



OBSIDIAN MC

VENOM'S STORY

**ECHODIES**

FROM WITHIN

CAROL DAWN

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**Echoes**  
**From Within**

**Carol Dawn**  
International Bestselling  
Author

# **Echoes From Within**

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# Trigger Warning

This book contains explicit language, graphic sexual situations, self-harm, and intense violence. Additionally, it delves into a highly sensitive medical topic. Reader discretion is advised. The content within may be distressing or triggering for some individuals. If you are uncomfortable with strong language, sexual content, violence, or find discussions about challenging medical conditions, rape, or self-harm emotionally difficult, it is recommended to approach this material with caution.

**Please, prioritize your well-being and mental health while engaging with this book.**

# Prologue

Sophia

“Thank you so much for everything you’ve done for us,” the young mother tells me and my father. “You’ve saved our lives.”

“No,” dad responds. “We simply gave you the tools.”

“Reaching out for help is one of the hardest and bravest things you could have done,” I tell her. “The second you called us was the very moment you saved yourself.”

“Maybe,” she smiles. “But, if it wasn’t for what you guys do here, there wouldn’t have been anyone to reach out to.”

I return her smile and pull her in for a hug. Marsha has been here at UNITY with us for a few months now. Her husband has finally been caught and put behind bars for killing their three-month-old daughter and beating Marsha so severely that she had to be hospitalized.

The coward had been on the run since but we’ve been informed that it’s now safe for Marsha to leave the security of our shelter.

UNITY is an acronym for, Unite, Nurture, Inspire, Transform, and Yield to change. Through unity we nurture survivors, inspire change, transform societies, and yield to the changes needed to end domestic violence.

Before my mom and dad met, mom was in a relationship where she was abused physically and mentally for years. She tried reaching out many times for help from her family, the police, hell, she even begged for help from the mailman. But none ever came.

The bastard died in a plane crash and that was how she eventually broke free from the hold he had on her. My parents

met a few years after that. From what I understand, it took mom a long time to trust that dad would never hurt her.

Years after they were married, they created UNITY with a single thought in mind. To be there for someone when no one else is. My mom is a huge advocate for people experiencing domestic violence. We all are. When no one else will help you, we'll be right by your side. When no one else will believe you, we will.

UNITY has saved countless lives of both men and women over the years and I couldn't be prouder of my parents.

They had me a little late in life. I'm currently twenty-nine years old and my parents are both in their early eighties. They want to retire and travel for a bit but only if I agreed to take over UNITY. It was a no-brainer. They're leaving in a few hours to start their vacation. Dad's here to say goodbye to some of our long-time residents before they head to the airport.

"If you ever need anything, just reach out to us," I tell Marsha before she enters the taxi.

With a nod, she shuts the car door.

"Another life saved because of you and mom," I tell my dad as we watch the car drive away.

"Yeah," he sighs. "It's hard not to think about all the lives lost that could have been saved had they just reached out, though," he tells me. "Promise that you won't let this job eat you up, babydoll."

I don't say anything because it's not a promise that I can keep. I've worked here for years already and I know exactly what he's talking about. I'm currently watching one of them drive away. Marsha was being abused by her husband for years before he killed their daughter. Had she reached out sooner, even a single day sooner, they both would be in that car driving to their new lives.

I'm not victim-blaming. At least, I'm not trying to. It just hurts my heart knowing that she lost her child because she was

afraid for their lives when in the end, it was her daughter's life, and almost hers, that was ultimately destroyed.

I can't say that I understand that type of fear, but I can sympathize. Marsha was terrified that her husband would kill her and her daughter if she tried asking for help. And he would have. I know that without a shadow of a doubt.

"Daddy, how can I do this job, help these people, if I don't understand what they're going through? Mom was able to connect with them because of their shared experiences. All I can do is hold their hands and give them my support."

"Sometimes, being someone to lean on is all they need," he tells me. "You reaching out your hand could be the very thing that gives them the hope to move on. All you need to do is be their strength when they don't have any of their own."

"What if I don't have enough strength for everyone?" I ask. "What if I can't do this without you and mom?"

Dad pulls me in for a hug, wrapping me in his loving arms.

"My sweet, sweet, Sophie," he says softly. "I have never met a stronger and more wonderful person than you. You're smart and kind. Your shoulders could hold the burden of every soul that walks through these doors and you would do it with love and understanding in your heart. I can walk away with absolute confidence that you will continue the work your mother and I started here and that you'll make it even better."

I snuggle into his embrace but choose not to respond. I smile knowing that he's right. I always have and will continue to give my entire heart to what we do here at UNITY.

Dad eventually has to leave to pick up mom. My parents and I spent several hours together earlier today knowing that we won't see each other again for at least a month. I'm happy they get to go on this extended vacation but I'm going to miss them.

**\*\*\*Three Months Later\*\*\***

“I’m heading out for the night,” I tell, John, the lead security guard. “I’ll check back in around midnight.”

“Get some rest ma’am,” he tells me. “I’ll alert you immediately if anything happens.”

I nod before turning and leaving the building. It’s been a rough few months. After my parents returned home from vacation, they looked happier than I’ve ever seen them. It wasn’t as if they were unhappy when they left, but they just looked radiant upon their return.

Unfortunately, that same night, both of my parents passed away in their sleep, holding one another tightly.

It was peaceful, but my heart still broke. They can’t tell me who died first, only that they passed away within moments of one another. I can only hope to find love as strong and as powerful as my parents had.

Instead of heading home, I want to swing by the park and check on something. Earlier today, one of the residents in our male section told me about how people keep disappearing from Harborbrook national park during the night.

There hasn’t been a single report of a missing person in years, so I’m thinking either this man was delusional from the brain injury his father gave him, or the people disappearing aren’t people that anyone cares about.

Once I reach the park, I slow down and just look around. It isn’t completely dark yet, but the park is already closed so I don’t expect to see anyone.

But I do.

I see a woman who looks like she’s holding a baby.

I don’t have much more room in the women’s section at UNITY, but I think if she needs it, we can make room.

“Hello?” I shout out from my cracked window. “Do you need any help?”

I’m not stupid. I’m not just going to get out of my car and jog across the park in the middle of the night. My daddy taught



me a hell of a lot better than that. But, if someone needs help, I will do what I have to do.

“Are you okay?” I ask, rolling my window down a bit more. “Is that a baby? It’s pretty cold out here. I have a place you can stay for the night if you don’t have anywhere else to go.”

“Please help,” a female voice cries out. “My leg is broken and I just can’t go any further.”

Not wasting time, I grab my taser and my phone before exiting my car. I lock the door making sure my keys are around my wrist to easily, and quickly, access them if necessary.

I do everything I can remember to do when going someplace alone at night. Especially when there is a potential threat nearby. Someone obviously hurt this woman and I have no idea if she’s being chased or not.

“I’m coming,” I say so softly that I know she doesn’t hear me.

I walk slowly and keep my ears open for any sounds. It takes me a couple of minutes to reach the woman. She looks young. Her hair is disheveled, she’s dirty, and the bundle in her hands is quiet.

“My name is Sophie,” I say quietly. “Do you want me to carry your baby until we reach my car?”

“I’m so sorry,” she whispers, tears clearing a path as they travel down her dirty face. “I had no choice.”

Fear courses through my body as I turn and run. I lift the hand holding my cell and I scream, “SERI, CALL 911.”

“Calling emergency services in five seconds.”

What? Five seconds?

One. Two.

I’m grabbed from behind, my phone yanked from my hand and the call canceled all with one second to spare.

“Oh, this one is spicy,” a male laughs. “I think the boss is going to like her.”

“Nighty night.”

A sharp pain pierces my neck and everything goes black.

# Chapter One

(One year later)

## Venom

**Ghost:** *Get your asses over here. There's someone here who is asking for help.*

**Steel:** *Help for what?*

**Ghost:** *No idea. He just said he needs help. I'm having him wait until you all get here to tell me what it is he wants. So, hurry the fuck up.*

**Blaze:** *Yeah, yeah. We're on our way.*

Shoving my cell back into my pocket, I look at my brother, the President of the Obsidian MC, and raise my brows.

“What?” he says. “Those two always take their time getting here.”

He's not wrong. Steel and Blaze are rarely apart and are always the last ones getting here. Even with Ghost sending out the message in our group chat, we're still going to have to wait at least ten minutes before they walk through the door.

Viper is currently with his new bride, Bitsy, visiting her family. Lucky bastard.

I look over at the man who came asking for help. He's sitting in one of the chairs in the office anxiously looking at his phone.

“*He looks nervous,*” Miles observes. “*Well, more like exhausted. Almost as if he hasn't slept in weeks.*”

“*Maybe I should front and check him over,*” Doc suggests.

*“Probably wouldn’t be a good idea,” Xander tells him. “It’s always easy to tell when you’re the one fronting.”*

*“Will you guys shut the fuck up?” I tell the voices in my head. “I can’t focus right now with all of you pulling my attention.”*

Sometimes having Dissociative Identity Disorder is a good thing. When things get emotionally overwhelming, all I have to do is take a step back and let either Doc, Xander, or Miles take over. But that doesn’t happen all that often these days.

When I was five years old, I watched my mother raped and my father killed only to be left alive to deal with the aftermath. My mind shut down to try and protect itself and in place of me, it created other personalities, or alters, that could easily deal with the situation.

It didn’t happen immediately. Actually, the first *alter* didn’t even show up until I was in high school. That was Doc. Xander and Miles came along shortly after, though.

Typically, when a person has DID and one of the *alters* fronts, or takes control, the person isn’t aware of it until they regain control of their mind. Almost as if they’ve developed amnesia. While the *alter* is in control, they have absolutely no memory of what they did.

They know the *alters* are in their head, but they can’t communicate with them.

I have the type of DID where I have strong communication and co-consciousness when it comes to my *alters*. I can hear them, I can see them in my mind, I can feel their own individual emotions.

I have some semblance of control when it comes to who *fronts* and when. I can’t always control it, though. Xander has a powerful mind and if he wants to *front* there isn’t a damn thing I can do to stop him. Luckily, those instances only happen when he knows he’s the best man for the situation that we’re in. Even then, he tells me what he’s about to do.

When I’m not in control I can either sit back and watch through my eyes as my *alters* live their moments, or I can just

cease to exist until I'm ready to take back control.

It's a complicated system. But, if Doc, Xander, and Miles were to disappear, I don't think my mind would be able to handle it. I'm grateful for all three of them.

"Your eyes are out of focus again, brother. Are you still with us?"

Colt, our only prospect says as he flops down beside me. A prospect is someone who is seeking to become a full-fledged member of the club. The probationary period lasts a year, longer if the president thinks it's required. Colt is one month out from being patched in.

"He's still Venom," Pops says from another seat.

"How can you tell?" Colt asks.

"It's the eyes," Ghost answers. "His eyes, the way he watches people, is vastly different than any of his alters."

"You do know that I'm in the room, right?" I ask. "Anyway, Colt, why are you here? This is a board members meeting only."

"I just came to deliver a message from King."

"He's not supposed to reach out to anyone until his job is through," Ghost says. "He's going to get someone killed."

"That's why he reached out to the not-so-important prospect," Colt laughs. "Anyway, he wanted to tell everyone that he'll be out another week. I guess some shit went down with whoever it is he was hired to..."

"Go home," I say before the idiot says another word in front of the detective who looks way too interested in the conversation.

"Oh, yeah," Colt mutters uncomfortably. "Alright, I'll go and get lunch for everyone."

"Hired to what?" Detective Jacobs asks before Colt can leave.

Colt, freezing in place, glances at Ghost before turning his full attention to the detective.

“Oh, building something,” he says. “He and his crew were hired to build some sort of fancy house and it’s taking him longer than he originally thought.”

“Why would him contacting you all get someone killed?” Jacobs asks.

“Because the last time the dumbass called one of us he was on the roof and practically knocked someone off because he wasn’t paying attention.” Colt rolls his eyes and shrugs his shoulders. “The fucker never pays attention to his surroundings. More often than not he’s inside his own head. A bit like Venom over there.”

“Go the fuck home,” I repeat, trying not to laugh.

I’ll give it to him, that was smooth as fuck. Jacobs leans back in his chair, his mind once again far away.

Colt shoots me a wink before leaving.

With a look at Ghost, I know we’re thinking the same thing. Patching Colt in to be an official member of the Obsidian MC is going to be a good thing.

With the detective’s mind on whatever brought him here, I let my own mind wander to King. Apart from being a member of our MC, King is a mercenary. His current job is to find and “deal with” someone who is a risk to the client’s family. Hired to kill. That would be the best job description.

Pops created this club years back with the sole purpose of keeping our family together. With all of us boys, Ghost, Viper, Blaze, Steel, and myself, we were always out running the streets. Pops wanted to keep us safe the best way he could.

Ma and Pops adopted me shortly after my parents were killed. When no other family could deal with my “tantrums” they took me in and I’ve been part of the family since.

Over the years, we’ve expanded our club into a more formal MC club. Now, apart from the five of us brothers, we’ve patched in three more men. Colt will make the fourth. We’re a small club, but mighty.

We don't exactly run shit by the books. Ghost owns a club called the Cage where he hosts the underground cage fights that I run and maintain. It's where a huge portion of our money comes from. King is a hired hitman, don't even get me started with Steel and Blaze, and I'm pretty sure Pops has started making moonshine.

"This better be important," Blaze says as he waltzes through the door. "I was in the middle of something important."

"He was watching bar renovation videos on his phone," Steel rolls his eyes.

"Exactly, something important."

"Sit down," Ghost grumbles. "Jacobs has something he wishes to talk about."

Once Steel and Blaze find their seats, we all turn our attention to the tired detective.

"Alright," he sighs. "Women are being kidnapped."

"Sadly, that's not uncommon these days," Steel says. "What do you need from us?"

"Help," Jacobs answers wearily.

"You work with many other agents, detective," Ghost says. "What could we possibly help you with that you can't get from them?"

"Infiltration," he says. "What I'm going to ask you to do is illegal. But, if I have to wait for the proper channels it would take several months before anything is approved."

*"Tell the daft fool to stop beating around the bush,"* Doc grumps.

"Out with it," I say out loud.

"For the past few years," Jacobs starts. "I've been undercover trying to make my way into DS."

"The Death Skulls?" Blaze asks. "Why the fuck would you want to do that?"

“Because they’ve been kidnapping women, impregnating them, and selling their babies.”

Say what?

“And you know this how?” Ghost asks.

“Like I said, I’ve been working this case for three years. Shortly after the latest woman vanished, this chapter’s leader, Malachi, finally hired me as clean-up. It’s taken most of the past year to move my way up the chain but I’ve finally hit a position where I think the bastard trusts me.”

“We are not getting involved with DS,” I say. “Malachi is one demented fuck.”

“They’re raping women,” Jacobs says, his voice raised. “Not only that, but they’re also kidnapping men and forcing them to rape women as well. They have to be stopped.”

“What do you expect us to do?” I ask. “I understand wanting to free those people, but we’re a club of eight men, detective. DS is a gang of hundreds.”

“Malachi’s chapter isn’t, though,” he tells us. “There are twenty members at the most.”

“Venom is right,” Ghost says. “As much as I hate to say this, there isn’t anything we can do to help. We would get ourselves killed within minutes with our numbers.”

“That’s where I come in,” Jacobs says. “Malachi has instructed me to go out and find a new, strong, young male to bring in.”

What the fuck?

*“If he’s already made his way inside the gang, why the fuck isn’t he and the other detectives burning that place to the ground?”* Xander growls.

I raise my brows waiting for Jacobs to answer only to remember that only I can hear Xander.

“You’ve already made your way up the chain of command,” I say. “You’re an inside man. Why not contact your boss and take down the whole operation?”



“Because I don’t have enough to put the bastard behind bars.”

“Explain,” Steel demands.

“I’ve never seen Malachi face to face,” he admits. “No one I work with has. He’s always barking orders over the phone or in some dark corner of the room. The second I tell my boss I’m in, he’ll be breaking down the doors. But Malachi will just run free.”

“So, in the meantime, women and men are being raped or forced to rape?”

*“This detective is an idiot,” Miles says. “All he cares about is getting that arrest under his belt.”*

“Trust me, I don’t much care for the plan myself. This is why I need help. I need to catch the bastard.”

“Malachi may run,” Ghost says. “But many lives will be saved in the meantime. Turn over your information to your boss and save those lives.”

Jacobs sighs, before dropping his head in defeat.

*“He’s not telling us something,” Doc says.*

“Out with it, detective,” I say. “What are you not saying?”

“My sister,” he starts, leaning back against the sofa. “Two years before I was handed this case, my sister was killed by Malachi and his gang. She was abducted from her room one night and was raped for months before becoming pregnant. Nine months later they stole that baby and sold it only to start the process all over. She didn’t survive the birth of the second child.”

“I’m sorry to hear about your sister,” Pops says. “But, how do you know?”

“I didn’t for the longest time. Her case was still open and unsolved when I went undercover,” Jacobs admits. “Once I had an in with Malachi’s crew, I pretended to thrive in the violence and laughed and cheered every time they told me about the couples they had locked together. I needed to appear genuinely excited about what they were doing in order to

climb higher in the chain. Then one day, the men told me about someone they had taken straight from their home. It was unusual because they normally grabbed women that no one would miss. But Malachi took a special interest in her. With a little digging, everything clicked into place. They were talking about my sister. She was only thirteen years old.”

“Shit, I’m sorry man,” Blaze says.

“They told me everything she went through,” he continues. “They had a sick gleam in their eyes with each sordid detail and I tried my best to replicate that look. I would laugh and moan but on the inside, I was erupting. My heart was breaking and being replaced with more anger than I’d ever felt. So, you see, this used to be about taking down Malachi and his gang. But now, I want to watch the life drain from his eyes and I want my sister’s name spoken from my lips so he knows the exact moment he signed his death warrant.”

*“I like him,”* Doc says.

The room is quiet as we process this new information. I get it, though. Revenge is something I most definitely understand.

“What do you need from us?” I ask. “What can we do to help?”

Hope shines in his eyes as he looks at each one of us.

“I need a man,” he says. “I need a young strong male to bring in so two things can happen. One, Malachi may trust me enough to actually be in the same room with me.”

“And two?” Ghost asks.

“I want to burn this whole fucking operation down to the ground,” he tells us. “But, before that happens, we need to grab all the files they have on the babies and who they were sold to. I’m not going to lie, whoever I take in might have to do some pretty shitty stuff. They may get beaten and forced to rape. They may be humiliated and ridiculed. But for some fucked up reason, the men are treated better than the women. They eat better, they sleep better. Hell, they even have free roam inside of the prison section while the females are always

in cages or sedated on cots. From what I understand, the facility is in Malachi's home."

"You want someone on the inside," Steel states. "Even if the men have the freedom to move around, how could a prisoner possibly be of any help to you?"

"I don't know yet," he admits. "But when I was tasked with bringing in a new male, I knew I had to bring in someone on my side."

"Why come to us?" Pops asks. "We're not a largely known club. Hell, we're mostly family. What made you think to come and ask us?"

"Roughly ten years ago there was this grandmother whose car was stolen with her infant granddaughter in the backseat."

"I remember her," Blaze says. "She was pumping gas when someone jumped into the front seat and took off."

"We had stopped by to get snacks before heading home for the night," Steel continues. "We heard her screaming and we took off after the bastard. He didn't get very far. I'm pretty sure he's still behind bars."

"He is," Jacobs confirms. "Well, that woman was my mother and that infant was my daughter."

"I'll be damned," Pops laughs. "Small world."

"Mom is always, to this day, bragging about *that kind motorcycle club*. I did some research on your club some years back. I know all about the illegal fights. I also know that you're good men. When I was tasked with this horrible job, your club was the first to pop into my mind. I know what I'm asking is a lot. But, it's the only way I could think of to take down this organization without losing Malachi in the process."

"I'll do it," I say.

"*What the fuck, Venom?*" Miles shouts. "*This isn't a good idea.*"

"*I agree,*" Doc says.

*“I’m with Venom on this one. Let’s do it. Let’s go gut some fuckers.”*

I smile. Xander is blood thirsty.

“What if something goes wrong?” Ghost asks. “How would Venom be able to communicate?”

“I have a guy who can implant an earpiece far back inside of your ear,” Jacobs tells me. “Far enough back that it won’t be detected and you’ll still be able to hear and call out if you need it. I think it works as a smart device where you say a phrase or word that activates it to turn on.”

“Like our phones?” Pops asks. “If I need to search something, I just ask my phone by saying, Hey Siri.”

“It’s exactly like that.”

“Is it removable?” Blaze asks. “Once he’s home, can we take it out?”

“Yes. I have one myself and was assured that it can be removed as soon as I’m ready.”

