausted.

"Nevada is gettin' information on houses in the area. Take Lacey to look at them and pick somethin' out. I want her back to work tonight. I need to know who the fuck is threatening us."

It still pissed me off that Lacey was expected to gather information. I didn't want her anywhere near that shit. But she agreed to it and I couldn't go against Prez. Not unless I wanted my ass handed to me.

"Can we up her security? I don't like her putting herself on their radar."

"No. It'll draw too much attention and they might not give up information. One is enough."

He noticed my silent seething, and before I could say shit, he sighed. "I'll have Lewis put up cameras so we can keep an eye on shit from here. They aren't going to give a shit about strippers anyway. They already talk like she's not in the room."

It still felt like too much of a risk, but from the dirty look Croy gave me, I wasn't going to get my way. I couldn't go with her every night, but I was going to try and be there as

often as I could. At least with me watching her, I knew she was safe.

Pushing out of my chair, I acknowledged Croy with a dip of my chin, hesitating as I got to the door. Lacey's concerns flashed through my head and I turned to look at Croy with a frown.

"I know she was a bitch about it, but Lacey wasn't the only one who noticed the First Lady lookin' kinda beat. You want me to let you know if any of those houses might suit you two?"

He lifted his gaze slowly to me, glaring at me. "If you weren't my brother, I'd say you were overstepping right now."

"I'm offering a courtesy, man. Before Lacey even showed up, Riley told me she was exhausted. Might not be a bad idea to find a quieter place for her to get some rest. She doesn't even have the energy to argue with you anymore, and you know she loves that shit."

He huffed out a small laugh, shaking his head. Their relationship started with a fight, and even a few years later, they still butted heads a lot. Usually it was for some bullshit reason just so they could have some insane make up sex afterwards. But Riley had been fighting less and less lately. She was too tired for the game.

"Yeah. I'll think about it. I've been avoiding it since I can't trust you assholes to hold down the fort if I'm not here, but she got to cryin' last night because she was so fuckin' tired. We're talking about lightening her work schedule a little, but maybe I'm part of the problem. I'll look into it."

"I'll let you know if I see anything decent."

He grunted, dismissing me with a wave, and I let it go. I said my piece. I wasn't normally the one getting into other people's business, but Lacey got in my fucking head and I figured it was better coming from me than her.

I found her in the kitchen, watching Diego eat while talking to the girls. When I saw Riley there, I raised my eyebrows at her.

“Lookin’ to get Lacey in trouble?”

Riley rolled her eyes. She looked more awake than she did yesterday, so hopefully she got in a decent night’s sleep for once.

“Croy doesn’t get to dictate who I’m friends with. Besides, Lacey told me everything, unlike you guys, who would’ve kept that shit to yourself.”

“If you try to put us in lockdown again...” Allie growled.

I gave her a bored look. “That shit ain’t up to me, but if it’s necessary, it’s for your own good.”

“Sounds like a stupid idea to me,” Lacey interjected. “If they are looking to come here and cause a fight, why would you keep people here who you’re trying to protect? If the police know of a threat, they move you to a safe place. They don’t keep you where you’re at and see what happens.”

“No one gives a shit what the pigs do,” Croy growled. He went straight for Riley, wrapping himself around her. Riley tipped her head back to look at him.

“She has a point, though. Most threats didn’t specifically have here as a target. These guys do. Wouldn’t it be better if we weren’t here?”

No other woman on the planet could get away with questioning Croy. And even Riley had limits. If there was more crew around, he’d take exception to her argument right now. But apparently, he was going easy on her today.

“We’ll discuss all the options with the crew once we get more information.” He shot a glare at Lacey, who rolled her eyes and gave her attention to Diego instead. The woman had a death wish, I swear. “For now, we’ll up security, but I won’t keep you here on lockdown. Baby, Brewer needs to know your schedule for next week. We’ve got a run coming up.”

She pulled up her schedule on her phone and handed it to me, but she was more focused on Croy than me. “You said you’d look at my car before my next shift. I need to be at the hospital at two.”

He looked exasperated, everyone knew how much he hated that car. We told him to buy her a new one, but she didn't like him buying her shit. She wanted to be independent.

“If I say it's a death trap and you need a new one, will you believe me?”

“No,” she scoffed. “But you don't lie to me, so I'm not worried about that.”

His face softened a little until he saw me smirking at him. He was such a fucking pushover for her. He shot me a dirty look and tugged Riley off her stool, tucking her against his side as he led her outside. No doubt, he'd push for her to let him buy her a new one and end up fixing the damn thing anyway.

The others went to do their own shit while I joined Lacey in the kitchen. She was cleaning up the mess Diego made, so I plucked him out of the high chair and sat him on the counter, using the baby wipe she handed me to clean off his face.

“Once Nevada gets here, we'll go looking at some houses.”

I still hated the idea, I liked her close, but I figured if I stayed with her at night, it wouldn't be much different. The rest of the officers, aside from Croy, moved out of the club house for their old ladies. She and Diego couldn't live here forever anyway. I just had to keep her place close enough that we could get help if necessary. Maybe assign some security until the threat passed.

“I want a house in the city.”

I snorted, pulling Diego's dirty shirt off and wiping the crud from his neck. “Good for you. It's not gonna happen. You're going to be close by so we can look out for you. Besides, you really want to commute that far just to piss me off?”

She glared at me, but didn't argue, so I knew she was just being a bitch to irritate me. Good thing I was a patient man. I could ride out the stubbornness. Or put her over my knee to get her in line. Both options were alright with me.

“Come on, little man. Let your mama get some food in her. Maybe she’ll stop bitchin’ so much if she’s eaten.”

Another steady stream of Spanish curses came my way, and I smiled smugly. I wasn’t sure she knew I understood her, and I wasn’t about to give away the secret. I wanted to hear her true thoughts without a filter. I could use it to my advantage.

## CHAPTER 23

LACEY

I didn't expect to find a house the first day we went to look. Nevada's wife worked in real estate in the area. All the options she showed me were significantly better than what I was used to, but Brewer had his opinions and kept dismissing things left and right. I was ready to throw things at him before we finished for the day. If it were me alone, I would've just picked one so we could move out of the clubhouse as soon as possible.

Once we were through, I expected Brewer to drive us back, but he made a detour, heading to a smaller neighborhood not far from the clubhouse. When he pulled into the driveway of a two story Spanish-style home, I frowned at him.

"Where are we?"

"Reaper's place. You aren't comfortable leaving little man at the clubhouse, and I've got work tonight. Quinn's mama agreed to watch him for us. Practically screamed my ear off when I called, she was so damn excited."

I pursed my lips to hide my frown. I left Diego with sitters before, I couldn't afford not to, but it never came easy to trust someone with my son. But at least Brewer was listening to me and didn't expect me to keep him at the clubhouse while I wasn't there. I pulled Diego out of his car seat, hugging him close as we stepped past the archway to the front door. The door opened just as we got close, a busty blonde with a huge smile squealing just beyond the screen. She urged us inside, cooing at Diego before she even introduced herself.

“Oh look at you! Such a handsome little man! You look just like your daddy!” Her gaze swung to Brewer, and she winked at him. I rolled my eyes, handing Diego over when she put her hands out.

“Brewer isn’t his daddy. Mass was. I appreciate you watching him. I have a shift tonight, and I don’t want him at the clubhouse.”

She snorted, bouncing Diego and rubbing noses with him. “I don’t blame you. That place is fun, but no place for a baby. Anyway, I’m Camille, Quinn’s mama. You can call me Camille, Mama, or even Foxy. Just not Mrs. Roberts. It makes me feel old. We’ll have a good time here. I swung by the thrift store, picked up some toys and baby books. And Quinn picked me up some rotisserie chicken for tacos tonight. He’s on solids, right?”

“Oh... You didn’t have to go to the trouble. I brought him some toys.”

She waved a hand dismissively, heading to the living room where a play yard was already set up in front of the couch.

“It’s fine. Quinn’s been hinting at wanting babies. I figure it’s only a matter of time until we need this stuff anyway. Lord knows, that man of hers won’t deny her a thing.”

I made a face, wrinkling my nose. Quinn was with Reaper and I couldn’t imagine that terrifying man doting on his girlfriend. Then again, it was hard to imagine any of them holding a woman down. They didn’t strike me as the loving types.

Camille looked like she was fighting back a laugh, a grin tugging at her lips. “Don’t let their looks fool you. They’re rough around the edges, but when it comes to their old ladies, they’re big pushovers. Even Croy is wrapped around Riley’s finger.”

“Don’t let him hear you say that shit,” Brewer grumbled. He was leaning against the wall, watching Diego reaching for a toy. He was moments away from crawling and it hurt to walk



away when I could miss it, but I had to work if I wanted to get Croy the stupid information he needed.

Camille must've seen my remorse because she put her hand on my shoulder. "I can either take videos of everything new, or I can pretend it never happened so when it happens with you, it'll still be his first. Whichever is easier on you."

Forcing a smile, I shook my head. "I don't expect to be there for all his firsts. Not as a working mama. But hopefully I won't miss much during the night shift. Perks of being a stripper, I guess."

Her eyes lit up. "Oh! I used to be a stripper! Worked at the club in town. The manager still Wade?" When I nodded, she sighed wistfully. "He was a good man. I would've gone back for him, but my sponsor and I both agreed it was healthier to steer clear and focus on me. Almost six months sober now. Figured you'd want to be aware of that."

That didn't bother me. I'd had babysitters I was sure weren't one hundred percent clean. I couldn't afford anything better. There were times where I went days without food to keep a roof over Diego's head. Camille being a recovering addict at least included the word 'recovering'.

After exchanging numbers and giving her the rundown of Diego's likes, dislikes, and struggles with sleep, I let Brewer lead me out of the house. The drive back was quiet, but not strained or awkward. Brewer didn't feel the need to fill the silence with small talk.

When we pulled up in front of the clubhouse, I sighed. "Thank you. For finding Diego a safe place. I was worried about leaving him here tonight."

"I figured. Mrs. Roberts said she'd watch him whenever you needed her. I got shit to do tonight, but if anything comes up at the club, you call me. I'll be there. Got it?"

It was annoying, his overprotectiveness, but I didn't hate it. It'd been a long time since someone cared if I came home safe. Because he'd gone above and beyond by fighting me a

sitter in a safe neighborhood for Diego, I leaned across the center console and pressed a kiss to his cheek.

“Good night, Brewer.”

He caught me by the back of the neck, swooping down to claim my mouth. It was a fierce kiss, demanding and rough, and I was breathless by the time he released me.

“Good night, Lacey. I’ll see you after your shift.”

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The club was just as crowded as the night before. I kept my eye out for the group from the other night and asked the girls to do the same. They couldn’t get me information, since none of them spoke Spanish, but if they noticed groups only speaking in Spanish, they pointed them out for me.

It took hours for them to finally show up. I was on stage when they came in, and I tracked them as they sat at a table closer to the back. I couldn’t ditch my set in the middle of it, and I couldn’t hear them over the pulsing music, so I had to wait until I finished to get close to them. I changed into my floor costume, flirting my way through the crowd until I could see them better.

A few requested lap dances got me closer, but I still couldn’t hear them until one of them waved me over and requested his own. I let my body do the work, my ears straining to hear any part of their conversation. When I turned to face the man, kneeling on the edge of his seat and running my fingers through his hair, he grinned at me, raising an eyebrow.

¿Hablas Español?”

I faked confusion, drawing my brows together tightly. He leaned closer, his lips brushing against my ear as he switched to English. “You speak Spanish?”

I shook my head, biting my lip in what I hoped was a coy smile. I didn’t want him knowing I could understand him.

“Pity. You are very beautiful.” He switched to Spanish again, rumbling in my ear as he ran his hands up the backs of my legs. “The things I would do to you would shock you. But I think you’d enjoy them. I want to mark that pretty skin and watch you bleed. Would you like that, you little whore?”

Feigning ignorance and keeping the disgust off my face took all my effort. I giggled, tossing my hair back and shooting him a sultry look.

“I wish I could understand you. That sounded sexy. I’ve always loved accents.”

He hummed, his body losing some tension I hadn’t noticed. Too busy trying to listen to him and his friends. The one next to him snagged me around the waist when the song ended, pulling me into his lap. I saw Wade straighten and step closer, but I gave him a subtle shake of my head. I didn’t want him interrupting me right now. I could handle myself.

“She says she doesn’t speak Spanish,” the first man said in Spanish to the rest, winking at me.

The one holding me raised an eyebrow, running his hand up my thigh. “How does a woman like you not speak Spanish, hmm? You look Spanish.”

Putting on my best pout, I shrugged. “Daddy was Mexican, but he died when I was a kid. Mama was as white as they come, couldn’t speak a word of it, and she moved me away from my extended family after he died.”

That was actually true for the most part. The only part that was a lie was my mom not speaking Spanish. She knew enough to get by and encouraged me to take it in school so I wouldn’t lose my connection to my culture. She never wanted me near my extended family because they were dangerous and she didn’t trust them. I haven’t seen them since my father died.

“Such a shame,” the man holding me purred. “You’d sell better if you spoke both languages.”

I knew he wasn’t referring to here, but he was ballsy enough to say it in English, so I played up the ignorance with a giggle.

“Most men aren’t asking me to talk. I speak with my body.”

He chuckled lightly, lifting his chin at me. “Go on then. Talk to me.”

Wiggling off his lap, I danced for him and for the man next to him. I thought maybe they wouldn’t talk about work again tonight, but when the last one beckoned me for his dance, they finally started talking.

“Where’s the boss?”

“Crossed the border with Juan. They’re going to the whore house tonight. He prefers real latin women.”

“Unlike this one,” the middle one scoffed in my direction. “Americans don’t give a shit about their culture.”

The first one rolled his eyes and ignored him. “Did you see the asshole at the drop off tonight? He was looking at the boss like he was a fucking bug. I can’t wait to put a bullet in his skull.”

“When is the boss planning the attack?”

“No clue. I think he’s hoping to entice them to join us for a party. Easier to get rid of them on our side. He invited them again tonight, but the asshole in charge said he’d talk to his Prez about it. Pussy.”

The song finished, and I collected the money from the man I was dancing on. I couldn’t hang around without looking suspicious, so I moved to step past them, but they all stood at once and the one in the middle, who said I’d sell better as a bilingual, snagged me around the middle. My hackles went up as he dragged me against his chest, his friends surrounding me.

“If you want to make more money tonight, you should join us outside. We’ll show you a good time.”

The squeeze of his arm made me feel like I didn’t have much of a choice. If I was a weaker willed woman, I would’ve gone along for fear of what would happen if I didn’t.

Unfortunately for them, my father raised me to be tough, and I didn't scare easily.

"I'm sure you would, but I'm not done with my shift. One night with you isn't worth my job."

He dragged his mouth down my cheek, and I fought off a grimace. "I can make it worth it. How much do you make in one night?"

"Hey! Get your hands off her," Wade bellowed. He and the bouncer were making a beeline for us and I saw Chase hovering by the door. He'd block them from dragging me outside, but he wouldn't get closer and blow my cover unless he had to.

Spinning around, I gave the man a sultry grin. "More than you can afford, handsome. I'll be back on stage next week. See you around."

Wiggling my fingers, I stepped out of his arms right as Wade appeared behind me. He grabbed my arm, yanking me back, and glared at the men who'd surrounded me. The one who tried to force me to leave with him put up his hands with a playful grin, playing up his accent hard.

"Sorry, sorry. No speak any English."

Wade scowled at him, speaking slowly, like he was talking to an idiot. "Don't touch the dancers."

A flash of annoyance crossed the guy's face before he grinned again. "Okay, okay. We're going." He caught my eye, winking at me and speaking in Spanish again. "See you soon. I promise."

## CHAPTER 24

BREWER

Eduardo was fishing for another invite to the club or us joining him on his side during the drop off tonight. He didn't come every time, and we went a few drops without seeing him, but he was back and more persistent than ever. I had to head him off by saying I'd talk to Prez before he'd fuck off. I watched him leave, my eyes narrowed, until he was out of sight and Knox sidled up next to me.

“Think we're going to have issues with him?”

“Startin' to feel that way. Check the product carefully. I don't trust the asshole not to do something stupid.” It wouldn't be the first time someone tried something stupid like putting in trackers or not giving us decent product. We had a good relationship with Eduardo's daddy, but the kid was young and I didn't trust him.

We checked the product and the pallet it was on without finding anything suspicious. Knox said the count was spot on, and a test of the product itself said it was high quality. Still, after it was loaded up and moved to a more secret location, I called Neo to check in.

“Anything?”

“No. I watched the cameras, but they didn't do anything suspicious, and there's no one else in the area. Did you want me to check for trackers?”

Neo was our resident tech and damn good at his job. The only reason he was demoted to prospect was because he fucked over the crew by helping when Wrecker decided to start skimming. He was under duress, which was why he was

still alive, but Prez knocked him back down to prospect and he had a babysitter whenever he had to work. We couldn't take him off the job without losing our tech connection, but we could make sure he didn't take a shit without one of us knowing. He wouldn't be screwing us over twice.

“Nah. I checked it myself. Did you put the cameras up at the club?”

“Not yet. The owner kicked up a fuss when I went down there this afternoon. Called me a pervert.”

I snorted. Couldn't actually fault him there. Neo was part of the crew, but he wasn't built like most of us. He was thin and pale, a stereotypical nerd. He didn't even have any ink. And when he was knocked back down to prospect, he lost his cut, so he had nothing but his word and his keeper to tie him to the crew. If they sent him with another prospect, then he was shit out of luck.

“I'll go with you tomorrow and talk to him.” I didn't want Lacey working there without cameras in the joint so we could watch over her. If the man didn't trust Neo at his word, then an officer of the crew could change his mind. Either with words or violence. I didn't really give a shit which. I kind of hoped he'd fight me a little. I was still irritated about Lacey's involvement and could use an outlet.

I considered going to the club to watch over Lacey for the night, but Croy's warning about not drawing attention to her rang in my head. No one knew she was connected to me, but if more members of the crew started showing up at her work, they might put shit together that one of the women belonged to us.

Instead, I headed back to the clubhouse to update Croy. Before I could get to his office, a sweetbutt named Carla bounced into my path, her tits nearly spilling from her dress as she threw herself at me.

“Brewer! I haven't seen you in forever! Wanna go upstairs?”

She fisted my cut, pressing herself against me, and I fought off a grimace. Most of the sweetbutts knew I didn't like that desperate shit. I came to them, not the other way around. If I didn't seek you out, I wasn't fucking interested. Carla had been around long enough to know that, but she was playing ignorant tonight.

Peeling her hands off me, I scowled at her. I wasn't going to waste my time making excuses to head her off. I just moved her out of my way and stalked off. Normally, that was enough. They'd pout about it and move on to the next guy. But Carla was being pushy tonight. She grabbed my arm, whining at me.

“Oh, come on, baby! I'm horny and I miss you! You know how to show a lady a good time. I want that tonight.”

Ripping my arm away from her, I leveled her with a glare so intense, she shrank away from me on instinct. Carla was fun for a night or two, but she wasn't Lacey. Lacey was a strong ass woman who didn't need to beg anyone to get what she wanted. If I had my way, I'd be spending the night with her, not some desperate sweetbutt.

“Pretty sure the answer is no, sweetheart. How about you leave the man alone and spend your time with someone who's interested?” Aero beckoned her from the bar with a crook of his finger, lifting his chin at me when she pouted and flounced away. I needed to make a claim on Lacey soon so I'd stop having to deal with this shit.

Instead of bothering Croy while I was still pissed off, I decided to wait until Lacey got back. I wanted to hear what she got tonight anyway. I joined Clink at the pool table, checking in with Chase on how it was going. Time moved too damn slowly, and I was pissed off by the time he texted to say they were picking up Diego and on their way back. If I had a cage, I'd pick him up myself. I'd look into it once Lacey accepted my claim. She's been a little more receptive to me lately, but I knew I'd have a fight on my hands when I eventually brought it up.

She looked like she was going to head straight upstairs when she got in, but I blocked her, nudging her towards Croy's



office. She scowled at me, but didn't argue, Diego fast asleep in her arms. I put my hand on her lower back, knocking on Croy's office door before heading inside. He was on the phone and ignored us while he finished up, so I settled Lacey on one of the chairs and squatted next to her, jerking my chin towards Diego.

"How'd he do?"

She was ready to be pissed, already looking to start shit if the glower on her face was anything to go by, so I figured I'd distract her with baby shit. She softened a little, looking down at Diego with a tender expression.

"Camille said he did fine. Fought going to sleep for a while. You'll never guess who got him to sleep." Even she looked like she didn't fully believe whatever they'd told her. When I raised an eyebrow, she smirked. "Apparently, Reaper came to check on them. He took a turn with Diego while Camille used the restroom, and when she came back, Diego was asleep. It's a little weird that Diego likes bikers so much."

"It's in his blood," I murmured, running my fingers gently over his hair. Mass would've been proud of this kid. I hated Hammer a little more for making him miss this. I almost wished we kept the bastard alive longer, just so he'd suffer more.

Lacey wrinkled her nose at my comment. "He's not joining the crew. He's going to college and doing something great with his life. Maybe a doctor or a lawyer."

"He could still be part of the crew with either of those jobs. We could use an in-house lawyer," I suggested with a smirk. It made Lacey scowl at me, but she knew I was just teasing. I wasn't about to argue with her about Diego's future. If he wanted to join the crew, that'd be up to him when he was old enough. She wouldn't get a choice in the matter once he was eighteen.

Croy made an irritated noise, tossing his phone onto his desk. I frowned at him.

"Everything alright?"

He grunted, standing to pour himself a drink before turning to Lacey. “Get anything tonight?”

“I don’t think it was useful. They didn’t say their names or anything. Just talked about a meeting they had tonight. They still plan on attacking you, but they said their boss is hoping you’ll visit his place over the border, so clean up is easier.”

That made me stiffen. “Be more specific. What exactly did they say?”

She shot me an irritated look, but did her best to give all the details she could about the men talking tonight. In any normal circumstance, she’d be right that the information was too vague to be helpful. Except I was there for both meet ups with Eduardo, and both times he tried to invite us over to his side of the border.

“He said the guy he talked to was a pussy because he said he’d have to talk to his Prez about joining them for a party or whatever.”

“Fuck.”

Both Croy and Lacey turned to me, and Croy raised his eyebrow.

“What is it?”

“That was me. I was going to tell you about it after Lacey gave her update. Eduardo’s been at the drop site twice now, and he’s invited us over to his side both times. He’s also fishing for an invite to the clubhouse. He looks pissy whenever I turn him down or ignore him, so I said I’d talk to you to get him to fuck off.”

“Fuck!”

Without warning, Croy spun and threw his glass against the wall. It shattered, the noise startling Diego and waking him up.

Lacey went off on him, calling him names for waking her kid up. Now was really not the time to test him though, so I grabbed her arm and hauled her up out of her seat, steering her towards the door.

“Bring him to bed. I’ll be up later.”

She didn’t argue this time, but her focus was on the baby, rocking and shushing him as she stormed out of the room. She shot one last scathing look over her shoulder, but Chase was by the door and when I shot him a look, he dipped his chin. He’d make sure she didn’t take off tonight while we dealt with this.

## CHAPTER 25

BREWER

Most of the officers had to be called in, since they didn't live here anymore. Only Clink and I were close by. We waited for the rest, a prospect coming in to clean up the glass in Croy's office, while we moved on to church. Croy paced and growled, his hands balled into fists like he was seconds away from punching someone. That reaction was why I sent Lacey away so quickly. I didn't think he'd hit a woman holding a kid, but he had a violent temper and only Riley could bring him down from it. I sent her a message, hoping to get her here sooner rather than later to calm his ass down, then tucked in to wait.

Nevada was the last to arrive, closing the door to church behind him. We all sat at the table in the middle of the room, waiting for Croy to be calm enough to talk to us. He let out another snarl, dropping into his seat and facing us.

"Who needs fucking up, Prez?" Clink was already geared for a fight, still eager to prove his loyalty after his fall off the wagon a few months back. No one blamed him for that shit, but meeting Hammer alone had been a stupid choice that made people question if he could be bought off with a hit. He showed us he couldn't, but he still jumped at any chance he could get to prove himself.

"Looks like Eduardo is getting ballsy. Lacey's been overhearing conversations at the strip club and her information matches Brewer's from the drop off tonight. Our newest threat is our goddamn supplier."

"Son of a bitch," Knox muttered under his breath.

Nevada looked pissed, and Clink's gaze darted toward the door, already planning how he could go after the fucker. Reaper was silent, but I could see the dark promise in his eyes. He was the Sergeant-at-Arms. He'd be taking point in dealing with the double crossing little shit.

"What's the plan, then?" Nevada asked.

"I don't have a fucking clue," Croy snapped. "We've had the same supplier for years. Since before I took over. I never considered needing to find a new one."

"Do we need a new one? Can't we just beat some sense into Eduardo?" Knox offered.

I shook my head. "It might stall him, but we'd never be able to trust him. And it might make him retaliate with shit like demanding a higher cut or bullshit like that. We need a back up."

"Or a fucking replacement. Start making inquiries, but keep it quiet," Croy ordered. "I don't want Eduardo finding out before we've got a back up. And someone get me fucking proof. We can't put a fucking wire on a stripper and I need something to show to Carlos once I carve his son into pieces."

Chairs scraped across the floor as we pushed to our feet to get to work. I was going to head out to start looking for a new supplier when Croy called me back.

"Brewer, stay put."

Dropping back into my seat, I frowned as the rest of the guys left the room. Croy still looked ready to punch someone. Kinda hoped it wouldn't be me. I could fight as well as the rest of us, but Croy was a beast, and I wasn't looking for an ass kicking.

"You need me, Prez?"

"Did Lewis put up the cameras at the club?"

"Not yet. Got some pushback from the owner. I was going to go down with him tomorrow to make the man see reason. Why?"

“Because Lacey is our biggest connection on this shit, and I want proof his guys were hanging around at bare minimum.”

“Prez—”

“Don’t. I know you’re gonna argue, because I wouldn’t want Riley near that shit either. But I can’t pull her until I’ve got more information. I’ll put more security down the block, but I need her in that club. She’s the only one so far who’s given us anything.”

Anger roiled in my gut, and I seriously considered refusing him. Lacey did enough. She figured out who the threat was. She wasn’t part of the crew and I didn’t want her out there where she could get hurt. Once they figured out there was a leak about their plan, they were going to go looking for who it was that let the cat out of the bag. She already said they threatened to sell women into the trade. I didn’t want her anywhere near that.

“Prez, she’s a mother. She’s Mass’s kid’s mother. If shit goes wrong—”

“It won’t. We’ll have precautions. Talk to Lewis, see if we can put a tracker on her somehow. But I’m not changing my mind. Until I know when the attack will go down, I need her in the club. Now go. I need to call the charters and warn them of what’s happening over here. Can’t get a fucking break without someone causing fucking trouble for me.” He mumbled the last part under his breath, frustrated, and turned his back on me.

I knew better than to argue with Croy. He was the Prez, and what he said, goes. But because it was Lacey who would be caught in the crossfire if this went to shit, I felt my temper slip. I shoved to my feet, throwing the door to church open so hard it banked off the wall and made several people jump and curse. Storming up the stairs, I went straight for Lacey’s room. I half expected her to have locked her door, since she was so pissed when she stormed off. But it was unlocked, and she was sitting on her bed, drying her hair and scrolling on her phone when I came in. She looked up, surprised and a little annoyed, but I didn’t give her a chance to bitch at me. I grabbed her

arm, yanked up and against my chest, and claimed her lips roughly.

Her body was tense at first, confused, but I didn't back down, and when I shoved my tongue between her lips, she sucked in a breath and pushed back, tangling her tongue with mine. There was no surrender with Lacey. She gripped my cut tight, fighting for control, sinking her teeth into my bottom lip when I didn't give her any.