“What the hell. What’s one more voice in my head? Let’s do this.”

# Chapter Two

## Venom

*“I honestly don’t think this is the best idea,”* Miles says. *“Maybe we should reconsider.”*

*“Everything will be fine, Miles,”* Xander assures him.

“You’re going to have to remove your cross necklace,” Jacobs tells me as we head towards his car.

It’s been a few days since he came to us asking for help. Pops has been on the phone with his buddies from the Phantoms MC. Unfortunately, they’re in the middle of a turf war with some other club and can’t risk sending anyone for at least a week.

My brother, Viper, is over there helping out the best that he can.

“I don’t think so,” Pops says. “The boys never remove their necklaces.”

“It’s most likely going to get ripped from his neck and tossed away,” Jacobs warns as I remove the cross from around my neck. “If it’s of any importance, leaving it behind is the best bet.”

I don’t say anything as I hand my cross to Pops. Pops gave all of us kids these cross necklaces when we were younger. Each one is equipped with a tracking device so that our parents would always be able to find us if something had happened.

For years they were never needed in that way until last year when Viper was taken. Luckily, because of that old tracking chip in his necklace, we were able to find him.

“I don’t like this,” Ma says, tears forming in her eyes. “What if they beat you, my love? What if they force you to force yourself upon one of those women?”

I pull Ma into my arms and hold her tightly. I may not be born of this woman's blood, but she has never once treated me as if I wasn't fully hers.

"I can make you this promise, Ma," I say against her head. "I will never force myself on any woman. No matter what they do to me. I will protect them at all costs."

"What about you, Travis?" she sniffles, using my real name. "Who is going to protect you?"

"I can't promise my safety, Ma," I tell her. "But I can promise my dignity. I won't let them use me to harm anyone else. Think about all those people who need to be saved, Ma. Think about all those babies."

"I am, son," she says. "I know your heart, my love. I know what you will do to save all those people. But promise me one thing. Do everything you can to ensure your safety. Promise me that you'll be smart and not draw any attention to yourself."

Oh, how I want to make those promises. I want to assure Ma that everything will be alright. But memories of my birth mother being raped smashes back into my head and it takes everything I can not to pull back and let someone else take over until the flashback is gone.

Xander is right at the front, ready to pull me away if need be. But I internally nod letting him know that I'll be alright.

I wasn't able to save my mother all those years ago, but I sure as hell will do everything in my power to save as many of the men and women as I can inside of those walls.

"Protect him, boys," Ma whispers against my chest. "Protect all of you."

Xander, Doc, and Miles all nod even though they know Ma can't see them.

"Pops," I say, silently asking him to come and take Ma away. I don't want her here for this next part.

"Come on, sweetheart," Pops tells her, pulling her from my arms and into his. "Let's head inside and call Bitsy. She's

worried about everything and needs an update.”

I watch as my parents turn and walk away. There’s a good possibility that I’ll never see them again, but I won’t tell them that.

“Alright,” I say once Ma is inside. “Let’s get this over with.”

“I need you to punch me first,” Jacobs says. “You’re a big dude, so it needs to look like we struggled. Don’t be afraid to really go all…”

Pulling my fist back, I punch the detective in the jaw.

“MOTHER FUCKER,” he yells, his hand clutching his jaw. “A warning would have been nice. You didn’t even hesitate.”

I shrug and smile. That punch was full of built-up tension from what we are about to do.

“Well, that makes my part a bit easier,” he smiles.

I return his smile, ready for the pain. With each punch, I adjust myself and wait for the next one. After four or five solid punches and kicks to the side, we’re good to go.

“Take these,” Ghost says, handing me some pills.

“I need to be clear-headed,” I say. “Well, as clear-headed as I can get, anyway.”

“It’s just ibuprofen,” he tells me. “It won’t mess with your head any. Take them so it can get a head start on that swelling.”

I accept the pills and swallow them.

“Let’s test the earpiece,” Jacobs says. “Try and activate it.”

Jacobs’ buddy was in and out in thirty minutes flat earlier today. The process of placing the earpiece was painless but slightly uncomfortable.

“When you set it up make sure you program it to activate using a word or phrase that won’t sound suspicious to the people around you,” he told us. “The signal will reach several hundred miles out and will only be heard by this radio on the

set frequency of your choosing. Messages will not be able to be sent to the earpiece unless the person wearing it has activated it to be turned on. So, keep the radio on and charged at all times for when he reaches out. Once you are finished and need to turn the signal off, use a separate word or phrase.”

“My fucking head hurts,” I say and nod when I hear the static of the earpiece being activated. “Can you hear me?”

My voice echoes from the radio in Ghost’s hands.

“Is it too loud?” Ghost asks, sending the message through the radio.

I can hear his voice clearly, but it isn’t loud so I shake my head.

“Now, deactivate the signal,” Jacobs says. “I won’t be able to hear you in my earpiece, but my signal is connected to the radio your brother has as well. So, if I need to get a message to you, or vice versa, it will have to be through Ghost. Got it?”

“I’m over it,” I say, nodding, and hear the slight tone of the earpiece being turned off.

“Good,” Ghost nods. “You might not be able to keep track of the time but try and radio in at least twice a day. In the morning and at night. I’m calling in all the allies we have and we will be ready to break down those fucking doors and get you out at the first sign of your life being in danger.”

“We really need to go,” Jacobs says. “I need to have you there in less than an hour.”

“Don’t fucking die,” Blaze says. “I don’t want to go on a revenge killing, but I will.”

Smiling, I pull my brother in for a hug, making sure to hug them all tightly. Nothing else is said as I walk to the car and wait by the back door.

“Sorry,” Jacobs says as he ties my hands behind my back and puts a sack on my head. “I don’t want to risk someone catching us if we stop to do this closer to the house.”

“It’s alright,” I say as I clumsily fall into the back seat.



*“We need to ice your side,” Doc says. “That fucking detective kicked you too hard.”*

I want to laugh at Doc being Doc, but I don't. He's right. My side is fucking killing me.

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“Alright, we're here,” Jacobs mutters quietly. “I don't know what's going to happen to you from this point on. You won't stay here long before the trucks come and take you and the other new prisoners away. I don't know the location of Malachi's home, but I have people working on that. Just don't do anything to draw too much attention to yourself.”

“I'll be smart,” I say from beneath the hood. “I'll check in once I get settled to wherever they're taking me.”

“Here they come. Remember to act as if you've been drugged.”

I don't respond and relax all of my muscles. I won't fight these men. Not yet.

I can't explain the reasoning behind it, but this feels like the most important mission of my life. Something is about to happen to me that will change my life forever. I don't know if it's going to be a good or bad thing. But it is going to be important.

# Chapter Three

## Sophia

I want to die. I want to be free from this miserable existence.

“Is she ready?”

“Give me just a few moments to run my scans and I’ll be able to tell you.”

“Just do your fucking job.”

Moments later a door slams and I’m left alone with the doctor.

“Now that he’s gone, I’ll loosen your straps a bit,” the doctor tells me.

I don’t respond. I don’t even acknowledge that he spoke. I used to think the doctor was the only good person in this hell but he’s just as bad, if not worse, than the rest of them.

“I need to do an internal examination to see if you’ve healed,” he says as he loosens my arms and legs. “Then we’ll do an ultrasound to check and make sure your insides are all healed. Once that’s finished, we’ll draw some blood to check your hormone levels. Hopefully, your body is back to working order. Seeing as you’re already ovulating again, I think the results will be positive.”

His voice is sad as he spouts off his plans. He hates what he does but is forced into doing it to keep his family safe. Deep down I know that he’s not an evil person, but on the surface, he’s a monster. Each night, the doctor leaves this place and goes back home to his family. Every day he has an opportunity to try and tell someone what’s happening to us.

But he never does.

I spent months begging him to tell someone. Leave a note written on the gas station's bathroom wall. Hell, go to the confessional and tell a priest to tell someone.

He would shake his head as tears fell from his eyes.

I wanted to hate him but I could never bring myself to do it. He was as much of a prisoner as I was. Only in different ways. He didn't deserve my hate.

Until recently.

I was raped for weeks until I got pregnant all because the doctor said I was in perfect breeding health.

Even then, I didn't hate him.

I tried to kill myself before the baby was born to spare us both from this life. The doctor told the men in charge that I had prenatal depression and they had me tied to a bed for the remainder of the pregnancy. For eight months.

Still, I didn't hate him.

Then, my water broke and I went into labor. Regardless of how that baby was conceived, it was still mine. I grew it inside of me and loved it with everything I had.

With that final push, my baby was born into this world of torment only to be taken away from me before I even had the chance to lay eyes on it. I only heard its cry as they were rushing it from the room. I don't even know if I had a boy or a girl.

When I watched the doctor pull my baby from my womb and willingly hand it off to someone else; that's when it happened. Hate beyond anything I've ever felt coursed through my veins.

I thought I hated the man who raped me. I thought I hated the man who had me kidnapped and imprisoned. But knowing the doctor has had every opportunity to save us but still chose to pull my baby from my body and hand it off opened a door that I didn't even know I had.

“Just a few more minutes, Seven.”

That's my name. My designation. I'm number seven out of the ten women currently being held prisoner inside of this damn building. The doctor asked for my name one time, but my name is the only thing of mine they can't mock or take away.

"All done. Do you want me to wait a few minutes before I call them back in?"

I want to yell; *you mean before you have them take me back to my cell?* But I won't give him the satisfaction of my communication.

I just stare up at the ceiling knowing that my cell is the exact place I'm heading back to.

"You haven't said a word to me in almost four months, Seven," he says, his voice laced with defeat. "You know that I had no choice. If I hadn't handed that baby over then both of us, and my family, would have been killed."

Nothing. Not a single ounce of sympathy sparks in my heart for this monster.

"I'm always being watched," he continues in a desperate whisper. "My house is bugged and I'm always being followed. They would know if I told a single soul what happens in this place. Please, believe me, Seven. Please know that I would save you all if I could."

Without thought, my eyes fall to his face. He looks exhausted and so very sad. I decide to gift him with a small bit of my attention.

"Fuck you," I whisper, returning my eyes back to the ceiling.

"Seven, I'm so sorry. I fucking hate this," he whispers back, tightening the belts on my wrists and ankles. Clearing his voice, he shouts out, "We're finished."

"Well," one of the guards asks as he bursts through the door. "Is she in breeding order?"

"Her body is completely healed from her last pregnancy," the doctor says emotionlessly. "She needs more food, water,

and some exercise. Maybe a comfortable place to rest for a little while.”

“I don’t care about her fucking comfort,” the guard says. “Is she breedable?”

“The more stress and discomfort she’s under the harder it will be for a positive pregnancy,” the doctor tells them. “But, yes, she is ready for conception.”

“Perfect,” the guard laughs. “We just got in a good candidate to breed her with. He just needs a little convincing. They’ll make the boss some expensive babies.”

As the guard pulls my bed from the room, I look back at the doctor and let my tears fall. I want this man to feel every emotion I feel and I want him to know that everything I’m about to go through, again, is all his fault.

“I’m sorry,” he mouths as my bed turns the corner.

He can be sorry all he wants. If it were me, I would have found a way to tell someone. Especially considering one of the current pregnant females in the breeding cells is a fourteen-year-old girl.

And he fucking knows that.

“I’m going to free your hands and feet,” the guard tells me once I’m back in my cell. “If you try your shit, you’ll be right back on this bed. Got it?”

He doesn’t wait for an answer as he unties me and takes a quick step back. I can’t help but smile. The last time he freed me, I found and took the opportunity to kick him in the balls as hard as my weakened body could. Now, he always watches closely as he walks backward from my cell.

“Smirk all you want,” he says as he shuts the cell door and locks it. “You will be tied back down in a few short hours while the new breeding man fucks you like the dog you are.”

His laugh follows him down the dimly lit walkway. I wait until he takes the few steps that lead to the door and watch him walk through it, locking it in place.

“Cady,” I say in the darkness.

Our cells can only be described as prison cells. Iron bars, concrete floors, and a bucket to use the bathroom in. That's it. Ten cells line the walls, each with a woman slowly withering away.

"Is he gone?" Cady's voice is so quiet that I almost miss it.

"He's gone," I say. "The doctor is still in his office down the hall, but it's just us now. How are you doing?"

There isn't much light down here. I can see the women in the cells on each side of me, but it's too dark to see the others. Cady is to my right. She's always too scared to talk when the guards are down here. Might have to do with the fact that she's a fourteen-year-old girl.

All I can think about is getting her out of here and into a bed at UNITY. If it's still operating, that is. With my parents gone and my disappearance, there really wasn't anyone else to take over. It makes me sad that the doors of UNITY could be closed when so many people need a place like that to feel safe.

"Everything hurts," Cady tells me. "And my feet are swollen like a balloon."

"Sit the head of your cot up slightly," I tell her. "Lay down and prop your feet up on your pillow. It's not much, but it might help with that swelling."

I forgot to mention that Cady is currently thirty-nine weeks pregnant. Any minute now, she's going to go into labor and they're going to rip her baby from her womb just as they did mine, and she's never going to get to see it.

I know they're selling our babies. They talk about how we're breeding them a higher paycheck, so it could only mean that the more babies we have the more money they get.

I know most of the men that rape the women aren't doing it willingly. So, they're not paying these men. They're prisoners just like us.

But the men are always smart, strong, or handsome. They always have some positive attribute that they can pass on through their DNA.

These bastards are selecting the best cattle for their breeding parties so they can get the best outcome with the offspring.

Right now, I'm the only one not pregnant.

"Did you give your baby a name?" Cady asks me. "I mean, before they took it away?"

I sit on the floor and lean against the bars of the cage that's separating us. Part of me wants to lie so I keep this for myself, but Cady is scared and if this is the only type of comfort I can offer, then I'll do it.

"Since they don't let us know what our babies are," I start. "I chose a name for a boy and a girl. If it was a girl, her name would be Hope. If it was a boy, I was going to call him Gabriel."

"Those are beautiful," Cady says. "Why those names?"

"Well, my daughter would be named for the very thing I hold close to my heart," I explain. "Hope. I have hope that we'll be rescued."

"Hope is a perfect name," Cady sniffles. "Why did you choose Gabriel?"

"It means God is my strength," I explain. "I can only hope and pray that whatever they're doing with our babies will bring them a life of comfort and happiness. What about you? Did you pick out any names?"

"My baby is a boy," she tells me. "I heard the doctor talking to one of the men last week. The doctor kept saying 'he' instead of 'the baby' like he normally does. I think he does stuff like that on purpose to give us as much information as he can without telling us too much."

"Don't act like he's a good person," I tell Cady. "That bastard can get us out of here anytime he wants. He's just a coward."

"He's protecting his family," Cady whispers. "Wouldn't you do the same?"

“Would I do the same knowing what’s happening behind these walls?” I ask sarcastically. “Absolutely not. I would find a way to tell someone. He’s a doctor, Cady. He works at the hospital. He goes out grocery shopping. He drives to and from this building every evening. He can find a way to help us.”

“Maybe he’s being watched,” she whispers.

“Maybe he is,” I whisper back. “But if you knew what he did, would you find a way? Knowing that teenage girls were being raped repeatedly until they got pregnant, would you keep that to yourself or find a way to get help?”

She doesn’t respond. She doesn’t have to.

I sit on the floor of my dimly lit cage until I drift off to sleep only to be woken by someone banging on the cage door.

“Rise and shine, Seven,” the guard says. “Get on the cot.”

Thoughts run through my mind of me with a metal pipe hitting the guard in the back of the head. My mental fight is as strong as ever, even if my physical one isn’t.

The only things in our cells are the cots and a bucket. I avoid the cot at all costs and mostly sleep on the hard floors. The cots are only here for a single use. To tie us down.

Knowing that fighting would be useless, I slowly stand and make my way to the damn cot. The guard is already at its side waiting for me.

“Do you really have to tie me down?” I ask.

“You know I do, Seven,” he says. “I’d rather not get my balls kicked again.”

Regardless of the situation, I smirk as he tightens my wrists to the sides of the bed.

“You do know that when I get out of here, I’m going to fucking kill you, right?” I say sweetly.

“Whatever you say, Seven. Whatever you say.”

The guards have told me countless times that the only way I’m getting out of here will be in a body bag. I don’t care what their plans are for me, but one day I will be free.



I don't think these people realize just yet that they've created a killer.

But they will.

Violence was something that never even crossed my mind before. Sure, I've been angry for the people who would come to UNITY for shelter. I've even been so angry to have violent thoughts towards the victims' abusers. But never before have I gotten the urge to take a life.

Until now.

"We have a new male for you," the guard tells me. "It's time to get back into the breeding room, Seven."

"Yay me," I say sarcastically. But inside, I'm terrified. I know that Cady and some of the other girls had men who didn't want to rape them and were forced to at gun point but I wasn't that lucky. They've only ever had the same male in the breeding room with me until I got pregnant and he was a sadistic fuck who had the time of his life.

I shiver at the memories of that man raping me for weeks. I'll never feel clean again.

"Do you think the boss will let me in the breeding room with you, Seven?" the guard asks, clearly amused.

"I wouldn't take that chance, bud," I say with false confidence. "Do you really want your dick swinging free where I have so many opportunities to grab it, twist, and pull?"

The guard grumbles as he keys in the code that opens the breeding room door.

I learned pretty early on that the guards won't lay a hand on us. They make sure we live in cells with next to no light, feed us just enough to keep us alive, have the doctor medically check us before and after each rape, and they steal our babies once they're born, but they won't beat us. The *boss* made it clear that we were off-limits apart from being restrained.

That doesn't mean we don't get beaten, but that's only done by a single person when we *earn* a punishment. Cady started calling him the punisher and the name stuck.

That doesn't stop the rough handling and face slaps from the guards, though. Seeing as how I refuse to keep my opinions to myself, I'm quite familiar with both of those.

"Your new breeder won't be here for another hour," the guard says. "I should keep you tied up until then."

"Do what you've gotta do, bud," I say bravely, trying my best to hide my fear of what's to come.

"Remove your gown and lay down on the mattress," he mutters, removing my restraints. "You know what happens if I come back and you're still dressed."

They won't feed me dinner if I don't comply. I doubt I'll be in the mood to eat anything this evening anyway, so I walk to the back of the room and lean against the wall.

"You know," he tells me as he backs out of the room. "One day, the boss is going to classify you as useless. When that happens, you'll be mine to do with as I wish. I'm going to beat that bitch right out of you."

His laughter follows him down the hall.

I fall to the floor and cry. I'm angry and so freaking scared. It takes everything I have not to show that in front of the guards and the doctor. But, when I'm in this room, my fear becomes too much for me to hide because I know what's about to happen. And there isn't a damn thing I can do to stop it.

The breeding room is just another cell but it's much more comfortable. It has a tv, a sink, a shower, and a regular toilet. Plus, a bed. An actual bed.

But it's not a bed I will ever willingly lay down on.

The room is lit up with soft white lights and the temperature is much warmer than the cells we live in.

I hate this room regardless of the comfort level.

Pulling my knees to my chest, I let all of the tears fall. On top of being angry and scared, I'm simply lost. I don't feel as if I'm the person I was before I was taken.

I lay my head on my knees and silently cry.

“Get your fucking hands off of me,” someone yells out. The voice is deep, masculine, and angry. “Who the fuck do you think you are?”

“Just go in there and do as you’re told and your time here will be pleasant,” I hear one of the guards say. “Fuck the bitch tonight and you can go back upstairs to your room in the morning.”

“I will not rape someone for your sick pleasures, you sick fucks,” the man yells.

“You will, or you die,” the guard says. “It’s as simple as that.”

“You have a visitor, Seven,” my normal guard laughs as I hear the gate open and close. “He’s just as much of a pain in the ass as you are. I’m sure you’ll have fun.”

“Bring your hands between the bars and I’ll remove your cuffs,” one of the guards tells the man.

He doesn’t say anything but I hear the cuffs being removed. I keep my head on my knees and refuse to look up.

“Looks like you’re not getting your dinner tonight, Seven,” my guard says. “That gown better be removed by the time I reach the security room or you won’t get breakfast either. You have all night together. Might as well get comfortable.”

The guards walk away and I’m alone in the room with my next attacker.

“Hey sweetheart,” he says, his voice much softer than when he was talking to the guards. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

I wouldn’t be able to talk even if I wanted to. Fear has caused my throat to swell.

“I’m going to sit down near you, alright sweetheart?” the man says kindly.

With my eyes squeezed tight, I can’t see him, but I can feel his presence. It’s big. Almost overpowering.

“Do they have cameras in here?” he whispers once he’s seated on the floor in front of me.”

I try to make myself appear even smaller but still give him the courtesy of nodding to his question.