Dipping down, I scooped her off her feet and tossed her onto the bed. I was on her before she could blink, pinning her body with mine, my hands fisted into her hair. For once, she didn't seem to be in the mood to argue with me. She met me kiss for kiss, her tongue dueling mine, her fingers digging into my back.

Without breaking the kiss, I shrugged off my cut and kicked off my shoes. I pulled away only long enough to yank off my shirt and Lacey's before I was back on her, my hands everywhere, like I couldn't get enough. Probably because I fucking couldn't. I'd wanted this woman since the moment I laid eyes on her. Even her screaming and pounding on the clubhouse door didn't deter me.

Lacey's head tipped, giving me more room when I dragged my lips and teeth down the column of her neck. I sucked on her pulse point, selfishly putting my mark on her, even though I knew she couldn't have that shit on her at the club. I didn't fucking care. She was mine, and I wanted the whole world to know it. She moaned quietly, her lip caught between her teeth to muffle her. We couldn't be loud if we didn't want to wake Diego and I couldn't be interrupted right now. I could either pick a fight with Prez for keeping her in danger, or I let out my aggression in Lacey's perfect pussy. It wouldn't take a genius to know which option I preferred.

Tracing my tongue down her chest, I smirked when her fingers dug into my hair, dragging me where she wanted me. It was always a battle with her, and it was hot as fuck that Lacey took what she wanted. I'd only let her have control for so long, but I wasn't about to deprive myself of the taste of her tits just to tell her no. I drew one puckered nipple into my mouth,

sucking harder than necessary because I was still fucking pissed off. She didn't seem to hate the rough treatment, her grip tightening in my hair to keep me where I was. The farthest she let me go was switching sides, giving the other side the same rough attention.

Her breathing went uneven when I sank lower, dragging her panties down her legs. Sexy little thing liked sleeping in a shirt and panties, giving me quick access to her soaked pussy. I wasn't in the mood to drag it out, and it took her by surprise when I dove in for a taste without any preamble. She sucked in a sharp breath, muted whimpers muffled by her hand over her mouth. Her body writhed, her hips moving as she chased the best angles. When I flicked my tongue over her clit, she arched her back, her fingers tightening in my hair until it stung. The pain distracted me from the anger, so I let her have her way, teasing her clit before shoving my tongue inside her.

When I felt her channel flutter, I gave my attention back to her clit, sucking hard as I shoved two fingers inside her. She came on a silent scream, her head thrown back and her body nearly levitating off the bed. I kept licking until she pushed me away, too sensitive for more.

I was about to push inside her when I remembered the wrap shit. I'd forgotten to grab a new one for my wallet, and I let out a frustrated groan when I realized. Lacey frowned at me, her eyes sweeping over my cock before understanding crossed her face. She flipped over, crawling across the bed to where she'd dropped her purse at the foot. When she tossed a condom at me, I raised an eyebrow at her.

“Thought you didn't like me.”

“I don't. I like sex. Don't look too far into it.”

Chuckling, I grabbed her hips, dragging her ass into my lap. I was a definite ass man, and having her on her hands and knees was hotter than fuck. I gripped her cheeks, running my thumbs down the crease. She hummed, not a hint of trepidation getting that close to her asshole. I pushed experimentally against her pucker, and she looked over her shoulder at me, rolling her eyes at my salacious grin.



“I have protection, not lube. Either fuck me or fuck off. I’m tired, and Diego will wake up early.”

Fuck, there wasn’t even a no there. Not even most of the sweetbutts would let me go to town on their asses. Lacey was perfection in a curvy package. Suiting up, I ran one hand over her back, gripping her shoulder as I pushed inside her. She moaned, sinking her chest into the bed so she could muffle herself against the bedding. Drawing out slowly, I pulled out all the way to the tip before snapping my hips and burying myself inside her again. She rocked back, meeting me thrust for thrust, the bed shaking under the force of our movements.

A quick glance over my shoulder showed Diego still fast asleep. With that out of the way, I went to town, fucking out all my pent up frustration on the gorgeous spitfire I couldn’t get out of my head. Her quiet murmurs encouraged my rough treatment, breathless begging in Spanish that sent shivers up my spine. I stupidly almost answered her, biting my tongue at the last minute. If I wasn’t careful, I was going to give away all my secrets. Had to wonder why that didn’t bother me as much as I thought it would.

## CHAPTER 26

LACEY

Only the fact that I knew he couldn't understand me gave me the freedom to beg. I'd never in a million years let him hear me say it out loud. He'd be a cocky asshole about it. But it felt so good, I wanted more. So I spoke in a language he didn't understand to stop myself from saying something I would regret. I ground my hips back, pleading for more, my voice muffled in the mattress.

Tight spirals of pleasure sank low in my belly. It felt like my body was coiling in anticipation of another powerful release. The one he dragged out with his mouth almost made me pass out. This one almost felt heavier, more intense, the angle perfect to drag his thick cock against my g spot. My toes curled, and I sucked in a sharp breath, but before I could fall over the edge, he pulled out. The orgasm I'd been a breath away from slipped away and I whipped my head around, glaring at him.

“Asshole.”

He chuckled, all that pent up frustration gone now that he was getting laid. He hadn't finished yet, his thick cock still standing tall and proud in front of him, but he didn't push back in. Instead, he sank his finger into me, pumping a few times until I smacked his hand away.

“That's not what I want. If you aren't going to—”

“Shut up, gorgeous. I'm giving us both what we want.”

I muttered a few curses under my breath, but he pushed his cock back inside me before I could say any of them in English. I let out a breath, the thick slide building that fire back up

again. I sank back into it, letting my body relax, and that's when he decided to stick his finger up my ass.

I'd roll my eyes, but I happened to like it and he was nice enough not to go in dry. He took it slow, one knuckle at a time, his hips pumping lightly, keeping me strung out and moaning for more. When he eased a second finger in, he groaned a little too loud and I had to reach back and slap his leg to get him to stop. Another reason to find a house sooner rather than later, so I could have sex without worrying about Diego waking up. It was always in the back of my head, listening for his little babbles, but Brewer stole my focus as his hips snapped harder.

The heat in my belly tripled with his fingers in my ass, that delicious fullness only multiplied. What I thought was intense before was nothing compared to now, and I had no warning before the tension snapped and I exploded, my body squeezing his fingers and his cock as I desperately held back my scream. Brewer followed after me, biting his fist to silence himself as he bucked inside me, riding out his release and dragging out mine. When he tipped to the side, he brought me with him, pulling my back to his chest, his heavy breath skating across my sweat-dampened skin.

"Fuck, you're perfect," he groaned, peppering breathless kisses along my shoulder.

This time I did roll my eyes, though he couldn't see it behind me. "Hardly. Liking a dick up my ass doesn't make me perfect. It makes me smart. Less of a chance to get pregnant."

"Perfect for me," he murmured, sucking lightly on my neck. He was lucky I didn't plan on going back to the club until Friday or I'd be angry with him for marking me like that. It was a pain in the ass to cover hickeys and if I got too sweaty, the makeup would come off during my set.

He got out of bed long enough to clean up and dispose of the condom. He was even nice enough to bring me a warm wet cloth, running it between my legs and over my ass to clean me up. It was sweet, and it made me hate him a little less when he did stuff like that. He tossed me his shirt, smirking when I scowled at him for not giving me back my own clothes. But I

was too lazy to get them myself, and too sated to fight with him. I tugged on his shirt, checking on Diego as Brewer climbed back into bed. He dragged me back against his chest, his face buried in my hair as he let out a long sigh.

“Want to tell me what got you so riled up?”

He made an irritated noise, his grip tightening slightly. “Not unless you want a dick up your ass tonight to settle me again.” Kissing my neck, he settled in behind me. “We’ll talk tomorrow. Maybe some baby time will help me keep my head on straight.”

I huffed out a laugh, letting myself melt into his body. Diego did have a great calming effect on the people holding him. I’d used snuggles a time or two to get my temper in check. Whatever was bothering Brewer obviously wasn’t important enough to talk about tonight.

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I was still exhausted when Diego woke up, so I pulled him out of his crib and settled him between me and Brewer, fading in and out while he babbled and played. He went quiet for just long enough for me to fall back asleep, and when I woke up again, I was alone in the room. I sat up with a start, looking around, my heart hammering in my chest. It took way too long for my tired brain to remember that he was probably with Brewer. I still wasn’t used to having help with my son and I was too tired to think straight.

Since we were probably doing more house hunting today, I got dressed and braided my hair before heading downstairs. I found Brewer sitting on the floor against one of the couches, watching Diego rock back and forth on his hands and knees, staring at a toy just out of his reach. Whenever he reached for it, Brewer moved it just a little farther away, encouraging him to crawl.

“There’s coffee in the pot,” he murmured, trying not to distract Diego. I hummed, keeping one eye on my son while I went to pour myself a drink. I came around the counter,

watching them both, a smile pulling at my lips. This was what Mass promised me before he died. He wanted to be there for Diego, to help me with him as he grew. I was glad there was someone who cared about him now.

When Diego looked up at me with his big grin, I smiled back, wiggling my fingers at him. It distracted him from his goal, but not from Brewer's. I sucked in a breath as Diego cautiously crawled a few inches closer, his focus now on me. Setting my cup on the island, I squatted down, beckoning him in Spanish, my arms outstretched.

“Come on, mijo. You can do it.”

He looked determined, and I held my breath as he crawled the few feet between us and sat back on his knees, reaching up for me. I squealed quietly, snatching him up and spinning around, making him giggle.

Brewer's hand rested on my lower back, putting his hand out to Diego for a high five. I never taught him high fives, but he slapped Brewer's hand happily, bouncing in my arms.

“Good job, kid.”

“What'd he do?” Riley asked as she came down the stairs with Croy. She wasn't in scrubs today, she hadn't been for a few days now, and the dark circles were fading little by little. A vacation didn't mean things would magically be fixed, but I kept my mouth shut about that, my attention on Diego.

“He crawled to me. I couldn't let him practice in our last apartment, so I've been waiting for him to start since we got here.”

Riley stopped beside us, making a goofy face at Diego and tickling his belly. “That's great. Now you really do need a new place. Can you imagine trying to baby proof this man cave?”

I sighed, shooting an irritated look at Brewer. “Easier said than done when this one has something negative to say about everything. He's the one turning everything down, no matter how much I argue with him.”

Riley snickered, leaning back against Croy. “Yeah, they'll do that. Hey, have you looked in the neighborhood Quinn and

Allie live in? Reaper purposely bought the house next door to Allie to keep an eye on her. It's a nice neighborhood."

There was an edge to her tone, a shot at Croy probably, for keeping her here instead of buying her a house. He seemed unfazed by her not-so-subtle remarks, kissing the top of her head. To spite him a little, I tipped my head toward the door.

"You should come with us today. Maybe you'll find a place too. Somewhere to get some decent rest."

## CHAPTER 27

BREWER

I was starting to wonder who the hell raised this woman to be so ballsy. She was picking at Croy again less than forty-eight hours after he pointed a gun at her. I warned her not to get in between him and Riley. She had a death wish, I swear.

Luckily, Riley responded before Croy could, though the dark look on his face was warning enough.

“Can’t today. Croy’s busy and if we’re buying a house, I want him there with me. But hey, if that neighborhood has more than one place for sale, let me know. We can look into it later. It might be kind of nice to be that close to my friends again.”

I had to bite back a laugh at that. Riley was more subtle than Lacey, but she cut a lot deeper. She grew up on the same block as Quinn and Allie, and used to be roommates with Quinn for a while. They were a tight-knit group. Keeping her away from her friends would only cause more trouble between the two of them.

Croy sighed heavily, fisting Riley’s hair and forcing her head back to look at him. “Keep pushin’ me, woman. Watch what happens.”

Lacey looked ready to protest the threat, but I pinched her ass before she could say anything. Croy would never actually hurt Riley, and with the wicked grin on Riley’s face, she knew exactly what she was doing. Before she could incur the wrath of the devil, I tipped my head towards the door.

“We better head out.”

“Hold on. Lacey, come see me in my office.”

Lacey’s scowl didn’t phase Croy in the slightest. I guided her with a hand on her lower back, forcing her to follow Riley and Croy as they headed for his office. With Riley on his lap, Croy’s irritation settled, and he gestured to the chair across from him when Lacey hovered at the door.

“I wanna talk about the club. Brewer already suggested cameras inside so we can keep an eye on shit, but you know the club better than we do. Any chance of getting listening devices in there?”

Lacey pursed her lips, handing me Diego when he started to squirm. “No. The music is too loud. But didn’t you get all the information you needed?”

“Not yet. We need to know when and where they’re gonna come at us. We want you to go back to work, at least until we figure that out.”

It still pissed me off thinking about her that close to trouble. I ground my teeth, only keeping my head because of the baby in my arms. I couldn’t lose my temper while holding him. Lacey glanced at me, her eyes narrowing, before giving Croy her attention again.

“I have to earn money anyway. I wasn’t intending to stop just because you guys have issues. But I don’t think listening devices will work. Not unless they’re on someone, and they’ll figure that out during lap dances. The rule is not to touch, but those men don’t like to listen.”

“Hold on. What the fuck do you mean by that?” I demanded.

Lacey waved me away dismissively. “It was nothing. It happens every once in a while. That’s why we have security. But I’m not wearing something to listen to them. They’ll figure it out.”

My blood boiled at the thought of someone touching Lacey. Stripping was bad enough. Croy narrowed his eyes at me, daring me to argue with him again. Fucking hypocrite. He wouldn’t put Riley in this position. It wasn’t right. If she didn’t



belong with me, I'd give Lacey the money to get the hell out of here before any more bullshit could go down.

Like he could tell I was in a bad mood, Diego took it upon himself to distract me, fisting my beard and pulling hard. I grunted, wincing at the sting, and Riley burst out laughing. "Put in your place by an infant. That's funny."

With a heavy sigh, I carefully removed Diego's tiny fists from my beard, my scowl lacking any real venom to it. I couldn't be pissed at a baby.

"If you can think of some way to get us ears in there, let us know. You've got a job to do. You can't stay glued to them all night."

Croy and Lacey seemed determined to ignore us, talking about business like she was part of the damn crew. Riley shot me a sympathetic look. She could tell I was pissed about all this, but she couldn't say a damn thing against it, either. Croy never usually let her listen in on shit like this. The only reason he did now was because Lacey spilled the beans to all the old ladies.

"Even if you could get someone else in there, they have to be able to speak Spanish. They can speak English, but when they're talking business, they only speak in Spanish."

"Brewer can speak Spanish," Riley offered. "And it might make him feel better if he's the one doing security for Lacey."

Well, there went that secret. Lacey's eyes widened, and she slowly turned to face me, unbridled rage simmering just under the surface. I'd hear about that later.

Croy either didn't notice or didn't care about Lacey's reaction to the news. "No, it can't be Brewer. They already know his face. He took over for Clink. He's at the drops. If he was there, they wouldn't say shit."

Lacey frowned. "Who exactly are they?"

The normal response would be that it was club business. Women weren't allowed to know that shit. But Lacey was in the thick of it. She wasn't just some old lady fishing for gossip. She needed to know who she was up against. And

since I was pissed at Croy for ignoring all the massive red flags, I answered her.

“Our suppliers. Until we can find someone else to work with, we’re stuck with them. We don’t exactly have a list of suppliers in the area to replace them.”

“I know of one,” Lacey commented offhandedly.

The room went quiet, all eyes swinging to her. She didn’t even look phased with that confession, like it was normal for strippers to know drug suppliers. From what I knew of her, she never touched the stuff herself. She wouldn’t have been able to afford it anyway. Which begged to question—

“How the hell do you know a supplier?” Croy demanded.

Lacey pursed her lips, her eyebrows raised slowly with her cocky as hell attitude. “He’s my uncle. My father and him were estranged. I overheard them arguing over the phone when I was younger. My father called him Mexico’s most infamous drug lord. As far as I know, he’s still active in Mexico.”

“Infamous... Are you talking about Antonio Ruiz?” I queried, dumbfounded. There was no fucking way...

Lacey hummed, nodding her head. “So he is still active. My father couldn’t stand him. Then again, what cop would proudly admit they’re related to an international drug dealer?”

This was just getting better and better. I groaned heavily. “Your dad is a cop?”

“Was. He’s dead. Killed on the job.”

I shouldn’t be glad about that, losing a parent sucks, but it would’ve been a hell of a lot harder to claim her if she was related to a pig. Though I kind of doubted an international supplier would be any easier to deal with. I figured she was too good to be true.

“Can you call him?” Riley queried. “If he’s your family, he’d be a better option than assholes looking for a fight.”

“What do I get out of this? My father worked hard to keep me off that man’s radar. Why should I invite him back into my life?”

Croy glowered at her, but she had a fucking point. He was pushing her to do a lot of shit for us, even though she wasn't part of the crew. Getting a new supplier was important for us, but not if it put Lacey at risk. There were other suppliers out there.

“The house ain't enough?”

Lacey scoffed. “That was in exchange for gathering information. I did that. I'm not putting my son at risk for nothing.”

“The fuck do you want, then?” Croy growled.

A part of me hoped she'd say nothing. I loved my brotherhood, but I didn't want her put at risk. Croy was asking too damn much. But while Lacey refused to have anything to do with charity, she didn't have a problem with demanding fair payment for shit she was doing for the crew.

“Money. Enough for a college fund for Diego. At a decent school, not a crappy community college. He's going to do something good with his life.”

Croy didn't even fucking hesitate. “Done. I'll talk to Clink, put together a trust. If it's not enough by the time he's eighteen, we'll cover the rest. Now, call your uncle. I want Eduardo's head on a skewer as soon as possible, and I can't do shit until I have someone to replace him.”

“Prez—”

“It's her fucking choice, Brewer. Unless you want her to keep working at that club indefinitely to get us information until Eduardo finally makes a move.”

I was caught between a rock and a hard place. Lacey was at risk either way. I could only think of one way to protect her.

“I want to claim her.”

## CHAPTER 28

LACEY

I wasn't sure what the hell Brewer was going on about, and I honestly didn't care. One phone call would have Diego's future set, no matter what happened. Even if I stayed in shitty ass jobs until he graduated, my income wouldn't be holding him back and he wouldn't need to rely on scholarships. Nothing was more important to me than Diego, and making sure he was taken care of. Even if my father warned me more than once to steer clear of Tió Antonio.

Instead of waiting around for Brewer to argue with Croy, I plucked Diego out of his arms and propped him on my hip, bringing him upstairs for a nap while I called my aunt. Thankfully, I had her information from a card sent during the funeral, asking my mother to call her so they could take care of her. She refused and took off as soon as my father was in the ground, but she kept that card in case of an emergency. After she died, I found it hidden in the back of her bible.

The phone rang a few times before a soft voice answered in Spanish.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Tiá. It's Lacinda... Miguel's daughter?”

She sucked in a sharp breath, surprise and delight in her voice. “Oh, niña! I was hoping you'd call us one day. We heard about your mother. You poor thing. Where are you now? Are you well? Did you need help?”

It'd been a long time since I could say I had any family. I didn't remember my aunt, my father and uncle stopped speaking to each other when I was still in elementary school,

but I missed the connection. If I didn't know the reason my parents hated them so much, I might've wanted to spend more time together. But my father's voice rang in my head, warning me about the drug dealer and his corrupt wife. I knew it wasn't safe for Diego to spend too much time with them.

"I'm fine. I need to get ahold of Tió Antonio. There's someone who wants to speak with him."

She went quiet for a moment, and when she spoke again, her voice was a lot more suspicious.

"Who wants to talk to him? What do they want?"

I didn't blame her for being suspicious, since my father was a cop. I figured it was better to be honest. I needed him to at least show up to get that money for Diego. I couldn't guarantee he'd help, but that wasn't my job. All I had to do was call.

"I ran into some trouble, and the motorcycle crew my son's father was a part of took me in. They've been taking care of me and the baby. They found out their supplier is planning to betray them and they're looking for a new one. I mentioned Tió Antonio, since I overheard Papa talking about him when I was younger."

My aunt huffed out a laugh. "Well, that was refreshingly honest. But you're safe now? And your son? Dios, I can't believe you have a baby. You were just a baby yourself the last time I saw you. Is he well?"

I hummed, my eyes trailing to Diego in his crib. If I could, I'd have a better life for him, but compared to where we were a few weeks ago, we were doing a lot better. All thanks to Brewer being a pushy asshole and dragging me here.

"We're good. They're buying us a house soon, somewhere with a yard for Diego to play. I just need to find one I like." Or that Brewer approves of, because he was more of a stickler than I was. Compared to the hell holes I'd lived in the past few years, any house would be perfect.

"That sounds wonderful, niña. You'll have to show us when we get there. I'll call your tió, tell him you want a visit.

Send me the address where we can find you. I'm sure he'll drop everything to see you. He looked for you, you know. After your father died. And when your mother died, he tried again, but you were already gone by the time he got there."

That was by design. My mother warned me that they'd come looking for me and that I needed to steer clear. I listened to her and after her funeral, I got in my car and left. I was barely an adult, just graduated high school, but living in my car felt safer than facing an uncle with an unknown amount of warrants out for his arrest. What money my mother had left didn't last long, so I started stripping to earn some cash. The rest was history.

"I'll text you the address. Thanks, Tiá."

"No problem, mija. I look forward to being a family again."

She hung up, and a tendril of doubt settled in my gut. My parents both warned me to stay away from my uncle. Now I was inviting him into my life to help a club I couldn't stand. Money was nice, yes, but I felt a little like I was diving into a lake where I couldn't see the bottom and hoping I wouldn't drown. My eyes strayed again to Diego and I sighed. If I wanted him to succeed, I needed the money. After he was set, I could move on from this place and take him somewhere better. After all, once the guys met my uncle, there would be no more reason for me to stay.

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My aunt wasn't wrong when she said my uncle would drop everything to see me. Only a few hours after I called her, I got a message saying they'd come to visit the following afternoon. Brewer hadn't come to get me to look at houses after the meeting with Croy and when I went downstairs to update them, he wasn't around. I frowned, looking around the almost empty clubhouse while I knocked on Croy's door.

"Come in."

He was alone when I pushed inside, which raised my hackles a little. We'd not gotten along up until this point, and I doubted my helping them had done much good. He didn't like that I looked out for Riley, and I didn't give a shit. I'd seen enough of women being bullied by alpha assholes in my lifetime. If I could do something about it, I was going to help.

He barely glanced at me, his eyes on some paperwork in front of him. "What?"

His voice was gruff but not pissed or dismissive. He was being polite for now.

"I wanted to let you know my uncle will be here tomorrow."

That made him pause, sitting back in his chair with a deep frown on his face. "That was fuckin' quick."

I lifted my shoulder, bouncing Diego on my hip. "He's been looking for me since my father died. My aunt never said why."

His face darkened, and he pointed to the seat across from him, addressing me once I was comfortable.

"Are you worried about that?"

It surprised me that he even gave a shit, and I didn't hide my expression. He sighed, scrubbing his hands over his face for a second before leveling me with a look.

"I know we're askin' a lot from you. Believe me, putting a woman in danger is the last thing I wanna do. But since you're the only one actually gettin' any information, I'm stuck. Brewer ain't happy with that, and I wouldn't be either in his shoes. If you hadn't said the girls were being targeted, I never would've asked. We can handle our shit on our own. It's them I'm worried about. Even the sweetbutts are under our protection when they're here. They don't deserve to get hurt just because they were spendin' time with my guys. That doesn't mean I don't give a shit about your wellbeing. If you're worried about your uncle, we can up your security and make sure you're never alone with the man."

“I can take care of myself. Brewer likes to act like I’m a damsel, but I’ve been handling pushy men since I was a teenager. I’m not afraid of my uncle.” My father’s warning flashed through my head again, and I sighed. “But maybe more security for Camille when she watches Diego would be smart. I don’t know the man, I haven’t seen him since I was a toddler, and my father warned me about him plenty. I don’t want Diego in danger because I helped you.”

He dipped his chin in agreement. “Done. We’ll put at least three guys outside the house and one inside. If we think we’ll need more, I’ll up it. Diego is Mass’s kid. He’ll be well protected.”

I couldn’t ask for more than that. I made my choices on what was best for Diego. The risk was for him. So that he would have a better future than I could offer him alone. The future that Mass promised we’d give him together.

“Can I hold him?”

I glanced up at Croy, surprised. He was looking at Diego with something like pain etched across his face. Mass said he was close with his crew. He called them his brothers, and I always had the feeling he meant it more than just a brotherhood of bikers. They were his family, and he loved them. Pushing to my feet, I held out Diego. Croy was gentle, more gentle than I expected from the rough and angry biker, and when Diego was cradled in his arms, he huffed out a laugh that was tinged with sadness.

“He looks like him.”

I hummed, sitting back in my seat. “I know. It used to annoy me. Before I knew what happened to Mass.”

He sighed, letting Diego play with the rings on his fingers. “If I’d known about you—”

“Don’t. I don’t blame you. I wouldn’t have accepted your help anyway. The only reason I do now is because Diego is more important than my pride.”

He smirked, which was as happy as I’d seen him since we met. “I believe that. Whatever we can do now, we’ll do to help



you both. Including protecting you from your uncle, if it comes down to that. We need a supplier, but I'm not lookin' for an exchange. You're a fucking person. If he wants that, then we don't want to work with him."

Diego wouldn't lie down for long, he was too energetic for that. He ended up standing with Croy's support, bouncing on his thighs and grabbing at his beard. The rough and tumble biker didn't bat an eye, his expression soft for his brother's son. I could see now why Riley fought so hard against the idea of leaving Croy. There was more to him than I knew. It didn't excuse his behavior, but maybe I was only seeing the bad parts. He wasn't as rough as he seemed.

A knock at the door caught our attention and Riley poked her head in. The minute she saw Croy with Diego, she melted and I could almost see the baby fever switch on. When I glanced back at Croy, a slow smirk crossed his face.

"If you're not careful, you're going to end up pregnant in a week. Baby fever is contagious," I warned Riley.

She blinked rapidly, her face turning bright red. "I, uh... I'll take that into consideration. Cleo is here. Were you still going house hunting today?"

She was talking to me, but she was still staring at Croy. I fought back a grin and when I looked back at Croy, he looked downright smug. It was obvious what he wanted, and he wasn't afraid to use my son to get it.

"We can watch 'im while you go look. That way, you don't gotta cart him around."

The effort it took not to roll my eyes was intense. I huffed out a laugh, pushing to my feet. "Fine. But not here. I still don't trust the clubhouse. Take him to the park or something. I'll leave my car with you."

I handed Riley my keys on the way out, snickering when she couldn't quite drag her eyes away from Croy and Diego. I was curious if he'd planned that because he knew she'd come looking for him. If he did, he was more clever than I'd given him credit for.

## CHAPTER 29

BREWER

After Lacey left to call her uncle, I got into it with Croy. If I claimed Lacey, she'd be protected by the whole crew and the charters. Croy wouldn't be able to half ass it, just because she was only here temporarily. It'd be a hard sell for Lacey, but I'd do anything to protect her, including pushing a claim. Croy told me to get my head out of my ass and come back when Lacey actually accepted the claim, then told me to get to work before he laid my ass out. I was itching for a fight, but with Riley right there in his lap, I couldn't do a goddamn thing.

Since Lacey was busy, I couldn't deal with my anger the way I wanted to. Instead, I went to the range to blow off some steam. I saw Clink behind me, but I ignored him until I'd emptied at least three clips. The paper target was in tatters, but it only took the edge off.

“You imagining Croy's face right now?”

I grunted, unloading the empty clip and shoving in another. It wasn't helping anymore, but it was better than punching my prez in the face.

“After Sammy was taken, I had Lewis put a tracker in her shoes. She says it's creepy, but I don't really give a shit. Helps me sleep at night.”

I paused, putting my piece down so I could turn to look at him. “In her shoes?”

He nodded. “Every damn pair. Both shoes, too, in case she lost one in a struggle or whatever. She also has an app on her phone so I can track her and she checks in every few hours.