“Are they really going to take away your food if you don’t do as they say?”

I nod. He doesn’t need to know the extent of that exact punishment but it doesn’t matter either way.

“Fuck. What am I going to do?”

I hear the man move and I take a chance at opening my eyes. I don’t dare look up but I watch his legs as he paces back and forth. He has on a black pair of boots and some dark jeans.

He paces for several minutes before, once again, stopping right in front of me. I watch his legs as he crouches down, close, but still far enough away that I don’t feel crowded.

“What’s your name, babygirl? I’m Travis. I swear on my Ma that I’m not going to hurt you.”

I hear the sincerity in his voice but I don’t think he understands why he was brought here. Regardless of if he wants to hurt me or not, he’s going to have to. The last man said the same thing. His words were kind, but when I looked up into his face, his eyes and his smile were not.

I fear that the second I look into this new man’s face, it will be the same. So, I continue to stare at his boots.

When he doesn’t move or speak for several minutes, I find the nerve to look up. He’s wearing a black t-shirt and a leather jacket. Nothing super special about his outfit, but it sure does look warm.

I make it to his mouth, but I don’t see any smile. Finally, I reach his eyes, fully prepared for the evil looking back at me.

But I see none.

He’s young. Probably late twenties or early thirties. Clean-shaven, with beautiful blue eyes. When our eyes meet, I’m taken aback by the intensity of his stare. With his stare alone I feel as if I’m in a room with several people watching.

Intense.

“How do I know you even care about your Ma?” I ask, my voice hoarse from crying.

“What?” he asks, tilting his head.

“You said you swear on your Ma,” I remind him quietly. “How do I even know if you care about her enough to swear on her?”

A small smile forms on his handsome face.

“That’s a good point, sweetheart,” he admits. “I guess you’re just going to have to trust me. My Ma is very important to me and I would die to protect her.”

“I bet that’s nice,” I say, feeling sad that I don’t have someone like that in my life. The only man who ever wanted to protect me was my daddy.

“What’s your name?” he asks again.

“Seven,” I answer automatically.

“No,” he says forcefully. “Your real name, babygirl. What is it?”

Should I tell him? He doesn’t seem like the other man who raped me. I mean, regardless, he’s going to end up doing the same thing. He doesn’t have a choice, the same as me.

“Sophia,” I sigh. “My name is Sophia. Or Sophie. Whichever.”

“Good girl, Sophia,” he smiles tenderly. “How long have you been here?”

I think back. It didn’t take long for me to get pregnant when I first arrived. I had a full-term pregnancy, which means it’s been at least nine months. I’m not sure how long it’s been since then though.

“Probably a year,” I admit.

His eyes widen before slowly lowering himself from the squatting position to sitting.

“I’m so sorry, sweetheart,” he says. “I bet your family is worried sick.”

“I don’t have any family left,” I whisper. “My parents died shortly before I was taken.”

“Oh, babygirl.”

His eyes scream sympathy. I want to tell him to keep his pity for someone else but the truth is, I need it. I need for someone, apart from Cady and the other women, to at least feel sorry for me.

“Do you know what they want you to do?” I whisper.

His eyes darken, and for a split second, it almost appears as if someone new is watching me. Then his eyes return to the kindness that I’ve seen so far.

“I do, babygirl,” he admits. “Why do you keep whispering?”

“They can hear me,” I tell him. “They hear everything.”

With a nod, he extends his hand and I just watch. What does he want me to do? Hold his hand? He doesn’t move as I sort through my thoughts. If I give him my hand he can force me forward and throw me on the mattress. Although, based on the size of his arms, I don’t think he would need the leverage to put me where he wants me.

Taking a deep breath, I place my small hand in his.

His fingers envelope my hand and he lifts it to his mouth before blowing.

“You’re fucking freezing, babygirl,” he tells me. “You’re wearing next to nothing and it’s an icebox in here.”

“It’s actually much warmer in the breeding room than it is in our cells,” I tell him.

I know the men breeders live in different locations and always look as if they’re living like kings. But, for some reason, the women never get that privilege.

“Breeding room?” he asks.

I nod, roaming my eyes around the cell.

“Why must you never listen, Seven?” my guard’s voice echoes around the room. “Seeing as how you’re still dressed after you were ordered to remove your gown you will spend the night in cellblock X. Maybe after not eating tonight or tomorrow, you’ll learn to follow the rules.”

The tears form and fall before I can stop them. They barely give us enough food as it is but I don’t care about that. Cellblock X means I get a visit from the punisher.

“I’ve told her to keep her clothing on,” the man, Travis, calls out. “It’s cold down here.”

“It does not matter what you’ve told her,” the guard says. “Do your task and you can join the others in the male sector. Do not and we will have to take more drastic measures.”

“I’m going to fucking kill you,” Travis shouts.

“Look at that, Seven,” the guard laughs. “You two were meant to meet. You have one hour.”

Two things go through my mind. One, I don’t want to spend more time in cellblock X and around the punisher than necessary. And two, for some crazy reason, I don’t want the punisher to harm this man. Call me insane, but something in my heart tells me that Travis is a kind person.

I pull my hand back, not realizing that Travis was still holding it, before standing and removing my gown. I walk to the mattress and lie down.

“What the fuck are you doing, babygirl,” he says roughly. “It’s too fucking cold and you’re too fucking skinny to be in this room naked.”

“If you don’t do as he asks, he will punish you,” I say, not bothering to lower my voice.

“I don’t give a fuck,” he says, grabbing my gown and walking to the mattress. “He can torture me all he wants but I’m not going to rape some innocent woman. Get dressed.”

How can I make him understand?

“Alright,” I sigh, sitting up in the bed. “If you don’t do what they ask, they will drug you, bring you back tied to a cot.

They will pick me up, forcing me on top of you. They will force my hips to move as they rape you using my body. Either way, it ends the same.”

“What the fuck?” he says, sitting next to me.

“Then they will take you to the punisher in cellblock x where you will be beaten,” I continue. “My last breeder was someone who was more than willing. But one of the other women’s breeder wasn’t. He didn’t want to hurt her and that’s the exact thing they did to them.”

“What the fuck is this place?” he asks, pulling off his coat and laying it gently around my shoulders.

For a minute, I can’t speak. The warmth of the jacket is overwhelming. Not to mention the scent attached to it. As silly as it sounds, for just a few seconds, surrounded by the warmth and the scent of this man, I feel safe. Protected.

Just for a few seconds.

“It’s a breeding facility,” I finally answer after my mind refocuses. “But instead of breeding animals, they breed humans. Once the women are pregnant, they keep us locked up in our cells until the baby is born. Then they take our baby and sell them to the highest bidder. That’s what we think, anyway.”

“Coming back to all of that,” Travis says, pulling the coat closed and zipping it up. “You said they will take me to cellblock x where the punisher will beat me.”

“Yeah,” I sigh. “I really don’t want you to have to go down there.”

“Isn’t that where the fucking dick said you will be going?”

I look up into this stranger’s worried eyes and nod.

“What will happen to you there?” he asks, his voice deadly.

“It’s different every time,” I whisper. “One time I was just left in the cell without lights or communication for three days. Other times I’ve had to kneel on rocks for hours or sit in a tub of ice-cold water for so long that I was sure my skin would just fall right off my body. Sometimes, the punisher decides



not to torment but to torture. And trust me, Mr. Travis, there is a difference.”

“Just Travis, babygirl,” he says roughly. “Just call me Travis.”

“You have to do it, Travis,” I say, fresh tears forming in my eyes. “Would it be better if I gave consent?”

“No, Sophia, it wouldn’t,” he growls. “I’m not going to fucking rape you. We can just lie.”

“They’ll know,” I say.

“How?”

“I’ll be sent directly to the doctor to be checked for *insemination*,” I explain. “We’re checked before and after breeding room visits.”

“Fuck,” he says, rubbing his hand down his face. “I can’t do this to you babygirl. I don’t care if they beat me. I won’t fucking do it.”

I sigh. On one hand, I’m grateful for his reluctance. Travis truly does seem like a good man. But what he doesn’t understand is that no matter his choice, the outcome will be the same.

“I’m so sorry,” I cry. “You seem like such a good person. It’s just not fair.”

“Oh, babygirl,” he says. “Can I hold you? Would that be alright?”

He waits patiently for my nod before pulling me sideways onto his lap as if I weigh nothing.

“It’s alright, sweetheart,” he says calmly. “I’m going to take care of you. I won’t let them hurt you.”

I give in and let all of my fears out. I cry against this stranger as if I had the right to. He holds me for a long time while his shirt absorbs all of my tears.

“Time’s up, Seven,” I hear the guard say. “Guess we’re going to have to do this the hard way.”

“Stay the fuck back,” Travis says, standing up with me still in his arms. He places me on my feet and gently shoves me behind him.

“Well, well,” a guard says. “It looks like someone has a bit of a hero complex. You can’t save her, idiot. You couldn’t even save yourself.”

“You will not lay a hand on her head,” Travis says, his voice steady as steel. He almost sounds bored.

“No, we won’t,” my guard says. “Although, the little bitch is do for a good beating. However, she will get hers in do time when she spends the night in cellblock X. You, however, will come with me.”

“What you’re asking me to do to this woman is disgusting,” Travis tells them.

“We’re not asking you to do a thing. You don’t have a choice. Come on, Seven. Up on your cot.”

I place my hand on his back before dropping his coat to the floor.

“It’ll be alright, mister,” I say, purposefully not using his name.

Travis reaches out and wraps his hand around my wrist, ultimately halting me in my place.

“I’ll do it,” he tells the guards. “I’ll do what you want, but I will do it my way.”

“You will do it the way you’re told.”

“Actually,” the doctor interrupts from somewhere behind the guards. “Studies show that stress can lower a man’s sperm count. The less stressed he is, the more potent his sample.”

“Then why don’t we just continue using willing men?” my guard asks. “Free pussy doesn’t stress them out.”

“No, but those men usually have bad genes,” the doc explains. “These men are chosen by the Boss’s men. They’re handpicked because of their genes. This male’s offspring will sell for a large sum of money.”

I can feel the tension rising in Travis but I don't dare move.

"Fine," the guard says. "What do you want? I will talk to the boss and see what he says."

"Privacy," Travis tells them. "A room with a door, and no fucking cameras or listening devices."

"I'll talk to the Boss and see what can be arranged. It will take time. Take them back to their cells."

"Seven, now."

I tug my arm willing Travis to let go. He doesn't want to at first, but he eventually sighs and releases me.

"Get dressed," he orders me. I want to balk at his bossiness, but I also want desperately to get dressed myself. So, I grab my gown and slide it over my head.

When I get on the cot, my guard restrains me.

"Is that necessary?" Travis asks. "She's a small thing with three massive bodyguards. What could she possibly do?"

"This little waif is a bitch who can't keep her hands to herself," my guard says.

I look over at Travis and wink. Sure, I'm still scared shitless, but for some unknown reason, I feel a fresh breath of air.

And his name is Travis.

"To Cellblock X we go," my guard sings.

"I need to check her over first," the doctor retorts.

"When I get out of here, I swear on everything that I am, you will both die a slow and painful death," I promise.

"We know," the doctor says.

I'm sure they do. I tell them often. And I mean every single word.

# Chapter Four

## Venom

The guards hold me back as they wheel Sophia away. Knowing that she's going to be beaten and there isn't a damn thing I can do about it burns a fury inside of me that I've never felt.

*"We're going to get her out," Xander tells me calmly. "I want to break every fucking neck holding us back to get to her just the same as you do, Venom, but we have to be reasonable."*

*"They're not going to kill her, lad," Doc says. "They need her. Stick with the game plan."*

*"I do believe the gameplan has been changed," Miles says.*

He's not wrong. The end game was to always rescue the men and women that they're holding captive here, but the main goal was getting the damn detective what he needed to raid this place. However, the second I laid eyes on her, my sweet Sophia, the rules changed. The endgame is still the same. Get information for the detective and set everyone free. However, the most important thing is getting Sophia out of here.

The guards roughly shove me up the stairs until we reach the large room where the rest of the men stay. I don't know what the fuck Detective Jacobs was talking about, the men do not have the freedom to run around inside this building.

The guard shoves me hard into the room and I have to quickly move my legs before I fall. I clench my fists but make no move to turn around and beat the bastard.

"Where is everyone?" I ask, only noticing one other man sitting at a table.

I'm fucking pissed that they have the men stay in this room, complete with its own bathroom, sink, fridge, tv, and beds, while the women sleep in the cells below.

"Gone," the man says. "They brought lunch."

The man waves to the second plate but I choose not to move.

"You weren't in here earlier," I tell him. "I memorized every face before they hauled my ass to do deplorable things. You weren't here."

"Did you do them?"

"What?"

"The deplorable things," he says calmly. "Did you do them?"

"No, I didn't fucking do them," I respond. "What kind of twisted bastard kidnaps men and forces them to rape the women they've also kidnapped?"

The man, probably in his late forties, with graying hair, thick eyelashes, and a long straight beard, smiles over at me.

My gut is telling me that something isn't right.

"Who are you?" I demand.

"Come," he answers. "Have a seat. There's something I want to talk with you about."

*"Activate the headset, now," Xander says.*

Xander almost took over earlier tonight when we were in the room with Sophia. I was barely able to hold him back, but that's only because he saw reason. If Xander wants out, he gets out. So, instead of fighting against him and his instincts, I listen.

It just so happens that I agree with his instincts.

"My fucking head hurts," I say aloud, running my hand down my face.

I hear the soft beep of the line connecting.

“Thank fuck,” I hear Ghost say. “One more day and I was charging my ass inside. Are you okay?”

“Sit,” the man repeats.

I don’t answer Ghost, but with my silence comes his understanding.

“Is this recording, Blaze?” I hear him ask. “I think somethings up.”

“Yeah, from the second he connected.”

“I’d rather stand,” I say, trying to ignore the many voices in my head.

For the first time in days, my alters are all quiet. Thank goodness for that. I’m not sure I would be able to focus with so many talking at once.

“Fair enough,” the man says. He turns fully toward me in his seat and leans back as if he doesn’t have a care in the world. “How long have you been here?”

“I’ve been here for five days,” I answer, leaning against the wall on the other side of the room. “Now, I’m not going to answer another one of your questions until you tell me who the fuck you are.”

“Fair enough,” he repeats. “My name is Malachi Sinclair.”

He watches me as if waiting for a reaction. I give him none regardless of the curses going off in my head.

“Is that name supposed to mean something to me?” I ask. “You look as if you’re expecting recognition. We’re in the same boat here buddy.”

“I guess we are,” he responds. “What’s your name?”

Immediately, I want to give him a false name, but I’ve already told Sophia my name, and if this the Malachi running the place he likely already heard.

“Travis,” I say.

“Damn it, Venom,” Ghost sighs in my ear.

*“Don’t look too interested in him,” Xander says. “Go grab a water.”*

“So, you were kidnapped?” Malachi asks, sounding bored.

“I was fucking drugged,” I growl. “The second I escape this place I’m going to find that fucker and kill him. That is if my brothers haven’t already.”

“Do you know the man who took you?” he asks me.

I take my time drinking down half the bottle of water before answering.

“No, I’ll know his face the moment I see it. He’s fucking dead.”

“When you escape?” Malachi asks, raising his brows. “You sound pretty sure you can manage that.”

“Careful, brother,” Steel says.

“You seem awfully relaxed for someone in your position,” I say, carefully changing the path of the conversation. “You seem to know what goes on around here. Are you one of the men willing to rape those women?”

“Oh, I’ve never raped a woman in my life,” Malachi says.

“Have you ever raped a man?”

He simply smiles.

Fucker.

“Travis,” he says, standing from his chair. “I have a proposition for you.”

“We’re both prisoners in this fucking place,” I growl. “What could you possibly have that I want?”

“Call it a favor,” he responds gleefully. “You do something for me and I’ll do something for you.”

Malachi walks over to the door, knocks twice, pauses, and knocks once more. The door opens and one of the guards walks in holding a bottle of scotch.

“Who the fuck are you?” I ask as he walks back to the table with the scotch and two guards.

“As I said before, my name is Malachi Sinclair. I run this place.”

*“React,” Xanders says.*

I charge forward, ready to beat this fuckers head when his two guards grab me from both sides holding me back.

“Who the fuck do you think you are?” I say, anger dripping from my pores. “How could you do that to these women? What kind of twisted fuck are you?”

“The proposition, Travis,” he says calmly, pouring himself a glass. “Would you like to hear it?”

I shove off the two guards and wait.

“Very good. I have an issue, Travis,” he starts. “The men we bring in to breed these women are scum. Every single one of them are idiots. While I don’t know who you are, you appear very well put together. I’ll have to remember to reward the ones who captured you.”

“Not if I fucking kill him first,” I growl, trying to appear pissed the fuck off.

It doesn’t take much acting.

“I’d rather you didn’t,” he says, taking a drink. “Anyway, I will let you go free if you spend the next week giving me many samples.”

“Samples?” I ask, playing dumb. I know exactly what he wants.

“Your semen,” he says. “If I had enough samples to inseminate into the women, then they would no longer have to be raped.”

“You’re a sick fuck,” I say, tightening my fists.

“I know,” he laughs. “On top of setting you free, I’ll gift you with fifty-thousand dollars for your silence.”

“Act interested, brother,” Ghost says.

*“But not too interested,” Miles adds.*



“You want to pay me half a mil to blow my load into a beaker?”

“Maybe even later on down the road, you can come back to sell more,” he tells me. “The doctor had you tested when you first arrived. He said you have an exceptionally high sperm count.”

Yeah, I remember when I first got here. They told me if I didn't give them a sample for testing that I would be sedated and tested regardless.

Sick fucks.

“And I'll get to leave?” I ask, sounding as if I'm thinking about his offer.

“As long as you sign a paper for your silence,” he tells me.

“There were half a dozen other men in this room before I was forced downstairs,” I tell him. “Why me?”

“Did you see them?” he asks. “All drug heads, alcoholics, or idiots. You're attractive, well built, and put together.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” I ask, goading for more information.

“Come on fucker,” I hear Blaze say. “Give us what we want.”

“Your babies would be magnificent,” he smiles. “Worth so much money.”

“Got him,” Ghost says. “We're contacting Detective Jacob's boss. Time to get you out of there brother.”

“Can I think about it?” I ask.

“I'll give you until morning,” he smiles, walking towards the door. “I've got a good feeling about you, Travis. Your eyes are haunted. It's almost as if they keep changing color. It's strange. But, I hope you pass those on to your children. See you in the morning.”

“Wait,” I say. “The woman that was in the room with me. The guards said she was going to get punished for not doing as they said. I may be considering your offer but I'm not a

complete dick. She doesn't deserve a punishment just because I wouldn't rape her."

"Unfortunately, Seven is already down in cellblock X," he sighs, trying to appear upset. "Once the punisher has his task, he won't release them until he's finished. But don't you worry about her. Seven has been down there countless times during her stay here. She won't be injured enough to worry about death. See you in the morning, Travis."

With that, he and his guards walk out of the room.

Xander's in my head reminding me that I need to stay calm or he's going to have to take over. Xander has the most control over his emotions and reactions. He might have been the best bet for this job.

I walk to the sink and turn the water on as high as it goes.

"Details," I whisper, leaning my head down, hoping no listening devices can hear me.

"They're gathering to do a raid on Sinclair manor in twenty minutes," Ghost says. "Not much longer brother and we'll have you out of there."

My mind goes to Sophia and what she's going through.

*"I need to find a way down to her,"* I tell my alters.

*"As much as I hate it,"* Xander chimes in. *"The best course of action is to wait. Ghost says it will be twenty minutes and we know that she isn't going to be killed. We just need to wait."*

*"I'm ready for if she needs me, Travis,"* Doc says.

I know he is. Doc has been ready to front for days now. They've treated us men like royalty compared to what it looks like she's been treated. Sure, we're locked in this single room but at least we have fucking heat. It's the dead of winter right now and it was massively cold in that room.

"Venom," Steel says. "I know you can't say anything, brother, but are you doing okay? Did they hurt you?"

I sit on the couch, lean down, and rest my head in my hands. If anyone is watching on the camera it would just look like I'm exhausted.

"I'm good," I whisper. "Women not."

"I know, man. Ghost pulled some strings and we're going to be right behind the raid team. They second they took you from the warehouse, Detective Jacobs contacted us and told us that he was right in his assumption that they were holding the women and men in the same place this bastard lives. We've been camped out just a few miles down the road for days now."

"Hang in there, son," I hear Pops say. "Don't disconnect your ear piece until you're safe. We'll be silent on this end but know that we're here and we can hear everything on your side."

"Got it," I whisper before standing and pacing.