The doc at the rehab joint said I got PTSD or whatever. I dunno. I'd rather be overcautious than chance losing her again."

His expression darkened, and I saw his hand twitch. He told me whenever he got too deep in his head about what happened to Sam, his first instinct was to have a hit to block out the pain. He was a couple months sober now, and he always called me or his sponsor if he got the urge, but it was still there. Tyson said it always would be.

To distract him, I leaned against the counter and crossed my arms, jerking my chin at him. "Tell me how you did it."

He explained the trackers he got from Neo, small enough to hide in the lining of her shoes without irritating her. Lacey couldn't wear sneakers to the club, but Clink suggested hiding one in the platform of the heel. It was a solid idea and a way to track her without being too obvious. I was sure she'd fight me on it, so I'd probably do it without her knowing. We called Neo and let him know what was up. He said he had a few left over from when he bought some for Sam, and he'd order more once I told him how many I'd need. Luckily, Lacey didn't own that many shoes. Probably couldn't afford it. We could at least cover the ones she used at the club.

With that plan in place, I headed back to the clubhouse with Clink. Lacey wanted to look at houses and if I got her out of the house, it'd give Clink and Neo the chance to slip into her room and put the trackers in her shoes without her knowing.

She was coming out of Croy's office when I got back. She looked bemused, shaking her head. I pulled her into my arms the second she got close enough, dipping down for a fierce kiss. She leaned into me, her fingers digging into my cut, until a few of the guys whistled and catcalled. I flipped them off without moving away from Lacey, resting my forehead against hers.

"Ready to head out?"

She hummed, in no rush to leave my arms. It settled me more than the conversation with Clink and the tracking devices combined. I pulled her tighter against me, breathing

her in, until Nevada clapped me on the shoulder, leading Cleo out with a hand on her back.

“Diego?”

“Croy and Riley are babysitting. They’re taking him to the park, so they need my car.”

When my eyebrows shot up, she snickered. “Pretty sure he’s trying to get Riley to agree to a baby by using mine. No woman can resist a man who likes kids. Even one as rough as him.”

It was hard to imagine Croy as a daddy. The almost permanent scowl and bloody knuckles didn’t really scream parent. But I knew he wanted a family with Riley. And with the way he took care of his crew, it wasn’t a stretch to think of him taking care of a little kid. I doubted Riley would agree while they were still living here, though.

Lacey’s comment got me thinking as I guided her outside with my hand on her lower back. I had to get her to accept my claim to protect her. If the way I had to do that was through Diego, it wouldn’t be a hardship. He was a cute kid, and I didn’t mind watching him. I actually looked forward to it. I could spoil the hell out of him to get her to accept my claim, no issue.

I had to mask my expression when Lacey climbed onto my bike behind me. She tried to argue, but I reminded her that she left her car with Croy, and Nevada didn’t bring his truck unless he absolutely had to. She eventually stopped bitching and agreed. It was where she belonged and I couldn’t help feeling smug about it. Nevada must’ve noticed my face though, because he smirked and shook his head before taking off down the road. I followed after him, the tension from this morning completely obliterated with Lacey on my ride.

We looked at a few houses between Lacey’s work and the clubhouse, but none of them felt good enough. I wasn’t sure what was missing, but it never sat right with me. I didn’t like her being all alone. Who knew what kind of neighbors were around these places.

Lacey sighed heavily after I vetoed the third house. She was getting frustrated with me. Since saying I had a bad feeling wasn't good enough, I was making up bullshit to distract her. She saw right through me and shot me an exasperated look.

"If you don't stop, I'm going to go without you next time. They were all fine. Why are you being such an asshole?"

"They aren't good enough. If you're putting yourself through this much bullshit, then you should get a decent place. Besides, the neighbors look like crackheads."

That one wasn't actually a lie. The place we were at was closer to the clubhouse, but the neighbor who was staring at us from his driveway looked strung out. No way in hell was I letting Lacey and Diego move in next to them.

Crossing her arms, Lacey glared at me. "And the one before that looked haunted. You can't keep turning everything down just to keep me at the clubhouse. I'm not Riley. I won't stick around just because you want me there. I don't belong to you."

A muscle ticked in my jaw as I fought back my temper. I didn't like her arguing with me and I sure as hell didn't like her pointing out that she wasn't my claim. Before I could say shit about it, though, Cleo interrupted.

"Riley stopped to talk to me before we left and mentioned the issue you've been having." She shot a pointed look at me, but didn't say out loud that she was referring to me. "Did you want to look closer to the other ol' ladies? They aren't as close to your work, but it's a nice neighborhood. Nevada and I live one street over."

Now that was an idea. I'd forgotten Riley mentioning that this morning. If Lacey lived closer to the old ladies, that meant my brothers would be only a few houses down. That's why Reaper chose that house for Allie in the first place, since it was close to Nevada and he could watch over her. At least then I would know the neighbors wouldn't cause any trouble.

“Let’s do that. Didn’t Clink find a place close by recently?”

Cleo nodded, leading us back to the bikes. “Across the street, actually. That neighborhood had a lot of foreclosures and old people looking to retire. I know the one next door to him is for sale. It’s livable, but it’ll need work done. Pretty sure the owners haven’t upgraded it since the seventies.”

Lacey scrunched her nose at the idea of a fixer upper, but I wasn’t put off by it. Bear worked construction. He could fix the place up easy. A few guys in the crew worked legit jobs. They gave a portion of their paychecks to the coffers and sometimes fronted money exchanges through their jobs.

“Let’s at least look. I’d prefer you closer to the crew.”

That didn’t sway her in the slightest, and she shot me a dirty look as she climbed on the back of my bike. “Your opinion doesn’t matter. If this place doesn’t work, I’m choosing by myself and you’ll have to get over it. I want to get out of that clubhouse before your enemies show up.”

I didn’t like the reminder of what was coming. The last time someone came for the clubhouse, Mass died. I wasn’t going to lose another brother. I wanted to drop the supplier now and take the hit of a few weeks without one, but Croy wasn’t budging. He would drag this out until he had proof or until we had a replacement. Even if it put everything I cared about at risk.

## CHAPTER 30

LACEY

The place next door to Clink was... ugly. Thick shag carpeting, panels on the walls, limited lighting, and it smelled like cigarettes. It was worse than the rest of the places we'd looked at already by a lot, but Brewer was nodding like we'd stumbled on gold. I shot him an incredulous look, and he rolled his eyes.

"Stop lookin' at the surface. I can have it redecorated. A guy in the crew works construction, so he can do whatever you want to the place. But look at the neighborhood. Allie and Quinn are across the street. Sam is next door. That means your babysitters are right fuckin' there. It's got a decent back yard, which is what you wanted, right? And it's bigger than the other places we looked at."

I hated that he had a point. Most of my complaints were cosmetic. And it'd be nice if I could drop Diego off across the street instead of having to drive extra to pick him up and drop him off. The neighborhood was quiet, closer to the edge of town, and the elementary school was within walking distance. But it felt a little like I was integrating myself more into the crew instead of getting away from it by choosing a house so close to everyone else. I wasn't part of the crew and I didn't want Brewer getting any big ideas if I chose this place.

"Maybe Riley would like it. She wants to be close to her friends."

Cleo shook her head before Brewer could argue with me. "It's not big enough for Croy. I'm keeping an eye on the house at the end of the block. The owner is ancient and has no family

that I know of. The place would be perfect for Prez and Riley. We just gotta wait him out.”

We stepped outside, and she gestured to the house at the end. It was a massive monstrosity, looked like it was built in the 1800s and was falling apart at the seams. When I raised my eyebrows at Cleo, she shrugged.

“Croy wants big, so the crew can show up whenever they need him. It’ll need work done, but he’ll leave that kind of thing to Riley to decide on. He doesn’t care how it looks, only that it’s big enough.”

“Does Riley know he plans on making their place a second clubhouse?”

“I don’t think so,” she snorted. “I’m not about to get into the middle of them arguing about it, though. I value my life.”

I rolled my eyes. I had no issue telling Riley the truth. She shouldn’t be forced to give up her space to the crew. What if she wanted to walk around naked? She wouldn’t be able to if the crew had free rein to come and go as they pleased. They had a clubhouse for that. If Riley was okay with it, that was one thing. But she should at least be warned. Croy seemed like the kind of guy to just buy a place without her knowing and tell her he did what she asked by buying it. Asshole.

Looking back at the house we were in front of, I sighed. It had potential, but I would prefer a place that didn’t need any work. I wanted out of that clubhouse. The men talking at the club didn’t seem very patient, and I didn’t want to stick around long enough for them to attack. There were places closer to my work that didn’t need work done.

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Brewer was annoyed with me when I refused to go with the house next to his crew. I reminded him several times that it wasn’t his decision, but he didn’t like hearing that. He stormed off the minute we got back to the clubhouse, and I didn’t see him for the rest of the night. Riley was in my room, playing with her phone while Diego took a nap. I relayed what I’d



heard about the houses and Croy's plan, and told her about the one we looked at that I thought she might like. She looked irritated, but not overly surprised, and she stalked off to talk to Croy while I took her place watching Diego.

Brewer avoided me for the rest of the day. He was being a big baby, and I was going to tell him that, but by the time he crawled into bed next to me, it was late and I was half asleep. I ignored him, and when I woke up the following morning, he was already gone. I thought I imagined it, but the pillow next to me smelled like him, and Diego was gone just like the morning before. I got dressed before heading downstairs, and found Diego in his high chair while Brewer cut up a bunch of fruit and handed it to him.

Watching that big grouchy man smiling softly at my son as he handed him tiny bites of strawberry was jarring. It made me want to swoon, and I wasn't that kind of woman. I brushed off the feeling, scowling as I made my way to the coffee machine.

"Did your uncle say what time he'd be here?"

I shook my head, more focused on getting the caffeine into my system than answering him. Exhaustion had to be the reason I was acting so weird. I didn't normally get so emotional watching someone take care of Diego.

"Did you tell him to meet you here or somewhere else?"

I shot him an irritated look. He was grilling me too early in the morning. I wanted to tell him off, but that would require putting my drink down, and I wasn't willing to do that. I didn't trust myself around him until I woke up a little more.

He raised his eyebrow, but didn't demand an answer. Instead, he gave his attention back to Diego, wiping the strawberry juice off his face with a baby wipe. "You're gonna need a bath, kid. You're wearing as much as you're eating."

Diego didn't look bothered by it. If anything, he took Brewer's comment as a challenge and smashed another handful of strawberry into his mouth, smearing it over his face. Brewer snorted, a soft look on his face, and my heart fluttered again. There was something wrong with me. I was

spending too much time here. I needed to decide on a house soon or I might do something drastic and fall for the idiot who basically kidnapped me.

Luckily, Croy and Riley came downstairs before I lost my head completely. Riley was in her scrubs, which meant she was back at work today, but she looked more upbeat about it. She smiled brightly, leaning to kiss Diego's head as she passed to pour herself a coffee. Croy lifted his chin at Brewer in greeting before turning to me.

"I'm posting two guys outside the restaurant. I know you said you can handle him, but I'd rather be cautious. You sure you don't want me there?"

Waving him away, I took another sip of my coffee. "I said I'm fine. He said he wanted to meet me alone first. He knows why I called and I'll bring him here after he's satisfied with the little catch up."

Brewer straightened, swinging around to face me with a suspicious scowl. I ignored him, too. I didn't need his permission to go see my uncle. Maybe I would've considered bringing him along if he didn't run and hide like a child after I refused to pick the house he liked best. It didn't matter anyway. This was just a quick catch up before my uncle met with Croy. After that, I had errands to run and Riley offered to give Diego his next round of shots at her hospital so I wouldn't go broke with hospital fees.

Finishing my coffee, I put the mug in the sink and scooped up Diego, rubbing my nose against his. "Come on, mijo. Let's get ready to go. We're going to meet your great aunt and uncle today."

"Hold on. You're bringing him?" Brewer growled incredulously.

"Yes. They want to meet him. It's fine. It's not like they'll attack me in a busy restaurant in the middle of the day. I'm going to get him cleaned up before we leave."

I didn't wait around for Brewer to argue with me. I'd been letting him get away with too much lately. I needed to

remember what I was here for. I wanted to get Diego taken care of, and I needed to meet with my aunt and uncle to do that. Once this meeting was done, I would meet with Cleo and decide on a house without Brewer's input. Then we'd get out of this place and away from temptation and danger. That was the plan, and I needed to stick with it. I wasn't here to meet someone, and I didn't want to join this crew. I needed to remember that.

## CHAPTER 31

LACEY

When I got the message from my aunt about the meetup, I purposely chose to meet in the city. It was more crowded and definitely safer than the small town where we'd been living. I wasn't entirely comfortable with them knowing where I lived. My father's warnings rang in my head, making me cautious as I pulled up in front of the restaurant. It was a hole in the wall, not overly popular, but in a crowded neighborhood. Even on a weekday, the streets were busy and there was a police station only a few blocks away. I figured it'd be enough of a warning in case this didn't go in my favor.

Plucking Diego from his car seat, I fussed with his clothes a little, smoothing out the wrinkles on the little button up I put on him. This felt more like a business meeting than reconnecting with long-lost relatives, but I pushed that aside and took a deep breath. A quick catch up and then we were out of here. I had the excuse of Diego's doctor appointment to leave whenever I wanted, too.

Coming inside from the bright desert to a darker interior, it took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust. I'd been to this restaurant before, so I knew the food was amazing, even if the decor was a little lacking. Peeling plastic chairs, wobbly tables, old scuffed laminate flooring. When I came here the first time, I had really low expectations. But the food was to die for and the owner was a hilarious old woman who didn't hold back from making comments about everyone who came in here. Usually in Spanish because she could get away with it more, but that didn't stop her if you were a Spanish speaker.

Since I usually brought Diego with me, she had nothing but nice things to say about me, but I was an exception.

Most of the patrons were a lot like me, living paycheck to paycheck and working odd hours, with worn-out clothes that probably needed to be replaced, but none of us could afford it. In comparison, my aunt and uncle stood out like sore thumbs in the booth off to one side. My uncle wore a pressed three-piece suit, his hair slicked to one side and an expensive watch on his wrist. My aunt was a little more down to earth, not runway ready, but still her dress probably cost more than I made on a busy weekend at the club. I was worried I wouldn't recognize them, but my uncle looked so much like my dad that it was disconcerting. He slid out of the booth when he saw me, and his smile made my chest tighten uncomfortably.

“Lacinda, preciosa, it's been so long.”

He swept his arms out, waiting expectantly for a hug. Hiking Diego a little higher on my hip, I approached cautiously. He didn't wait for me to close the gap, pulling me into his arms when I was within reach. The hug was awkward, forced, and I stepped back the second he released me, forcing a smile that felt more like a grimace. My aunt gave me the same treatment, hugging me tightly, but it was shorter and her attention swung to Diego quickly.

“And look at you! Such a handsome little man! You look so much like your tió!”

I fought back a scoff. He did not. Diego was the spitting image of his daddy. The only part of me he got was my nose. The rest was all Mass. I wasn't going to argue with her about that, though. People saw what they wanted to see.

My uncle was more interested in me than Diego, his gaze scrutinizing and sharp. With the career he had, I didn't hold the suspicion against him. Long lost niece calling up asking about his work would be a big red flag for me if I were him. I locked eyes with him, letting him see on my face that I wasn't a liar and I didn't bring him here under false pretenses. His eyes narrowed slightly before a slow grin crossed his face.

“You are so much like your father. He was stubbornly fearless, even in situations when he should have been more cautious.”

His comment made my spine stiffen, and it was my turn to give him a suspicious look. “I didn’t realize I needed to be cautious around family.”

He chuckled lightly, masking his suspicion with a smile. “You are right. You have nothing to fear from me, mija. To me, family comes before all else. You just look so much like him.”

I ignored that, moving to sit across from them when he gestured to the table and sat back down. My aunt was busy cooing at Diego and took the seat closest to the high chair a waiter brought out for me, playing with his hands and making silly faces. She was a kind woman, all smiles, and she pulled out a new toy from her purse for Diego to play with once we were all settled.

“So, tell me, mija. Where did you go after the funeral? I saw you with your mother, but you were gone before we could talk afterward.”

Taking the menu from the waiter, I smiled politely before giving my attention back to my uncle.

“Texas, for a little while. Then Florida. Then New Mexico to be closer to her family in the end. We moved around a lot, something my mom couldn’t do while dad was in the force.”

He hummed, nodding his head slowly. “I suppose you are right. My brother was very rigid. Travel wasn’t a priority for him.”

It didn’t sound like a compliment, but I didn’t comment on it. My mom told me the two of them didn’t get along. It wasn’t really a surprise, given how vastly different the brothers were.

“And after your mother’s death?”

My aunt straightened, making a tsk sound. “Don’t interrogate her, Antonio. She lost both her parents before she was even a full adult. You can’t expect her to have known to call us,” she scolded.

“Actually, I was warned not to,” I admitted casually. I wasn’t the type to beat around the bush, and I didn’t want my uncle thinking this was some kind of family reunion. I was here to get the meeting with Croy and my uncle, not to reconnect. “After mom died, I bounced around a lot. I didn’t intend to stay here very long, but then I had Diego and things got complicated. I didn’t want to raise him in the back of my car.”

My uncle’s expression darkened, his frown deep and pronounced. “No, mija. No one wants that. I’m glad you called us. We will do everything we can to help you.”

My nose wrinkled, but I couldn’t reply right away. The waiter interrupted us to take our order, pausing the conversation. My aunt got the same thing as me, saying she trusted my judgment. My uncle barely looked at the menu before ordering something I knew they didn’t have. The waiter looked a little uncertain, but the warning look my uncle shot him shut him up before he could comment. He scurried off, and my uncle leaned forward, resting his arms on the table as he studied me.

“So, where is the boy’s father? I thought he would be here to meet us as well.”

It didn’t escape me that he was changing the subject, but I moved on for now. I didn’t need his help, and I wouldn’t accept it if he offered anyway.

“Mass died not long after I found out I was pregnant.”

My aunt’s eyebrows flew up, and she reached for my hand, squeezing lightly. “Oh, mija, I’m so sorry. That’s tragic. So much loss in one lifetime.”

My uncle nodded sympathetically. “It is good, then, that you called. A woman should not be forced to raise children on her own. You will love Mexico. I have a home by the beach and it is sunny all year round.”

Putting up my hand to stop him, I felt my brows draw together tightly. “Hold on. Stop. I’m not moving to Mexico. That’s not why I asked you to come here. I called because the

crew who has been taking care of us needs a new supplier. The one they work with now is making plans to double cross them.”

Waving a hand dismissively, my uncle pulled out his phone. “That is not my concern, mija. I assumed when you asked that your son’s father was around to take care of you and that you had a connection with the... crew.” He said the last word disdainfully, his lip curling up in a sneer. “But since you are single and alone, we will take over your care. We are a family business, mija. Since you are not part of this group, I will not discuss it more. I’m sending a message to my housekeeper now. We will have a nursery made up for the baby by the time you arrive.”

This was getting out of hand and I felt my temper boiling just under the surface. I clenched my fists in my lap, glaring at my uncle. My father told me he was dangerous. He never said he was a misogynistic asshole.

“Tió Antonio. I’m perfectly capable of taking care of my son on my own. I don’t need or want your help. I’m not moving and if you aren’t willing to at least meet with Croy, then we’re done here.”

Scooting out of the booth, I plucked Diego from his high chair and into my arms. I was going to storm off, frustrated that I wasn’t going to be able to get the college fund for Diego because my uncle wouldn’t even give the crew the time of day, but my uncle spoke before I could walk away.

“Sit. Down.”

It was rough, threatening, and sent ice down my spine, especially when I noticed two men at a table by the door get to their feet, blocking the exit. I suddenly felt like an idiot walking in here. The clubhouse would’ve been better. Now I was trapped with a man I knew was one of the most dangerous men in Mexico. I sat, keeping Diego in my arms as I swung to look at my uncle again. I refused to let him see that he scared me, lifting my chin and narrowing my eyes. My uncle glared back, clearly not pleased with me arguing with him. It wasn’t



until my aunt put her hand on his arm that he blinked, a deep scowl pulling at his lip.

“Fine. Tell the man to join us. But if you walk away, I won’t be so kind. I can easily destroy all access his crew has to product in Mexico. I am not a man to be trifled with.”

I had to bite my tongue to hold back my immediate response. I wanted to tell him to go fuck himself. But he was willing to meet with Croy. And while they were talking, I could slip out and leave. I guess we really were related, because he screwed with the wrong woman.

## CHAPTER 32

BREWER

Croy knew better than to tell me to stay away while Lacey was meeting her uncle. He assigned me and Reaper outside the restaurant to watch over her. He and Lacey didn't get along, but he took her seriously when she said she didn't trust the man. I hovered just out of sight, watching them through the window. Reaper was around back, watching the back exit just in case they tried to do anything shifty.

When Lacey stood, a furious look on her face, I felt my body tense, ready to get her out of here the minute she stepped outside. But she froze when her uncle spoke, and two men at another table stood to block the exit. My hackles went up, and I took a step toward the door, but then Lacey sat back down. I couldn't see her face, she sat facing away from me, but her uncle looked pissed. I wanted to storm in there and force her out, but I couldn't risk a fire fight with Diego in there with her. I should've pushed harder for her to leave him with Camille.

Fighting my instincts took a lot of concentration, and I almost missed Lacey making a call until my phone rang in my pocket. I pulled it out, my eyes locked on her as I put it to my ear.

“Yeah?”

“I need Croy to join us. Now.” Her voice was strained, the words spoken through gritted teeth, but I could hear the warning there. She didn't feel safe, and she wanted to get this over with.

“I'll call him. He's close by. Five minutes, alright?”

“Fine.”

She hung up without ceremony, and I quickly shot off a text to Croy to get him here asap. He was just as cautious as I was, and he and a portion of the crew were at a bar down the street in case something went wrong and we needed to get Lacey out. This wasn't some low-level supplier we were dealing with. Antonio Ruiz was the biggest drug producer in North America, and a cut throat bastard if the rumors were to be believed. He was also a traditional kind of guy, and while I hadn't heard anything about him abusing women, Lacey had a mouth on her, and I was sure he wouldn't appreciate it as much as I did.

I watched for any signs of danger from Lacey until the rumble of engines broke through the bustle of the busy street. Croy parked out front, a foreboding look on his face as he went straight for the restaurant. The rest of the crew surrounded the building, and I didn't even hesitate to follow Croy inside.

The guards near the door had their hands on their weapons, glaring suspiciously at my crew outside. The rest of the officers joined us, Reaper and Clink coming in through the back, while Nevada and Knox fell in behind me from the front. For once, Lacey looked relieved to see me. She quickly moved out of the way for Croy to take her place, and didn't argue when I pulled her behind me protectively.

Antonio wasn't a big man, about average in height, and not overly bulky. What he didn't have in stature, he made up for in confidence, his expression almost bored as he faced down Croy. Neither man said anything at first, sizing each other up with bored expressions. Lacey made an irritated sound, stepping up beside me to make the introductions.

"Tió, this is Croy. He's the president of the Devil's Disciples. Croy, this is my uncle, Antonio Ruiz, and my Aunt Carla."

Antonio looked disdainfully at Croy. It was obvious before he even spoke that he had no interest in working with us. It would be a pain in the ass to find someone different, but I couldn't say I wasn't relieved. I didn't want Lacey anywhere near the guy.

“I believe thanks are in order. My niece tells me you have been caring for her and her son after the baby’s father died. Family is everything to me. Had I known earlier that she was alone in this world, I would have come sooner. She also says your supplier is causing you issues. I will have them handled for you as a thanks.”

“That’s not necessary. We can handle the traitors on our own. Lacey set up this meeting because we’ll need someone to replace them. Someone we can trust. Since you’re family, she suggested you.”

“While I’m sure my niece had good intentions, she unfortunately doesn’t know me that well. My dealings are through family only. Had the baby’s father made an honest woman out of her, I would have considered a partnership. Because she is unconnected to you, I have no intention of making any deals. I’m sure you understand.”

There was no way to misunderstand his meaning. If Lacey wasn’t married to someone in the crew, Ruiz had no interest in working with us. And since Lacey would never agree to that, this meeting was useless.

“I can compensate you for taking care of my niece in my absence and I will be taking over her care myself from now on. She told my wife you were buying her a house. That will no longer be necessary, as she will be joining her family in Mexico, but I appreciate the thought.”

Lacey glowered at her uncle. It made sense now, why she got up to leave before. Lacey wasn’t going to let anyone push her around, and her uncle was demanding she move with him. I had to manhandle her to get her to come to the clubhouse, and that was when she was desperate and had no other option. She had options now, and she wasn’t about to back down without a fight.

Leaning closer to her, I murmured in her ear. “Diego needs a diaper change.”

She whipped her head around, angry confusion on her face. I shot her a significant look, and she flicked her gaze towards the hallway with the bathrooms, finally understanding

what I was hinting at. She sniffed and wrinkled her nose, frowning down at Diego.

“He needs a change. Is there a changing table in the restroom?”

Her aunt, who had been quiet and subdued during the exchange between Croy and Antonio, perked up as she replied to Lacey.

“There is. I saw it when we first got here. Do you want a hand? I can—”

Diego let out a wail, surprising everyone in the room as he started sobbing. The only person who didn't look surprised was Lacey. She shot an apologetic look at her aunt, shushing Diego lightly. “Gracias, tia, but he hates diaper changes. I need to do it quickly. Excuse me.”

I wanted to go with her and help her get out, but it would look suspicious if she was escorted. Reaper, who was the closest to the back hallway, disappeared into the shadows as she approached. He'd get her out without anyone noticing.

Antonio wasn't an idiot, and his gaze flicked to the guards by the front door. Instead of heading towards the bathrooms where Lacey went, they headed outside toward the parking lot, probably to block her escape.

“Lacey never mentioned wanting to leave. Are you sure that's what she wants?” Croy was acting like he didn't know what was going on, like he could somehow convince Antonio to change his mind.

“She is a young woman alone in the world with her child. She doesn't know what she wants. She will be happier with family,” Antonio growled. His eyes were locked on Lacey's car, which could be seen out the front windows. She wouldn't be leaving that way, though. It was Riley who was waiting in Nevada's truck out back. She'd get Lacey out with Chase watching their backs.

“She has a family. Mass was my brother. That's his kid in there. We take care of our own, Lacey included.”

Antonio sneered at Croy, his disdain for us and our crew clearly written across his face. “You are not her family. She is unwed, a single mother, and clearly struggling if her clothes and vehicle are anything to go by. She will want for nothing when she lives with me and I know a few gentlemen who I trust to take care of her.”

“She wants for nothing now,” I growled. I wasn’t part of this conversation, and the look Croy gave me said I’d face the consequences of interrupting later. It made him look bad when he couldn’t keep his crew in line. But this asshole was making it sound like he was going to sell Lacey off with or without her consent, and that wasn’t going to fly with me. It was no wonder she had avoided him most of her life. The asshole didn’t give a shit about what she wanted.

Antonio glanced momentarily in my direction, but Croy spoke before he could address my argument.

“So you’re saying if she was married to someone in the crew, you’d consider working with us?”

That made my hackles go up, and I felt a good portion of the crew looking at me. Croy never looked my way, but his intention was clear. He was going to ask Lacey to marry into the crew so he could get the deal he wanted. My patience snapped, and I stepped forward with a snarl.

“Fuck that. She’s a damn person, not a bargaining chip. Lacey isn’t going to want to get married, so both of you can shove that shit up your asses. She wants her freedom and to take care of her kid. The supplier bullshit is our problem, not hers. She’s not paying for our issues. I’ll move her somewhere neither of you can find her before I let her be used like this. The answer is no.”