Hold on, sweetheart. I'll be down there soon.

# Chapter Five

## Sophia

“I think you act out on purpose, Seven,” the Punisher says in his slimy little voice. “Do you miss me when I’m not around?”

“About as much as I do a toothache,” I say.

I’m still strapped down to my cot and even though I appear nonchalant, I’m freaking terrified. The Punisher is a sadistic man who smiles as soon as the screams begin.

“I was instructed not to damage you too much,” he tells me, running his fingers down the table housing his many devices.

“Shame,” I say, because for some reason, regardless of my fear, I’ve lost my fight.

“Isn’t it, though?” he sighs. “Since I can’t draw blood tonight, I’m just going to have to get creative. How do you feel about hanging upside down for a few hours? No, I don’t think I much like that idea. You have the most beautiful scream, Seven, and it would be a shame not to sing it for me. How about we warm up that voice of yours?”

I close my eyes, willing my body to just quit.

“So soft,” he says quietly as he drags his nasty finger down my arm. “I have just the thing to warm you up.”

He leaves only to return a few seconds later with a needle.

“Just a pinch, Seven,” he says, sticking the needle in my arm. “Years ago, they used a mixture of drugs to inflict an incredible amount of pain in prisoners that were sentenced to lethal injection. Of course, that was with death being the endgame. However, I’ve made a few alterations. I’ve taken the death out and added a bit more pain.”

Silent tears fall down the sides of my face as he pushes the needle plunger, shoving the liquid into my arm.

“Here in just a few minutes, you’re going to feel as if your insides are on fire. Your body is going to lock up, all control will be lost. You’ll struggle to breath but don’t worry, you won’t die. You’ll want to scream, but it will take several minutes before you gain back that ability. You will lay here completely and utterly silent while you beg for death on the inside. But no one will be able to hear you. No one will be able to save you.”

“Please,” I cry, already starting to feel my body tingling with small shocks.

“You beg so prettily, Seven,” he smiles down at me, his tone soft but his eyes alight with joy. “You can feel it, can’t you? The warmth throughout your body. And now, your body is frozen in place. You can’t even blink, can you?”

I try. I try so damn hard but nothing happens.

“I like to use this method when I have a headache,” he tells me. “It keeps my playthings quiet so that I can create art in peace. You slide your blade a few inches into a person’s skin and they scream like a baby.”

My eyes are frozen in place and I have no choice but to watch his face as he rolls his eyes. Smiling, he leans down and looks deep into my eyes as if he can see what’s happening.

“Has it started yet?” he whispers gleefully.

I want to shout how much I hate him but my thoughts are immediately gone as pain like I’ve never before felt blazes inside of me.

“There it is,” he says, but I can’t hear him. I can only watch as his lips move slowly with each word. All sound is blocked out but that roaring inferno coursing its way through my body.

I don’t know how long the pain lasts but it feels like days. Agony so severe that I can’t breathe. Finally, my lungs kick into gear and I take a deep breath before screaming. I still can’t move my eyes so I watch as the sound of my scream causes lust to shine in my tormentor’s eyes.

Slowly, so very slowly, the pain lessens. My body burns. It aches. But it's no longer on fire.

Then I watch as the Punisher injects a second shot into my arm.

"We can only do this two more times," he tells me. "We don't want your heart to stop now, do we?"

I still haven't regained control of my body apart from my face, so I'm helpless to do anything as he laughs.

"There's a special place for you in hell," I say gruffly, my throat raw from screaming.

"I sure hope so," he laughs.

It happens much quicker this time. My ability to move anything on my face stops, my lungs freeze, my blood boils, and I scream the silent scream of mercy.

But none comes.

### **\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

"We're here, Venom," Ghost says thirty minutes later. "We're already inside the building."

"Fucking find me," I shout, not caring if any guard unknown of the raid can hear me. "I need to find her."

"Who?" Ghost asks. They've unmuted their side of the radio so I can now hear screams and gunshots.

"I need to get her out of here, Ghost," I say. "I can't explain it brother, but I need to get her to safety."

Ghost doesn't say anything as I pace back and forth. The shots are closer and there's rustling outside of the door.

"Is this the one?" I hear someone say. "Ghost, it's up here."

Seconds later, Steel kicks the damn door off its hinges and I can finally take a breath in. But, I won't be able to release it until I get Sophia out of here.

“Thank fuck,” Ghost says as he strides into the room. He walks up to me, not bothering to slow down, before pulling me into his arms.

“Miss me?” I manage to smirk.

“Ma said she’d kill me if I didn’t bring you back home,” he says, not smirking.

I shove thoughts of Ma to the back of my head as I step back from my brother’s embrace and head for the door.

“The basement,” I tell them. “From what I understand, there are pregnant women down there. And Sophia. We need to get them out.”

I don’t bother looking back. I know my brothers are just as eager to save the women here.

Once outside of the room, I lean down and kick one of the guards in the side.

“Where the fuck is she?” I demand as he groans.

“Don’t kill him, Venom,” Ghost tells me. “We’re only here as a curtesy. The FBI won’t take too kindly to you killing one of their prisoners.”

“I don’t give a fuck,” I growl, gripping the guard by his forehead and lifting his head back. “You tell me where cellblock X is or I kick your fucking face in.”

The guard lifts a shaky hand and points to the door at the other end of the hall.

Standing, I pull my leg back and kick him in his fucking face.

“Are you sure that’s not Xander?” I hear Blaze ask.

“I think our baby brother has just found his person and he is fucking pissed that she’s been hurt,” Steel says. “Let’s help him kick some fucking faces in.”

Not bothering with the handle, I kick open the door and make my way down to the dark basement.

“Fuck,” I hear Ghost say. “Find the lights. There are people in these cells.”

Moments later, the room is flooded with light and my stomach sours. There are about nine women, one in each cage, and all heavily pregnant.”

“Fucking monster,” I mutter. “You guys get the detectives down here and help them. I need to find Sophia.”

“Sophia,” one of the women whispers. Her voice was soft. Innocent.

There’s one empty cell but the voice came from the one right next to it.

“Fuck. She’s just a fucking girl.”

“Hi sweetheart,” I say, crouching down near her cage. I don’t want to scare her. “Do you know where Sophia is?”

“The breeding room,” another female answers.

“She’s not there,” I say. “That’s where they had us. But we didn’t do what they wanted us to and now they’re going to punish her.”

“I saw them take her to cellblock X,” the young girl responds, her eyes wide with fear. “Please, get her out of there. It’s worse than the breeding room.”

“Where is it, sweetheart?”

“*She’s in rough shape,*” Doc says. “*They all are. Too skinny to be so pregnant.*”

“It’s behind that black door,” she answers, pointing to the back of the room. “All the way underground. I heard her screaming a few times.”

“I’ve got her, brother,” Steel says. “You and Ghost head down that way. Here, take my gun.”

Grabbing Steel’s gun, I race for the solid black door. The young girl was right about it leading underground. I’m surrounded by soil instead of brick walls.



A high-pitched scream pierces the room. The soil is preventing it from reaching very far. Gaining speed, I hit the bottom step, aim my gun, and shoot the fucking bastard laughing as he tortures my woman. Well, she's not *my* woman. She's spent the better part of a year being raped. I need to find out who the fuck raped her, too. He's dead.

*"Damn it, Venom," Xander shouts in my head. "Separate yourself from those thoughts and get her the fuck out of here. You can figure the rest out later."*

I race to her side and inspect her body. I don't see any blood. Why was she screaming?

"Sophia," I say when I notice her eyes wide open as she stares at me. "Hey baby, I'm going to get you out of here. But, I need to know if it's okay to move you. What was he doing?"

Nothing. She simply stares at me, tears running down the sides of her face.

"Baby, what happened?" I ask. "What hurts?"

Nothing.

"What the fuck did he do to her?" Ghost murmurs. "Apart from being too fucking thin, cold, and frail, I see no marks."

"Shut the fuck up, Ghost," I growl. "She's beautiful."

It's not a lie. She is beautiful. Even if she is too thin, cold, and frail.

"Yes, she is. What's Doc saying?" Ghost asks.

"He's assessing the best he can right now without taking over," I answer. "I'm just going to have to risk lifting her off of this table. I need to get her out of here."

"She's not even blinking, Venom," Ghost says. "Check her pulse and see if she's even alive."

My heart races and I rush to do what he says.

"She's crying," I tell him. "I saw the surprise in her eyes when she first saw me."

I grab her wrist and check her pulse.

“Her heart is racing,” I say. “She’s alive.”

“Tr...”

“Thank fuck,” I say, leaning down close to her face. Her eyelids finally slide closed and she takes a huge breath in. Almost as if she were gasping.

“There’s a vial of some drug over here,” Ghost says. “I’ll grab these, you grab her. Let’s get the fuck out of here.”

“Can’t move,” Sophia whispers. “Body frozen.”

“We don’t have time, Venom,” Ghost growls. “Let’s go.”

Without a second thought, I reach down and pull her into my arms. So fucking light. Too fucking light.

“Are we clear?” Ghost says into a walkie.

“All clear,” someone responds.

“Time to leave this place,” I tell her softly, leaning down to kiss her forehead.

Slowly, she turns her head into my chest and cries. My heart breaks with each tear that stains my shirt but for the first time since meeting her, I finally release that breath. She’s safe now.

She’s free.

“My baby,” she whispers. “Travis, they have my baby.”

My feet falter but I quickly regain control. They raped her to impregnate her and then stole her baby?

Taking a deep breath in, I know that I’ll be holding it until I get this woman’s baby back.

“Find my baby,” she cries, her voice fading. “Please, find my baby.”

“I will, sweetheart,” I say. “I won’t stop until I do.”

And I’ll burn this fucking world down building by building to do so.

# Chapter Six

## Venom

“You’re being discharged today,” the nurse tells Sophia.

We’ve been out of that damn place for two days now but Sophia’s mind is still trapped inside. It turns out she disappeared a year and a half ago without a single trace as to where she could be.

From what I understand, she took over her parents’ business shortly before they passed away. It was eventually partially shut down when she vanished.

“Is there any place you can go?”

I’m leaning in the corner of the room waiting to hear her answer. She knows I’m here but does everything she can to avoid looking in my direction. The safety she felt with me for that short amount of time seemed to have vanished once we were outside of those walls.

Not that I can blame her. Inside that prison, I was someone safe for that small amount of time we were together.

“My apartment is gone,” she whispers, looking down at her hands. “But, I have my parent’s house that I can stay in. I’ll be fine.”

Those last words were spoken with so much pain that it physically hurt to hear. She will be fine. But it’s going to take a while.

I want to offer her a room at my house, but considering how much she flinches every time she looks at me, I remain silent.

*“We’re a reminder of that place,”* Doc says.

I think he’s right.

Everything in me revolts at the idea of walking away from Sophia, but another part of me thinks it would be for the best.

Plus, that fucking bastard, Malachi, escaped. He must have some secret tunnel out of his house because there's no way he would have gotten past the number of people raiding the place.

I'll find him. I already have feelers out. No matter how long it takes, I'll find the bastard.

"I've sent all of your medications to the pharmacy," the nurse tells her. "You have an appointment to see your family care doctor in two weeks. Whenever you're ready, you should make an appointment to talk to someone."

Sophia simply nods.

"I'll return shortly with your discharge papers and then you can head on home."

I wait for several more minutes after the nurse leaves before I straighten myself and walk slowly towards Sophia's bed.

The second she notices me moving she flinches and it breaks my fucking heart.

*"We're just hurting her,"* Miles says.

For the most part, Miles stays quiet. He's the most silent *alter* but the one with the biggest heart.

"Hey sweetheart," I say softly, stopping a few feet from her bed. "I'm just going to be straight with you, alright?"

She doesn't move.

"I can tell that me being around is causing you to panic," I tell her gently. "So, as much as I hate to, I'm going to walk away. But I want you to know that I'll be here if there ever comes a time when you need me."

Removing a card from my pocket, I walk to the window and place it where she can see it on the windowsill.

"My number is on that card," I tell her. "You don't have to use it, but I want you to keep it just in case. Call me anytime, day or night, and I'll answer."

Silence.

“I mean it, sweetheart,” I say, my heart breaking with each step towards the door I take. “Anytime you need me, no matter what the reason, I’ll be here. Take care of yourself for me, babygirl.”

With that, I fully turn and walk away.

The hardest fucking thing I’ve ever had to do.

# Chapter Seven

## (Six months later)

Sophia

“Do we have room for one more?”

I look over at my newest employee, Cady, and smile. The past six months haven't been easy. I did manage to get UNITY back up and fully running. Even hired Cady to come and work for me. I walk out of my parents' house each morning with a smile plastered to my face and bravery etched into my every step.

But it's all a lie. A mask to hide the real me.

The broken me.

“We sure do,” I smile. “As a matter of fact, I think we still have two empty beds.”

Cady returns my smile before continuing her conversation with whoever is on the other end of the phone.

Cady welcomed a beautiful baby girl into the world a few weeks after our rescue. Despite her parents' offer to support her in raising the child, Cady made the difficult decision to put her up for adoption. It wasn't an easy choice, but she believed her daughter deserved a life free from the shadow of the captivity where she was conceived. Cady loves her deeply and wants the best for her, even if it means letting her go.

While I can respect Cady's decision, it's heartbreaking for me, to realize that I never had the opportunity to look past the circumstances of my child's conception. I'll never have the chance to see my baby, but all I can do is hope and pray that whoever is caring for her is providing a good life.

After a few discussions with her parents, they decided to let Cady work for me as long as she didn't do anything that would risk her health. So, Cady is my receptionist. She may only be fifteen years old, but she can relate to the women and men that we protect better than most adults.

"The police are bringing in a woman and her son," Cady tells me after her call ends. "It's a case of domestic abuse so she needs to be in the women-only section."

I nod my head and make a note of who I need to move. Since returning, I've redone my entire building. We have three different sections now. One for men only. One for women only. And a community section where we open our doors at seven each evening to house up to thirty homeless people. Each night, we serve them a simple meal and offer them a place to sleep.

They're required to leave by nine in the morning and it's always a first come first serve situation. It's hard turning people away when we're full, but there isn't anything I can do about it. We're just not big enough to help everyone.

When I was being held prisoner, I learned that most of the people they brought in were homeless people who were kidnapped while sleeping somewhere on the street. I hope that what I've done here will help prevent something like that in the future.

"Go ask Milly if she's willing to sleep in the community room tonight," I tell Cady. "Tell her it's just for the night. We have someone leaving tomorrow to go into protective custody, so we'll have the extra room."

Milly isn't here for a domestic abuse reason, so she won't have any issues sleeping around other men and women.

"Will do," Cady smiles.

The second she's gone I feel my mask fall. Thankfully, Cady has bounced back and is doing amazingly well. I am beyond happy about that.

However, I've gone through countless hours of therapy, I've done all of the mental exercises, and I've taken every

single pill the doctors have prescribed me, but I'm not getting better.

I still feel trapped in my old cell.

Each night is plagued with nightmares of my imprisonment. I even dream about things that didn't happen. My mind is shattered into pieces and I'm not sure it will ever be repaired. Most days I wish I could disappear inside my mind and let someone else take over.

I'm most likely not healing because the person who had me kidnapped to begin with is missing. Along with that doctor. And my baby.

I feel lost, alone, and so freaking scared all the time.

I've thought about reaching out to him. To Travis. But I haven't.

I can't.

I won't.

It's not because he reminds me of what happened to me. Actually, it's the opposite. He was there one minute and I was rescued the next. If anything, he's my hero.

Travis told me that he was there under false pretenses. He wasn't captured but was simply helping someone out.

It makes perfect sense, of course. He's not the biggest man I've ever seen, but Travis isn't small by any means. I couldn't figure out how someone got the drop on him.

I haven't seen him since the day he walked out of my hospital room. Maybe it's for the best. Someone like him wouldn't even be interested in someone like me.

Someone so dirty.

No matter how hot the water is, how much soap I use, or how hard I scrub, I can't seem to get clean. Every time I look down at my clean body all I see is filth.

"Milly said she doesn't mind," Cady says, walking back into the room.



“Perfect,” I smile. “I’m going to go and see how the kitchen’s coming with dinner. How many heads to we have in the community center tonight?”

“Full Capacity,” she says. “Including the private rooms, we have a total of eight-eight people tonight.”

“How many did we have to turn away?” I ask, already hating the answer.

“Twelve,” she says softly. “One of which was a woman with an infant.”

Damnit.

“The best we can hope for is that she finds a place for the night and can make it here early enough tomorrow to get a bed. Did you give her a baby kit?”

Our baby kits include two reusable diapers, a bottle, a blanket, one can of powdered formula, and a pacifier. It’s not much, but every little bit helps.

“Yeah,” Cady answers. “I also told her to check that one church at the end of Spruce street. Sometimes they’ll open their doors for the night.”

“Good idea,” I smile at my young friend. “Alright, I’m going to go tell the cooks how many we have tonight. It’s time to lock the doors so you can head on home.”

“Aren’t you going home?” she asks, her head slightly tilted.

“Not yet. I need to go over a few things with the night shift first,” I lie.

Well, it’s not a complete lie. I do need to go over some things with the crew, but it’s only to tell them about the new mom and her baby and the change in location for Milly. It wouldn’t take but a few minutes.

But, the truth of the matter is, I don’t want to go home. I hate it there.

The best part is the memories of my parents around every corner. But it’s quiet. And at night, I can’t bring myself to turn off the lights.

I'm just too freaking scared to be there alone.

"Alright," she says cheerfully. "I'm heading out then."

"Tell your parents I say hi," I tell her. "And thank your mom for that delicious lasagna the other day."

Once Cady leaves the building, I wait until she gets in the taxi before locking up.

I will head home tonight, but most likely not for many more hours to come.

# Chapter Eight

## Venom

Dead end. Every search comes to a screeching halt.

Where the fuck is this guy?

“How’s the system doing?” Ghost asks me. “The guys okay?”

I look to my president, my brother, and raise a brow.

“They’re fine,” I say. “Miles spent all last night fronting. Which is why I’m so fucking tired.”

*“I said I was sorry,” he tells me. “It’s not entirely my fault. I won’t have sex with a man out of respect for you, but you can’t stop me from spending all of my pent-up frustration on video games.”*

*“Your pent-up frustration?” I laugh. “You know you’re not interested in any type of sexual or non-sexual relationship. Why do you have pent-up frustration?”*

“We’ve lost him,” I hear Pop laugh. “He’s talking to someone.”

*“It’s not mine, you fucker,” Miles laughs.*

“Miles is being difficult,” I chuckle. “He seems to think I have pent-up frustration and he spent the night trying to calm my raging emotions by playing video games until it was time for me to wake up.”

When no one responds I look around the room and all the blank stares.

“Fuck all of you,” I glare. “Not you, Ma.”

Everyone laughs and I get back to checking my contacts to see if Malachi has tried to breach the Mexican border. He has

several homes listed in Mexico and I'm just waiting for him to try and reach them.

No such luck.

No suck luck finding her baby, either. I know that she had a girl and I know that she was sold to someone near Harborbrook. But the names were fake and no physical address was listed. Just the location and the amount. Five hundred thousand dollars a baby.

As everyone talks amongst themselves, I let my mind wander to Sophia. My sweet, beautiful Sophia. I didn't get to see her much and yet I miss her like fucking crazy. I may have checked on her last week to see how she was coping and she seemed to be doing well.

On the outside, at least.

*"You just need to go to her, son,"* Doc says for the hundredth time.

But I can't. Every time I think about making first contact, images of the fear on her face when I was near flood my mind. There's no way in hell I'm going to let her suffer through those memories just because I want her in my life.

"I need to fight," I tell Ghost.

"Brother, the last time you were in the cage you about killed someone," he reminds me.

*"He cheated,"* Miles says. *"He deserved everything he got."*

I nod.

"Gotta tell us what was said, son," Pops chuckles.

I shake my head and smile. I do that a lot. The alters in my head are as real as the people around me and I sometimes forget I'm the only one who can hear them when they're not fronting.

"Miles says he got what he deserved," I tell them.

"Be that as it may, brother, you can go in the cage and start killing the fighters," Ghost tells me. "Regardless of how much

they deserve it.”

“I won’t kill anyone,” I grunt. “I just need to fight.”

“Alright,” he tells me. “I can pair you up with Bullet tonight. His opponent pulled out when he found out he would be fighting the bastard.”

“So, he’d rather spend the two grand fee of forfeiting than get a little bruised?” Steel asks. “Fucking coward.”

“I accept,” I say. Bullet is a fucking beast in the cage. It will be a nice little challenge.

# Chapter Nine

## Sophia

Something jolts me awake. I look around the living room frantically expecting to see someone watching me, but there's no one. It's in the middle of the night and I keep the house lit up to where there isn't a single shadow someone can hide in.