Something flashed across Antonio’s face, too quick for me to catch it. I didn’t really give a shit what he thought, though. I spun on my heel, storming out of the restaurant without a backwards glance. Riley was bringing Lacey to Quinn’s place for now. I was going to find her and get her ass out of here. My claim wasn’t worth her freedom. No matter how badly I wanted her.

## CHAPTER 33

LACEY

I wasn't the sneak out the back kind of person. I liked to face my problems head on. But with Diego in my arms, I couldn't risk it. So when Brewer gave me a significant look and an excuse to get out of there, I knew I had to take it. I felt bad for pinching Diego's leg to get him to cry, but I didn't want my aunt following us. I cuddled him close, whispering apologies in his ear as I bypassed the bathrooms and headed for the back exit. Reaper, one of the terrifying members of the crew, appeared behind me, guiding me away from the parking lot and behind the dumpster out back where a truck was waiting, a familiar face in the passenger seat.

Riley looked unsurprised that I was sneaking out the back. She waved me closer, tipping her head toward the back seat.

"There's a car seat in the back. Get in."

I wasn't going to argue with her. I hurried into the back seat, quickly buckling Diego in as the truck took off out of the parking lot. Riley twisted in her seat, studying me carefully as I buckled myself in.

"You okay?"

I made a face, rolling my eyes. "I'm fine. Asshole wanted to force me to move to Mexico so he could 'take care of me'. What's with men lately thinking I can't take care of myself?"

She sighed, shaking her head. "I know what you mean. If Croy had his way, I'd be locked in a tower waiting naked in his bed all day. Men are idiots. No offense." She flashed a teasing grin at the driver, Chase, the same biker who guarded me at the club.

“None taken. I’m guessing since we’re sneaking you out that we didn’t make a deal?”

“Not likely. Apparently my uncle is a family man, and he only would’ve made a deal if I was married to Mass. Since Mass isn’t around to take care of us, my uncle doesn’t see any reason to help,” I replied dryly.

“That’s bullshit,” Riley growled.

Chase tipped his head side to side, his expression more thoughtful through the rear-view mirror. “Yes, and no. It sucks for us, but I read up on your uncle. He’s got a lot of enemies. Finding people to trust with his business probably isn’t easy for him. If he only worked through family or people married into family, it would limit the risk for him. Old mafia used to do it that way, too. It’s messed up, since women are seen as pawns, but not the worst idea business-wise.” When Riley shot him a dirty look, he sighed heavily. “I’m not saying I agree with it. I said it’s messed up. I’m just saying I understand it.”

“Still bullshit,” Riley grumbled, but she didn’t argue anymore. I could see Chase’s point too, but I didn’t agree with it. And I wasn’t going to be part of it. I wasn’t interested in being married off for a deal or being ‘taken care of’ by some asshole I barely knew. I’d had enough of men telling me what I could and couldn’t do. I seriously regretted coming to the MC for help. I wouldn’t be part of any of this if I’d just handled things on my own.

I purposely ignored the fact that without Brewer’s insistence, I would probably be homeless by now. Women’s shelters in the city were always overcrowded and finding a bed there was nearly impossible. Government assistance was even harder to come by and didn’t cover nearly enough for an apartment. I got food stamps, but I wasn’t making enough to cover rent and hospital bills, and all the costs in having a baby. Without Brewer’s help, I could’ve lost Diego.

Turning to my son, I gently wiped the tears off his cheeks. He was still sniffing, not happy with me for the pinch. Guilt hit me hard, and I leaned closer to kiss his forehead.



“I’m sorry, mijo. I was trying to get you somewhere safe. I won’t do it again.”

The ride back was quiet. Riley was on her phone, texting people for updates, and Chase was constantly scanning the road ahead and behind us to make sure we weren’t being followed. We passed the turn off for the clubhouse, instead heading toward the houses the old ladies lived in. Camille was waiting out front, a worried frown on her face, and she rushed to meet us the minute we pulled into the driveway.

“Is everyone alright?”

“We’re fine. Lacey’s uncle is a pushy asshole, that’s all. Brewer thought it was better to bring them both here in case her uncle followed them back to the clubhouse.”

Blinking a few times, I frowned at her. “This was Brewer’s idea?”

Riley nodded, hopping out of the truck. I followed after her with Diego in my arms, hugging him close when he rested his head against my shoulder. Poor little thing missed his nap for this useless meeting.

“Yeah, he got into a shouting match with Croy after you left to call your uncle. He was pissed about you being in an unsafe environment, and wouldn’t back off until there was a back-up plan in place to get you out safely.”

“And he asked you to come along?” I found that surprising. I thought it was Croy’s idea, and that was why his old lady was along for the ride. It didn’t seem like him to bring her along to something potentially dangerous.

Riley snorted. “He figured you’d feel more comfortable with me there, but I also think it was a bit of payback for Croy putting you in that situation. He knew I wouldn’t say no to helping you.”

For the first time since going to meet my uncle, I felt a smile pull at my lips. The fact that Brewer went up against Croy to protect me was nice, but him getting payback against Croy was hilarious. And he complained that I had a death

wish, going up against that man. At least I had the excuse of not being in the crew to protect me.

I let Camille give Diego his lunch while I flopped onto the couch with a heavy sigh. I should've known better than to get involved with my uncle. Now I was on the radar of some rival group for the crew and my overbearing uncle, who was determined to rescue me from my own life. I'd made some stupid choices in my life, but I felt like I was digging myself deeper into a hole by sticking around here any longer. Once Croy gave me the money he owed me, I was going to start looking for a new place to live. Maybe the east coast this time.

It wasn't long before Brewer joined us. He looked pissed, and he came straight for me, hauling me to my feet and fisting the back of my hair. He slammed his mouth over mine. It was rough and demanding, tinged with anger, and all kinds of addictive. I was actually dazed when he pulled away, completely blown away by the force of the kiss.

“Over my dead body is anyone forcing you into getting married. You hear me? You're no fucking pawn.”

His growl rocked me to my core, and I sucked in a sharp breath. It was a little hard to believe, given how forceful he was in taking care of me, but I saw the determination in his face when he pulled away. He was pissed on my behalf, ready to take on Croy and my uncle, and I didn't know how to respond to that.

“Who said anything about forcing her to get married?” Riley queried.

Brewer made an irritated noise, hauling me tightly against him. “Ask your fuckin' husband. He was fishin' for a deal by hinting that Lacey would marry someone in the crew. It's not gonna fuckin' happen. And no one's taking you to Mexico either. You're stayin' right here where I can watch out for you.”

Rolling my eyes, I pushed against his chest until he released me. “You're no better than he is, then. When are you going to get it in your head that I make the decisions here?”

This is my life and Diego's, and I'm not part of your crew. If I want to leave tomorrow, then—"

"Then I'll drive you somewhere safe. You can't go alone, not while that bastard is looking for you. But if that's what you want, I'll make it happen. We've got charters all over the country. Any one of them can hide you until it's safe for you to get your own place."

My mouth fell open. It was such a complete one eighty from his approach so far, it left me reeling.

"You're saying you'd willingly let me leave? No arguments? No demanding I stay with you? Or are you coming with me?"

His lip twitched like he was fighting back a scowl, but his hands were gentle when they cupped my neck, drawing me in for a slower and softer kiss.

"I'm sayin' you shouldn't be forced to do anything just because we got dealt a bad hand. I want you here with me, Lace, but I'm not gonna force you. And if it's safer to move you, I'll fuckin' do it. You and Diego's safety are my priority. Even if it means putting in a damn transfer so I can watch over you myself."

Riley sucked in a sharp breath, but my full focus was on Brewer. It sounded too good to be true. I searched his face for any hint of hesitation, confusion swirling in my gut.

"Why?"

"Because I want you to be happy, baby. Even if it means I gotta give you up."

## CHAPTER 34

BREWER

I'd never considered a transfer before. My crew was my family, and I didn't want to leave them. But Croy crossed a line when he suggested Lacey marry into the crew. It wasn't fucking happening, and it pissed me off that he'd even bring it up. We agreed to protect her because she had Mass's kid. No one said anything about forcing her to work for the crew, and I sure as shit never would've brought her into the clubhouse if I thought even for a second that she'd be used like she was today. I was done, and my faith in Croy was starting to waver. He was all for protecting the other old ladies, but he didn't extend that same protection to Lacey.

I wanted to ask him why, but it would only lead to a fight. I doubted there'd be anything he could say that'd change my mind. I was already going through the options of where I could move Lacey, and seriously considering joining her. She was worth it.

Lacey was quiet after my declaration. She probably didn't believe a word I said. I'd have to prove it to her, but I couldn't do shit about it right now. Not while we were having issues with our supplier. For now, if I wanted her taken care of, I needed to keep her out of sight.

"Reaper's got a guest room upstairs. He said we can stay here tonight, make sure your uncle doesn't try shit at the clubhouse."

Lacey made an irritated noise, putting her arms out for Diego when Camille pulled him out of the high chair.

“I’m not letting that asshole chase me from my own bed. We can hang out for now, but I’m not sleeping here. I need to talk to Croy anyway. I want the money for the house. I’m not settling here.”

I couldn’t argue that. He owed her a lot after all the bullshit she went through for him. It’d be smarter to have the cash instead of a house deed.

“I might wait for tomorrow to talk to him,” Riley suggested. “If he didn’t get the deal, he’s gonna be a pain in the ass tonight. Give me a few hours to get him to calm down first.”

Lacey’s brow drew together tightly as she studied Riley. “Is that safe? He won’t hurt you, right?”

In the little time she spent with the crew, Lacey had been protective of the women. She cared about their wellbeing, and not just physically. She wanted to make sure everyone was happy and taken care of. She didn’t even judge the sweetbutts, and growled at a few of the guys who were talking dirty about them. She wasn’t going to let Riley go near Croy if she felt it was unsafe.

Riley’s smile was warm. She knew Lacey was only looking out for her. “You don’t have to worry about me. Croy wouldn’t lay a hand on me.”

“Not unless you asked for it, baby,” Croy growled as he came in. I immediately moved in front of Lacey, glaring at him, and he shot me a dirty look, but his focus was on Riley. He pulled her into his arms, pressing a kiss to her temple. “You alright?”

She huffed out a laugh, turning to throw her arms around his neck. “You mean from the twenty-minute wait in the truck and the drive back? It was really hard, Croy. I could use a massage after all that work.”

Leave it to Riley to wipe out all the tension in the room with a snarky response. Croy chuckled, Lacey looked amused, and I felt a smile pull at my lips. Riley really was the best

person to be First Lady of the crew. She knew how to handle Croy.

When Croy turned back to me and Lacey, my face fell and darkened. He rolled his eyes.

“Don’t start. I was asking questions. I wasn’t ever gonna force her. She ain’t part of the crew. Now if it were *your* uncle, that’d be a different story.”

Riley snorted, backhanding him lightly in the chest. “Shut up. You’d never force anyone to get married if they didn’t want to. What happened after we left? Is he going to back off?”

“Not likely. He was pissed when he realized Lacey was gone.” His gaze flicked to Lacey behind me. “Until we can figure shit out, you’re on lockdown. I don’t trust the asshole not to snatch you off the streets.”

“That doesn’t matter. I’m not staying. I just want my money, then I’m leaving this place.”

My shoulders tightened, but I masked my expression at the thought of her leaving without me. I couldn’t go anywhere while everything was so chaotic. But I’d catch up with her eventually. As long as I could figure out a way to convince her to tell me where she was headed.

“Normally, I’d be all for that plan and I’m sure as shit not going to force you if you’re determined. But I’d consider waiting if I were you. He threw out the fact that he had people workin’ all over the country for him. Don’t run off until we can figure out where you’ll be safe.”

Lacey didn’t look happy about the argument, but Croy had a point. I didn’t want to move her until I was sure wherever we were sending her was safe. Right now, the safest place for her was here with me and the crew. They knew who she was and who to look out for. A charter wouldn’t, and they wouldn’t have the connection we have to Mass pushing them to put up with her attitude.

Reaper showed up with Quinn a little while later. Lacey was putting Diego down for a nap in the guest room when he

came in, so I joined him and Croy as he gave a report of what happened after we left.

“How many we lookin’ at?”

“At least a dozen. Maybe more. I wouldn’t be surprised if they knew where she was already. They were all over the place. The clubhouse might be safer. At least there, she’ll be surrounded by the guys, and they’ll all be on high alert.”

Croy dipped his chin to acknowledge him, glancing at me. “You and me need to talk.”

I knew this was coming. I overstepped during that meeting, and Croy wasn’t going to let that slide. I followed him outside, not an ounce of regret in me for standing up for Lacey. When Croy spun around on the sidewalk, I braced myself for the hit. Didn’t make it any less painful when he clocked me across the jaw, but since I was ready for it, I didn’t hit the ground. I figured there would be more, but he didn’t hit me twice. When I frowned at him, he raised his eyebrows at me.

“I would’ve said the same damn thing if it were Riley. Doesn’t mean I can just let it slide. But I understand it. You gonna make a claim already?”

“No,” I said, rubbing at the sore spot on my jaw. “She doesn’t want that. She wants out. I’m not keepin’ her here. How long are we looking at before she can move on?”

He studied me for a minute, and I masked the bad taste in my mouth over the idea of letting Lacey or my crew go. My crew was my brotherhood, my whole damn life since I was twenty-one. Never in my life did I think I’d walk away from them. But then I thought about Lacey and Diego, and the idea of letting them go... I couldn’t let that happen. They were mine. If I had to transfer to a charter to take care of them, I’d fucking do it. Not only because Lacey was perfect, but also because I knew Mass would’ve done the same to look out for my kid.

“Until we can figure out how much of a problem her uncle will cause, I can’t answer that. Bring her back to the clubhouse after dinner and watch your tail. I don’t trust this asshole.”

“And the supplier?”

“Nevada’s making some inquiries. We’ll find someone else. When does Lacey work next?”

I scowled at him. “Thought she was on lockdown?”

He shot me a bored look. “You really think she’ll let any of us stop her?”

No, not a fucking chance. Even with the promise of money from Croy, Lacey wouldn’t quit her job and let other people take care of her. As long as she was capable, she’d go to work. It’d be admirable if it wasn’t so fucking annoying.

“Next shift is on Friday,” I growled. She told me already that she was only gonna work on weekends. She made enough in those three days, and she said it’d bring more people in on the weekend if they knew they’d only get to see her so many days a week. She’d been doing this long enough to know how to handle the crowd and keep up interest. She could probably run the whole joint on her own by this point.

“Good. The quicker we get information about the supplier, the quicker we can handle those assholes. If she wants to leave after that, we’ll make it happen.”

It was a smart plan, one less asshole on her tail to cause her trouble, but it’d be a hard sell. Lacey wanted out, and she wasn’t a patient person. But if the supplier was dealt with, I could follow her. As much as I hated the idea of leaving.

“I’ll talk to her. Is Antonio gonna cause trouble for us?”

Croy snorted. “He can fuckin’ try. He was pissy about Lacey sneaking out. Don’t think the man gets told no that often. He’d have a hell of a time getting Lacey to listen if he managed to take her.”

“Yeah, no shit.” Over my dead body would I let him take her, but it was funny to think about the trouble she’d give him if he managed it. Lacey wasn’t a damsel in distress. She’d fight tooth and nail for her freedom.

The thought made me frown. In the time I’d known Lacey, she wasn’t the type to back down. Getting her out of that



shithole apartment was one thing. She was obviously desperate and put aside her pride for Diego. But why the hell hadn't she brought up leaving before now? She claimed no loyalty for the crew, even said she hated it a time or two. What was keeping her here?

I wanted to hope it was me, but after the bullshit she'd been through with my crew, I doubted it. I put her through a lot of shit since she showed up. If I wanted to keep a woman like her, I'd need to come at it differently. She was already halfway out the door. If I didn't do something, she wouldn't look back.

## CHAPTER 35

LACEY

Camille suggested keeping Diego until my uncle backed off, but I refused. Diego was sticking with me. The only time I'd let him out of my sight was when I went to work. I knew Brewer would have an issue with me going, but I wasn't about to lose my job just because my uncle was more of a dick than I'd assumed. Besides, I wanted as much cash as I could gather before the move. It'd make things easier on me and Diego.

After a nice dinner made by Quinn, we headed back to the clubhouse. If they were hoping for subtlety, an escort probably wasn't the brightest idea. There were four bikes surrounding the truck the whole way there, and I couldn't stop rolling my eyes. We arrived at the clubhouse without any issues, and I let Diego crawl around downstairs for a while before putting him to bed.

I was looking on my phone for ideas on where to go next when Brewer showed back up. He'd been quiet since his declaration at the house. I wasn't sure I believed him when he said he'd let us go. I wanted to, which was a first for me, but a lifetime of disappointment made it hard for me to trust him. He went back and forth on being an asshole. It might've just been something he said to keep me calm.

When he sat on the edge of the bed next to me, I expected a conversation. Maybe him asking me to stay. Instead, he dropped back with a sigh, pulling me with him so I was tucked against his side with my head on his chest.

“What size clothes does Diego wear?”

Frowning, I sat up enough to look at him. “Why?”

He lifted a shoulder. “Wanted to get him somethin’.”

“You. Wanted to get him something. Again, why?”

“What’s wrong with me gettin’ him something?” He scowled.

“Nothing. I just want to know why. Is this some kind of ploy to make me stay? Because there’s nothing you can do to—”

“Believe me, I fuckin’ know that,” he snapped. “It’s not about that. You two have been handed a shitty hand, and I wanted to do somethin’ nice. Just forget about it.”

He looked irritated, but the longer I looked at him, the more the embarrassment peeked from under the surface. Maybe he really was trying to be nice. He wasn’t a cruel man. A little rough around the edges, and his kind gestures were usually more demanding than thoughtful, but he was trying.

I decided to give a little, settling my head against his chest again. “Twelve months.” I felt him shift to look at me and tipped my chin to look him in the eye. “His clothes size. He’s above average in size. Always growing out of his clothes before I can blink. If you’re thinking of getting him something, don’t expect it to last.”

He grunted, relaxing again and staring at the ceiling. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

Letting out a long breath, I laid with him for a while before I pulled my phone back out. Brewer was being sweet, but I wasn’t going to stay here. I needed a plan in place on where to go next.

“What are you doing?”

“Looking at housing prices on the east coast. I figure the farther from Mexico, the better, but I hate being cold.”

“Lemme see.” He put out his hand, taking my phone from me. I kind of thought he’d toss it away and demand I stay, or something else stupid, but instead, he frowned at the pages I pulled up. He flicked through a few of the options before handing my phone back. “I got family in Tennessee. Doesn’t

get too cold there. Not as warm as here during the winter, but unless you stick to the south, you're not gonna find places that stay warm."

Frowning at my phone, I couldn't help feeling a little disappointed. He'd been fighting for me to stay with him since we got here. I didn't want him or anyone else forcing me to stay, but I thought he'd put up a little more of a fight.

"You're really okay with us leaving?"

He made a tsk sound, and his arm around my shoulders tightened slightly before relaxing again. "You made it clear I don't get a say, Lacey."

"But if you did, what would you say?"

I didn't know why I was being so demanding about it. He was saying everything I'd wanted to hear since I showed up, but it bothered me. We'd spent time together, and he'd been quietly supporting me since I moved in. I didn't like the idea of him just brushing that off like it was nothing.

I heard the rustle of the sheets as he glanced down at me, but I didn't look at him. I didn't want him to see that his words bothered me. If he didn't want us anymore, I'd deal with that. I survived on my own for years. I didn't need him.

Gentle fingers grasped my chin, forcing me to look up at him. He didn't look smug or demanding. He looked resigned.

"It doesn't matter what I want. You've been dealt a shitty hand. I'm sure as shit not going to add to it by demanding you stay here."

"Is that what you want? For us to stay?"

I felt stupid the second I asked, but I had to know.

His thumb trailed over my chin gently. "Baby, if I had my way, I'd claim you tomorrow. But I can't force that shit. I'm not gonna be like your uncle. I'm not stifling your spirit. If you wanna go, I'll help you do it."

Pushing myself up, I shifted closer, until I was hovering over his face. I didn't know what it was about Brewer that kept me coming back for more, but I didn't feel like questioning it

right now. He gave me the choice on what happened next, and right then, in that moment, I wanted him.

Unlike the last few times we'd hooked up, neither of us seemed interested in fighting tonight. It was a slow build up, both of us on equal ground for once. When he rolled us over and covered my body with his, it wasn't to take control. He wanted to get closer, and I wanted the same damn thing.

I'd never been the type to take my time during sex. I wanted my release and then to get on with my life. I had too much to do to drag shit out. But Brewer seemed in no rush, his movements slow and deliberate. It was like he was worshipping my body, his lips and tongue brushing over every inch of exposed skin as he dragged my clothes off. Even when he went down on me, he wasn't in any hurry. He lazily trailed his tongue around my clit, teasing me until I almost begged for more. It was only the reminder that he understood me last time that made me bite my tongue. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction.

The orgasm that hit me when he pushed his tongue inside me wasn't explosive. Syrupy heat spread through my body, the pleasure dragging on and on until every inch of me was tingling. When Brewer's tongue flicked lower over my asshole, I moaned quietly, my lower body clenching with his silent query.

Like before, he used the slickness of my release to coat his fingers before teasing my ass. I could see the line of his erection in his jeans, the strain on his face as he pushed a finger inside me, and still he didn't rush. When three fingers of his free hand pushed inside my pussy, I arched my back and nearly came a second time from the fullness alone.

“Fuck, Lacey. I wanna fuck your ass so bad right now.”

A tremble was working its way through my system, my body strung out on pleasure, and his begging only made me want more.

“If you had lube, I might let you,” I murmured, biting my lip as he added another finger to my ass.

Suddenly, his fingers were gone, and I let out a noise of protest. Brewer's lips slammed against mine for a quick but fierce kiss before he pulled away from me.

“Put this on. My room is next door.”

He handed me my robe, which was hanging off the bathroom door. When my gaze flicked to Diego, he shook his head.

“We'll be able to hear him fine. But if I don't get in that ass soon, I'm going to lose my goddamn mind.”

I snickered, pulling the robe on and cinching it tightly. I wasn't shy about my body, but I wasn't looking to give his crew a free show just because he was too horny to let me get dressed. Brewer didn't seem any more interested in sharing than I was, and he peeked out the door before dragging me out of the room and closing it quietly behind him.

When Brewer tugged me into his room, I bit back a laugh. He was as eager as a kid on Christmas, yanking me off my feet and tossing me on the bed before I could blink. The slow perusal he'd been intent on before was gone, and he stripped off his clothes quickly before climbing on top of me.

His kisses turned feral, demanding, and the slow burn turned into an addictive kind of aggression that had me panting and needy for more. He flipped me without warning, disappearing only long enough to grab the lube from his nightstand before I felt his cock drag along my ass.

“Please tell me I can fuck you raw like this.”

I almost wanted to tell him no. It was the desperation in his voice that swayed me. “Don't come inside me.”

He groaned loudly, his hips bucking like he couldn't help himself. His fingers, now slippery with lube, pushed inside my ass, stretching and prepping me. The bullshit about women not liking anal or only doing it for the guy didn't apply to me. I loved it and when his fingers disappeared and his cock head nudged against me, I pushed back and demanded more.

Even that eager, Brewer was smart enough not to slam inside me. He used micro thrusts, his fingers digging into my

hips as he fought to stay in control. His cock felt bigger in my ass, my pussy clenching on air as my clit throbbed with needy pleasure. I moaned, gritting my teeth only once when the burn edged between pleasure and pain. Brewer added more lube and kept going until his thighs were flush against mine.

## CHAPTER 36

BREWER

“Holy fuck,” I groaned, pausing to let her body adjust. I was hanging on by a thread, the grip of my fingers probably bruising her skin. She was so damn tight, I couldn’t think straight, and every time I moved even a little, she clenched around me and bolts of pleasure shot up my spine.

Running my hands over her ass, I stared at the sight of my cock in her ass. I couldn’t look away. It was so fucking hot, I almost busted before I was fully inside her. Even now, I had to grit my teeth to keep myself under control. I tested the waters a little, pumping my hips slightly. Lacey’s moan was like a gun at the start of a race. It set me off, and I lost my damn mind. The smack of skin on skin was loud in the room, making me that much more grateful that I had the presence of mind to bring her to my room instead. Less likely to wake up Diego. I wouldn’t have been able to stop even if we did wake him. The tight heat around my cock was too fucking good.

Lacey was just as into it as I was, which made it so much better. She thrust her hips back to meet mine, moaning and demanding more, harder, until she slipped into Spanish and started begging again. This time I couldn’t help but answer her, my Spanish rougher than hers.

“You are so fucking perfect. I’ll give you everything.”

Her moans got louder, the Spanish seemed to do it for her, so I kept going, making promises I knew she’d never let me keep.

“I want to be inside you every goddamn night. I want to fucking ruin you for other men. You’re mine, Lacey. Every



inch of you is mine.”

Her ass tightened around my cock, and she screamed out her release. It took everything for me to remember to pull out. My cum splashed against her ass and lower back, the sight only dragging out my pleasure. The sight was just as good as coming inside her.

She sank into the bedding, while I collapsed next to her, both of us panting for breath. It was the hottest fuck of my life, and I almost wanted to tie Lacey to the bed so I could keep her here with me. I wasn't bullshitting her. If I could, I'd spend every night buried in her ass. I could wake her up with my cock in her pussy, and then wear her out at night in her ass. My cock twitched at the thought and I seriously considered gearing up for round two, but when I looked over at Lacey, she was half asleep, her breath slow and even. Pushing myself up, I grabbed my t-shirt off the floor to clean her up with. She barely stirred, only opening her eyes a little when I pulled the blanket up over her shoulders.

“Diego?”

“I'll check on him. You get some sleep.”

She hummed, her eyes drifting shut again. After a quick check on Diego, who was still sleeping soundly, I crawled back into bed with Lacey, pulling her into my arms. She grumbled a little, not pleased about me moving her, but she settled again with her head on my chest. Drawing in a deep breath, I ran my fingers lightly down her spine as I stared at the ceiling.

I wasn't the type to get hung up on a woman. I never fucked a sweetbutt more than once, and I wasn't looking for a claim. Not until Lacey showed up. Now, when I was finally ready to settle, she was ready to walk away. And because the idea of stealing her fire pissed me off, I'd fucking let her. It made me wonder what it said about me. The rest of the officers seemed fine with not taking no for an answer. I couldn't do that to Lacey. I wanted to make her mine, but I didn't want her forced. I wanted her to want it as badly as I did.

I didn't sleep much. Too busy trying to wrap my head around what came next. Was I really gonna give up my crew and transfer to another just to keep Lacey and Diego? Would any crew live up to what I had here?

Because I was already awake, I heard Diego babbling next door. He didn't seem bothered by waking up alone, and when I came in to get him, he was playing with his feet. He grinned at me, looking so much like Mass it was a little crazy. I plucked him out of his crib and grabbed the shit to change his diaper, murmuring low to him while I cleaned him up.

“What's it gonna take to change your mama's mind, huh?”

He blew a raspberry, kicking his legs. I sighed.

“Yeah, I figured.” I picked him up, raising my eyebrows as I tossed the diaper in the trash. “You gonna help me out with her, or am I on my own?”

If him grabbing my beard and pulling was an answer, that'd be a hell no from him. I was on my own with Lacey. I shook my head, gently moving his hands away from my face.

“You're just like your daddy. He'd laugh me out of the house if I asked him for help with a woman.”

Diego giggled, still trying to grab my beard. I couldn't make myself be pissed at him, so I rolled my eyes and headed downstairs to make breakfast. I was no closer to figuring out what I wanted to do, but I was going to soak in as much time with the two of them as I could before they left.

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LACEY

I knew my uncle wouldn't just let it go. He didn't take kindly to me ignoring his demands, and whenever I left the clubhouse, he showed up to talk to me about it. Brewer never let me go anywhere alone, him and a few other bikers following me like shadows, but he didn't demand I stay inside either. Croy tried, but when I told him to go screw himself, he backed off. He was probably hoping my uncle would take me off his hands. Asshole.