My heart races as I scan the room for a third time. Just because someone isn't in this room doesn't mean someone isn't in the house.

I can't bring myself to sleep in any of the bedrooms. My parents had an open-concept living room that was attached to the kitchen.

I used to not be bothered by tight spaces, but now I can't stand them. So, I sleep in the living room.

Tossing the blanket off my legs, I go to stand when I hear a noise from somewhere deeper in the house.

I freeze. Someone is in here. I can feel them watching me.

But I can't freaking move.

I can't breathe.

There's no telling how long I sit here before my legs finally start working. I reach under the pillow I was laying on and grab my gun.

The gun I hated to buy but knew better than most how easily someone could hurt you.

With shaking hands, I lift the gun and hold it the way the instructor at the range taught me. My right hand holding the gun, my finger hovering near the trigger, with my left hand cupping the base of my right.

*Don't forget the safety, Sophia, I remind myself.*

With a flick of my finger, the safety is off and ready.

I walk through the house, room by room, closet by closet, but find nothing. The doors and windows are locked tight. Logically, I know my alarm would go off if one of them were bothered. But my mind doesn't really think logically these days.

By the time I've checked the whole house, I'm trembling so badly that I fear I might accidentally shoot my loaded gun. Quickly putting the safety back on, I drop to the kitchen floor and cry.

"What's the point, God?" I pray. "What's the point of letting me go through what I did? What purpose can I possibly receive from that lesson? Did I have to go through all of that so that my child could be born?"

I crawl into the bathroom and open the bottom drawer, pulling out my dad's old cosmetic bag. With no thought in my mind, I grab a loose blade and sit back on my butt.

"Why can't I feel anything anymore?" I continue not even sure God's listening to me at this point. Has he given up on me too? "I just want to feel something. Anything."

Tear-filled eyes cause my forearm to blur, but I don't need to see to know what's there.

Scars. Both old and new. All placed after I was rescued.

I blink to remove the tears and place the blade on fresh, unmarred skin. I press until my arm stings and blood seeps out. I slide the blade across my arm and relish the burn.

Closing my eyes, I sigh.

Finally. I feel something.

I sit there for several minutes until, finally, my heart slows. I clean the blade, place it back in the bag, and toss it in the drawer. Within a few minutes, I've cleaned my arm and bandaged it. I never cut deep enough to risk my life.

I'm too much of a coward for that.

But, when I feel like I'm about to disappear, I need the sing to know that I'm still here. I will spend the next several days pressing on the new cut so that I can feel something. Even if it's not enough to fix me, it's enough to get me through another day.

**\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

*"You need to check on her,"* Doc says.

*"I need to let her live her life,"* I tell him. *"She doesn't need a constat reminder of what she went through."*

*"Your gut says to check on her,"* Miles adds.

*"You are my gut,"* I remind him.

*"Xander, help us out,"* Miles sighs.

*"Since when do you doubt yourself?"* Xander asks.

*"I don't doubt myself, Xander. I just know that she's better off without me in her life."*

I get the feeling that Miles is pacing back and forth while Doc is shaking his head. Xander, however, is just watching me.

*"What's wrong, honey?"* Ma asks.

I glance over and notice that everyone is watching me. The entire club is here apart from Viper and Bitsy. They're still with the Phantoms.

Ghost is sitting on a chair. Steel and Blaze are on one of the couches while our prospect Colt hands out beers.

Jax has just returned from his baby sister's place with Knox who is sitting on the floor, his laptop on his lap and watching me from above his black-rimmed glasses.

However, it's King who has my attention. He's leaning against the wall near the door and watching.

Waiting.



For what, I haven't the slightest idea.

King is always quiet. Patient.

Good thing considering his job is waiting for the right time to kill someone he's hired to kill.

We decided to get together for a barbeque since Jax, King, and Knox have all arrived back home. Now, we're sitting in Ma and Pops living room waiting for Pops to return with the ribs he went to get.

"Is it that woman?" Knox asks shyly, his face turning red.

Knox is another quiet man. But not for the same reasons King is. Knox is submissive to his very core. Blaze and Steel co-own a BDSM club, called, Obsidian Oasis. That's where they met Knox several years back. He was there to see about becoming a member but the twins wouldn't let him. They said he was too pure for a scene like that.

They were right. Knox is the embodiment of a pure and kind heart.

They sort of took him under their wing and shortly after so did the rest of the family. Knox spent his year as a prospect before he was officially patched in.

"Yeah," I admit softly. "The alters seem to think I need to contact her but I don't think it's a good idea."

"Why not?" Knox asks quietly.

"Because I will simply be a reminder of the worst time of her life," I tell him. "She can't heal and move forward if there's always something there to remind her of her past."

Knox seems to contemplate that for a few seconds before he opens his mouth to say something.

"It's okay, sweetheart," I smile at him when he decides to keep silent. "You can tell me what's on your mind."

"I don't want to upset you," he tells me.

"I won't get upset," I tell him. "Nothing you say will make me angry towards you."

“I’ll kick his ass if he upsets you, Little one,” Steel says, meaning every last word.

This causes Knox to giggle.

Not only is he a submissive, but he’s also a Little. Something I don’t know much about, but I will love and protect him to my dying breath if it means he can live his life the way he wants.

If I upset him, I would kick my own ass.

“Won’t she be reminded daily, anyway?” Knox asks.

I raise my brow and wait for him to continue.

“She had a baby,” he reminds me. “Her body has scars from where she was abused. Every time she takes a shower she’s going to be reminded of what happened to her. I don’t think seeing you will throw her back to the bad memories. You could very well be what she needs to feel safe enough to move forward.”

“What aren’t you saying, Little one?” Blaze asks. “How do you know she hasn’t already moved forward?”

“Knox,” I say when he remains silent. “Out with it.”

Sighing, he clicks on his laptop before standing and bringing it over to me.

“I may or may not have been keeping tabs on the women rescued,” he says, his head lowered as he hands me his laptop.

“These are the police reports,” I say.

“I also have all of their Doctors’ reports and their Psychiatrists’ notes.”

“That is a series breach of privacy, Knox,” Ghost reprimands.

“I’m sorry,” he whispers. “I just wanted to make sure they were alright.”

“You have such a big heart,” I say, closing the laptop. “What made you look into them?”

“I could tell that Sophia meant something to you,” he tells me, still avoiding my eyes. “I wanted to help you find her missing baby. Then, one thing led to another, and I wanted to help all of the women who had their babies stolen.”

“How is hacking into police and hospital records going to help find those babies?” Jax asks. “You risked a lot doing that, little Knox. What if you were caught?”

Knox scoffs and I can’t help but chuckle.

“*He knows damn good and well he won’t get caught,*” Miles laughs.

“I won’t get caught,” he says, picking at the invisible lent on his shirt. “And I may have found a way into Malachi Sinclair’s dark web email.”

Silence.

“I... I found emails between him and several other people about some pretty horrid things.”

“What type of horrid things?” Ma asks.

“And why haven’t you mentioned any of this before now?” Ghost growls.

“I didn’t think you would want to be involved,” he says. “I was going to send everything I had to the police once I was able to find possible locations for Malachi.”

“Knox, you know damn well that we’ve been trying to locate both Sophia’s baby and that bastard Malachi. Why wouldn’t you tell us?” Steel asks.

Knox flinches when Steel calls him by his name and not, *Little one*.

“I’m sorry, Steel.”

“Right now, I am Sir,” he demands, standing and making his way to where Knox is still standing in front of me. “Not only did you withhold this information from us, but you also put yourself in serious danger.”

“Relax brother,” Blaze says. “Technically speaking, it’s his job as head security to do shit like this.”

“I don’t give a fuck,” Steel says. “We swore to protect him and to keep him clean when we patched him in.”

“I promise, I can’t be traced, Sir,” Knox says.

I want to pull the poor boy into my arms but I don’t think Steel would be too happy about that. Knox may be in charge of our security but Steel and Blaze are in charge of our protection.

Two majorly different things.

And right now, Steel is pissed that he wasn’t there to protect Knox against any possible threat while he was knuckles deep inside of Malachi fucking Sinclair’s private email.

I watch as Steel takes several breaths in before pulling Knox into his arms and holding him tight. From the outside, it would appear as if he were embracing his lover. But Knox is our baby brother and I feel that same pull to protect him as Steel does.

“Don’t fucking do it again,” Steel warns as he pulls away. “Now, look Venom in the eyes and tell him what you found.”

Reluctantly, Knox looks up until our eyes meet. I smile encouragingly.

“I’m sorry, Sir,” he says softly.

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” I tell him. “And I am not a Sir. Now, tell us what you found sweetheart.”

Ten minutes later I’m floored with the amount of information Knox found. We now have three locations as to where Malachi is hiding along with a long fucking list of people who have bought babies off of him.

Fifty-seven babies. That’s how many he sold. The thought sickens me when I think about how many women were rapped for that to happen.

“About Sophia,” Knox says. “I truly think you need to go check on her.”

“Why?” I ask, my heart rate spiking.

“I have a friend who works at the homeless and rescue shelter called UNITY,” he tells me. “Sophia took over the business when her parents died.”

“Sophia owns a homeless and rescue center?” Ghost asks, and I smile feeling so fucking proud of her.

“Yeah,” he smiles. “But my friend says she’s been acting weird. She’s been distant and seems tired.”

“Is your friend close enough to her to know for a fact that something is wrong?” Blaze asks.

Knox nodded, tears filling his eyes.

“My friend was also a prisoner of Malachi’s,” he says, causing us all to look at him in shock. “I thought she was dead. My mom and her mom have been best friends since high school. They thought she fell into the river because her coat was hanging from a bridge. She was missing for two years.”

“What’s her name, Little one?” Blaze asks.

“Candance,” he says. “But everyone just calls her Cady.”

Cady?

“Wasn’t that the young teenager that was pregnant?” I ask.

“Yeah,” Knox says. “She gave the baby up for adoption though. She’s now working for Sophia.”

Sometimes I forget just how young Knox is. At nineteen years old, he isn’t much older than the young teen we rescued.

“Somethings wrong, Knox,” he tells me. “Cady is scared it might be something deeper than she can handle on her own.”

*“If you don’t get the fuck over there then I will force my way to front and go myself,”* Xander growls.

“Damn it, I didn’t drive here,” I say, standing.

“Where are you going?” Ma asks with a small smile.

“I’m going to go claim my woman,” I answer.

“Bout fucking time, brother,” King says. “Let’s go. I’ll drive.”

I glare at King as I open the front door and walk out.

So, that's what that fucker has been waiting on.

*"Yeah, he was waiting for you to get that stick out of your ass," Xander says.*

I glare at the moody bastard getting behind the wheel while simultaneously glaring at the moody bastard in my head.

"I like that Xander," King grunts as he starts the truck.

"How do you know it was Xander I was just grumping at?" I ask.

"He's the only alter who makes you look like you want to kill them."

I pause for a few seconds before chuckling.

He's not wrong.

Xander is a pain in my ass.

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"Oh hey, I remember you."

I smile at the young teenager and offer my hand.

"Names Venom," I say. "Your Cady, right?"

She blushes but accepts my hand.

"Thank you for getting us out of there," she tells me after pulling her hand back.

"It wasn't just me, sweetheart," I tell her. "But I'm glad I was able to help. How are you doing?"

"I'm better," she tells me. "It was really tough at first. Especially considering the baby, but things are finally getting back to normal and I'm learning to just live each day to the fullest."

"That's good," I say. "I actually know a friend of yours."

"Really?" she smiles brightly. "Who?"

"Knox," I answer.

“Woah, are you in that same cool club that he’s part of?”

I nod, much to her delight.

“I never would have imagined that my best friend would be part of a motorcycle club,” she giggles. “He’s just not the type.”

“Not to mention the young man is terrified of motorcycles,” King says, walking into the door.

I watch as Cady’s smile falters for a split second before she rolls her eyes at herself.

“Sorry,” she tells King. “I just wasn’t expecting someone so…”

“Black?” King suggests.

“No,” Cady says, her eyes going wide. “Huge. You’re really huge.”

King doesn’t respond but I know he doesn’t take offence.

“I stopped by to talk to Sophia,” I say. “Is she here today?”

This time, her smile completely goes away.

“She’s not,” she says, her brows creasing in concern. “Actually, I haven’t seen her for almost a week. She told us that she had some family business to take care of and that she would be back in a few days.”

“Do you have her number?” I ask.

I wait as Cady pulls out her cell and recites it.

“Thank you, Cady,” I say. “If I hear from her I will let you know. I need you to do the same for me, alright?”

I reach out and grab a pin from her desk and write my name and number on a sticky note.

“I will,” she says, voice filled with concern. “I probably shouldn’t say this but I don’t think she’s well.”

“Why?” I ask.

“I don’t know,” she shrugs. “I guess it’s more of a feeling. She’s always smiling and being so kind but her eyes look so

sad. I've tried many times to get her to talk to me but in the end, I'm just a teenager and I know she probably doesn't feel comfortable talking to me."

"I doubt it has anything to do with your age, sweetheart," I tell her. "She probably wants to appear strong for you because you both went through the same situation."

"She doesn't need to be strong for me," she says, hands on her hips. "I know exactly what she went through. I mean, I wasn't put in cellblock X as many times as she was, but we both went through the same thing. She should be able to talk to me considering I understand."

"I agree," I say gently. "Maybe when she returns, you can try again."

She nods just as the office phone rings.

"I have to take this," she says. "I'll text you if I hear from her soon."

"See ya, Cady."

"UNITY, this is Cady speaking," she answers the phone with a wave.

"I have her address," King says as we make our way back to his truck.

"Let's go," I say.

### **Baby, this is Travis. How are you doing?**

I send the text before securing my belt.

*"I don't have a very good feeling, Venom,"* Miles says.

Neither do I. Every fiber of my being is screaming that something is wrong.

"King," I say.

But he seems to understand. The truck speeds up as we listen to the GPS tell us where to go.



# Chapter Ten

Sophia

“Miss, are you okay? Are you here with someone?”

“No, I’m all alone,” I tell the strange man. Which in hindsight might have been a stupid thing to do.

“Can I call someone for you?”

“No, thank you,” I say, taking another shot of vodka. I’ve never been a drinker before, but the burn that rolls down my throat causes me to feel. Even if only for those few seconds. “Can I get some water please?”

My phone dings and I pull it out of my bra to see who would bother to message me.

**Unknown Sender: Babygirl, this is Travis. How are you doing?**

Travis? Didn’t he go back to living his life? Why would he message me?

**Unknown Sender: Your friend Cady is worried about you. I’m worried about you. Where are you?**

**Me: I’m fine. Just needed a break.**

“Hey there, sexy. Care for a drink?”

I look up at the stranger and then at the drink he’s offering. An amber liquid in a glass of ice.

“Nope,” I say, popping the *p*.

“Awe, you’re going to hurt my feelings,” he says, pouting. “I bought it just for you.”

The man looks like he’s in his late forties and is quite handsome. However, I may be slightly buzzed from my own shots, but I’m not stupid.

“I’m going to have to pass,” I smile.

He frowns before tossing the drink onto my chest.

I don’t flinch. I don’t even move.

“Fucking bitch,” he says before walking away.

“Are you alright, miss?” I hear someone say but I’m already back to looking at my messages. I’ve programmed Travis’s number into my phone. Not that it matters. I won’t be using it. But I like knowing that I have it, regardless. I threw his card away before leaving the hospital. I always regretted that.

**Travis: Where are you?**

**Me: Someone just tried to get me to drink something that I know they spiked.**

**Travis: ...**

**Me: They got pissed when I didn’t take it and dumped it all down my shirt. Gotta go now. Bye.**

**Travis: Where the fuck are you? Are you drunk? Is someone there to protect you? Who the fuck tried to drug you? I’ll fucking kill him.**

I smile at the ridiculousness of the whole situation. I'm not even sure why I told him.

**Me: You say the F word a lot.**

Shaking my head, I turn off my phone and shove it back into my bra. I don't have enough room in my damaged heart for someone else right now. It's already hard enough pretending around Cady and my therapist.

I'm about to get up and leave when he catches my eye. The whole reason I'm here pretending to me smashed to begin with walks over to the corner of the room and falls into a seat.

Bingo.

"Here's your water," the bartender says.

"Thanks."

Grabbing my water, I adjust my wig and walk to the corner of the room where he can't see me.

And I wait.

I warned the bastard. By the time I'm done, he's going to wish he'd never met me.

Enjoy your night while you can, doctor. We're about to play a game.

**\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

"Can you track a cell?" I ask into my phone.

"I'm insulted," Knox says. "Send me the number."

Pulling the phone from my ear I forward the information and hit speaker.

"Where's the nearest bar?" I ask King. "She said someone tried to give her a spiked drink."

“The Cage is the closest club,” Knox says absently through the phone. “But there’s no way in hell Ghost’s men would miss someone spiking a drink.”

“Then there’s the twin’s private kink club,” King reminds us.

“Again, I don’t think one of the staff would miss someone spiking a drink,” Knox says. “Plus, every single person is vetted before becoming a member.”

*“So much for her being better off with you,” Xander smirks. “Sounds like she needs you just as much as you need her.”*

*“Shut the fuck up, Xander,”* I growl.

“Alright, her last ping was at Borough’s Bar until she turned her phone off,” Knox tells me.

“That’s the one near the hospital,” King says. “It’s going to take us twenty minutes to get there.”

“Are you sure you should be going after her, son?” Pops asks from Knox’s side of the call. “Maybe she just needs some time to herself. Maybe she’s on a date.”

“I can’t explain it, Pops,” I tell him. “Something is telling me that I need to go to her.”

Pop’s sighs, but I know he understands.

“Never ignore your gut,” he says. That’s something he’s told us boys our whole lives.

Never in my life have I had such a strong feeling inside. I need to get to her. I need to make sure she’s safe.

# Chapter Eleven

## Sophia

My plan is going perfectly. I knew the doctor would come to this bar sooner or later. After watching him for weeks, he often spent a few hours at this bar after getting off shit at the hospital.

It took everything in me not to just shoot the bastard the first time I saw him. But no. I made him a promise. Him and that freaking guard.

I will kill them both.

I haven't had any leads on the guard who took pleasure in my torment. I know that the man in charge, Malachi, managed to escape and I can't help but wonder if his little boy toy was with him.

Shaking my head, I focus back on the task at hand. Once I leave the bar, it doesn't take long for me to spot the doctor's car. With a smile of pure satisfaction at what's to come, I climb into the back seat and hunker down.

A big part of me wants to leave and go back home. But I just can't. Even if I turn the doctor into the police, the worst thing that will happen to him is jail time.

That's a bed to sleep on. Three meals a day. Yard time. Not to mention, the possibility of leaving.

How fucked up is that?

I spent over a year in a damp cell with next to no light. A cot to sleep on and a thin sheet to cover up with. Don't even get me started on all of the *tests* the doctor put me and the other prisoners through.

There's no way in hell I'm going to allow this sadistic fuck to spend his life in a prison that will make sure he's well-fed

and taken care of.

Hell. No.

I want him to feel what I went through. I want him to experience the humiliation of being probed with the excuse of making sure everything was in working order.

The memory of the last year slams through my mind and I dig my nails into the palms of my hands to try and pull myself out.

I want to feel again so badly. But I don't want to relive that year. I'd rather spend the rest of my life numb.

"I'll be home shortly, honey," I hear him say. The sound of his voice causes fear to overpower my every thought. But I somehow managed to lock that fear back up.

Again.

I wait until the doctor flops into his car and pulls out of the parking lot. I'm small enough to comfortably sit on the floor behind his seat. In the cover of darkness, he has no idea I'm back here.

"Do you want me to stop somewhere and grab some food so you don't have to cook?"

The doctor's family pops into my head. His wife and his two young children.

But then, I open that door. The one I just closed, and I let every single memory of what I went through flow through my veins.

Regardless of whether he was being forced to do what he did or not, the fact of the matter is, he did it. Not just to me, but to other people. To freaking children.

All in the name of protecting his family.

Well, if him being alive is what's putting them in danger to begin with, I don't mind lending a helping hand at keeping them safe.

"Pizza it is," he laughs.

He laughs. He fucking laughs.

When was the last time I laughed? When was the last time I had a real smile?

I don't know how to do either of those anymore. The doctor and his buddies made sure of that.

I wait until he hangs up the phone and pulls out onto the highway. Harborbrook is quite a large town and I know Harborbrook Hospital is thirty minutes from the good old doctor's house.

"Miss me?" I say softly.

The car swerves on the highway but the doctor manages to get control.

"Who...who are you?" he asks, fear evident in his voice.

"Don't remember me?" I say, shoving the tip of my gun at the base of his skull. "I'm hurt."

"Seven?" he asks, his pitch raising. "What are you doing here? I thought you were free?"

"Free?" I shout. "Don't stop driving. I'll never be free from what you all did to me. Part of me died down in that cell and the only piece I had left was ripped right out of my womb by your hands and handed off to someone else. I'm still trapped down there, doctor."

"What do you want from me?" he asks, slowly moving his hand toward the consol."

"Put your hands back up where I can see them," I demand, shoving the gun harder against his head. "You are going to drive until I tell you to turn. You are not going to try anything funny or I will shoot you where you sit."

"This isn't you, Seven," he tries to beg. "Please, I have a family. Let me go. I won't tell anyone."

Fury.

That's all I feel.

But I'm feeling something other than despair and that makes me smile. I climb up in the front seat and relax, keeping the gun pointing at his head.

"I'm sorry," I laugh. "Are you begging for your life? Are you scared and want someone to come and save you? Maybe hoping someone will say something to another someone and you will be saved? Oh, how the tables have turned."

"You're not evil," he says, his voice heavy with fear. "Please, don't do this."

"Shut up and drive."

Doubt is a constant shadow in my mind. But I won't be able to live my life until the doctor, the guard, and Malachi are dealt with.

And it seems like I'm the only one willing to taint my soul to do so.

### **\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

"They haven't moved in ten minutes," Steel says. "Are you sure you don't need backup?"

"I have King with me," I remind him.

What the hell is she thinking? Knox hacked into the surveillance feed of the bar and watched Sophia hide in some car only to have some middle-aged man climb in twenty minutes later. With some serious skill, he hacked into traffic cam after traffic cam and explained what he was seeing.

"There has to be a reasonable explanation," I say.

"You don't really know her," Ghost reminds me. "And even though she was some sweet woman before, I can guarantee that's not who she turned into after a year of torture."

"Do we have any idea who the man is?" I ask, ignoring everything my brother just said.



“Facial recognition is coming through now,” Jax says.  
“According to this, his name is Robert Harvey. Doctor Robert Harvey.”

A chill ran through my body.

“Send me his picture,” I demand.

Seconds later, his face pops up on the screen.

“That’s the fucking doctor that checked me over when I was a prisoner,” I growled. “He’s done bad shit to the men and women that were held there. Most likely for years.”

“Okay,” Ghost sighs. “So, she’s out for revenge. We can work with that. Get to her before it’s too late, brothers.”

I understand exactly what he’s saying. I don’t want Sophia’s hands covered in blood. No matter who she’s taken revenge on.

“Prepare the chamber,” I growl.

# Chapter Twelve

## Sophia

“Get out of the car,” I demand once the doctor turns off the engine.

Grabbing the keys, I toss them under the car as I get out of my side. I don’t want him to know where they are in case he escapes.

My hands are shaking and the doubt creeps back up.

I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to be like him. But I just need to feel safe. I have no one to take my nightmares away like Cady does. I go home each night completely alone. Any friends that I had two years ago have either moved away or just act differently around me.

If I’m ever going to feel safe again, I’m going to have to be the one to make it happen.

We’re several miles outside of Harborbrook. This construction site was closed down when the funding stopped after there was a landslide half a mile up the road. It washed the road out and now it sits here looking every bit like a ghost road. However, they were building a motel along this stretch of highway and there are several rooms finished.

I make the doctor enter one of the dark rooms.

“Sit down,” I say.

Reaching into the crossbody bag I have on, I pull out two injections.

“You will inject yourself with both of those,” I demand, my voice slightly wobbling. “If you don’t I will put a bullet where you will lay here and bleed out for hours. You’re a doctor. I’m sure it won’t be a problem for you to find a vein.”

“Please, don’t,” he cries, tears actually running down his face.

“I’m doing something for you that you didn’t do for me,” I say. “I’m going to let you die in peace. You won’t feel anything, doctor. You’ll just fall asleep.”

“Please, Seven,” he begs.

“Begging will get you nowhere,” a new voice says.

Gasping, I turn, pointing my gun at the newcomer. It’s too dark to see his face.

“Don’t fucking move,” he growls.

Fear courses through my veins and I freeze. It takes me a few seconds to realize that he’s not looking at me. I see his shadowed face looking at the doctor.

“She’s a fucking maniac,” the doctor yells. “Help me. Please.”

“What are in those needles, baby?”

Baby? No one has ever called me baby except...

No way.

“Travis,” I whisper, dropping my hand.

“The needles, Sophia,” he says, looking in my direction. “What’s in them?”

“Heroin,” I admit. “One-hundred milligrams in each syringe.”

I remembered that Travis and his friends were working with the police to save us so I have a feeling that this is the end of the road for me.

Hanging my head in defeat, I don’t fight when he gently takes the gun from my hands.

“Oh, thank you,” the doctor sighs. “I thought for sure the crazy bitch was going to kill me.”

“She’s not going to kill you, doctor,” Travis says as he pockets my gun.

“Thank you, kind sir,” he cries.

“But, you’ll wish she had by the time I get through with you.”

I’m not sure who is more shocked, me or the doctor.

“Babygirl, this is my brother, King,” he tells me. “He’s going to take you to his truck and get you safely inside.”

For the first time, I notice the tall black man leaning against the door frame of the room. The look in his eyes as he glares at the doctor has me cowering back.

“He’s safe, Sophia,” Travis tells me. But I don’t dare remove my eyes from the new threat. There isn’t a single thing safe about the man watching the doctor.

Then his eyes flick to me and they soften in a way that changes his entire face.

“Hello, little wolf,” he says with a slight nod to his head. “It’s cold out here. Let me get you settled in the heat of the truck while your man and I take care of this.”

“He’s not my man,” I mutter.

The man, King, just chuckles.

“Come on, little wolf,” he smiles.

He turns to leave but I hesitate to follow.

“Do you trust me, babygirl?” Travis asks.

I look back to see that he has the doctor on his belly with his foot pressed to the back of his neck.

But his eyes are locked with mine, full of concern.

Do I trust him?

My head is screaming that I have no reason to. I don’t even know this man. I met him once for a very short time.

But something deeper is telling me that I can trust him with my life.

“Yeah,” I whisper. “I trust you.”

“Good,” he smiles. “Then believe me when I tell you that King wouldn’t harm a single hair on your head. Follow him so that he can get you safely tucked away for me.”

I mean, when he puts it like that what other choice do I have? Turning, I follow the mysterious unknown man to his unknown truck so that he can tuck me away inside.

The second I step outside, I’m aware of how cold it actually is. I’m wearing jeans and a short-sleeved shirt but not once tonight did I feel the cold. Shivering, I stop a few feet from King.

“I have the heater going on high,” he tells me, stepping away from the door. “Climb into the backseat. There’s a blanket and pillow already there in case you want to take a nap.”

I’m grateful he decided to step back. Travis promises that his friend is a good man, but I’m still scared. Not that I would say that out loud.

The fact of the matter is, I’m always scared these days. Especially when it comes to men. I don’t think I’ll ever not be afraid anymore.

Moving quickly, I manage to haul my body into this massive truck and into the small backseat.

“I’m going to shut the door now, little wolf,” he tells me softly, almost as if he were talking to an actual wild, skittish wolf.

Nodding, I grab the blanket in the seat beside me and wrap it around my shivering body.

“What the heck is happening?” I question out loud when I’m alone.

# Chapter Thirteen

## Venom

“Did you kill him already?” King asks when he walks back into the half-finished building.

“No. Just gave him enough of the heroine to knock him out cold.”

*“I still think you should have just stabbed him with both the needles,” Miles complains.*

“Good,” he responds. “Ghost told me some of the things this man did to those women and men. Did he do anything to hurt you while you were there?”

King’s voice is as calm and smooth as ever, but his eyes darken with rage. No one fucks with this man’s family.

“No,” I admit. “He just ran some tests when I first arrived. I had assumed he was another prisoner because of the look in his eyes.”

“He may very well have been,” King says, lifting the doctor over his shoulder as if he weighed nothing. “He may have been forced to do what he did. But it doesn’t change the fact that he did those things.”

I follow King back outside into the night and wait for him to secure the doctor in the back of the truck. For good measure, he ties his hands behind his back with a rope he found before yanking it down and securing his legs together.

“Tied like the fucking pig he is,” King mutters before tossing a tarp over his body. “Let’s get your girl home so we can get this bastard to the chamber before the sun rises.”

The chamber is something we have always had but haven’t had to utilize in quite some time. My fists clench in excitement at what’s to come.

“Let’s see if we can get Knox to dig into the police and hospital reports to see everything this man done to those people so we don’t have to get your girl to answer any hard questions,” King suggests.

Nodding, I jump into the passenger side of the truck and turn to look at the woman in question. Her eyes, void of emotion, look so tired.

Almost defeated.

“You don’t have to say anything,” I tell her. “I’m going to take you home and get you into bed. You need a good night’s sleep. Tomorrow morning, we’ll talk.”

“Am I going to jail?” she asks.

“No baby,” I smile.

“Is he going to jail?”

“Where he can get three free meals a day, free housing, and a chance to live the rest of his days safely behind bars?” King asks sarcastically as he starts the truck. “No. Prison will look like fucking paradise compared to the future we have planned for him.”

“You won’t ever have to worry about him again,” I tell her. “Now, it’s going to take a little while to make it back to town. Why don’t you try and get some shut-eye?”

She glances from me to King before pulling the blanket tighter around her.

“You’re safe, babygirl,” I tell her. “Nothing can harm you with my brother here.”

“You mean to tell me that you wouldn’t be able to protect me?” she asks. If I wasn’t paying close attention to her face I would have completely missed the small smirk before it quickly vanishes.

“Brat,” I smile. “Of course, I could. But King is sort of like a mother hen. I wouldn’t even get the opportunity to defend you against an enemy before he has everything taken care of while still checking to make sure we’re not harmed. All while ordering pizza.”

“Fuck you very much,” King grumps.

Sophia giggles and as much as I hate that it was directed at King and not me, I’m still beyond thrilled to see something other than complete defeat shine in her eyes.

“Sleep baby. I’ll wake you when we get home.”

“Too dark,” she whispers. “Can’t sleep.”

Reaching up, I flick the light on and watch her relax slightly. Satisfaction soars through me when her eyes close.

King pulls out onto the highway and we head back towards Harborbrook.

\*\*\*Sophia\*\*\*

This is surreal. I never thought I’d see Travis again. The fact that he’s sitting right in front of me is making my heart go crazy. He’s even more handsome than I remembered.

“Do you want to drop the fucker off first?” his friend, King, asks.

“Nah. He’s out for the next few hours. Let’s get her home and safe first.”

I have my eyes closed but I’m not asleep. There’s no way I’ll be able to fall asleep for a long time to come.

It takes a solid hour before they pull in front of my parent’s house. Even though I was raised in this house, it just doesn’t feel like mine. It doesn’t feel like home.

I open my mouth to ask them how they knew where I lived but decide that it doesn’t really matter.

“Come on, babygirl,” Travis says, opening the small back door. “Let me walk you inside.”

I fold the blanket as best as I could and lay it back down where it was before exiting the truck.



Travis reaches out his hand and I accept it without hesitation. My body feels as if it's on autopilot. On one hand, I'm glad that Travis and King stopped me before I completed my task. But on the other hand, nothing has changed. I still feel stuck.

"You should have let me finish," I say when we reach the porch.

"We'll talk about all of that in the morning, Sophia," he says. "For now, I want you to get some rest so that you're mentally ready for that conversation. Can you do that for me?"

*Rest?* He wants me to rest? I haven't been able to rest since the night I was taken.

But, I don't say any of that. I simply nod.

"Good girl," he smiles, and a warmth surges through my body. "Go inside now, baby. I'll be back in the morning."

I grab the spare key from the hide-a-key rock next to the porch and, ignoring the growling sounds coming from Travis, turn to unlock the door.

"One more thing to add to our conversation," he says.

When the door is open, he slowly reaches out and gently presses me into the house.

"Lock the door," he demands.

With a sigh, I close the door and lock it.

"Goodnight, babygirl," he says before walking back to the truck.

I watch from the tall window beside the door until the truck is out of sight. Then I'm alone.

Again.

And that warm feeling vanishes.

I know that they're going to take care of the doctor issue. All doubts about them working with the police vanished after hearing their conversation about the doctor's future.

I don't even feel bad about that. Call me a monster all you want but knowing that he's going to suffer after everything he put me and all those other people through makes me giddy.

But I still feel empty.

Stuck.

The guard? Maybe I need to find him next. I know the punisher was killed in the raid so maybe if I killed the guard I would feel free.

I'm not even worried about Malachi. I never even saw his face. I know he's the one who orchestrated the entire thing. He's the one who received money for having my body beaten, raped, and impregnated so he could sell my baby.

But his face isn't the one I see in my nightmares.

It was always the punisher, the doctor, and the guard. But the face I see every single time I close my eyes, asleep or not, is the man who raped me repeatedly each night for weeks before I got pregnant.

But he's already dead. I know this for a fact because he was the first person I looked for when I got out.

But his death hasn't appeased anything inside of me. Just like I have a feeling the doctors or the guards won't either.

Maybe I'm just broken. Maybe they broke me to the point of no return. I'm damaged, a mere fragment of who I once was.

I make my way down the hall and it feels as if I'm walking through a swamp surrounded by a heavy fog. Each step feels like a battle as the bad images I try so hard to keep at bay burst to life. It's almost as if I'm watching that year of my life play out on the walls of my parents' home.

Minute after minute. Hour after hour. Day after day. Week after week. Month after month.

Every second is a nightmare in the making.

My body is being controlled by all of the anger, sadness, fear, and hopelessness. I feel myself fall to my knees on a hard

floor. I'm simply a backseat driver as my hands reach into the drawer, unzip a bag, and pull out a blade.

I can only watch as my hand presses the blade against my wrist, applies pressure, and slides smoothly across my skin, slicing the vein in two.

I lean against the sink as I watch all of that anger drain out of me. The sadness lingers but the fear and hopelessness are withering away.

Finally, I can get some rest.

# Chapter Fifteen

## Venom

“I think we should have him sit here and soak in the view for a few days,” King says once we have the doctor secured inside his very own cage.

“We’ll have to remember to come back and give him some food and water so he doesn’t die prematurely,” Ghost answers.

“I won’t eat or drink anything you give me,” the doctor says.

“Then I’ll shove a tube down your fucking throat and force it into your stomach myself,” King says. “The choice is your doctor but the end results will be the same. You decide how you want that to happen.”

*“Somethings bothering me about the look in her eyes when we left her,” Doc says.*

*“She’s just scared and tired,” I answer.*

*“No, I’ve seen that look before. Somethings off.”*

“Everything okay, brother?” Ghost asks.

*“I think you should at least call her,” Miles says.*

“Yeah,” I answer Ghost. “My alters are talking.”

Pulling out my phone, I find her number and hit call.

Straight to voicemail.

*“She needs space,” I say to the alters. “I don’t want to freak her out with how strong of a pull I feel towards her. We’ll go over in the morning.”*

“Doc and Miles are worried about Sophia,” I tell the room. Ghost, Steel, Blaze, and Jax all met us at the underground

chamber beneath the clubhouse. This isn't the scene for Knox so he and Prospect Colt are still upstairs.

"Is there a reason to be concerned?" Jax asks.

"Considering we found her on a deserted highway inside of a partially built motel about to kill this fucker, I would say yes," King says, clearly annoyed with the stupid questions.

"I'll go over and check on her in the morning," I repeat what I told the alters. "I can come on a bit strong and the conversation we need to have will be tough as it is. She needs to rest."

The men mumble to themselves as we head back up the stairs, kicking off the lights to the chamber. The doctor's sudden screams are silenced as we close and seal the door.

As soon as we walk back into the clubhouse, a pain shoots behind my eyes and I fall into darkness.

I'm not sure how long I'm out before I open my eyes to King looking down at me.

"Took you long enough," he says.

I want to shut my eyes and just lay my head back on the floor where I must have fallen. Except, my brain doesn't do what I tell it to. Instead, I'm standing and walking back out the door.

I'm no longer in control. There's only one alter who can force himself to the front without my knowledge.

*"Damn it Xander," I yell. "Give me back my body."*

### **\*\*\*Xander\*\*\***

*"You know I fucking hate it when you force your way to the front without telling me first,"* Venom yells inside my head. *"Step back and give me back control."*

*"No."*

*"Damn it Xander. What the hell are you doing?"*

*“He only ever fronts like that when he knows he’s in the right,” Miles reminds our host. “He’s on a mission that is very obviously important.”*

Venom is too damn stubborn sometimes and Doc and Miles are right. Something is seriously wrong with Sophia. For a split second, her eyes flickered with life when Venom touched her to help her into her home. When he called her a *good girl*. But, right as she was closing the door, I saw the look I’ve seen one too many times in other men and women we’ve helped in the past.

She’s done.

*“She needs help,”* I tell Venom.

*“And we will help her,”* he responds. *“Tomorrow, after she’s had some rest.”*

*“Did you ever stop to think that we are your subconscious trying to tell you that something is wrong?”* Miles asks. *“Except instead of the feelings a normal person would get, you’re lucky enough to get words. Why are you ignoring it?”*

*“Damn it,”* he yells. *“You better be right. Don’t fucking scare her, Xander.”*

I grin and head out back to the shed.

*“And don’t fucking crash my bike,”* he grumps.

*“He means, again, Xander,”* Doc reminds me. *“Don’t crash his bike, again.”*

It wasn’t my fault that some bastard flipped me off and I lost my temper. I jumped off the bike without stopping it and walked over to the man sitting in his car and punched him in the face through his open window.

Besides, the bike only had a scratch on it. It still worked just fine.

Big baby.

It takes less than fifteen minutes to reach Sophia’s house. Seeing as how it’s about three in the morning I shouldn’t be surprised that all of the lights are off.

But I am.

*“She doesn’t like the dark,”* Venom tells me.

My thoughts exactly. She told Venom earlier in the truck that she couldn’t sleep because it was too dark. So, why would her whole house be dark?

*“Maybe she went out,”* Miles suggests.

Walking up to the door, I knock and wait.

Nothing.

*“Try again,”* Venom orders.

So, I do. I knock again.

Nothing.

Taking a few seconds to assess the situation and decide on the best course of action. I grab the hide-a-key rock and grab the key that she put back earlier. Without hesitation, I enter her home and look around.

It’s too quiet.

*“Fuck,”* Venom shouts. *“You guys were right. Find her Xander.”*

It takes a minute to find a light switch but once I do, finding the other ones isn’t a problem. The house is old. You can tell that Sophia never gave it her own touch and left everything the way her parents had it.

My heart races and I know that Venom is on the verge of a panic attack. Seeing how I can feel his panic, that means he’s too close to the front.

Sneaky bastard.

I use my force and push him back further.

*“Don’t you dare knock me out,”* he shouts. *“I’ll let you be for a while but don’t fucking knock me out, Xander.”*

I’m the only alter that can make Venom black out for as long as I think he needs. I haven’t had to do that in years and I’ve made him a promise that I won’t do it again without his consent.

I understand his panic. He's claimed this woman as his. As ours. But, I have better control over our emotions than he does.

*"I'll give back control once she's safe,"* I promise. *"I won't knock you out."*

I can feel Venom take a step back. He's still a strong force just silently watching behind my eyes. I wonder if this is what he feels like when I'm on edge and he's in control.

"Sophia," I call out. "Are you here, sweetheart?"

I check almost every room and have found nothing. There are three rooms left. Once again, I feel Venom's panic.

*"I hope Miles is right and she just left when we dropped her off,"* he says.

Going by instinct alone, I head straight for the second to last door in the hall and shove it open. Sophia is leaning against the bathroom sink surrounded by blood. Reaching down, I check for a pulse.

*"It's there, but faint,"* I say. *"Doc, you're up."*

With a single thought, I step back and Doc takes over.

### **\*\*\*Doc\*\*\***

There's no time to stretch my muscles when I gain control of our body. I grab the robe that's hanging by the bathroom door and yank the tie loose.

Falling to my knees, I tie it a few inches above where Sophia sliced her wrist. Luckily she only did one. If she had cut both wrists she would be long dead.

*"Is she breathing, Doc?"* Venom asks.

I don't have time to deal with him right now. Reaching into my back pocket, I grab my phone and dial 911. When I'm assured an ambulance is on its way I hang up and lift Sophia into my arms.



We shouldn't have brought the damn bike.

I rush outside and can only wait. Little Sophia doesn't have much time. They need to hurry the fuck up.

*"There they are," Venom says. "Thank fuck."*

*"Is she going to make it, Doc?" Miles asks.*

*"Not sure, son," I admit. "She's lost a lot of blood."*

"What's going on?" The EMT says as he hops from the truck.