We were picking up groceries when my uncle showed up for the third time that week. Diego was in the cart in front of me, but I plucked him up and handed him to Brewer when I saw my uncle standing at the end of the aisle.

"I'll be right back."

"You're not going anywhere near him alone, Lacey," Brewer snarled.

Rolling my eyes, I glanced at the bikers with me and grabbed the nearest one. Bear, I think.

"Here's my shadow. You take care of Diego. This needs to stop."

Brewer wasn't happy about me not taking him, but out of everyone in the crew, he was the only one I truly trusted to take care of Diego. The other guys were fine, and a few offered to babysit if I needed a hand, but I trusted Brewer. He'd protect Diego with his life.

Stomping over to where my uncle waited, I stopped a few feet in front of him and crossed my arms over my chest. "What's it going to take for you to leave me alone?"

He tried the harder approach already, demanding I get in the car with him or threatening to force the issue. Since none of that seemed to work, this time he took a gentler approach, his voice smooth and almost affectionate.

"Lacinda—"

“My name is Lacey. I’m a grown ass adult and no matter how much you beg, I’m not going anywhere with you. Back the fuck off.”

Ti0 Antonio looked ready to slap me for speaking to him like that, but I knew he’d be shot between the eyes for it. Bear hovered at my elbow, the other bikers all armed and ready in case my uncle did anything stupid like try and force the issue. I lifted my chin, narrowing my eyes at him, showing him without words that I wasn’t the woman to fuck with.

“I take care of my family, Lacinda. That includes you. You shouldn’t be raising a baby without a husband. Think about your son.”

My blood boiled, and I seriously considered punching him. “I don’t need a fucking man to take care of my son. Everything I do, I do for Diego. Including staying the hell away from you. If you try anything, I’ll hand over every bit of information I’ve got on you to the police. Leave. Me. Alone.”

“You would turn your back on your own blood and work with the police instead?” he sneered.

“You forget, Dad was a police officer. I’ve got more connection to them than I do you. You aren’t my family. Stop trying to pretend you are.”

He was smart enough to take my threat seriously, and he took a step back, glowering at me. “You’re going to regret this, Lacinda. You already needed my help once. You’ll come back eventually.”

“Keep dreaming,” I snarled.

He didn’t argue any more, spinning on his heel and storming away. I watched him go until he climbed behind the wheel of a stupid expensive car and sped off. Shaking my head, I turned to join Brewer again, but paused when I saw Bear shaking his head.

“What?”

He shrugged, but I wasn’t about to let anyone judge me for my decisions. I narrowed my eyes and waited until he finally spit out what he was thinking.

“Just seems like you’re letting stubbornness cloud your judgment. He’s offering to take care of you and your kid. Not many families would do that.”

From the outside, it might look like I was just being stubborn. Bear wasn’t there when my uncle demanded I move with him. He didn’t know the strings attached to the deal. And I wasn’t about to lay out all the reasons why trusting him would be a bad idea.

“If he was actually a good person, my dad wouldn’t have told me to stay away from him. I trust his judgment more than I trust Antonio or Croy. It’s my life. How about minding your own business instead of butting in?”

He pressed his lips together to hide a scowl. None of the crew liked me talking back, but I didn’t really give a shit. I was tired of this game. I wanted out of this place. It was getting to the point where I cared less and less about the money Croy owed me. I would only hold out so long before it wasn’t worth the effort anymore.

## CHAPTER 37

LACEY

By the time Friday rolled around, I had a shorter fuse than normal. It was almost a relief to drop Diego off with Camille and lose myself in my work. While I was dancing, I could shut my mind off and just focus on the music and the movement of my body instead of every stupid thing going wrong in my life. My decision to go looking for Mass was turning out to be my biggest mistake. I should've just packed my car and left with what little I had on me. I've survived worse than living in my car.

I saw the guys from the week before come in after my second set. They got comfortable at some tables in the back and seemed content to watch the stage for an hour. I planned on ignoring them, since helping Croy hadn't done me any good thus far, but they requested another double show in the private booth before I could get back on stage. This time Stella joined me, and she winked when I followed her into the booth.

I put on the charm because it was my job, but I wasn't paying attention to their murmurs until someone said something about a trap. I forced myself to smile, writhing against Stella as the men talked amongst themselves.

“When?”

“Maybe an hour. We should go soon.”

“How much do you think I gotta pay for one of them to suck me off? I always shoot better after I come.”

“You can't afford it,” the middle one snickered, tucking some cash into my g-string when I got closer. I didn't get close enough this time to let them pull me into their laps, and Stella

was the one who picked up the money once we were through. I followed her out of the booth, giving the group a sultry smile just so they didn't think I'd been eavesdropping before hustling my ass to the changing room. Stella handed me half the cash with a grin.

“That was fun. I gotta say, I prefer doubles like that. Less likely for them to grope if we aren't alone.”

I forced a smile, but my mind was on what they'd said. I hadn't caught all of it, or even that much, but if they were going to lay a trap for the Devil's Disciples, Brewer needed to know. He told me he was going to a pick up tonight. He was the only one who gave a shit about what I wanted. I didn't want him to get hurt. I waited until Stella went back on the floor before calling him.

He didn't pick up the first time I called, but the second time was the charm. He answered on the first ring, a frown in his voice.

“What's wrong? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Listen, those assholes from before were here. They said something about a trap.”

He growled, and I heard him snapping at people in the background before he spoke again.

“What exactly did they say?”

“I don't know. I only heard part of it. But they mentioned a trap and whatever was happening would happen in an hour. One of them mentioned shooting something. Does it have something to do with you?”

He didn't answer me, his hand muffling the phone as he spoke to someone else. When he spoke to me again, he sounded like he was gritting his teeth.

“You need to get your ass home.”

“What? Why?”

“Because I said so. Get Chase, go straight to Reaper's place, and stay there until I come get you,” he demanded.

It sounded serious and I kind of figured he'd try demanding I leave. I wasn't going anywhere, though. It wasn't like they were going to come here. That was their problem, not mine.

"I'm not going anywhere. They're leaving soon, and it'll look suspicious if I leave in the middle of a shift."

"Lacey..." he growled.

"I'm fine, Brewer. Worry about yourself right now. I'll talk to you after my shift."

Hopefully anyway. It was freaking me out thinking about him going into a gunfight. I knew the Devil's Disciples were dangerous, the threat from these guys last week was enough to teach me that, but I never really thought about it much outside of my own safety. I didn't think I'd get attached to one of them, and I was worried about Brewer.

"Brewer! Let's go, man!" someone's muffled shout called on the other line.

"Fuck. Fine. But if Chase says you need to go, it's for a fucking reason. Get back to Diego and stay out of sight. Understand?"

If Chase was interrupting me, it meant that something went wrong with whatever was going down. At that point, I needed to get Diego out of that house and to safety. I could agree to that. Diego was, and always would be, my first priority.

"I got it. And Brewer?"

"What?"

"Be careful."

"I will, baby. See you tonight."

After I hung up, I took a few minutes to breathe. I actually wanted to listen to Brewer this time. I didn't like being so far away from Diego. But since those guys were still outside, I figured it'd be a dead giveaway if I left right after they said something about setting up the crew. I went back on the floor and did my best to keep my face straight as I gave lap dances and worked my ass off.



I was on stage again when they finally left. I watched them go and the tension in my body wracked up considerably, but I played it off with a smile, switching to more complicated moves to keep me distracted.

I still had a few hours left of my shift when Chase approached the stage. He had his phone pressed to his ear, and his expression was serious, so I finished up my set and made a beeline for him, hovering beside him as he spoke to whoever was on the other line.

“Yeah. I got it.”

“What happened?” I demanded once he finally hung up. He tipped his head towards the hallway leading to the changing room, speaking low once we were out of earshot of the crowded club.

“Crew ran into some trouble with the supplier. A few guys were hurt. Can you leave right now? I gotta go help.”

I was about to agree, my schedule was technically dictated by me, when Wade appeared beside me.

“Got a request for a private show. You up for it?”

I grimaced. I didn’t want to leave Wade hanging, but Chase needed to go help. And if I was being honest, I wanted to leave as well. He said people were hurt but never mentioned Brewer. I wasn’t sure if he was doing that to spare me or if Brewer was alright.

“Okay, one more dance. Then I need to head home. I need to check on my son.”

Wade didn’t seem put out by me leaving early, I name dropped Diego for a reason. He just bobbed his head and followed me toward the private booth. Chase looked annoyed, but he didn’t push, heading back to the bar to wait for me.

I stepped into the private booth, but before I could close the curtain behind me, all hell broke loose. I whipped my head around to see what was happening just as the shooting started. The club wasn’t as crowded as when we first opened, not this close to closing, but it was still crowded enough that people panicked and ran.

“What’s happening?” the man who had been waiting for a private dance demanded. He was standing right behind me, peering over my shoulder, and when he saw the gunman, he shrank back.

“What the hell?”

I didn’t have any more answers than he did. Chase said the crew ran into trouble, so it could’ve been the men who were here earlier. But Chase never said anything about them losing. Why would they come back here? Maybe it was my uncle. He said I’d regret telling him no. If it was him, I was going to kick his ass.

The pop of the gun was loud, and the private booth was tucked into a corner, the farthest away from any exits. I wasn’t any safer in here than out there, but when I saw Stella and the other girls being hauled off, I reacted on instinct, racing for the nearest one. I grabbed the guy dragging Stella away by his hair, yanking his head back and punching him in the neck. He wasn’t paying any attention to me, so he never saw it coming and crumpled to the ground. Wade appeared beside us, his arm around Stella as he urged us toward the back exit. With the lights of the club still dim and flashing, it was hard to see what was happening. I had no idea where Chase was. I’d figure that out later, after we got out of here.

Before we could get close to the exit, a tight grip wrapped around my arm, yanking me back.

“Someone here gave away our plan. Was it you, bitch?”

I fought against him, and Wade pushed Stella toward the back so he could help me, but whoever was holding me shot him before he could take more than a step in my direction. He riddled Wade’s body with holes and I could only watch in horror. Another man darted past us, grabbing Stella again, and they dragged us toward the exit. I knew wherever they were taking us wasn’t good, so I fought like hell to escape, throwing my elbow into my captor’s sternum and then again into his nose. He cursed, dropping his hold on me, and I spun to face him. I was going to go after his gun when a familiar face

appeared in front of me. He grinned right before pistol whipping me hard enough to knock me out.

## CHAPTER 38

BREWER

Since we knew the supplier was planning something, we weren't taken off guard when Lacey called to warn us of the attack. The crew was ready, and the girls were already out of the clubhouse in case something went down like Lacey warned us about. I wanted her ass home with the rest of the old ladies where she was safe, but she had a solid argument about staying, at least until the assholes who were planning this shit left. After I was through with these guys, we were going to have to sit down and discuss her priorities once she moved, because having her working this late in a sketchy area wasn't working. I needed to know she was safe, even if I wasn't around to watch over her.

Croy had the crew waiting down the road from the drop point. Clink volunteered to be the one waiting for the drop, luring them in so we could follow behind them unnoticed. Croy seemed pissed about that, but he agreed because it'd be too suspicious if he showed up himself. Still, he was on edge and seething, just waiting for the assholes to show up.

The truck carrying the product came down the road like normal, and once they turned into the drop point, Croy motioned us forward. We snuck down the road, coming up to the entrance of the drop point just as the other half of the crew followed with Reaper in the lead. He held up his fist to warn us to stop and snuck a glance around the abandoned building he was hiding behind, watching the drop with a frown. I couldn't see much from where I was standing. At first glance, it looked like a regular drop. Two guys got out of the cab of the truck, talking and making jokes with Clink. I almost

wondered whether Lacey was wrong until Gabe, one of the prospects, went around the back alone to pull out the product. He barely got the damn door open before a blast went off and he hit the ground.

“Move!” Croy bellowed, racing into the fray.

There wasn't fucking product in the truck. Instead, there was a group of assholes waiting to catch us off guard. It was a bitch move, and if Gabe was dead, these assholes would pay the price for that, but it didn't really feel like a well thought out plan. It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

Reaper must have been thinking the same thing because he slowed to a jog, looking around warily. I did the same, peering out into the dark around the drop point. You couldn't see shit with no moonlight around us and only the one light over the drop point. Lacey's words flashed through my head right. Trap. This was a fucking trap. We had more than half the crew in this spot and we couldn't see a damn thing.

It wasn't until one of the fuckers looking to trap us stepped too close to the ring of light that my suspicions were confirmed.

“Trap!” I shouted, firing at the asshole before he could shoot at my crew. There were more than we expected that were firing from the shadows. With only the flash that went off when they fired to guide us, we were shooting in the dark. The shouts of pain from my crew hit me in the gut and I darted forward towards the shadows, hoping I could see a little better out of the light.

A shot went whizzing by my ear and I ducked, firing two shots in the direction it came from. Someone yelped and went down, but I still couldn't see shit. I picked my way through the brush, firing when I saw a flash. Most of them didn't see me coming, since I was coming at them sideways, and I managed to get a few of them before they realized what was happening.

When the shots started heading my way, I had no choice but to hit the dirt by some brush. I must've distracted them long enough to give the crew the advantage because, after a few more blasts, the world went silent.

“Who’s still alive?” Clink called out.

I rolled my eyes. Fucker couldn’t be serious even in a gun fight. Pushing to my feet, I glanced around for more assholes hiding out, but nothing moved that I could see. I stomped through the brush, putting my hands up when Knox whipped around and aimed at me when I stepped out of the dark.

“Just me, man.”

“So you were the reason they stopped firing at us,” Nevada huffed, clapping me on the shoulder. “I was wondering why they suddenly started firing at each other.”

Reaper stepped out of the shadows on the other side of the truck, a knife dripping blood at his side. He was one scary motherfucker, and I had no doubt he got a lot more assholes than I did sneaking around like that. They never would’ve heard him coming.

Nevada helped Croy to his feet. He took one to the arm, but he ignored the pain, calling in backup and checking on all the guys who got hurt. I was about to join in to help when my phone went off. It was a text from Chase, and all it said was ‘911’.

My blood ran cold, and I sucked in a sharp breath, taking off for my bike.

“Brewer? Where the fuck are you goin’?” Croy demanded.

“They’re going after Lacey!” I barked over my shoulder. I didn’t wait for permission, or for backup. I started my bike and peeled out before anyone could stop me, barreling towards the nightclub.

Hold on, baby. I’m coming for you.

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The club wasn’t far, but by the time I got there, it was a fucking shit show. The whole club was on fire. Abandoning my bike, I rushed inside, but I couldn’t see shit. The black

smoke was heavy and blinding, and the heat licked at my skin the farther I stumbled inside.

“Lacey! Lace! You in here?”

Bodies burned on the ground, none of them small enough to be Lacey. Probably patrons caught in the crossfire. Fire licked across the ceiling and I heard the structure groan, but I kept going, searching for any signs of my girl.

I came up empty, and I was coughing hard by the time I headed back outside. My eyes burned and watered from the smoke. I heard sirens headed my way, and I knew if they found me in here, they’d blame the crew. I took one last look around, but there wasn’t a chance I’d be able to find her even if I stuck around. I couldn’t see past my damn nose in there and I felt like I couldn’t breathe. I headed back to my bike, looking for any signs of Chase or Lacey around back. There were plenty of cars in the parking lot, but no one was outside. The sirens got closer, so I moved on, parking my bike down the block and pulling out my phone. I tried calling Chase, then Lacey, but neither of them answered. They were either taken or dead, and I couldn’t stomach either scenario.

Clink pulled up beside me, looking around like he was expecting Lacey to just be waiting on the side of the road for me.

“Where is she?”

“I don’t fucking know!” I growled, dialing Chase again. The asshole had nine lives, already survived an attack from Hammer and a couple shoot outs since he got his cut. I refused to believe he was dead. And he wouldn’t leave Lacey behind.

“Did you check with Lewis?”

Whipping my head around, I frowned at him. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

He rolled his eyes. “The trackers, dipshit! The ones we put in her damn shoes? Pull your head out of your ass and focus!”

After I found Lacey, I was going to hurt him. I dialed Neo, still looking around for some sort of fucking clue while waiting for him to pick up. Please, please, please be gone. I

could chase her down, but I couldn't do shit about it if she was in that fire.

“Hello?”

“Pull up the tracker on Lacey.”

To his credit, Neo didn't hesitate. He'd been with us long enough not to ask stupid questions. I heard the clacking of his keyboard, his phone probably trapped between his shoulder and his ear as he pulled up the information I needed.

“She's on the move. Looks like she's headed toward the city.”

The relief was short-lived. She wasn't leaving on her own. She wouldn't do that without Diego, and her car was still in the parking lot. Someone had her. I only had so long to catch up before I lost track of her.

“Keep an eye on it. We're headed that way.”

Hanging up, I glanced at Clink. He was on the phone, updating Croy, and once I started my bike up again, he hung up and followed me without question.

We had to stop twice for updates from Lewis, since I couldn't talk on the phone and ride at the same time. They bypassed the city and headed straight into the desert. We were behind them, but I was gunning it to make up time. I didn't give a shit if the pigs came after me. I wasn't stopping until I found Lacey.



## CHAPTER 39

LACEY

I groaned as I came to, my head throbbing where that asshole pistol whipped me. I couldn't move to touch the spot that hurt, and it didn't take long to figure out my hands were tied behind my back with zip ties. The plastic dug into my wrists and ankles. I was slumped on the floor, the entire room rocking like we were in motion. I grimaced as I forced myself to sit up, blinking to clear my vision.

There was only one light in the corner, but since we were in what looked like a shipping container, it was better than nothing. I saw the women I worked with huddled close to me, as well as a half dozen others I didn't recognize. Probably women taken before us. The assholes in the club said they wanted to sell us off. It wasn't a huge leap to think we weren't the first.

"Lola," Stella murmured. "Are you okay?"

"Peachy," I ground out, shifting my arms and testing the ties. They were tight enough that I couldn't slip out of them without a little help. Luckily, I was plenty flexible because of my job, so I could slide my hands around my butt with only a few minutes of grunting and wriggling around. Once I got my legs through and my hands in front of me, I put them between my knees and thrust downwards, breaking the ties on my ankles. The ones on my hands came off by slamming them down on my knee. It hurt, and I felt the blood trickling down my wrists and ankles, but it was better than being tied up. I looked around again, sucking in a breath when I noticed Chase near the door.

"Chase!"

He was unconscious, but when I felt his pulse, he was still alive. I felt bad for what I did next, but I needed him to get his ass up, and it wasn't like I had any water to splash on his face. I doubted any other women in there had any experience with self defense, or they would've been out of the ties already. I slapped him hard, wincing at the crack in the quiet shipping container. A few women gasped and one sat up, glaring at me.

“What the hell are you doing? He's hurt!”

“I need him to wake up. Chase! Wake up, dammit!”

He groaned quietly, but he started to come around. While I waited for him to pull out of it, I looked at the women in the truck.

“How long have we been in here?”

Most of them frowned, and a few shook their heads. This was why my dad stressed never to panic. You wouldn't be doing yourself any good and you might miss something important.

“How long have we been moving, then?”

The one who was sitting up twisted and showed me her back. “I've got a watch on. I can't see it, though.”

Crawling toward her, I twisted the watch face to see it better in the limited light. It was close to closing time when we were attacked, so we'd been on the move for at least thirty minutes, probably more. I didn't have a chance to look at the time before that last dance request.

Chase groaned a little louder and started moving, so I scooted back to his side, tipping my head so he could see me.

“Welcome back.”

“Who the fuck attacked us?”

“Your little friends,” I murmured, checking him over. He was bleeding from somewhere and when I touched his shoulder, he grunted from the pain. “You got hit?”

“It's fine. Check my boot, see if they missed my knife.”

We got lucky. Chase's gun was missing, but he had a knife in his boot. They would've caught it if it'd been in a holster or something, but Chase apparently was smart enough to tuck it into his shoe.

"How does that not hurt when you're walking around?"

"You get used to it," he grunted. He said his shoulder was fine, but when he tried to push himself upright, his arm gave out and he let out a string of curses. It was worse than he was willing to admit. Since I was still in my costume from work, I didn't have anything to cover it with to stop the bleeding. In all the training I'd done, I never thought I'd be in a sparkly bra and panties when I was taken.

After freeing Chase, I moved on to the rest of the women, cutting them free. The one who got pissed at me for slapping Chase helped him to sit up, leaning him against the wall, while Stella took over, freeing people so I could look around. There wasn't much to it, and there was no way we could get out on our own. When I shot a look at Chase, he looked around with his eyes narrowed.

"We'll have to wait until they come in here to get us. If you stand near the door, you can stop them from locking us back in."

"Oh, joy for me."

My sarcasm pulled a smirk from him, and he shook his head. "Anyone ever tell you that you're a pain in the ass?"

"I think Brewer says something like that pretty much daily."

"And yet he keeps coming back for more," Chase chuckled, grimacing as the woman beside him pressed her hands against his injury. I was worried about him bleeding out in here, but I couldn't even begin to guess where they were taking us or how long we'd been moving. I settled myself into a squat by the door, listening to the sounds outside. If I'd been awake when we were taken, I would've tried to remember the turns to figure out where we were headed. None of the other

women looked like they even thought about that kind of thing, so I wasn't going to get much from them.

I took a minute to think, still half focused on the movement of the truck and the sound of the engine. Out of all the scenarios I considered when I got into this mess with the crew, I never once thought I'd be attacked at work. I should've known better. I should've had a couple of escape plans in place. My dad taught me better than that. The only excuse I had was that I was distracted by all the shit going on in my life. Finding out Mass was dead, trying to accept that I'd be raising Diego on my own. Brewer. He was one hell of a distraction. I was angry at myself for letting him get into my head, but... right now, while everything was going to shit and I was afraid for my life, he was the one I wanted to see. It almost felt like a slap in the face. I tried so hard to do everything myself. So why the hell was I so desperate to see him?

We went off-road at one point, the smooth pavement traded out for the sound of gravel and rocks. The whole container bounced around, making a lot of the women scream and cling to each other as we were tossed around. But eventually we slowed to a stop, the brakes squealing. I leapt to my feet, grabbing the knife from Stella, and Chase nudged the woman helping him back with the rest.

“Hands behind your back. Pretend you're still trapped, and if you get a chance, fucking run,” I hissed. “Chase, play dead.”

He shot me a dirty look but did as I asked, settling on the floor again with his hands tucked behind him. My hope was they would come inside to get him and give me the opportunity to get behind them.

I was the only one not where they left me, my back pressed against the wall of the container. I heard the engine shut off and the cab doors squeak as they opened, low voices muffled through the walls of the container.

“Think the boss would notice if we sampled a few of them?”

“Don’t even think about it,” someone snapped. “We’ve got a job to do. Let’s get the asshole from that stupid biker club so the boss can make an example out of him and leave the rest. The pick up will come eventually.”

I held my breath as their footsteps came around to the back of the container, the noise of the locking mechanism loud as they opened the door. Thankfully, they only opened one, and the first guy went straight for Chase instead of checking his surroundings. Idiot. The second one had a big gun hung over his shoulder, but I leapt into action before he could even react when his eyes met mine.

I’d never stabbed anyone before. My training with knives was limited. My dad didn’t want to teach me that stuff before I was old enough not to get scared by it. I used my knowledge of anatomy, slamming the knife in the guy’s neck multiple times. Blood sprayed across my face and body, and my heart pounded so loud in my ears I couldn’t hear anything else. I’d always seen myself as a tough woman. My dad trained me for the worst and I didn’t scare easy. But my stomach churned with every downward motion. I stumbled away when the guy collapsed, moving on autopilot to help Chase, who was wrestling with the other man. Lucky for me, he managed to break the guy’s neck before I had to step in. Chase shoved the body off him and we both stared at each other for a second.

“You alright?”

Yeah, no. No, I wasn’t. I dropped the knife, spinning toward the wall and dropping to my knees as I hurled my guts out. I heard people moving, heard Chase murmuring out instructions as the women got out of the truck, but no one bothered me. Not until Chase kneeled beside me, his hand on my back.

“Come on. We need to get moving.”

Wiping my mouth on the back of my hand, I nodded, letting him help me to my feet. My eyes strayed to the man I murdered, and I worried for a second that I’d throw up again, but Chase guided me out of the shipping container quickly and once the cool night air hit my face, I felt a little better. I knew

in the back of my head that I murdered that man. I couldn't dwell on that now. We were free of the shipping container, but no way were we safe.

The women all huddled together, shivering and looking around with wide, terrified eyes. It was almost pitch black in the middle of the desert, no moonlight to light the way. Chase jumped back into the shipping container to look for phones or a flashlight, while I moved to check on the women.

"Everyone okay?"

"Don't think we can answer that honestly, honey. Why the hell did they take us? They said something about selling them out?" Stella murmured.

Guilt settled heavily over my shoulders. I almost didn't want to say anything. I was the one who got involved with the Devil's Disciples, and I dragged everyone there down with me.

"It's my fault. I overheard them talking about a plan to betray the Devil's Disciples. I've been selling them information I gathered while working. They must've figured it out."

Cherry sucked in a sharp breath, for once looking present in the moment, and her head whipped up and she glared at me.

"You don't give information away! You mind your business and keep your head down! You could've gotten us all killed!"

"Don't blame her," the woman who had helped Chase demanded. "They were sex traffickers. If they thought they could get away with it, they would've taken you anyway. If she hadn't done what she'd done, we wouldn't have gotten out." She gestured to the other women behind her, the ones who hadn't been at the club.

"They killed Wade!" Cherry shrieked. "Because she couldn't mind her own business! It's part of the job! You hear shit and you keep it to yourself!"

Stella stepped up to Cherry, pulling her into her arms and rubbing her back as she sobbed. When she lifted her gaze to me, she forced out a smile that looked pained.

“We should move on for now. Make a plan. Can we steal the truck or something?”

“No,” Chase interrupted. “It’s got a tracker on it. Safest bet would be to leave on foot. I pulled up a map on one of their phones. We need to go east.”

I nodded, fully on board with getting the hell away from the truck. The men said the pick up would happen soon. If it did, I didn’t want to be around for them to show up. Some women agreed with me, including the one who was currently using her cardigan to help Chase’s shoulder. Others argued, including Cherry.

“They’re already dead! We should use their phones and call for help! We can’t wander the desert in the dark!”

“There’s no telling how long it’d take for the police to get here. I’m not waiting around for more of their people to show up for pick up,” I argued.

“But it’s freezing!” another woman complained, her teeth already chattering. Considering she was wearing actual clothes while I was in a thong, I could only flash her a dirty look.

“Freezing is better than being sold into sex slavery. You can do what you want. I’m getting out of here.”

Following Chase’s direction, I led the way through the desert. There was a lot of stumbling, only the limited light of stars to guide us. Chase didn’t think it was smart to bring the bad guys’ phones, in case those were being tracked too, and neither of them had a flashlight. Not that I’d want to use one. That’d be a beacon for our location. We could only hope we were going the right direction and wouldn’t freeze before we got to the city.

## CHAPTER 40

LACEY

We didn't walk for long before Chase noticed tire tracks in the dirt. We followed that, even though I worried it made it easier for us to get caught. I lost the vote on that one. Still, it was easier than tripping over brush. I hated doing the hike in heels, but I wasn't stupid enough to take off my shoes when I couldn't see where the hell I was going. Cherry tried, and I had to lie and say she could step on a scorpion to get her to keep them on. Given how cold it was, they were probably underground, but she didn't know that and I didn't want her getting hurt and end up having to carry her back.

I didn't know how long we'd been walking when the sound of an engine cut through the quiet desert. Cherry looked excited, stumbling towards the noise, but I was more wary. Chase was too, and he grabbed Cherry's arm, dragging her back.

"Hide. Now."

"What? Why? It could be someone coming to help!"

I shushed her, pushing her off the road and towards some brush. My eyes had adjusted enough to see in the dark, and there was a small dip in the earth nearby that we could hide in to stay out of sight.

"You seriously think a single engine alone in the dark is a rescue crew?" I hissed when she tried to fight me. "We never called anyone to ask for help. How the fuck would they even know?"

That got her moving, and she let me push her into the sandy divot. Hopefully, they'd drive right past us.



Only, Cherry turned out to be right. The engine slowed, and when I heard the voice calling out, my heart tripped over itself.

“Lacey? Lacey, where are you?”

“Brewer?”

I was up and moving in an instant, crawling out of the divot and racing towards the light on the road. His shadow passed in front of it and then I was in his arms, relief slamming into me so hard I choked on sobs.

“Are you alright? Are you hurt? You’re bleeding. Let me—”

“It’s not my blood,” I murmured against his chest, burying my face against him. I’d never been this needy in my life, but in that moment, I needed him to hold me. I was freezing, my mind felt numb, and the events of the evening threatened to buckle my knees.

Another engine rolled up next to us, and I stiffened, but Brewer was quick to reassure me, his voice low and soothing. “It’s just Clink. We’ve been lookin’ everywhere for you, baby.”

Tears slipped over my cheeks. I’d been alone for so long, I never even thought to hope that someone would come looking for me. I was ready to walk back to the city on foot if it meant getting back to safety, but it meant so much to me that he would come looking.

“Hey, man. You hurt?” Clink asked. “Woah. There’s a lot more of you than I expected.” I heard movement behind me as the women and Chase joined us on the road.

“Yeah, no shit. Took one to the shoulder, but I’m fine. Is the crew coming?”

“Nah. It’s just us for now. We had a bad break with that fuckin’ trap. I’ll call Croy in a minute, but we gotta get you guys back to the road. No fuckin’ service out here,” Clink complained.

Brewer stroked my hair, keeping me cuddled in his arms as he slipped off his cut and put it over me when I started to

shiver. He was warm, and it only made me more aware of just how cold I was.

“How far is the road?” Stella asked. “Some of them are injured.”

“Not far. Maybe fifteen minutes on our bikes. I’ll drive ahead and make the call. Brewer, you good?”

He grunted, keeping me tucked against his side. “I’m good. We’ll use my bike to light the way.”

It took some discussion, since Brewer was reluctant to let me go. He couldn’t move his bike without both hands, so I hooked my finger in his belt loop and followed after him. Chase took Brewer’s phone, using the flashlight on our feet so we wouldn’t trip and stumble. It made us more vulnerable with all the lights, but I felt safer with Brewer beside me.

By the time we got to the road, there were cars waiting, but it wasn’t who we were expecting. Brewer stiffened when the light of his bike settled on a black SUV and my uncle stepped out of the back. His face was dark and angry, but he didn’t say anything to me directly. He snapped his fingers and his men got out of the SUVs, moving to help the women into them.

“The hospital is only thirty minutes away. We will go there first,” he assured them. “Then I will help you get home.”

When I narrowed my eyes at him, he scowled. “I’m here to help, Lacinda. You need a doctor. We’ll discuss your stubbornness later.”

I didn’t trust him as far as I could throw him, but I didn’t have much of a choice. Croy was on his way after Chase updated him about what happened and that the traffickers would be coming eventually. They wanted to meet them head on. So Brewer and Clink would stay here while my uncle took us back into the city.

Brewer looked just as wary as I was and he pulled me against his chest, leaning to murmur in my ear. “Don’t take off your shoes. They’ve got trackers in them. If he tries anything, I’ll know where you are.”

I didn't know whether to be grateful, since he obviously used the trackers to find us, or seriously pissed off. I went with incredulous, jerking my head back and gaping at him. He shushed me with a kiss, hugging me tight before he released me.

"We're discussing this later," I griped as he helped me over to my uncle's SUV. Brewer just smirked, almost scooping me off my feet to help me into the back seat.

"Whatever you say, baby. I'll check on you as soon as we're done."

When he pulled back, I felt my stomach clench, and I gripped his shirt to keep him from moving away. He looked confused at first, but then his face softened and he stepped closer, cupping my face in his hands.

"You're alright. I've got you."

I didn't want to admit out loud that I didn't want him to walk away. I wasn't that weak-willed woman who needed a rescue. But I was still reeling from everything that happened, and it bothered me to watch him walk away. To hide the neediness, I grabbed at the first excuse I could think of to stop him from leaving immediately.

"Have you checked on Diego?"

His expression said he saw right through my subject change, but he didn't mention it. He pulled out his phone, putting it on speaker as he called Quinn. She answered on the second ring, her voice tight with worry.

"Brewer? Did you find her?"

"I found her. You're on speaker. She's asking about Diego."

"Lacey?"

"I'm here," I mumbled. Diego was obviously okay, if anyone attacked the house Quinn wouldn't have answered, but she took the time to tell me about Diego's night, from what he ate to when he went to sleep. It soothed something in me and I felt myself relax. Diego was safe. And so was I.

None of the other cars would leave until we did, so I didn't keep Quinn on the phone for long. Brewer kissed me once more, fiercely like he thought he wouldn't have had another opportunity again. He closed the door softly and Stella, who sat next to me, reached over to hold my hand.

I watched Brewer as we pulled away until he was out of sight. My uncle, who sat in the front seat, was smart enough to plug in the address to the hospital on the GPS so I could tell where we were going, but I still watched like a hawk until things started to look familiar. It wouldn't have surprised me if he decided a hospital in Mexico counted as keeping his word.

I didn't know if he was aware that the hospital he brought me to was the one Riley worked at, but she was waiting for us when we pulled up. She was surrounded by an army of nurses with wheelchairs and orderlies who helped the women from the SUVs and inside. When I stepped out, Riley almost tackled me, hugging me tightly.

“Oh my god, I was so worried.”

Hugging her back, I felt myself smile. “I'm alright. Just a little rattled.”

She pulled back, looking me over, but I shook my head. “It's not mine.” My face hardened at the memory. “I did what I had to do so we could escape.”

There wasn't a hint of judgment in her face, only calm understanding as she wrapped her arm around my shoulders and led me toward the emergency bay doors.

“No one is going to hold that against you. Let's get you cleaned up and into a pair of scrubs. You've got a whole song and dance left tonight. The cops are already here and asking questions.”

That made me stiffen, and my gaze snapped to Cherry. She was pissed at me for getting us involved with the crew's problems. If she said anything, it could get the crew into trouble. That included Brewer.

There wasn't a lot I could do about it, so I let Riley guide me to an empty bed, where she took her time helping me clean

the blood off and change into some scrubs. She also got me a warm blanket, wrapping it around my shoulders because I was still shaking. She offered for me to take off my shoes, but I refused, remembering Brewer's warning.

The officers looked judgmental the minute they came to talk to me. I told them a half truth, mostly about the events of the night, leaving out the connection to the Devil's Disciples. When one of them asked how we were found, I pretended not to have a clue and turned on the waterworks about how terrifying it all was. One of them handed me a tissue and promised they'd look into it, but I doubted they'd do much. Sex trafficking was above their pay grade, and there wouldn't be much to find if the crew stepped in.

I was exhausted by the time they walked away, and not in the mood to deal with my uncle, so when he came in, I groaned and scrubbed my face.

"Can we not? I've had a long night and I just don't have it in me to deal with you right now."

"Lacinda," he reprimanded, his tone sharp. "You were kidnapped. You are not being taken care of here. A good man wouldn't let you work as a *stripper*." The word dripped from his mouth with disdain, and I shot him a dirty look.

"I never asked permission. I do what I do because it means I can keep a roof over our heads and food in Diego's belly. I'm not looking for your approval. I'm too tired for this argument. Go away."

He sighed heavily and stood, but he didn't try to grab me or force me to go with him. He approached only long enough to kiss the top of my head. I didn't see it coming, and I was too stunned to do anything but stare at him.

"You're right. You've been through a lot. You need your rest. I'll give you a few days to recover. It will give you the time to see that I am right. You deserve better than this place. And so does your son. Think about that."

## CHAPTER 41

BREWER

Chase was in no condition to join us, so we forced him to go with Lacey and the girls. He wasn't happy about it, but the fucker was still bleeding and pale. He needed to see Doc. He described the location of where they'd escaped and how far they walked before we caught up with them and climbed into the back of an SUV, a pretty little thing ready and waiting to help him. While I settled Lacey enough to get her moving, Clink called Croy.

Clink stepped back when the SUVs pulled away and hung up his phone, shoving it into his pocket. He looked grim, which wasn't like him.

"What is it?"

"We lost two guys in the firefight. Buzz made it to the hospital, but he lost too much blood."

"Who else?" It hurt to think about losing our brothers, but with the life we led, it happened more than we wanted.

"Gabe. I told him not to open that truck alone, we knew we were headed into a trap. Little shit didn't listen. He was dead before he hit the ground."

Clink's voice was choked, and I could tell he was blaming himself. Gabe was just a prospect and Clink was supposed to be in charge at the scene. But it was always going to be someone. They were hiding back there so they could take the crew by surprise. If Gabe hadn't gone off on his own, they would've mowed down everyone who was standing nearby. It didn't make his loss any less painful, but at least he saved lives in the process.

Gripping Clink's shoulder, I gave him my support while we both took a minute to remember our fallen brothers. There would be a funeral, and probably a party to celebrate them, but for now, we stayed quiet.

"Fuck, I need a hit," Clink finally admitted.

"Why don't you call Tyson? I'll keep an eye out for the crew."

Sucking in a slow breath, he nodded, moving to lean against his bike as he called his sponsor. Clink was a recovering addict. This was the last thing he needed to deal with, but he had a good support system. I'd tell his old lady when we got back to keep an eye on him and I'd watch his back myself when I could.

Croy and the crew showed up about an hour later. He was full-blown furious and out for blood, already snarling before he even shut off his bike.

"Where?"

I pointed down the path the girls had walked up. "A few miles that way. Chase said there's a semi with a shipping container and two dead in the back."

His eyes narrowed slightly. "He's alive?"

Dipping my chin, I sighed. "Hurt, but alive. Took one to the shoulder. I sent him with Lacey and the rest of the women who were taken to the hospital. I already let Doc know they were headed his way."

The fury faded for a second, the relief cutting through the tension like a knife. He drew in a deep breath, settling his temper a little.

"Lacey?"

"She looks okay. A little freaked out."

Croy nodded. There wasn't much else to say about it right now. I was almost desperate to head to the hospital so I could make sure Lacey was truly okay. She could be in shock and not even notice. But I wasn't a damn doctor, and we needed to be here.

“Alright. Let’s head to the drop site. I wanna be there if Eduardo shows up himself. If he doesn’t, at least we can remove some fuckers from our territory who don’t belong here. They came onto our turf, they’re going to face the consequences.”

The rumble of engines was loud in the quiet desert. We followed the tire tracks to a small clearing in the middle of nowhere. We were far enough from the border to not worry about border control, but close enough to know where the truck was headed next. We parked our bikes nearby, but out of sight. Croy climbed into the shipping container, looking to reverse the trap the fuckers played on us while the rest of us stayed out of sight.

While we were waiting, I got a text from Riley, and relief slammed into me hard.

“You okay?” Knox whispered. He was closest to me, his eyes scanning the desert for any sign of Eduardo or his crew.

“Yeah. Just a message from Riley. Lacey’s alright. Resting now.”

“Thank fuck for that. Getting a little sick of these assholes going after our women, though. Fucking pussies.”

Yeah, no shit. Every one of the girls had bad luck like that. Three were targeted by Hammer, one by her fucked up ex, and now Lacey. Something had to change. They shouldn’t be targeted for our shit.

While I considered the options, we waited restlessly in the dark. It took hours before someone finally showed up. A pack of SUVs came from the south, stopping behind the truck, all lights pointed at the container door. Doors open and closed, one slamming roughly as a familiar voice bitched and complained.

“I told them not to touch the product. If they think I won’t cut their dicks off for this—” Eduardo snarled, heading straight for the container. There were maybe half a dozen guys with him, and none of them even glanced around for potential enemies. Fucking idiots. It worked in our favor, though. We



moved through the shadows, surrounding them on all sides while Eduardo barked at two of them to open the container door.

Someone stepped on a twig right as the shipping container door swung open, finally alerting the idiots that they weren't alone. I aimed for their knees, hoping for at least a few to bring back to the gas station. Sharp cries cut through the air as they collapsed one by one, until only Eduardo was left, his hands in the air with Croy's gun pressed against his forehead.

Eduardo turned on the charm, letting out a nervous laugh as he edged back. "Croy! Mi amigo! What— What are you doing here?"

"You made a mistake tonight, Eduardo."

"I-I don't know what you're talking about, my friend. Did something happen? I can assure you, I—"

"Cut the shit, asshole," Clink snarled. We all stepped closer and Eduardo started sweating when he realized we had him surrounded. A few guys got closer, kicking guns away from the guys on the ground. At least a couple were groaning, so we got lucky. I didn't want them dying too quickly. They had to pay for what they did to Buzz and Gabe. And Lacey.

"Whatever happened, I promise I had nothing to do with it. My family has worked with you for years. I—"

"Your father worked with us. He was a smart man, knew not to fuck with me. You came for my crew, Eduardo. I'm going to send you back to him in pieces."

Eduardo lurched, trying to run, but there was nowhere for him to go. He tried to escape between a few guys, but they shoved him back and he tripped over his fallen men and landed on his ass. Before he could do something stupid and reach for a gun, I stepped forward and kicked him in the face, knocking his ass out.

"If you killed him, I'm gonna hurt you," Croy growled.

Rolling my eyes, I leaned to check his pulse. "He's not fucking dead. But he will be. He was here to pick up Lacey."

Croy grumbled his acknowledgement, jerking his chin at one of the SUVs. “They probably have ties and shit for the women in there. Let’s get them to the gas station. I’m going to make sure everyone knows what will happen to them if they fuck with us again.”

His words were foreboding, and it made me glad I was on his side. Croy wasn’t a man to be trifled with. And considering the amount of people hurt by this asshole’s dumbass decisions, he was going to make a goddamn statement. He might even let one of them live just to spread the message.

Most of the crew was here with us. Whoever wasn’t here was in the hospital or guarding the girls and the clubhouse. We were stretched thin at this point, and we still had Lacey’s uncle and Eduardo’s old man to deal with. While the guys started zip tying our captives, I came to stand beside Croy with a frown.

“We might need to call in reinforcements.”

He made an irritated noise and took a few minutes before he responded. “Make it happen.”

Nodding, I headed for Knox. He was the Secretary, he was the one who’d contact the charters and ask them to join us. Croy didn’t like calling them in unless he absolutely had to, but with the hit we took, we couldn’t afford to avoid it. We helped the charters when they needed us, and they did the same. They wouldn’t ignore a call to arms.

I shadowed Knox to the main road so he could have service to make the call. We wouldn’t be going anywhere alone until we knew we had Eduardo and his fucking crew handled. We already lost brothers in this fight. We weren’t losing anymore.

Knox didn’t take long and by the time he finished up, the crew was on the move. We followed the SUV driven by one of our guys all the way to the gas station and by the time we felt satisfied they paid for their crimes against us, the sun was coming up. There was still a lot to do, including calling Eduardo’s old man, but Croy decided to give everyone a break before getting back to it. We had heavy hearts for our loss and blood on our hands from revenge, and we all needed time to

recuperate. I got on my bike and headed for the hospital. I wasn't going to get any fucking sleep until Lacey was in my arms again.

## CHAPTER 42

LACEY

I didn't want to spend the night in the hospital. Aside from a bump on my head from where they pistol whipped me, I wasn't hurt. But Riley insisted and had me admitted. Without a phone to call for a ride or cash for a taxi, I wasn't going anywhere without her help. She called Quinn for me on video chat so that I could see Diego, and Quinn promised to keep him in the room with her. There wasn't much else I could do, so I gave in and tried to get some rest.

Sleep was hard to come by, though. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw the shooters in the club, the terrified faces of my coworkers as they were dragged off. Wade's shocked expression as he was shot. The same surprised look on the guy I killed. I would drift off and wake up not long later, gasping and sweating. I gave up after a while and turned on the little tv in the corner, flipping through channels for something mindless to watch to keep me occupied.

I was exhausted and fighting sleep when Riley poked her head in. She gave me a sympathetic look when she saw me awake and stepped inside.

"I told you that you needed to stay."

I flashed her a flat look that made her snicker, but didn't respond. I was too tired to argue right now.

"Are you up for a visitor?"

She pushed the door open a little more, and I gasped when Brewer stepped inside. And he wasn't alone. He had Diego cradled in his arms, fast asleep. I reached for him, choking on a sob, and pulled him against my chest the second I could.

“Figured he’d make you feel better than I could,” Brewer murmured, sitting on the edge of my bed. He watched us with a soft smile that almost looked sad, his hand coming to gently rest on Diego’s belly.

“We got the asshole. Once we know where to avoid your uncle, you’ll be free to go.”

It was everything I wanted to hear since the day he showed up in my life. I’d have my freedom, take Diego somewhere safe, and live my life without having to argue with anyone about how I did it. I opened my mouth to acknowledge him, to ask where he thought I might be able to go, but the words that fell out of my mouth surprised even me.

“I don’t want to leave.”

His head jerked up, and he frowned at me. “What are you talkin’ about?”

I felt stupid when tears burned in the back of my eyes and a lump formed in my throat. I could count the amount of times I cried in the past decade on one hand. Usually because someone close to me died. But no one was fucking dead, and I was still fighting back sobs.

“When I was out there... you were the only one I wanted to see. I still don’t like you. You’re cocky and demanding and probably a misogynist with the bullshit ideas you have about being in charge. But I still want you. Which is fucking stupid, I know. Your red flags are the size of Texas.”

He snorted, his eyes softening. “I’m not—”

“Shut up, you so are. You’re like a caveman. You literally dragged me back to your cave and tried demanding I stay home to take care of the children. It’s gross.”

He licked his lips, looking like he was fighting back his amusement. It was annoying, and I wanted to hit him, but with Diego in my arms, I wasn’t going to risk waking him just because Brewer was annoying. But his teasing grin did help a little. The urge to cry settled, and I sucked in a deep breath, looking down at my son.

“You’re the only person I ever truly trusted with Diego. Even babysitters, I worried the whole time we were apart. Not with you. I knew you’d take care of him. And when I thought I was going to die, I never even for a second worried if he’d be okay because I knew you’d be there.” Lifting my gaze, I locked eyes with him. “My son is my everything, Brewer. I don’t... I don’t want to raise him alone. He deserves better.”

“So what are you sayin’, baby? You want me to transfer? Go with you? Because I’ll do it.”

Pressing my lips together, I studied him. He looked like he was being honest, and I didn’t doubt him, but I could see the pain underneath. He didn’t want to go. And I wasn’t going to make him. Unlike him, I wasn’t an asshole who forced people to move when they weren’t ready.

“No. This is your home. Your crew. And even though they can’t stand me, they still came for me and dealt with the asshole who took me. We’re safer here than on our own. Besides, Diego will ask about his daddy eventually. He should hear about him from the people who loved him most.”

Brewer didn’t get all emotional, thank god. He leaned forward, pressing his forehead against mine, and sighed.

“I’ll make sure you don’t regret it, baby. Anything you want, it’s yours.”

I pursed my lips, raising my eyebrows. “Pretty sure Croy is the one buying me a house, but okay.”

That dragged a smile from him, and he rolled his eyes. “You’re such a pain in my ass.”

I hummed, leaning to rest my head against his shoulder. “You love me anyway.”

“Yeah, baby. I really do.”

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I finally got some sleep with Brewer and Diego around. Brewer took over holding Diego, getting comfortable in the

chair next to mine with his eyes on the tv, and I felt safe enough to drift off. I woke again to some pokes and prods as a nurse who wasn't Riley came in to check my blood pressure. She flashed me an apologetic smile.

“Sorry for waking you. I'll be done in a minute and you can get some more sleep. The doctor will come see you probably around lunch. If he thinks you're good to go, you'll be discharged after that.”

Frowning, I looked around the quiet room. “Where—”

“Your husband took your son downstairs for some food. He was getting fussy. They should be back soon.”

The word husband almost made me snort. I didn't argue with it, though. I didn't care either way. Marriage never really crossed my mind. I'd been in survival mode since my parents died. Even now, I still didn't think much of it. It was a piece of paper. I had everything I needed without it.

The nurse didn't stick around long. Long enough to get my vitals and make sure I didn't need anything. She mentioned something about food being brought to my room, but I was too tired to be hungry. I drifted off again soon after she left and woke up a few hours later to my favorite sound in the world.

Diego was babbling, and I heard Brewer grunt, huffing out a laugh. “What's with you and my beard, kid?”

“It's a novelty,” I replied. “He's mostly been around women his whole life. He's never seen one before.”

Brewer was detangling Diego's fingers from his beard when I spoke. His gaze was soft, not a hint of annoyance at the pain, and when he finally got free, he smiled at me.

“How ya feelin', beautiful?”

I scoffed, running my hand over my hair. “I seriously doubt I look good right now. Being kidnapped doesn't really do good things for your looks.”

To his credit, Brewer didn't start acting funny with my dark humor. Points to him. If he started babying me, I'd get

really irritated. Instead, he snorted and stood, plopping Diego in my lap.

“You could do a mud run and we’d still think you’re gorgeous, baby. Look at him. He isn’t scared of your rat’s nest.”

I gasped, shooting him an incredulous look, and his teasing grin made me laugh. “You’re such an asshole.”

He made things easier on me without coddling. He teased me and answered my questions honestly about what had happened the night before. Most of it I knew from Chase and from what the kidnappers said, but Brewer filled in the blanks and it made me feel better that the asshole who did this was dead.

“Are you supposed to be telling me this? Isn’t it ‘club business’?” I made quotes with my fingers.

“It is. But you were hurt working for us. Just because you aren’t wearing a cut doesn’t mean you weren’t a part of it,” Croy answered before Brewer could as he and Riley stepped into the room. She made a beeline for Diego, making grabby hands until I handed him over. I trusted Brewer the most with my son, but I was getting more comfortable with the old ladies in the crew. They were kind and loving to Diego and I worried a little less knowing he was with them.

“Besides, Croy knew if he and Brewer didn’t fill you in, I would,” Riley commented, bouncing Diego on her hip.

Brewer leaned back in his chair, raising an eyebrow at Croy. “Thought it was club business?”

Croy gave him a flat look. “You try keepin’ that shit from your ol’ lady.”

Riley leaned closer to mock whisper to me. “I’ve got an excellent way of getting him to talk,” she winked.

I chuckled. I could only imagine. My room was across the hall from theirs. I’d heard them once or twice when I got home from work. They weren’t even trying to be discreet about it.



Croy cleared his throat, drawing my attention back to him. “Chase gave me what he could about what happened. Think you can give me your side of it?”

Drawing in a breath, I let it out slowly. It still wasn't easy to think about, but with Brewer holding my hand and Diego nearby, I let go of the fear. It happened, I got through it, I'd need to get over it eventually. I went through the night before, from my shift to the attack, all the way until Brewer found us in the desert. I still needed to talk to him about the trackers in my shoes, but I didn't really have room to argue against it right now. Who knew what would've happened if he hadn't been that much of an asshole.

Croy nodded along, listening intently, and Brewer didn't seem surprised by any of it. Riley did, and she frowned as she tipped her head at me.

“You knew how to get out of zip ties on your own? How?”

“My dad taught me when I was a kid. He was a cop and a little paranoid. He started drills with me when I was like six.”

Her eyebrows flew up. “Your dad is a cop?”

“Was,” I corrected. “He died when I was thirteen. Mom signed me up for self-defense classes after we moved, so I never really lost the lessons he taught me. I stopped going once she died, but I still remembered it.”

Croy looked pensive. “Think you'd be willing to teach the girls?”

I bobbed my head, glad they didn't hyper fixate on the whole dead parents thing. Yes, it sucked, and I wish it didn't happen, but I didn't like to dwell on it. Moping wouldn't bring them back, and Dad always told me to keep moving forward.

“I can do that. Not at the clubhouse. Misogynistic comments aren't going to give them any confidence.”

“They can practice at our place,” Brewer interjected.

Riley looked surprised and elated. “So you're staying, then?”

He raised an eyebrow at me, still giving me the option of saying no. If I hadn't already decided to stay, that alone would have cinched it for me. He wasn't going to force me. This was our decision to make together.

“Yeah. As long as *someone* stops being a jerk and lets me pick the house I want.”

Brewer didn't even look ashamed, a lazy grin on his face. “I will. When you pick the right one.”

“I'm seriously regretting agreeing to stay now.”

“I love you too, baby.”

## CHAPTER 43

BREWER

Doc kept Lacey overnight because he was worried about her mental health. He didn't know how tough my old lady was. I saw flashes here and there, where she struggled with what happened. Taking a life wasn't easy, especially the first time, and she'd need some time to get over that. But she wasn't going to let the attack keep her down for long. She left the hospital with her head held high and a spine of fucking steel.

Before she left, she stopped to check in on her coworkers. The injuries they got were minimal, mostly bumps and bruises from being manhandled. One of them looked wary when Lacey approached, but Lacey didn't comment on it.

"You okay?"

The woman scowled. "What do you think?"

"Cherry, I—"

"I didn't say anything," she snapped. "What good would it have done? The cops don't see us as any better than those assholes you were selling information to. I'm not working with jerks who can't respect me. So you can stow your bullshit concern."

I frowned at her vitriol, but Lacey didn't even blink. She sighed.

"I'm sorry. For getting you involved. I never intended for that to happen. They were supposed to go for the clubhouse, not for my work. That's what they said, anyway."

"I know," the woman growled. "I heard them. You hear a lot of shit as a stripper. But you don't tell people. That's how

you end up dead in a ditch somewhere.”

After one more apology, Lacey left the woman alone. She didn't accept the apology, and she looked pissed, but Lacey wasn't about to grovel. I wouldn't let her, even if she tried. It shouldn't have happened. We should've done better. And I'd protect her better from here on out.

Lacey sighed as she stepped outside, closing her eyes to enjoy the sun on her face. While she took a minute to just breathe, I studied her. She was still perfect, even tousled and dirty and fresh out of the hospital. And stronger than I ever imagined. I couldn't imagine anyone more amazing than her.

“Lace.”

She blinked, looking over her shoulder at me, a relaxed smile on her lips. “Hmm?”

“Say you'll be my ol' lady. Let me claim you.”

Her nose wrinkled. She already made comments about the misogynist crap, but it wasn't like that. It was a title, so the rest of the world knew she was mine and what I'd do to protect her. To protect both of them.

Diego blew out a raspberry, and I rolled my eyes. “Come on, little man. You're supposed to be helpin' me out.”

He giggled, not a care in the world for what I wanted. Just like his daddy, always messing with me. I gave him a mock scowl, which didn't phase him in the slightest. He just grabbed at my face. I just barely kept my beard out of his reach. I knew better by now.

Lacey's light chuckle drew my attention. She moved closer, running her finger through Diego's hair. With her heels on, she was almost as tall as me, and when I cupped her cheek with my hand, she didn't have to look up to lock eyes with me.

“Fine. But if you try anything—”

I didn't let her finish, claiming her mouth roughly and yanking her closer. She sank into it, one hand fisted on my cut to keep me close. I would've kissed her all damn day if I wasn't interrupted by tiny fingers in my beard. I grunted and

Lacey burst out laughing, pulling Diego away and back into her arms.

“Don’t worry, mijo. You’re still my favorite.”

I didn’t even argue that. I didn’t expect anything less. Diego was her priority. They both were mine. I could handle coming second to him, as long as I was in the damn line up. I put my hand on Lacey’s back, leading her down to where Nevada’s truck was waiting.

“What happened to my car?”

“Don’t know. I couldn’t get near the strip club since it was crawling with pigs. I’ll find out later.”