"A 30-year-old female presents with a laceration on her left wrist. It seems that the injury has not significantly affected the arterial depth. Based on my estimation, the incident occurred approximately five minutes prior to my assessment. I have applied a constriction to the arm to mitigate the bleeding, although she has experienced considerable blood loss. Her heart rate is notably low, and her respiratory rate is shallow."

"Are you a doctor?" the man asks. "A British doctor?"

"She doesn't have time for your questions," I growl. "I'll meet you at the hospital."

*"Fuck Xander," Venom says. "She would have been dead had you not taken over."*

*"I don't do shit without a good reason," Xander says. "I knew something was wrong. We all did. I just took out all the emotional shit and did what needed to be done."*

Xander isn't saying that to make himself sound like a hero. He really is an emotionless prick. But he's a smart-headed emotionless prick.

Sighing, I grab the damn bike and straddle it. These lunatics might enjoy risking their lives on this death trap, but I don't.

*"Want me to take over, Doc?" Miles asks.*

Miles doesn't like fronting very much. Hell, none of us do. But he only comes out once, maybe twice, a year.

*"I got it, kid," I answer. "I just fucking hate it, is all."*

*“Besides,” Xander cuts in. “When Venom takes back control in an hour or so, he needs his body and mind to be as functional as possible. With two of us already fronting in a single day, it’s going to take a toll on him”*

The boys keep talking but I tune them out so I can concentrate on keeping us alive. It doesn’t take but five minutes to reach the hospital. It’s typically a fifteen-minute drive, but I feel Venom’s need to get there right as the ambulance does.

“You can’t come back here, sir,” one of the doctors says as I rush through the ambulance bay doors.

“You damn well best believe I’m not going to leave my wife’s side,” I lie with a glare.

“Alright. I apologize Mr. ...”

“Montgomery,” I answer.

“Mr. Montgomery. Your wife is in critical condition. We need to be able to work on her without distraction. And no offense, sir, but I know husbands like you. If you think we’re hurting her, you will most definitely be a distraction. You can wait just outside her door if you like. We’ll come and get you when we’re able.”

With a satisfied nod, I take the seat the other doctor gestured to and relax.

*“I did what I could, son,” I tell Venom. “I’m going to step back now.”*

*“Thank you, Doc,” Venom answers. “Thank you, all.”*

Sighing, I close my eyes and dive back into my little corner of the *alterverse*.

# Chapter Sixteen

## Sophia

“Nurse, she’s awake.”

Oh, I like that voice. It’s as smooth as whisky. Not that I know what whisky tastes like or why people call it smooth.

“You can’t have whisky, babygirl,” someone laughs.  
“Maybe some water.”

Someone used to call me babygirl when I was alive. I’m glad I’m dead but I’m really going to miss him.

“Why is that?” the smooth-voiced man asks.

Can angels read my mind? I mean, I guess that makes sense. Wait, what if it’s not angels? What if it’s God? I know God can read my mind.

“I’ve never been called God before, babygirl. And I’m not reading your mind. You’re just chatting away... With your eyes closed. Open them for me. Let me see those beautiful greens looking back at me.”

Since you’re God, can I just have a redo at life? Maybe put my soul into a baby boy this time.

“I like you in the body you’re currently in babygirl. And I’m not God. I’m Venom. Well, Travis.”

My eyes fly open only for me to slam them shut.

“Why is it so bright?”

“You’ve been out a little over a day,” the smooth-talking, I mean, Travis says. “I’ve dimmed them a bit. Try again.”

Going much slower this time, I gently open my eyes.

That’s better.

“I’m not dead?” I ask, too afraid to look to where I can see the man in question sitting.

“You came close, baby,” he says, his voice filled with pain. “I almost lost you before I had you. You can’t do that again, Sophia. If you’re having issues then we’ll work through it together. You can’t do it alone.”

“I’m always alone,” I say. “Maybe not physically, but I’m always alone in here.”

I point to my head hoping he understands what I’m trying to say.

“I can’t move forward in this life because I feel like I’ve already died,” I continue, keeping my gaze locked on the clock on the wall. It says it’s five o’clock. I wonder if it’s in the morning or evening.

“I started to die the day they took me, Travis,” I say. “It took months, but I felt the moment my mind decided to no longer care. I started acting out, which is why I was always down in cellblock X with the punisher. I begged God to kill me. Or, at the very least, to take away my pain. And he did. I stopped feeling. I was nothing more than a robot causing as much trouble for those bastards as I could.”

Feeling a bit more courageous, I look over at Travis, but can’t find it in me to look any further than his chin. He has a shadow of a beard on his face where before he was clean-shaven. He said I was out for over a day. Has he gone home?

“I thought when I got free I would feel again,” I continue. “When nothing happened, I figured I just needed to feel safe. So, the only logical thing was to get rid of the ones making me scared. The guard, the doctor, and my rapist. I can’t find the guard, but the man who raped me died from a drug overdose a few months ago, and you have the doctor. But, even then, I’m lost. I felt something when you brought me home. Hope, maybe? But, when you left, you took that hope with you. I know it’s crazy since you told me you were coming back. But I just lost it. I don’t even remember doing what I did. All I know is that I could feel the moment that blade slid across my wrist.”

“We found older scars, baby,” he tells me. I watch his lips as they form each word. He has such pretty lips.

“They weren’t deep,” I admit. “Just enough to sting. Enough to hurt.”

“Enough to feel?” he asks.

I nod and the tears I’ve tried to keep down suddenly fall from my eyes.

“Oh, baby. Can I hold you?”

I’m dirty. I’ll have to tell him to take a shower afterward so he doesn’t get their touch on his skin. But, I really need to be held, I think.

Before I finish nodding, Travis is up on the bed with my upper half lying on his chest.

“I’m going to tell you a story,” he says against the top of my head. “It’s not an easy story for me to tell, and by the end, there’s a good chance that you’ll think I’m crazy. But I want you to understand that you’re not alone.”

“You don’t have to,” I say.

“Hush,” he says softly, kissing the top of my head. “When I was a young boy of five, I was playing on the living room floor just before bed when our front door was kicked in. Three men whom I’ve never met prior came in wearing these black ski masks and holding guns.”

I gasp but remain silent.

“They weren’t targeting my family but just chose a random house they could rob,” he continues. His hand is slowly rubbing up and down my back as if he’s trying to soothe us both. “When they saw that we were home, they attacked my father and had him tied up before he had a chance to get up off the couch. Then my mother came down the stairs. She was so scared, but she begged them to leave her son alone. The men made her a deal. They would leave my young self unharmed, but only after they raped her in front of me and my father.”

“Oh no.”

“She fought them with everything she had,” he says. “My father tried his best to save her, but they kept beating him. With his hands and feet tied, there wasn’t anything he could do but watch. When they pointed a gun at my head, my mother froze. I remember the look in her eyes. Absolute fear. But not because of what was happening to her. Because she was afraid for my life. I tried to get up and run. Even tried to close my eyes. But they wouldn’t let me. I was forced to sit there with my father while they spent over an hour taking turns with her. The entire time they kept reminding me that her being hurt and violated was my fault.”

“It wasn’t,” I whisper.

“Please, let me get this out,” he begs.

Cuddling in as close as I can, I silently wait.

“I won’t share all of the details of her attack,” he finally says. “I don’t ever want that image in your head, but after an hour, my mother was barely alive. She screamed and cried out in pain, but she never fought back. With her last breath, she said, *love you*. But all I heard were the men saying, *your fault*.”

After they killed my mother, they continued to beat my father until he too died with them taunting that his death was also on my hands. My young mind couldn’t handle what it had witnessed. For years I acted out. I threw tantrums and would often black out. Sometimes for days. Those blackouts happened for years before someone finally told me what was happening. It wasn’t until after Ma and Pops adopted me and fought for me that someone finally took an interest. I have what is called Dissociative Identity Disorder. My mind was so broken, baby, that it split itself in half. I became a person who I wouldn’t meet for many more years. The blackouts continued but I noticed that they only happened when my thoughts started to become overwhelmed by the memory of that night. I would wake up days later only for no one to even notice that I was gone. On those days, someone took over my body. He’s the one who saved you the other day.”

I don’t say anything as I try to digest everything he’s saying.

“Then one day, I started talking to this other person in my head. This other half. Then that one personality turned into two which eventually turned into three. Do you understand what I’m saying, Sophia?”

“You’re saying that you have three other people living in your head?” I guess. “I don’t understand.”

“Pretty much,” he chuckles. “It was hard for me to accept the truth at first. But, the doctors showed me cases where people had developed multiple personalities in the aftermath of trauma. It’s a way for our brains to cope with what we’ve been through. With years upon years of therapy and lots of conversations with professionals who deal with my type of mental disability, I’ve learned to accept the fact that I’m only one part of four.”

I don’t want to believe him. His story is so wild that it sounds made up. But, then I remember those times when it would appear as if I wasn’t talking to the same man when we were being held by Malachi. Could it be true?

“What did you mean when you said that *he* was the one to save me?” I ask.

“The first alter, or personality, that appeared was an older man. I didn’t know his name for the longest time, but Ma and Pops called him Doc because of his fascination with all things medical. Doc was in control when he saved you. But Xander, another alter, was the one who fronted, or took control, and got my hard-headed ass over to your house. If it wasn’t for them, you’d be dead.”

“I’m really confused,” I admit. “But I believe you. There have been a couple of times when we were talking that you didn’t look back at me the same way you had moments before.”

“Up until last night I have always been myself around you,” he tells me. “But when we were in that cell, Xander was close to the surface. He wanted to take control so he could kill every single fucker in there. But, anyway, I told you all of that to tell you this. I understand not being able to feel. I understand the

fear of being alone and scared. I was so fucking scared that my mind shattered and was put back together with school glue.”

“Did it help? When your mind shattered and came back with your alters. Did it help?”

“Sort of,” he admits. “At first, I was mostly confused and scared. But after years of learning and talking with my alters, we’ve become one single unit.”

“You can talk to them?” I ask, looking up from his chest to his eyes. “I thought you said you blacked out?”

“I did for the longest time,” he smiles. “But, for some strange reason, instead of blacking out, one day I just stood back and watched. I felt my body move around and I wasn’t the one controlling it. When things get a bit rough in here,” he points to his head. “Xander usually forces himself to the front. He’s the only one who can make me blackout these days. But we have a mutual understanding that I’ll hate his guts if he does.”

I shove my face back into his chest to hide my giggle.

“My alters are all part of me. They all share who I am as a person. We’re one well-oiled system and we all care for you deeply. Your mind didn’t break like mine did, but it still broke, baby. Let me help you fix it.”

“Can you make me blackout for days at a time?” I ask, feeling more tears on their way.

“No,” he says, squeezing me a bit tighter. “But I can help you feel again. We’ll find a way that doesn’t harm you. Now that I’m holding you in my arms, I don’t think I’d survive if I had to let you go. Let me take care of you. Let me help you.”

“What if I can’t be helped?” I ask. “What if I’m too damaged? What if I’ll forever be shattered into a dozen pieces?”

“Then I’ll be your glue. You won’t be able to go anywhere without me.”

I feel him smile against my temple and I poke his side.



His chest vibrates and I can only assume that he's silently laughing.

"Sorry about your parents," I whisper after a few silent minutes.

"Thank you, baby," he whispers back. "I'm gonna fix you, Sophia. Do you want to know why?"

I nod my head.

"Because I can't lose you. You don't know this yet, baby, but you're stuck with me until the day I die. If you decide that you don't want to be with a crazy mental patient like me, then I'll simply protect you from a distance. But know this, I won't give you up easily. I will fight for you. Even if I have to fight you, yourself."

"Alright, Mrs. Montgomery. Your husband has already signed your discharge papers. I think you can go home now."

I sit up and look at the nurse smiling from the doorway.

"My *husband* already signed my discharge papers?" I ask slowly, making sure I didn't mishear anything.

"That's right, my beautiful wife," Travis laughs, sitting us both up fully. "Let's get your things and head home before it gets too late."

I look at Travis and see the delightful glint in his eyes. He knows exactly what he's doing.

For the first time in a long time, I feel hopeful. Maybe this man, and his multiple personalities, will be the ones to save me.

Just, maybe.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Sophia

If you had told me a week ago that I would arrive at UNITY on the back of a motorcycle I would have laughed in your face.

“You have until the time we leave here to decide if we’re going to be staying at your house or mine,” Travis says as I hand him the helmet.

“We’re not staying at our own places?” I ask, confused as to what this man is wanting.

“No, baby,” he tells me. “We will both be at one place or the other. I don’t really care where.”

“Sophia,” I hear Cady call. “I’ve been so worried. Why didn’t you call me?”

Glancing down at my wrist, I make sure the long sleeve covers the bandage before reaching out and hugging my friend.

“I just had some things I needed to work through,” I admit, pulling back.

“Is everything okay?” she asks, concern written all over her face.

“No,” I smile. “But they will be.”

“Because that sexy man standing behind you will make sure of it?” she asks, her lips quirked in a teasing grin.

“Damn right,” Travis mutters.

“How are things here?” I ask, ignoring that sexy man standing by me.

“They’re good,” she gestures for me to follow her. “For the past few nights, we’ve had an increase in the amount of people

wanting beds at night. Most of them are young teens my age. I don't really know the procedure for that. Do we call in social services when someone comes in alone and underage?"

"I'm so sorry, Cady," I say, pulling her in for another hug. "I left you here to deal with all of this craziness on your own. Without proper training. Please, don't hate me."

"I don't hate you, Sophie," she frowns. "I had it all under control. You've trained me plenty enough to handle this place without you for a few days. Besides, I kind of liked having all of these adults working for you do what I ordered."

Laughing, I glance down at the report she pulled out.

"It's sad, but I can understand the influx of homeless teens this time of year," I tell her. "The schools have just let out for the summer and a lot of these kids have abusive homes that they can't escape from during the day. We don't call in social services for older teenagers unless they specifically ask for our help with such matters. But we always do if a young child comes in alone."

"Gotcha," she nods.

"However, what does strike me as odd is the amount of men and women from our Unity units that have left."

"Is that not normal?" she asks. "I mean, they don't stay here forever. Eventually, they all leave to try and get back to their lives once they're safe."

"Sometimes not even if they're safe," I add. "But, not this many people at once. When I left, we had to move people around just to make room for one more person. Now, there are multiple beds in both sections that are empty. Do you have the release forms that they sign when they leave?"

Cady moves to her computer and logs in.

"Yeah," she says as she hunts for the files. "But only a handful even signed out. Most of them just left and never came back. I figured they just went back home."

"It's a possibility," I admit. "That happens more often than not. Just not these numbers in such a short amount of time."

“Here they are,” she says, standing from her chair.

I take her seat and carefully go through the forms. There are a total of thirty beds in the community action section and twenty-nine each in both male and female sections of our unity center. As sad as it is to say, the women’s section at UNITY is almost always maxed out. The men’s section is usually half-filled. Now, there are over twenty free beds in the men’s section and fifteen free beds in the women’s.

I pick up the desk phone and hit the button for security.

“Cady,” John answers. “Is everything alright?”

“Hey John, it’s Sophia,” I say. “Would you please come here a moment?”

“Oh, sure thing ma’am. I’ll be right there.”

I continue looking over the files until John stops to stand by Travis.

“Who are you?” he asks suspiciously.

“He’s with me, John. Listen, have there been any people hanging around the building lately,” I ask. “Maybe someone who just appears to always hang out nearby?”

“No, ma’am,” he answers. “I’ve trained all of my men personally and that’s something they’re trained to look for. Why? What’s going on?”

“There’s just been a weird amount of people who’ve left in the past few days,” I tell him. “Without letting Cady know they’re leaving and not coming back.”

“Surly that’s not unusual,” he says, head tilting slightly. “People come and go from here all the time.”

“I know.” I look up and watch as I land the blow. “Sally’s gone.”

“What?” he shouts. “Did you check her room?”

“Not personally, no,” I admit. “But she’s been logged out of the system as of yesterday.”

“She didn’t sign out either,” Cady says. “When the therapist went to her room for her appointment she wasn’t there. Security searched the entire building and couldn’t find her.”

John turns and runs.

“Slow down,” I shout out. “Those women are sensitive around big men like you.”

John slows to a quick pace.

“Well, that was interesting,” Cady says.

“Sally was actually here before I was taken,” I tell her. “She was absolutely terrified of leaving for fear that her brother would find her and kill her. I don’t know her whole story, but I do know that she was way too scared of the world to have simply walked back into it.”

“What happened to her during that time you were taken?” Travis asks.

“She was still here,” I tell him. “I guess there was a petition to keep this place open after I disappeared. We mostly run on donations and voluntary work from the community, so it wasn’t too hard for them to keep the place running. Because of the donations we receive we’re able to take on a large staff to help keep the place going.”

“I think that’s so wonderful,” he smiles. “I’m so proud of you.”

“Technically, UNITY is my mom’s baby,” I say, feeling the blush at his words. “When my parents died they entrusted me to keep this place running and active.”

“Where the hell could she have gone?” John asks frantically as he returns. “There’s no way in hell she would have simply left here and not said anything.”

John has been sweet on Sally since Mom and Dad gave her a room. He’s always kept a respectable distance from her because he knew he would scare her. But, right now, he looks both scared and worried.

“I’ll reach out to some of her family,” I assure him. “She probably just found the courage to go stay with her parents.”

Her brother hasn't been seen around here for a long time. I'm sure she's fine."

He nods but doesn't look convinced.

"Would it be alright if I did that?" he asks. "It's just... Ma'am, I need to find her."

I look into this man's eyes for a long while and just search. I don't really know what I'm searching for, so I look over at Travis only to see him doing the same. When I see him nod to himself before looking back at me, I make my decision.

Pulling up Sally's file, I hit print.

"Here are the addresses and phone numbers to all of her contacts," I tell him. "I'm trusting you, John. Any backlash you get shines a light right back on UNITY. I can't have that."

"I understand, ma'am. I just want to make sure she's safe. I won't cause any issues."

"Even if it's her brother," I add, raising my brows and waiting.

"Even if it's her brother," he forces out between clenched teeth.

"Let me know what you find out."

"I'm going to put Russell in charge until I get back."

With that, he turns and walks away.

"Cady, get in contact with Russell and have him schedule an appointment to have additional security cameras added around the building," I say. "I also want two more light posts added out front and four out back. I don't want any part of this building shrouded in darkness during the nights from now on."

"Do you think something is going on?" Cady asks while taking her notes.

"I don't know," I admit. "But, regardless, I'll feel better knowing that we're doing everything we can to protect the people in this building to the best of our ability. Most of them come here during the scariest times of their lives. We need to

do everything we can to make them feel safe during their stay.”

“Alright. Oh, before I forget, we received a call from the county Mayor’s office yesterday. He was asking about placing someone here who is in witness protection. I told him that I was unable to make those types of decisions and that you would be in contact as soon as you were able. I’ve emailed you the information.”

Shoot. I really wanted to go somewhere and take a hot shower. I look over at Travis and give him an apologetic smile.

“I have to stay here for a few hours,” I tell him. “You can go ahead and go and come back to get me around eight. That’s when we locked down the building.”

“I think I’ll just stick around if that’s okay,” he smiles.

“I have sensitive people here,” I tell him. “I don’t mind if you stay, but you have to be mindful of the guests.”

“I’ll be a perfect gentleman,” he says. “Actually, why don’t you point me in the direction of security? I’d like to see what they have set up to keep you safe.”

“The security isn’t about my safety,” I tell him. “But, they have their own building. It’s the small one right off to the side.”

“I disagree,” he tells me, walking up and crowding my space. “It is very much about your safety.”

He grips my chin and slowly leans down pressing a very light, almost non-existent kiss to my lips.

“Don’t leave this building.”

With that, he turns and leaves.

“That was so hot,” Cady sighs.

It was something alright.

I touch my lips as a warmth moves from where his lips met mine and travels down to my heart. For the first time in almost two years, I feel as if it wants to keep beating.

\*\*\*Venom\*\*\*

I'm nervous as I lead Sophia into my home. I swore never to bring hookups into this house because I built it for someone special.

Glancing at the sleepy woman walking beside me, I smile.

I'm almost positive that Sophia is that someone special. It took me three years to build this place. Every board and nail was put together with the love of a future person I didn't even know I would get the chance to meet.

So, like I said before, I'm nervous. I want her to love this place almost as badly as I need my next breath to survive.

"Is that a wraparound porch?" Sophia asks me breathlessly.

"It is," I confirm. "It goes around the entire house but connects to the deck out back.

"A deck?" she asks. "Like, for a pool?"

"Yep," I smile watching her eyes light up.