She didn’t argue with me, which was refreshing, and instead of sitting in back with Diego, she climbed in front with me and held my hand the whole way back.

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LACEY

As much as I wanted to say the worst was over, the peace only lasted another day before my uncle showed up again. This time, he didn't sneak around to meet me in public. He came straight to the clubhouse and demanded to speak with me. I heard him snarling at the front door as I came down the stairs, but Croy blocked his way.

“She is my blood! She belongs with family!”

“She wants to stay here. So she'll fuckin' stay. End of story, Antonio,” Croy growled.

Most of the crew who weren't still in the hospital hovered nearby. Including some new ones from the Albuquerque charter, who came out to back up the crew after the chaos of the supplier betrayal. I stopped beside Brewer, listening as my uncle continued to have his tantrum. It wasn't until he started threatening the crew that I stepped in.

“You are screwing with the wrong man,” my uncle snapped. “I am the largest producer in Mexico. I can block all your access with just one phone call! No one will work with you! Not if I have something to say about it! Unless you want to lose all access to the product on this side of the continent, then I suggest you hand over my niece!”

Opening the double door next to Croy, I faced my uncle down, a bored look on my face. He looked furious, his face red and his hair a little unkempt. It looked like my refusal to do what he wanted was starting to unravel him.

“Tió Antonio. I'm not aware of any health conditions in our family. Are you deaf, or just plain stupid?”

That made the crew snort, but Croy's dark look never wavered as he glared at my uncle.

“I told you already, I'm not going with you. You've already seen what I'll do to kidnappers to get my freedom. Unless you want a knife in your neck, I suggest you fuck off back to where you came from.”

Yes, the reminder that I killed someone still made my stomach clench uncomfortably, but I wasn't going to pretend it didn't happen. And if the threat got people to back off, I'd use it.

"Lacinda, I promised your father that I'd look out for you. He would be ashamed to know you were an unwed single mother who took off her clothes for money! I—"

"My father hated you. My mother hated you. They spent my whole life warning me away from you. There isn't any kind of reality where I'd believe my father wanted you to be part of my life. It was a mistake calling you. If I could go back and change it, I would."

He actually flinched, like what I said hurt him. I wasn't sure what he was expecting. I had been honest so far about how I felt about his demands and his requests to be part of my life. It shouldn't have come as a shock.

I felt Brewer approach me, his hand resting on my lower back. "What's it going to take for you to leave her alone? Not take her away," he growled before my uncle could open his mouth. "What's it going to take to get you to back off?"

My uncle sneered at him. "Nothing. There is nothing you can provide her. She belongs with her family. She will learn to accept that eventually. I have a home for her, dozens of people to look out for her, and men lined up to marry her and take care of her. You have nothing. You can't even protect her."

"I don't need a man to protect me," I said, putting steel in my voice. "Dad taught me that. Go away, Tió. We're done here."

Without another word, I slammed the door on his face. Croy followed suit, shutting his door roughly. He waited by the door for a moment, like he was expecting my uncle to burst in here and take me, but I doubted it. He wanted me and Diego alive. Putting us in the middle of a gunfight would go against what he wanted.

"Think he's serious? About blocking our access to the product?" Clink asked, Diego resting on his hip. Brewer must

have handed him off before he came to support me.

“Antonio Ruiz isn’t the only supplier in Mexico. We can find someone else. It won’t be easy and it might make things more dangerous, but I’m not handing over a person just to appease him. Especially not Brewer’s claim.” Croy flashed me a look that was part a promise and part acceptance. We started out on a bad foot, but he wasn’t about to let my uncle have his way. Even if it made his life more difficult.

I’d forgotten what it was like to have a support system. To have people at my back. Not since my dad died. It felt like part of my mom died with him, and I was on my own a lot while she worked two jobs to support us. After she was gone, I stopped expecting people to support me. I had to do it all on my own. And yet this group of rowdy, irritating bikers was willing to fight for me, even when I was barely a part of their world. It meant a lot, and even though I kind of hated it, I didn’t want them to think I wasn’t grateful.

Once they were sure my uncle was gone, they all wandered away. Croy stormed back into his office, probably to find another supplier who would go against my uncle. I pressed my lips together, frowning at his door, until Brewer gently touched my elbow.

“Baby?”

Sucking in a breath, I turned to him. “Let’s get married.”

His head jerked back and his eyebrows shot up. “What? No. You don’t want that.”

I rolled my eyes, fighting back a smile because even with everything that happened, even when he wanted to claim me as an old lady or whatever, he still didn’t want to force me into something he knew would make me unhappy.

“It’s just a piece of paper, Brewer. We can go down to the courthouse on Monday, sign it, and move on. You heard him. He won’t leave me alone until I’m taken care of.” I scoffed at that. “If we can cover all the bullshit he listed off that he wanted to provide, then he won’t have any arguments left. And during the meeting with him and Croy, he said he would’ve



helped if I was married to Mass. I'll seriously enjoy throwing that in his face after I show him the paperwork. He'll either be a liar or he'll have to help the crew."

Brewer's face was a mix of disbelief and amusement. "Seriously? You wanna get married just to stick it to your uncle? Why am I not surprised?"

"Because you know me. You know I wouldn't suggest it if I wasn't willing to follow through. So take me to the stupid courthouse, buy me that ugly fixer upper, and whatever other bullshit we can come up with to force his hand. You already said you wanted to claim me, which I still think is misogynistic as hell. This is just another part of that."

He chuckled, drawing me into his arms. "Do me a favor, baby. Don't ever change."

## CHAPTER 44

BREWER

When I told Croy about Lacey's idea, he actually laughed out loud. My woman was a hellion, and she was going to give her uncle the finger in the most outrageous way possible. He enlisted Riley and the other girls to plan out a party for when we got back, and I met with Cleo about buying the fixer upper. It'd need work before we could move in, but I wanted to make sure it was exactly what Lacey wanted. I took her back to look at it, walking her through every room. I could tell she was being sarcastic with half of her requests, but I didn't give a shit. It'd be really entertaining to see the look on her face when I put in the sex swing she mentioned in our walk-in closet.

Lacey wasn't interested in a big wedding. And she wasn't about to wear white. She wore this pink number that was tight in all the right places and showed off every inch of her curves without being too out there. She got whistles when she came downstairs, but I was too busy gaping at her to say anything. Her thick curly hair cascaded down her back, and my hands itched to wrap it around my fist and pull. Like she could read my thoughts on my face, she smirked at me, raising an eyebrow before her attention swung to Diego in my arms. Her smirk bloomed into a sweet smile, and she beamed at him as he reached out for her.

“Look at you! So handsome!”

There wasn't a chance in hell I was getting into a suit, but Lacey found a cute one for Diego, including little suspenders. He didn't seem to mind the stuffy outfit, and it was similar to

mine, with the white button up and black pants. Mine were jeans, but hell, I was a biker, not a damn choir boy.

Lacey taking Diego from me was what snapped me out of my staring, and I leaned in for a kiss, dodging Diego's hands before he could grab my beard.

“Saw you comin’ that time, kid.”

He giggled, completely unbothered by my grouchy comments. Lacey loved when I talked to him like he understood me and always had a smile on her face when she watched us interact.

“So who’s coming as our witnesses?”

She didn’t have much to do with the planning herself. She’d been through enough stress the last few days, so I kept her busy in bed with me while the girls did all the planning.

“Croy and Riley. And my mom.”

Her head whipped around, her eyes wide as dinner plates. “Your mom?”

I twisted my mouth to fight off a smile. I’d never mentioned my family before now, and Lacey didn’t ask. She had issues with the subject of families and avoided the subject if she could. Not a lot of guys at the clubhouse had families outside of the guys here. I was one of very few. My mom was surprised when I told her I was getting married, but she quit trying to meddle when I was a teenager. When I invited her, she agreed easily and told me she was looking forward to meeting the woman who tamed me.

“Don’t worry about it. We better get going if we wanna make our appointment.”

It felt like Lacey had more trepidation about meeting my mom than about getting married. She was adamant that she wasn’t interested in commitments or sticking around, and yet she was signing up for a lifetime with me just to stick it to her uncle. It was hilarious, and I was getting what I wanted out of it, so I wasn’t about to argue.

The entire way to the courthouse, Lacey grilled me about my mom. Croy and Riley sat up front, since Riley was wearing a dress too and didn't want to show her ass to the world. Croy was swayed when she said that, so we all took Lacey's car once we got it back from the crime scene. Riley was just as surprised as Lacey and she twisted in her seat, adding her own questions into the mix.

"Why didn't you ever tell me you had family around here?" Riley demanded.

I shrugged, my focus more on Diego, who was examining the rings on my hands like they were fascinating to him.

"You never asked."

Croy snorted, which drew Riley's attention to him, her eyes narrowed and suspicious. "What about you? Any secret family you haven't told me about?"

He kept his eyes on the road, his tone bored. "I've got a brother on the east coast. He's a history teacher, last I heard."

Riley gaped at him. "Seriously?"

Croy grinned. "No. No family but you, baby. You and my crew."

She slapped his shoulder, but she was laughing when she said, "You ass! I thought you were serious!"

Lacey shook her head, a smile pulling at her lips. She was getting along better with Croy and the crew. I think part of it was because when she mentioned her plan, he actually refused at first. He didn't want her forced into getting married just to help him out. He cared, and she appreciated that. He only agreed when she made it about her and getting her uncle off her back. He wouldn't say no if Antonio agreed to make a deal. Refusing to work with us didn't make him untrustworthy. But he wanted Lacey to make her choices for herself and not for the crew.

We'd been on high alert since the run in with Eduardo. Croy was still keeping the little shit alive, mostly to see what he could get out of his old man for the betrayal, but that didn't mean he was unharmed. He got what was coming to him, and

the only reason he was still breathing was because Croy was thinking of sending him back home so fucked up no one would ever question how far we'd go again. But while he was still alive and in the area, Croy told us to be cautious. He didn't trust Eduardo's old man not to make a play to rescue his kid. So, even though it'd just be a couple of us in the courthouse itself, we were escorted here by at least four guys and they'd wait outside for us. The Albuquerque charter watched over the clubhouse, and there were a few guys stationed at the hospital, too.

Mom was already there when we arrived, in a nice dress with sunflowers and a white sweater. She couldn't be more my opposite if we tried. She was all sunshine and soft smiles, an elementary school librarian with a heart of gold. She often said she didn't know where she went wrong with me, but she loved me anyway and I left her out of the nitty gritty of club life. She'd only been to the clubhouse a handful of times, and the guys knew what would happen if they weren't on their best behavior when she was there. I might not be Sergeant at Arms, but I'd kick their asses six ways from Sunday if they upset my mom.

Lacey was stiff and awkward as we closed the distance and my mom put her hands out for a hug. She actually looked panicked for a second and I had to fight back a laugh. My girl was definitely not the touchy feely type. She probably preferred a handshake over a hug.

Mom's eyes went wide when they landed on Diego and she cooed, baby talking to him, before swinging her gaze to me. In an instant she went from kind and matronly to pissed off and scowling, pinching my arm hard.

“You didn't tell me you'd had a baby!”

Rubbing at the sting on my arm, I made a face. “He might be my kid, but he's not my blood. He's Mass's boy.”

Her face softened at the mention of Mass. He was one of the few who spent any time with my mom. He was a social butterfly and whenever she came to visit, he'd make an excuse to join me. I still wasn't convinced he wasn't making a power

play. Who was that sociable on a regular basis? It sounded exhausting.

“You’re marrying his mama. It still counts. I’ll lecture you about not telling me earlier after the ceremony. Come on, we don’t want to be late.”

Lacey’s face finally relaxed, and she looked like she was trying not to laugh. I shook my head at her.

“You just wait. Once she thinks you’re warmed up to her, she’ll be just as aggressive with her love for you.”

“I doubt that. I’ve got a son. I’d be pissed too if Diego didn’t tell me he was getting a kid out of the marriage.” Her voice went lower, and she leaned against my side for a second. “Thank you. For saying he was yours.”

“He is mine,” I murmured back. “Just like you are. I’m going to take care of you both.”

That made her scoff, and she rolled her eyes hard. She was agreeing to a lot of shit, but letting me take care of her wasn’t part of it. She could take care of herself. I wasn’t about to argue with that. I just wanted to remind her that I was there, even if she didn’t need me.

The ceremony itself was short. Mom was overjoyed when Lacey let her hold Diego, and she bounced him as she watched us, her eyes wet with unshed tears. I kissed Lacey at the end more gently than I had before. It felt a little wrong to kiss her how I wanted to with my mom a few feet away. Croy and Riley were the ones who signed the documents as our official witnesses, and when I wrote my name down, Lacey raised an eyebrow at me.

“What? You think I’d sign it with my road name?”

“No. But it’s a little funny that I’m marrying you and I didn’t even know your real name, *Nicolas*.”

“The only person on the planet who calls me that is my mother. And she has rights to it since she gave me that name. Don’t start with me, *Lacinda*.”

She made a face. “It’s a family name.”

“So is mine,” I chuckled as I handed the paperwork back to the judge. He signed where he needed to and stamped it, handing it back to us.

“There you go. You’re married. Turn this in to the office across the hall and you’ll be good to go.”

Lacey smirked when I offered her my arm, rolling her eyes, but she still took it and let me lead her into the hallway. We handed the document in and when we were through, Riley pulled out a mini bottle of champagne and some dixie cups from her purse. Lifting my glass to Lacey, I grinned.

“Here’s to forever, baby.”

## CHAPTER 45

LACEY

It was my idea to invite my uncle to the party afterward. Brewer suggested inviting him to the house we were buying, but I didn't feel comfortable with the man knowing where we lived. It was bad enough he knew what town we were in. Instead, we had the reception at the clubhouse and invited him and my aunt to join us. He arrived after us, a suspicious look on his face, but when he saw the banner over the kitchen island that said 'congratulations on your wedding', he did a double take.

Storming up to me, he hissed, "What is this, Lacinda?"

"This is me doing what you wanted. You said I needed to be married, to have a house, and to be taken care of." I gestured to Brewer with the hand holding my champagne, the other tucked into Brewer's back pocket because I enjoyed how much it seemed to irritate my uncle. "Here's my husband. We are signing on a house in a few days. And," I gestured to the crew surrounding us. "I've got babysitters aplenty to help me when I need it."

That got a few grumbles from the crew. They wanted a higher title than babysitter, but they hadn't earned that yet and it was entertaining to listen to them complain. None of them argued, not in front of my uncle, anyway. It'd defeat the purpose.

"This isn't what I meant, and you know it," he growled. "You're better than these criminals."

"Pot, meet kettle," Clink commented dryly. He was sitting on the couch with Sam in his lap, but he could hear my uncle



just fine and he wasn't good at keeping his comments to himself.

I gave my uncle a look that said I was in full agreement with Clink. "True. You're just as bad as they are. And since you'll be working with them for the foreseeable future, it doesn't matter if I'm in Mexico with you or here with them."

His brow furrowed. "What are you talking about?"

"You said you would've made a deal if I was married to Diego's father. I married into the crew. Either you meant what you said and you'll help the people who are protecting me and my son, or you had no interest in my wellbeing in the first place."

He looked stunned and seriously pissed off. Straightening, I released Brewer and stepped forward, narrowing my eyes as I spoke.

"I told you before. I won't be used as a pawn. You think you're the dangerous one, but you've got nothing on me. Fighting isn't the only way my dad taught me to protect myself."

The room was quiet after my threat, everyone waiting for my uncle's response. I was messing with a seriously dangerous man, but I wasn't afraid. Not with Brewer at my back and the crew nearby. And even without them, I wouldn't back down.

"I'll make the deal," he said after a few moments. "On one condition."

Crossing my arms, I glared at him. "What condition?" No way was I going to agree to anything before he answered that. I didn't trust him.

"You let me and your aunt be a part of your life. I told you, I only work with my family. If you want us to work together, you have to act like it."

I considered refusing. He caused a lot of trouble for me since he showed back up. And I didn't trust him not to try something later. But when my gaze swept over the crew, reminding me of how much harder their lives would get

without my uncle's help, I relented. They've been taking care of me since I arrived. It was only fair I returned the favor.

"Fine. But on my terms. I'm not letting you dictate my life and how I live it. You're my uncle. Stay in your lane."

He huffed out a breath, shaking his head. "You are so much like your father. Fine. I'll agree to that. But if this truly is your wedding day, then some changes have to be made."

Brewer stopped me from hitting him, and his changes weren't all that bad. He ordered some traditional Mexican food and desserts that actually came from over the border, as well as a cake and a stupid white dress. It wasn't one of those frou frou heavy things, and my aunt looked like she was close to tears when she said it was a family heirloom. I rolled my eyes the entire time I was upstairs changing, and my aunt fixed up my hair, but I had to admit the dress was pretty. Off the shoulder, macrame lace, very traditional, floor length and bright white despite its age. When I came back downstairs, instead of the catcalls I got with the first dress, I got a lot of softer looks and smiles. It wasn't at all disconcerting.

I always knew my uncle didn't go anywhere without an army. The two in the restaurant weren't his only guards. So it didn't surprise me when his men swept into the backyard to decorate before I was even done getting ready. The obstinate man even hired a mariachi. I was trying really hard not to glower, but Croy noticed and snorted, taking a large sip of his whiskey.

"Just go with it. He already made the deal. Threatened me six ways from Sunday if you weren't treated right, but we've got a batch coming later in the week straight from your uncle's plantation."

"I'm glad this worked out for you," I drawled sarcastically. I was being a bitch, but I was uncomfortable with the celebration. I'd been fine with a typical MC party, but this felt like too much.

Brewer noticed me standing close to the back door with Croy, hovering out of the way. He came to join me, Diego still

safe in his arms, and pulled me against his chest when he was close enough.

“What’s wrong?”

“This is way more than I agreed to,” I complained. “He hired a damn mariachi for fuck’s sake.”

“I guess petty revenge runs in the family.”

My mouth fell open, and I whipped my head up to look at him. “Do you think that’s what this is?”

He lifted a shoulder, glancing at where my uncle was standing near the fire, a stupid, smug look on his face.

“That dick!”

He heard me across the yard, and his grin grew. When I stomped over to him, his eyes were dancing and he reminded me so much of my dad it sent a pang through my chest.

“You’re screwing with me, aren’t you?”

He chuckled. “My brother and I loved to play pranks on one another, and I did enjoy watching your fight to keep a scowl off your face. But no. I did this for your parents.” When I frowned, his smile turned sad. “I know what you were told about Jose and I. After he got married and had you, he became paranoid of his family being hurt, either used against me or against him as an officer of the law. We both agreed that I would keep my distance in hopes that it would keep you safe. Your mother agreed wholeheartedly to the plan.

“Maria, may she rest in peace, never liked me. She didn’t like being associated with a criminal and she blamed me for Jose’s death. Even after they named the killer, she still blamed me. I tried to find you both after he was killed, to bring you home so that you were safe and well taken care of. She ran before I had the chance to offer. Even after your aunt moved here, hoping to entice her to at least move closer and under my protection, Maria refused. And by the time we heard what happened to your mother, you were already gone.”

I didn’t want to believe him. I went my whole life being warned to stay away from my uncle. But when I thought about

it, my dad never said anything about hating his brother. Just that his life was dangerous, and I needed to stay away from him. Only my mom ever said he was a bad person. And Tió Antonio wasn't wrong. My dad was a very paranoid person. It's why he started training me in self defense so young. Few elementary school kids could say they knew how to load a gun and escape from zip ties. Dad started running simulations when I was in the first grade. Nothing insane and he did his best not to scare me, but he always said he wanted me to be stronger than everyone else.

My uncle continued speaking, his voice fond and a little heartbroken. "He would have wanted you to have a big party, mija. He would have wanted to celebrate you properly. I'm more sorry than you know that he can't be here with you, but I promised him I'd look out for you if anything ever happened to him. This is me keeping my promise."

Letting out a long sigh, I nodded. "Okay. But this is the only time you get to do stuff like this. If I wanted a big party, I would've planned one myself."

He smiled, and this time it was tender and affectionate, like a real uncle might give his niece. I would still keep my guard up around him, he hadn't earned my trust just by agreeing to work with Croy, but I could see that he was trying. It wouldn't hurt me to try a little harder. At least for Diego's sake. I never got to have a family outside of my parents. He deserves the whole world.

Brewer came to join us, offering me another glass of champagne. Not once did he let anyone take Diego from him. My son was now sound asleep in his arms, completely unbothered by the mariachi or the noise of the crew nearby. I pressed a kiss to his forehead, stroking his hair, but I didn't take him from Brewer. I loved that Diego was so comfortable with him.

"Normally, it's traditional for a man to ask the family for permission before marrying a woman," Tió Antonio growled at Brewer.

Brewer just lifted an eyebrow, taking a long pull of his beer. His face said he didn't give a shit what my uncle wanted, and I knew it'd take longer for him to warm up to my uncle than me.

“Lacey makes her own decisions. Including getting married. Besides, she asked me, not the other way around.”

That surprised my uncle, and I smirked. He was going to have to let go of the whole men taking care of women idea. My father raised me to be stronger than everyone else. And that lesson never left me. It never would.

## CHAPTER 46

BREWER

I never really thought I'd be the guy waking up with the same woman in his arms every day. Settling down was never in the plans for me. But waking up with Lacey's head on my chest and Diego's babbles as my alarm clock, I couldn't be happier. I carefully shifted Lacey off me, pulling the blankets up over her shoulders. I kept her up late last night with my dick up her ass. The 'we just got married excuse' still hadn't run its course a week later and since she liked it as much as I did, it didn't take much flirting to get her on board.

After pulling my clothes on, I turned to Diego. He was standing in the little portable crib, watching me with a grin on his face. He could crawl like a champ now and pull himself up as long as he had something to hold on to. He made happy noises when I plucked him out of the crib, taking the toy I offered him to keep him out of my beard. I suggested once shaving it off, but Lacey turned that idea down immediately. Apparently, she liked the way it felt when I was going down on her and she said if I shaved it, she'd be pissed. It made me a little smug, and I found new ways to keep Diego from messing with it instead.

Riley was sitting at the island, half asleep, with a coffee in front of her when I came downstairs. I nudged her shoulder, handing her Diego while I set up his chair. She still had a shitty schedule, but holding Diego always seemed to make her feel better.

"Long shift tonight?"

She made a face, sitting Diego on the island in front of her and playing with his hands. "No. Just tired. How's it going

with the house?”

Since the house we bought was in foreclosure, it didn't take long for us to close on it. A few brothers were hard at work on updating it, and Lacey was eager to move out of the clubhouse. If it wasn't a construction zone, I would've moved her already, but I didn't want her dealing with all that. She had enough on her plate trying to figure out a new career choice. She couldn't go back to the strip club since it was burned down, but she didn't know what else she wanted to do. I convinced her to really take her time and think about it, and since she knew I only wanted her to be happy and I wasn't trying to control her, she agreed. She'd been going down to the library almost daily to look at her options, which gave me the opportunity to sneak out and pick up something for Diego.

“It's good. You gonna throw a housewarming party for us?”

She shot me a dry look. Between throwing the wedding, and the planning wake for Buzz and Gage, Riley had her hands full in the last week. She was a great First Lady, making that a priority even though she had a full-time job, and we all appreciated her for it. Didn't mean we didn't tease her by calling her our little party planner, though.

Clearing my throat, I frowned. “Everything set for tonight?”

Her expression softened and she nodded once. “Full escort, just like last time. And a celebration of life after it's through. They'll get the send off they deserve.”

Coming around the counter, I gave her a side hug, just so she knew I appreciated her. Losing brothers was hard. Croy never handled it well and Riley had a lot to deal with handling him alone. That she still went above and beyond for Gage and Buzz meant a lot.

Rubbing her shoulder, I gave her another squeeze before grabbing Diego and putting him in his high chair. I had some cut up fruit waiting for him while I made him a bottle. The kid could pack it in, and Lacey said he'd stay on formula until he was a year old, so we supplemented milk with little things on

the side. Pretty sure he could consume an adult sized meal on his own, but if he needed the milk, I'd give it to him.

I liked letting Lacey sleep in, so I wasn't surprised that she was the last old lady to join us in the kitchen. Allie and Quinn were over early in their property cuts and dressed for the funeral. Riley went up to change at one point, coming back in full black with her own property cut. Sam and Clink showed up later, and with the way his hair was messed up, I got the feeling he had a decent wake up call this morning. I shook my head when he shot me a shit-eating grin. Idiot.

Lacey agreed to the claim and married me, but she was reluctant on the property cut until today. When I said it was a tradition for stuff like this, she agreed to wear one. I had it ready for her when she came down. Her smile was stiff when she took it, but she put it on without complaint.

“What's that?” Riley asked, pointing to the box Lacey's property cut was stored in. Lacey looked curious, as did the rest of the crew who were hanging around us, and when I pulled out the little cut for Diego, the women went nuts. Awws filled the room, and they started cooing and making goo-goo eyes at the little outfit. Honestly, I got it because I wanted Lacey to be less uncomfortable with her own cut, and it was cute as shit, but apparently it made me fucking popular.

“That's so cute!”

“Put it on him!”

“I want to see!”

I snorted, taking a minute to wipe the mess off Diego's face before putting the cut on over his pjs. When I pulled him out of the high chair to show it off, the coos only got louder. He was a cute kid.

“Cue the baby fever in three... two... one...” Lacey murmured, leaning her shoulder against mine.

She was on the money with her count down. Quinn's gaze drifted to Reaper, Riley's went to Croy, and even Allie looked like she was considering it. Sam and Clink were still working on his recovery, so it probably wasn't in the cards for them yet,



but the heated look she shot him said she'd be down to practice the baby making part.

Lacey snickered, shaking her head as the officers of the crew suddenly had their hands full of baby hungry women.

“You're an evil man.”

I barked out a laugh, tucking her against my side. “Blame Diego. It wouldn't be such an easy sell if he wasn't so damn cute.”

That made her beam, stealing the baby away from me. “That's true. You are the most handsome man in the world, aren't you, mi amor?”

“Thank you,” I replied with a grin.

She rolled her eyes. “I guess you're cute, too. In a rough and annoying kind of way.”

I growled, nipping at her neck, and she laughed as she went upstairs to change Diego's outfit. Today was a hard day, a sad day, but the old ladies made it a little easier to bear the loss. They brightened the room and eased the ache a little. I'd miss my brothers, but I was glad I didn't have to face the loss alone like I had to when Mass died.

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Riley outdid herself for Buzz and Gage. With the Albuquerque charter here for support while a few members were still on the mend, it was a hell of a send off. The party was massive. The first half was just the crew and family, but eventually the sweetbutts showed up and the liquor flowed freely, and I was suddenly glad we hadn't moved yet. With the amount of alcohol in my system, I wouldn't be getting behind the wheel tonight.

Diego was popular in his little cut. He was passed around by the crew, all of them remembering Mass on a day like today and wanting to hold on to the piece of him we had left. Lacey eventually had to steal her baby back, but she was smiling the entire night and didn't once look bothered. At least until a

sweetbutt started screaming at her. I heard it before I saw it, and I almost wanted to roll my eyes at the sweetbutt's rant.

"You manipulated him! He was the last officer without a claim and you swooped in with your sob story before any of us got a chance!"

The crowd was thick between me and my woman and I had to shove my way through to get to them, listening to Lacey's bored tone.

"Are you done?"

"You're such a bitch!" the sweetbutt screeched. "If it wasn't for that stupid baby, he wouldn't have looked at you twice."

When I finally got close enough to see them, Lacey was shaking her head, her smile condescending.

"Normally, I'm not one to put down other women. We've got it hard enough. But you call my kid names one more time, and I'm gonna put my foot up your ass."

The sweetbutt, a regular named Sarah, bared her teeth at Lacey. She didn't know who she was challenging, but me stepping in would protect her more than Lacey. Lacey didn't actually need the protection.

Sarah's hand went out, reaching for Diego for god knows what. Even with a kid in her arms, Lacey wasn't someone to be messed with. If anything, having Diego with her made her even more vicious. Her hand snapped out, catching Sarah's wrist, and with a move I almost couldn't follow, Sarah's wrist snapped. Sarah screamed, dropping to her knees. Lacey handed Diego to Quinn, who was standing behind her, and stood over Sarah with a look that said fucking try me.

"You're a stupid cunt if you think I'd let you hurt my kid. You've got about five seconds to get your ass out of here, or we'll start counting how many bones I know how to break. Five... Four..."

Sarah looked around helplessly, but when no one stood up for her, she pushed to her feet and ran, her hand cradled against her chest.

Lacey didn't look worried about the interaction, taking Diego back and cuddling him a little. It was Riley who lost her damn mind, spinning to face Croy and pointing her finger at him.

“This is what I was telling you about! Those bitches don't have any respect for us! They think they can just walk all over us and we'll take it! You went on and on about how we outrank them because we're ol' ladies, but we still gotta deal with them every damn weekend!”

Croy's face was dark, almost daring her to keep going. Riley had her place, just like everyone else, and yelling at Croy in front of the crew was stupid. Riley wasn't done, though, and her threat rocked the whole yard.

“If you think for a second that I'm having kids with you in a place like this, you're fucking delusional! Either you deal with this shit, or you can take kids off the table! I'm fucking done!”

She stormed off, the back door slamming so hard I heard something crack. Croy watched her go, barely banked fury on his face, but Lacey interrupted him before he could go after her.

“Did you close yet?”

He made an irritated noise, taking another heavy swallow of his drink. “Closes tomorrow.”

Lacey hummed, nodding. “Maybe it's time to tell her. The surprise isn't going to work the way you want it to when she's that pissed off.”

Croy didn't reply, handing his glass to a prospect before stalking through the yard and inside without a word. Everyone went back to the party eventually, but the officers all looked concerned and when I raised an eyebrow at Lacey, she shrugged.

“You told me to get along with Croy. So I had a meeting with him. Made him see what Riley was feeling by him refusing to buy her a house. He was going to surprise her with it after the funeral was over.”

Clink gaped at her. “Holy fucking shit. You’re serious, aren’t you? How the hell did you get away with butting in on their relationship? We all thought she deserved her own place, but no one had the balls to mention it to him.”

Lacey raised an eyebrow lazily. “My balls are bigger than yours.”

That broke the tension, and we all laughed. She was a hell of a woman, willing to go up against the devil himself to make sure the women in the crew were happy. And she’d face down an army to protect our kid.

When she turned to me, I tickled Diego’s neck, checking on him even though I saw how she handled the situation.

“Figured you’d be more pissed right now.”

She snorted. “She wasn’t a threat. Stupid bitch was drunk and talking out of her ass. If I was actually worried, I would’ve handed him off earlier. But now all the women here know I could hurt them with my arms full. It’s a good message to deliver.”

A grin tugged at my mouth, and I leaned in closer. “You’re hot as fuck, you know that?”

“And you’re drunk,” she snickered. “Wanna go upstairs? Diego needs some sleep. And you look like you could use a hand.”

She rubbed her palm against my erection with a sultry wink before sauntering into the house. Fuck, she really was perfect.

## CHAPTER 47

LACEY

“You asked to see me, my liege,” I drawled sarcastically. Being summoned to Croy’s office was not on my list of things to do today, and I didn’t hesitate to tell him how I felt about it.

He’d gotten used to my attitude by now, and a smirk pulled at his lips as he waved me inside. “Keep it up, Lacey. I’ll make it a rule that you gotta call me that every time you come to see me.”

“Over my dead body,” I snapped, dropping into the chair across from him. He’d mellowed out a little over the past few weeks. Part of it was because things were going well with my uncle, and business was booming. At least, that’s what Tío Antonio said the last time he called. But I was betting the biggest reason Croy was in such a good mood was because he and Riley had moved into their new place and she was showing him how happy she was about it every damn night. She told me that when she came to the clubhouse looking freshly fucked four days in a row and I pointed it out.

“Don’t tempt me.” His voice was teasing. After everything that happened at the strip club, Croy and I got along better. Nearly getting sold into sex slavery for the crew apparently earned me a little respect.

Rolling my eyes, I crossed my arms over my chest. “So, what did you need me for? I’ve got an interview in an hour.”

“I wanted to talk to you about that. I had an idea I wanted to run by you. You working at the club gave us a wealth of information we had no way to get on our own. I want to tap back into that if we can.”

My brows furrowed. “You want me to go back to stripping?”

He shook his head, a bemused look on his face. “Pretty sure if I suggested that, Brewer would shoot me. No. I was thinking of buying a club and having you run it. You can hire people you trust to get us information and plenty of men wouldn’t look twice at a woman in the club, even if you’re running the books. I’m tired of my guys dying on my watch. I need someone I can trust to get information.”

Pursing my lips, I thought about his offer. I’d been struggling with coming up with a new career path. I didn’t want to strip forever, but I didn’t have a clue what I wanted to do, and it was driving me nuts. I didn’t want to work for other people, but I wasn’t smart enough to come up with a new business on my own. I knew the ins and outs of running a club, I’d been working as a stripper since I was nineteen, but I never considered running one.

“Where, exactly?”

“Edge of the city, closer to us, but not too close where they’d be worried about talking. You’ll have a full security team, but they’ll stay out of sight except the bouncers to not tie the club with us.”

It made sense, and the more I thought about it, the more it seemed like a good idea. Too many strip clubs treated their strippers poorly. I could make sure the environment was safe and clean, that the women wouldn’t be touched inappropriately. It’d be a good deal for women like me who needed a place to work but were down on their luck. Croy was giving me full control on hiring, too. There was a level of danger to it, sharing information like that, but it wasn’t any more dangerous than being associated with the Devil’s Disciples. And we were a lot safer now that we didn’t live in the clubhouse.

“I hate that I have to ask this question, but did you talk to Brewer?”

It was like pulling teeth, saying I needed to ask my husband first. He shouldn’t factor into my decision making.

But he was a good man and, as often as he could, he made sure our decisions were mutual. I didn't want to go into this without making sure he was okay with it first.

“Yes. And thanks to that, I owe him fifty bucks. He said you'd ask. I told him you'd do whatever the fuck you wanted,” Croy smirked.

That made me laugh. “Sorry, not sorry. If he's okay with it, then I'm in. But I get full control on the inside. The women will be treated well, and if I find out any of them are being forced to be there, I'll turn on you so fast, it'll make your head spin.”

Croy shook his head, but he still offered me his hand. “A few sweetbutts might be interested. They're loyal and if they get the chance to help out, they'd jump on it. I can have a few of the guys ask around if you're interested.”

“Sure.” Unlike most of the old ladies, I didn't have a problem with the sweetbutts. They were looking for a good time and the guys provided that for them. As long as they were respectful, I couldn't give a flying fuck what they did. And since my demonstration at the funeral, none of them dared to mess with me.

“I'll put it into motion and let you know when you start.”

He waved me off, and I left his office smiling. That tension that had been sitting on my shoulders since the club was burned down and I lost my job was lifted and I could finally take a deep breath. I hated not contributing, even if I knew Brewer could cover our lives easily. Between him and the gifts from my uncle, I didn't want for anything. But I still wanted to work. It wasn't in me to sit around letting others do the work.

Brewer was waiting for me on one of the couches when I came out, raising an eyebrow when I dropped into his lap.

“Croy owes you fifty bucks.”

He barked out a laugh, his head thrown back. He smiled more now than when I first met him. He was still stoic and quiet around his crew, but when it was just me and Diego, he

relaxed and smiled more often. Diego especially could wring smiles out of him effortlessly.

“I’m guessing you said yes, then?”

“Yeah. I think it’s a good fit.”

“And the fact that you’ll be protecting women was a big selling point, right?”

He knew me well. My dad raised me to be strong, and I wasn’t going to sit on that kind of knowledge and keep it to myself. I helped the girls with self defense, teaching them the tricks my dad taught me to escape in dangerous situations. It augmented Reaper’s lessons with fighting and we all had a blast when he challenged me to a fight and I almost laid him out. He won on a technicality. I was distracted by Diego. And I’d keep telling myself that until I was strong enough to beat him. Croy’s offer gave me the opportunity to help more women in desperate situations and I leapt at it. If I could help just one person who was like me, I wanted to do it.

“Since you’re canceling your interview, wanna take a ride with me?”

I hummed, my eyes tracking for Diego. I found him being fed lunch by Quinn, with Reaper close by, watching over them both. Those two were full blown on the baby train, and Quinn took every opportunity to babysit for practice. I wouldn’t be surprised if she popped pregnant in the next few weeks.

“Yeah. Let’s go.”

It felt good to know my son was safe when I went anywhere without him. Since he was born, I had to leave him with babysitters I didn’t fully trust, some of which I knew were drug users, because it was all I could afford. I was afraid for him every day. Now, I had a lot more people I could count on to watch over him. It gave me freedom I didn’t realize I needed.

It took some convincing to get me to ride regularly with Brewer. I didn’t like the risk of both of us getting hurt. I gave in because he said he’d been riding longer than he’d been driving and he never got into any accidents. I trusted him not



to lie to me. I hugged his middle, my chin rested on his shoulder as we took the scenic route around town. When he eventually pulled up in front of our house, I was relaxed and honestly, a little hot and bothered with all the vibrations for the past thirty minutes.

“Progress check today?” I asked, as he helped me off the bike.

“No, I sent the guys home today. They’ve got a little left to work on, but we can finally move in. I wanted you to see it without being distracted.”

The sentiment was sweet. Brewer did his best to give me plenty of opportunity to do things on my own. I’d been raising Diego by myself, and it was hard on me never being able to do anything alone. Brewer gave me that back, waking up early with Diego and taking him off my hands when I was getting burnt out. It was everything I hoped for with Mass, with the added benefit of being head over heels for him. I never would’ve had more than affection for Mass, but Brewer was everything I needed and more.

As he walked me through the house, all the trepidation I had about this place slowly washed away. It wasn’t perfect, there was still work to be done, but it was livable and clean and there was tons of room for Diego to grow. And with the security system Brewer had installed, it was safer than a military base. Brewer didn’t mess around with our safety.

Our last stop was the master bedroom, with the attached bath complete with a luxuries jacuzzi tub big enough for both of us. I got the feeling we’d be using that tub often.

“What do you think?”

Returning to the massive master bedroom, with the thick cream carpets and enormous windows letting in tons of natural light, I sighed happily.

“It’s perfect.”

Brewer came up behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist and pulling me in close. “You’re perfect.”

“No one is perfect,” I argued. We had this discussion a lot. And he always had the same answer.

“Perfect for me.”

It made me smile, and I leaned into him, giving myself a minute just to be in the moment. I’d come a long way from the broke stripper, almost forced into turning tricks to keep a roof over my son’s head. I had a home, a man who loved us both, and a community who supported me despite my red hot temper. It was everything I never knew I wanted, and I sent up a silent prayer of thanks to Mass for making sure I got here eventually.

I hit rock bottom, but my connection to him and Brewer’s stubborn force of will made sure the only direction I could go was up. Now I had all this, and I couldn’t help but feel possessive of it.

“Thank you,” Brewer murmured against my ear.

“For what?”

Like he felt the same possessiveness I did, his arms tightened around me, his voice gravelly in my ear.

“For being mine.”

## CHAPTER 48

BREWER

I should've known Lacey was going to be late. She spent the afternoon at the new club, making sure everything was set up for a night without her. She was a damn stickler for the place and she didn't like not being there while it was open. She got back home with only two hours before we had to be at Croy's and then she demanded to take a shower first. Now, we had less than an hour and she was still in the damn bathroom.

"Lacey, baby, what the hell are you doing?"

"Putting on my makeup," she called through the door.

"We're gonna be late."

"Beauty takes time, Nicolas. Stop being such an asshole."

She only called me Nicolas when she was annoyed with me. It started as payback when her uncle came to visit and I laughed when he refused to use her nickname, but now it was her thing. She knew it irritated me, but she said it was wife rules and she could do what she wanted. She was still a pain in my ass and I loved her for it every damn day.

The door to the bathroom was unlocked, so I pushed it open, raising my eyebrows at her.

"You know damn well you look fucking perfect with or without the damn makeup. You're dragging this out on purpose. What'd Croy do this time?"

While she wasn't purposely antagonistic anymore, sometimes Croy irritated her with his rules and demands. She stuck with petty revenge, showing up late or ignoring him when he called her until someone else pointed it out. It drove

him up the wall, but Riley always distracted him before he could lose it entirely. The old ladies were working together at this point, manipulating the crew with their charm to get their way. Their biggest win was making sure no sweetbutts were even allowed on the street. There were a few empty houses on the block, and we bought them out so we wouldn't have to worry about snooping neighbors, but the girls said no single guys could move in because the area was for families only. Any parties held at Croy's place were only for family and crew. No sweetbutts. It made Riley grin like a maniac any time someone brought it up.

“He didn't do anything. This time. I'm just running behind. I've got a lot on my mind.”

Frowning, I moved to join her, resting my hip against the counter as she leaned over it to apply her makeup.

“What's wrong?”

She ignored me at first, like she was trying to decide if she could handle it on her own or not, but eventually she sighed and put the makeup down. She moved a towel off the counter, exposing some white sticks with pink caps on the end. It didn't take a fucking genius to figure out what they were. I picked one up, reading the little window and raising my eyebrows at her.

“You're pregnant?”

“Apparently,” she scowled. “I told you, I'm super fertile. Two forms of birth control and your cock up my ass like fifty percent of the time and still I end up pregnant.”

She looked pissed, and I wasn't entirely sure why. She loved the hell out of Diego, and this time she wasn't struggling and alone. Moving to stand behind her, I wrapped my arms around her towel covered body.

“Tell me why that pisses you off so much?”

“Because! The club is still brand new and I work all the time! I don't have time for this!”

Drawing in a breath, I let it out slowly. I learned over time I had to have patience with Lacey. I could see her side of it. It

was a bad time to get pregnant when she had a new business she was still getting off the ground, but I had to remind her of the facts.

“You aren’t alone on this one, Lace. You’ve got me, the old ladies, and the whole fucking crew to help. It’s going to be okay.”

I watched her through the mirror, her expression tight. She was still coming to terms with it. Not everyone jumped for joy when they found out they were pregnant. Quinn cried when she found out. Riley and Croy were still trying, but I knew when it happened, she’d be ecstatic. I wasn’t going to put that on Lacey. She could feel how she needed to feel with the news. The shock would pass eventually and she was an amazing mom. She’d love this kid, just like she loves Diego.

Hoping to distract her, I started kissing down her neck, nipping the spot I knew made her shiver. She sank into it, leaning against my chest. When my cock hardened against her ass, she huffed out a laugh.

“Can’t keep it in your pants for one night?”

“Baby, you’re standing here in nothing but a towel. What the fuck did you expect?”

With a sultry grin, she pulled the towel loose, letting it drop to the floor. Miles of tanned skin bared to my gaze. I zeroed in on her chest, my brow furrowing a little.

“Are your tits bigger?”

She snorted, rolling her eyes. “Yes. And tender as hell. Touch them and I’ll hurt you.”

I hummed, letting my hands drag along her naked skin. “I’ll be gentle.”

I caught her rolling her eyes in the mirror, but I ignored it in favor of touching her. Lacey wasn’t into gentle. There was no making love in this house. We fucked, and she liked it that way.

“Where’s Diego?” she murmured, tipping her head to give me more room to suck on her neck.

“Dropped him off with Camille. She’s gonna watch him tonight.”

“Smart man,” she murmured, spinning in my arms. I hoisted her onto the sink, claiming her lips roughly. Even months later, Lacey never gave in easily. She fought for control, our tongues tangled in a fucking battle. I let her win once after a conversation with Knox, and the thrill she got from that was sexy as hell. I wouldn’t do it all the time, I liked our fight, but it was fun when either of us gave in eventually.

Lacey’s hands moved over me, shoving off my cut and tugging at the hem of my shirt. I broke the kiss long enough to pull it off before coming back to her.

“There’s one positive to this pregnancy,” she muttered against my lips as she shoved her hand into my jeans and wrapped it around my dick.

“What’s that?”

I was only half listening, my mind on her hand in my pants and her tongue in my mouth. At least until she broke the kiss and gripped my hair to drag me closer, her lips brushing the shell of my ear.

“We don’t need a condom.”

The groan I let loose was loud in the small bathroom. I’d only ever had Lacey’s ass without a wrap. I was dying to feel her wet pussy around my cock. She snickered, clearly feeling like she had the upper hand. To put her in her place, I dragged her to the edge of the counter and sank to my knees with her thighs over my shoulders. The first long drag of my tongue made her moan, her head thrown back. She rocked into it, one hand fisted in my hair, the other supporting her as she moved. I kept it up until I felt her thighs tremble and her breath catch in her throat. When she was close, I drew back, blowing cool air over her wet sex.

“Fuck. I fucking hate you,” she hissed.

I grinned, flicking my tongue over her clit just to make her jump. When I pushed to my feet, she growled, probably worried I’d walk away. I’d punished her like that a few times,

but it always ended up being a punishment for both of us, so I didn't do it often. I liked fucking her too much to deprive either of us.

When I unzipped my pants, her face lit up, and she moved to help me, shoving my jeans down. The material only made it mid thigh before she was grabbing my dick and pulling me closer.

“Eager, baby?”

“Shut up and fuck me,” she demanded.

“Say please.”

If looks could kill, the one she gave me would've done it in an instant. I was hard as granite, but I wasn't going to give her what she wanted until she begged me. She knew how much I loved it. When she refused, I ran my dick along her slit, pushing against her entrance without sinking inside. I was teasing us both, but she gave in before I did.

“Brewer, por favor.”

She liked to pretend I didn't understand her when she spoke Spanish, but she still gave me what I wanted. In one smooth movement, I sank into her pussy and we both groaned together. Fuck, she was perfect. Tight and wet and so fucking hot. I snapped my hips roughly, growling as I pounded inside her.

Once she started, the begging wouldn't stop. She clung to me, her nails digging into my shoulder, her head thrown back as she moaned. It only spurred me on and her ass left the counter entirely as I fucked her.

I felt her pussy flutter, signaling her climax, but before she could go over the edge, I snapped at her.

“Look at me, baby.”

Her chin dropped, her lips swollen from our kissing and her eyes half lidded and filled with ecstasy.

“Say it.”

She bit her lip, denying me, and I felt her clench again.

“Please, Lacey.”

She wasn't the only one who'd beg to get what they wanted. Her lips ticked up, and she dragged herself closer, making us both groan. What she whispered in my ear never failed to send me over the edge, and she always came with me.

“I'm yours, Brewer.”

My release slammed into me like a mac truck, nearly making me lose my grip on Lacey. My fingers were probably bruising her, but she either didn't notice or didn't care, her screams loud as her pussy clamped rhythmically around my cock. My eyes rolled into my head, and I leaned into her, setting her back on the counter before we both hit the ground. Her arms wrapped around my shoulders, her face buried against my neck as we both came back down to earth. Even panting and blissed out, she didn't forget to nudge me, prompting me to reply.

“Yeah, baby. I'm yours. For-fucking-ever.”



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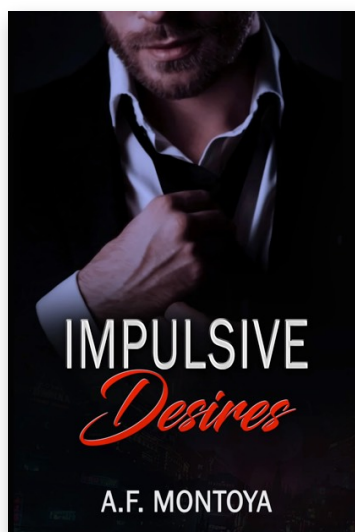
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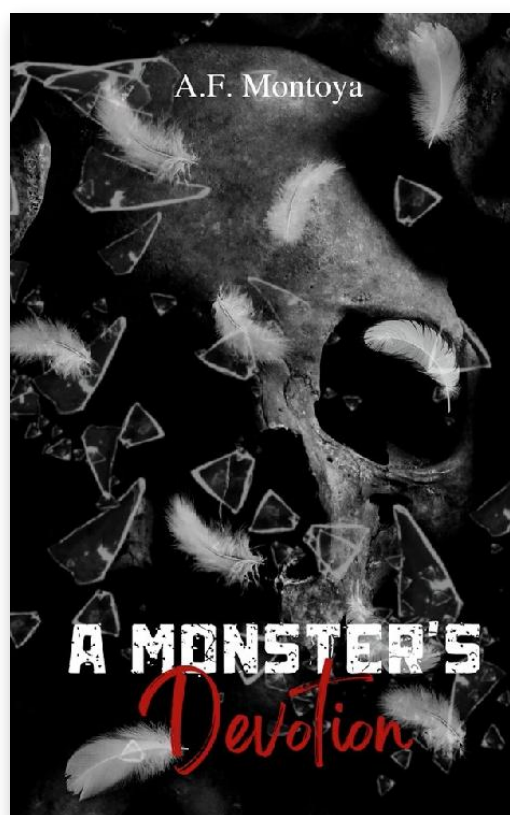
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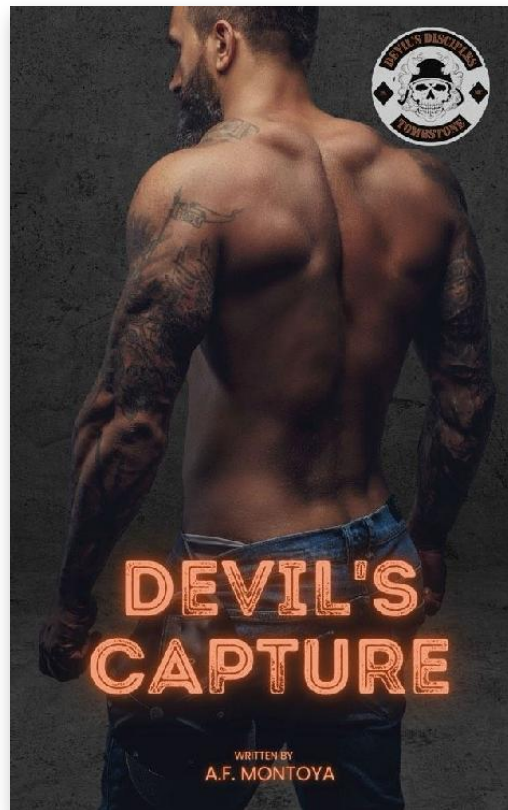
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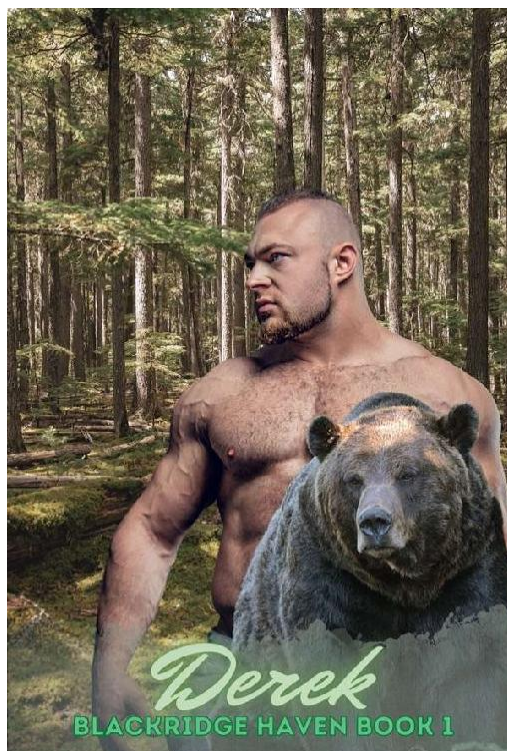
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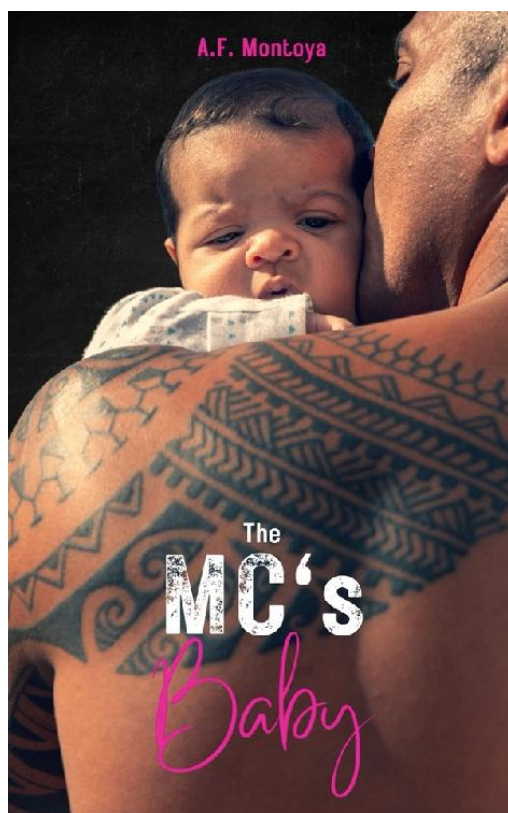
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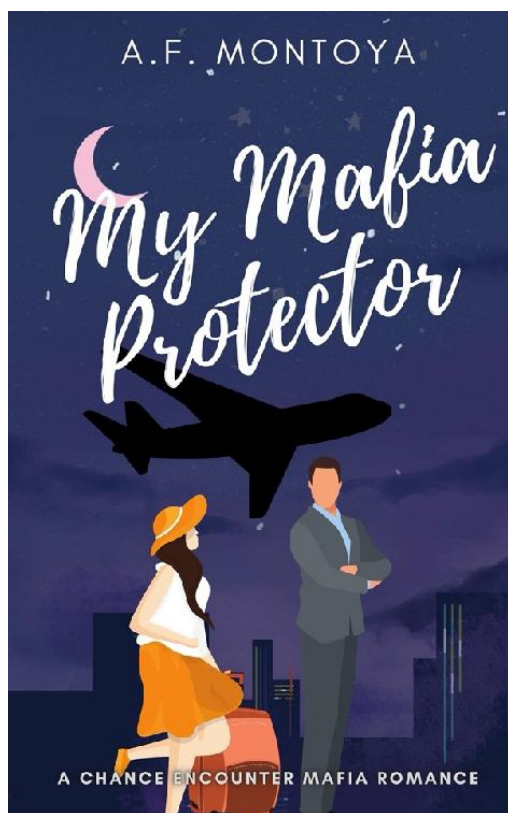
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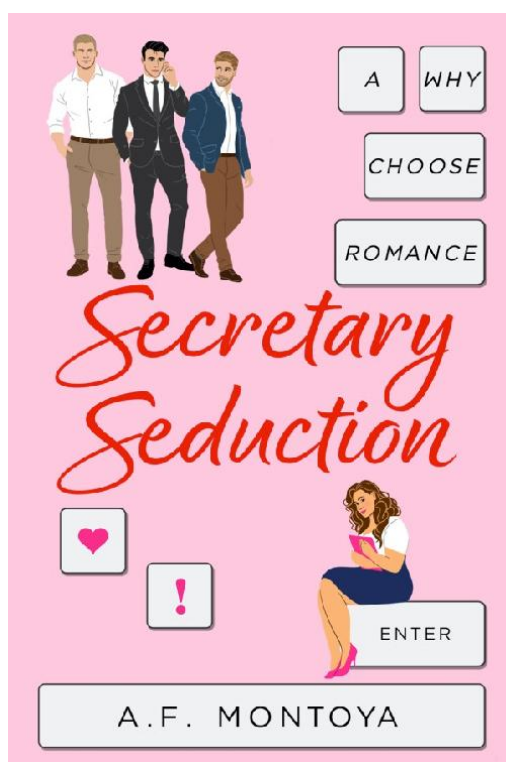
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