"How exciting."

Chuckling, I unlock the front door and step aside.

"Welcome home," I say softly, those words meaning more than she could possibly understand at this time.

My poor babygirl isn't doing mentally well, but I will do everything in my power to fix that.

"Wow," she whispers.

I take a look around and try to see it from her point of view. When I had this house designed, I did it not knowing what my future woman would like. I went off of instinct alone. It's not overly done, but you can tell the place has a feminine touch.

As soon as we step inside it's like a breath of fresh air. The whole vibe is a mix of floral notes and a subtle hint of vanilla—kind of like walking into a high-end spa. That's how Bitsy explained it one day.



The living room is bathed in this soft, natural light filtering through the sheer curtains. The walls are done up in these muted pastels—creams, pinks, and blues—giving it a touch of sophistication without going overboard. Real modern elegance. Again, Bitsy.

There's this plush ivory rug on the wooden floor that feels real good under your feet. Furniture's all about clean lines and modern design, but still comfy as hell. You've got these throw pillows on the sofa, not too flashy, just enough to add a bit of style.

On one wall, you've got this gallery of framed photos. They're not your typical family portraits; they capture moments—laughter, adventures, real-life stuff. And on the coffee table, a simple vase with wildflowers, bringing a bit of the outdoors in.

The decor's got a feminine touch, but it's not in your face. A sleek mirror, a minimalistic console table, and a modern crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Classy stuff.

In the corner, there's a cozy reading nook. A comfy chair, good for soaking up the natural light, and a small bookshelf with some well-loved novels.

The kitchen's an extension of the living space, with white and gold everywhere. Marble countertops shining under the cabinet lights. There's a vase of fresh flowers in the breakfast nook—a spot where I've pictured many laid-back moments with a stranger's face over a cup of coffee.

“This place is amazing,” she gasps. “This is your home?”

“Sure is, baby,” I say, wrapping my arms around her waist.

She doesn't step away from my embrace and I feel as if I'm standing on the world.

“Who decorated it?” she asks with a tilt in her voice.

Seeing as how she can't see me, I smile and let myself enjoy her jealousy.

She doesn't understand this yet, but she has and never will have anything to be jealous of.

"I did," I admit. "Well, sort of. I hired someone, a few someones, to build this place and fix up the inside for me. But I gave them all strict instructions on exactly what I wanted done. Everything you see was one hundred percent my idea."

"That's pretty impressive," she says, turning her head to look up at me. "This is too perfect of a house for a single person to live in."

I look deep into her eyes, and say, "I agree. Let's go get you unpacked."

"I didn't mean..."

"Come on, baby," I laugh. "I want to show you around."

# Chapter Eighteen

(Three weeks later)

Sophia

I've been living at Travis's house for three weeks now. I can feel a difference in myself but at the same time, something is stopping me from completely letting go. It's not that I don't trust the man, I do. I guess I'm just scared. I'm not good enough for a man like Travis. He's kind and sweet, even with three other personalities living inside of his head.

I have yet to officially meet them but he tells me that, for the most part, they don't really *front* much unless he's mentally unstable. But I find him zoning out all the time and he told me that's when he's talking to them. At first, it was odd watching him silently communicate with the voices in his head, but I've done a lot of research on DID and find myself kind of jealous.

What would it be like to know that you're never alone?

"Babygirl, how would you feel about a cookout at the clubhouse?" Travis asks me from the kitchen.

I pause the movie I was watching and glance back at the man.

He's wearing a pair of sweatpants with no shirt as he works his way around the kitchen making dinner. I have never before seen something so sexy and the wetness between my legs confirms that.

"Your biker clubhouse?" I ask.

"Yeah," he says. "Viper and Bitsy are back home and Ma wants to celebrate by the whole gang getting together to eat."

"I guess that would be okay," I say, suddenly unsure of my position. "I mean, if that's okay with the rest of your brothers. I wouldn't want to intrude on such a big event."

Travis has spent the past few weeks giving me his family history. I learned that Bitsy is actually the daughter of another club's president. I've learned that when he says "brothers" he's not talking about blood family. I've also learned that his role in his biker club is that of the Vice President. I guess he's the second in charge.

I also know that Ma and Pops are the actual parents of Travis, Ghost, Viper, Steel, and Blaze with Travis being the only one adopted.

However, the two parents also claim King, Jax, Knox, and Colt as their children, as well. I've met them all in passing over the past few weeks but I'm not sure how I'll react when I'm in the same place with all of them. It's not that I don't like them. I like them all very much. I guess it just makes me realize what I don't have.

Even when my parents were alive I've never had a large family. It's always just been me, mom and dad.

"You know very well that they would love it if you came," Travis tells me, pulling me from my thoughts. "Bitsy wouldn't have it any other way. She hates always being surrounded by men. The men far outnumber the women in her family and it isn't any different here."

"What if I have another bad episode?" I ask. "I don't want to embarrass you."

Since leaving the hospital, I've had several manic episodes. I would go days without eating or sleeping and I would just be so freaking depressed. I craved the burn of a blade against my skin but Travis has made sure the only place with knife-like objects is in the kitchen. High. Where I can't reach them.

I both hate the man and love him.

"Baby, I have imaginary friends who live in my head," he tells me, smirking. "I promise that no matter what, they won't judge you. And you couldn't embarrass me if you wanted to."

Still, I hesitate. I don't do well in crowded places. Especially if we're inside.

"Before you say anything," he says, bringing over a glass of iced water and handing it to me. "I've already talked to Cady and asked her if she would be able to cover for the day. Once she gave me the clear I told her to wait for your call to give her the order because I wanted you to meet my family."

"I've met your whole family," I remind him.

"True," he grunts. "But you need to meet them when they aren't trying to be careful around you. And what better way than when they become ravenous animals over barbeque chicken?"

"If Cady doesn't mind then I don't see why not," I agree. "I'll call her and let her know."

"Thank you, baby," Travis says, leading down to kiss my head.

He's had yet to kiss my lips since that first time. I know he's giving me time to adjust to him taking over my life, but honestly, it just pisses me off. Not the part about him taking over my life. Strangely, I don't care about that part. Actually, not having to make decisions about either my mental or physical health these past few weeks has been a blessing. A huge weight was lifted off my chest the moment I realized that Travis wouldn't put up with my bullshit about not taking care of myself.

I'm mostly upset over the fact that Travis keeps treating me as if I'm a delicate cracked vase that will shatter at the slightest touch.

Sure, he's not far off, but I can feel myself getting stronger. Why can't he see that?

Then again, maybe he doesn't see me that way. Maybe he's realized how filthy I am and wants nothing to do with me. It might be time for me to move back into my parent's house.

Looking over at Travis I watch as he's strutting around the kitchen looking so happy.

After the barbeque. I can give him that. Then I'll get out of his way and let him continue on with his life.

# Chapter Nineteen

## Venom

“Hello?”

I smile as Sophia walks off to take her call.

“She’s something else, brother,” Ghost says.

“Yeah,” I agree. “She’s so much stronger than she realizes.”

We’ve just spent the past several hours hanging out at my parent’s house. Viper and Bitsy have finally returned home after spending way too fucking long with the Phantoms.

“Do you think she will try and harm herself again?” he asks me.

Clenching my jaw at the memory of her in that bathroom, it takes me a few seconds before answering.

“I honestly can’t say one way or another,” I admit. “The past week or so it’s almost as if she’s another person. From the moment I met her, she had this hopelessness in her eyes. But it’s not there so much these days.”

“She’s a fighter down to her bones,” he tells me.

“Hey guys,” Knox whispers as he ducks behind us. “Hide me.”

I’m about to ask why when I see Steel stomping his way over while Blaze follows laughing his ass off. Steel stops a few feet away and glares down at our feet, arms crossed.

“What’s going on?” I ask.

“He...He was...”

Blaze can’t seem to function properly as he wipes the laughing tears from his eyes.

“Little one,” Steel says. Although his face is saying, I’m going to fucking kill you, his voice is the complete opposite. Kind and soft. Like it always is when talking to Knox.

“I didn’t mean to, Sir,” Knox says from behind us. “I didn’t think it was going to be that big.”

“Come on, Little Knoxy,” Blaze says once he gains control of himself. “You aren’t in trouble. It was all fun and games.”

“Tell that to your evil twin,” he mumbles. “Sir,” he adds when Steel raises his brows.”

Sophia returns and assesses the situation before retaking her seat with a giggle.

“Are you in on what’s going on?” I ask her.

“It’s not my story to tell,” she smiles, shrugging her perfect little shoulder.

Sighing, Knox stands from behind us and stops several feet away from the twins before turning to us.

“Yesterday, I accidentally spilled juice on my pants when we were at the clubhouse,” he tells us, blushing. “Steel smirked and said that it looked like I needed to start wearing diapers. He knows I’m not that Little. Well...”

Blaze falls to his ass laughing before Knox can finish his tale.

“When the twins left for work last night,” Knox continues. “I may, or may not, have snuck over to their house and let myself in with the spare key I stole from the clubhouse.”

Knox lowers his head trying to hide his own laughter.

“Keep going, Little Knoxy,” Blaze wheezes.

“I went to Steel’s room and emptied out his entire underwear drawer and replaced them all with adult diapers.”

“He even went through his dirty laundry and took those, too,” Blaze laughs, falling to his back as if he no longer had the strength to hold his own body up. “Tell them the rest.”

The corner of Steel's lips raise and I know that he's just as amused by their friend's little antics.

"I also left a bottle of diaper rash cream," he admits. "With a note."

Sophia is having a hard time keeping her own laugh in. She must have heard the tale earlier when she was hanging out with Knox and Bitsy.

"What did the note say?" Ghost asks, clearly amused.

Sighing, Steel pulls a piece of paper from his pocket and hands it to Ghost. I lean over and chuckle as I read through the note.

Dear Master Steel,

Time to strut your stuff with a new swagger! I noticed you've been walking around like you've got a secret. Well, surprise! I've given your wardrobe a cheeky upgrade. Embrace the rash-tastic vibes and enjoy the attention.

Happy strolling,

Your Little Fashion Fairy Godbrother.

Without warning, Steel starts running right at Knox who squeals and runs away. If I didn't know for a fact that my brothers weren't into men, I would think they had a thing for the young guy.

"Aren't you going to go and save him?" Sophia asks Blaze.

"Nah," Blaze answers, flopping down in the chair next to her. "He's on his own. Little brat has what's coming to him."

"And what exactly is coming to him?" she asks, a small quiver in her voice.

I reach over and grab her cold hand.



“He won’t hurt him,” I assure her.

“He’ll most likely just throw him into the pool,” Blaze chuckles.

No sooner had Blaze finished speaking do we hear another one of Knox’s squeals followed by a splash.

“See?” Blaze laughs.

“What was your call about, baby?”

Call me nosy, but I don’t give a fuck. I’m going to worm my way into every single crack of this woman’s life until she tells me to go away.

I hope to hell that never happens.

“It was Cady,” she tells me. “She’s not feeling well and asked if she could stay home tomorrow. I told her that she didn’t have to ask me to stay home, she just had to let me know.”

“Is she alright?” I ask, worried about the young girl.

“Yeah, she thinks it’s just a cold. I’m going to go in early tomorrow and take over her shift. It’s probably for the best, anyway. Remember that call I got from the Mayor asking about a placement for someone in witness protection? Well, they’re arriving shorting before noon. So, it’s best if I’m there anyway.”

Everything in me wants to go with her. I hate knowing that someone who needed to be under witness protection will be anywhere near my woman. Simply for the fact that they could unknowingly bring danger with them. But I can’t. I’ve been neglecting my own business these past few weeks and I need to go and check in.

“I won’t be able to tag along tomorrow because I have to get things squared away for the next fight,” I tell Sophia. Over the past few weeks, I’ve slowly incorporated Sophia into club business. With Ghost’s permission of course. They all know she’s my girl even if she hasn’t fully come to that realization just yet. “Do you want me to see if King is available to come with you?”

“I’m honestly fine, Travis,” she tells me. “I’m in a really good place right now. I won’t do anything stupid.”

She says that last part softly.

“I’m not worried about that, baby,” I tell her. “I know you won’t risk your life knowing that you hold my very own in your chest. You’re my very heartbeat, Sophia. I trust you to keep it safe and in working order.”

She shakes her head but I see her smile.

“*She’s happy,*” Miles tells me.

I nod in agreement.

“Then why do you insist that I never go to work alone?” she asks, grabbing the beer I was about to drink from my hands and taking a drink.

“Because when you’re alone you let your thoughts wander,” I tell her, grabbing another beer from the cooler right next to her seat.

She giggles and takes another drink of the one she stole.

“I don’t want you getting doubts about me,” I keep explaining. “I don’t want you to ever think that I’m not standing in your corner.”

“I have no doubt about that,” she says, but her smile doesn’t quite reach her eyes. She may not doubt that I’m in her corner but she does have some doubts about something and I have a pretty good idea what it is.

I’ve tried to keep myself from going too fast when all I want to do is sink into her body until our bodies connect in a way neither of us has ever experienced. But she went through so much hell during the time she was taken and I don’t want to trigger her. I think when we get home tonight we need to sit down and have a talk about all of this shit.

I want to doubt in her mind about my feelings towards her.

“You could always get things scheduled over the phone, Venom,” Ghost tells me. “Everything is already cleaned and

ready for the next fight so there isn't really much you need to do at the Cage until then."

"I'm training new fighters tomorrow," I tell him. "And you may be my older brother and my President, but I could still kick your ass."

Ghost reaches out and smacks the back of my head.

"True," he says as I fight off a concussion. "If we're going to train men to fight then I want the best training them."

"I still think King should go with you tomorrow, baby," I say, rubbing the back of my head much to Ghost's enjoyment. "We have no idea why this person is in witness protection. If trouble follows them I don't want you in the middle of it."

"I can understand that," she tells me. "But I highly doubt there will be any issues. Besides, I have John's back and his team is there. Everything will be fine."

It took John over a week to find Sally. She had run away when she thought she saw her brother in the community room one night. There's no way to tell for sure if he was actually there, but over the years I've learned to not always dismiss something you see from the corner of your eye. Anyway, Sally had checked herself into some hospital hours away and that's where John found her. Instead of taking her back to UNITY, he took her to his house where she is this very day.

"I'll be fine," she tries to assure me.

"I don't think King will be here anyway," Blaze says. "I'm pretty sure he accepted another job."

"I did, but family comes first. Always." King grabs a beer and leans against the porch we're all sitting on. "If you need me tomorrow, little wolf, I'll be there."

"Based on what you've told me, King," Sophia says. "Your job is a heck of a lot more dangerous than mine. Maybe I should tag along with you to make sure you're safe."

"Not happening," I say.

"I work alone, little wolf," King chuckles. "Besides, I don't want you physically seeing what I'm capable of. I like being

your favorite Obsidian.”

“Hey, fucker, I’m her favorite,” I say, tossing my empty can at the fucker’s head.

“You had best pick that up before your Ma sees, Venom,” Pops says from the grill.

We spent the rest of the evening having a nice time. I’ve hardly kept my hands off of Sophia. I crave the feeling of her skin, even if it’s just simply holding her hand.

Jax tells her a story about his sister that has her tossing her head back and laughing. It’s the first deep full belly laugh that I’ve heard from her and the image of her in that moment will forever be burned into my brain.

“*Our little man is in love,*” Miles says.

“*Shut the fuck up,*” I tell him, but they all know that my heart is bursting with the love that I have for this woman.

Doc chuckles but Xander remains silent. He’s been watching through my eyes non-stop since we found her in the bathroom. I can feel my routine with Sophia getting easy but Xander is weary that another threat lurks around the corner.

“Hey Sophie, come swim with me,” Knox yells out.

With a smile, she stands and heads towards the pull removing her swimsuit cover along the way.

So. Fucking. Beautiful.

# Chapter Twenty

## Sophia

*“You do know that I’m aching for you, right?”*

*“What do you mean aching?”*

*“I mean, I want to lay you down on my bed, completely naked, so that I can admire your beautiful creamy body. Then I want to spread those sexy legs and eat your pussy until I’m no longer starving. Because I am, baby. I’m fucking ravenous and only your pussy will be able to sustain me. Then, I want your mouth on my dick, getting me nice and wet while I prepare your pussy for it. Only when you’re nice and ready, will I remove my dick from your mouth and sink deep inside of your warmth.”*

I’m sitting at UNITY as my mind replays the conversation I had with Travis after we got home last night.

The images from his very thorough description haven’t left my brain. I’m not that I want it to. He told me that he was afraid anything he did would trigger me into remembering my own rape. But I don’t think it will. Call me a psychopath all you want but the rape was the part of my capture that was the easiest to not think about.

Don’t get me wrong. It was scary and thinking about it does cause my anxiety. But, Cellbock X, the Punisher, the Doctor. Those are the subjects that live rent-free in my head.

And my baby. The baby I’ll never get to see or hold. Right now, she would be almost eight months old.

“I’ll have someone check in about once a day,” the man standing on the other side of the counter says. “She has everything she needs and if something comes up just let her

caseworker know and we'll get it out to her as fast as possible."

"No problem," I smile.

But there is a problem. A huge problem. The person in witness protection is a young girl. And when I say *young* girl, I mean she's eight years old.

"Actually, I do have a question," I admit. "She's so young. Wouldn't it be safer if you put her with a family? This place isn't for children who are on their own."

"The Mayor said that you gave your okay for her to be here," he tells me.

"That's true," I nod. "But I'm just wondering if this is the safest place for her. At night, the only staff here are the security team. That girl needs parents to look out for her."

"She's perfectly fine here," he says. "Her door is locked at night and she knows the rules. She won't get in the way or cause you any problems."

"I wasn't worried about her causing problems," I say harshly. "I was worried about her well-being."

"Her well-being is the concern of WP. You just do your job and your company will receive a generous donation."

With that, he turns and walks away.

What in the world am I going to do now? I can't leave this poor girl in this building on her own each night. She's in a room in the women's section and John has this place extremely secure. Even more so since Sally was able to sneak out without alerting a single camera.

The girl will be safe here. But she's still a little girl. I'm going to have to talk to Cady to see if she will take turns doing overnight shifts with me until this poor girl can go back home.

If she's able to go back home.

"Do we have a head count for dinner tonight, boss?"

"The community room will most likely be full tonight because there's a storm rolling in," I tell cook Donna. "We

have fifteen women and eight men.”

“Alright,” she says. “Do we have any babies or toddlers? We’re having chili tonight and I don’t think any toddler is going to want that. I’ll make them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”

“As of right now, it’s just adults and one child, eight years old. But I won’t know who will be in the community room until seven.”

“That’s fine,” she says. “I’ll make sure I have everything ready either way.”

“How are we on formula?” I ask.

“We haven’t had any donated in several months,” she tells me. “But, we still have about ten cans of powder left.”

“I’ll see what I can do about ordering a few different brands in bulk,” I tell her. “Check your inventory and let me know what you need. I’ll reach out to some of our sponsors and then I’ll buy whatever isn’t donated.”

“Will do. Would you like some chili?”

“No, thank you, Donna. However, if you wouldn’t care to make a couple extra hotdogs I wouldn’t complain.”

Smiling, she nods and walks away.

I do a quick check-in with John before heading towards the new girl’s room.

“Hello,” I call out when I reach her door. “It’s me, Miss Sophie.”

“Come in,” she answers in a hushed voice.

I slowly open the door and step into her room.

“Hello,” I smile. I had only met her a few minutes earlier before we took her room because her anxiety was getting the best of her. “You know what? I don’t think I got your name.”

“The people who brought me in call me Zoe but my real name is...”

“Don’t tell me,” I rush to say as gently as possible. “Right now, let’s call you Zoe. But, when things are safer then I would really love to know your real name.”

“Okay, ma’am,” she whispers looking defeated.

I understand. She doesn’t feel like anyone sees her. She’s being called a name that isn’t hers. She’s in a place that isn’t her room. Talking to an adult that she doesn’t yet trust.

I was in her exact shoes not very long ago. Sure, the circumstances were different and I will do everything in my power to make sure she comes to no harm here. But Zoe and Seven are more alike in regard to being forgotten.

Sighing, I shut her door and sit on the bed. She’s currently crouching on the floor in the corner of the small room.

“How about this,” I say. “Come over here and whisper what your real name is. When we’re in private that’s what I’ll call you. But only if you promise to call me Sophia or Sophie.”

A bright smile breaks out on her freckled face.

“Okay,” she says, rushing to stand.

“My name is Alice,” she whispers next to my ear. “But I like to be called Allie.”

Instead of returning to her spot on the floor, my new friend takes a seat beside me on the bed.

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, Allie,” I smile. “I hope that we can be friends. So, I need to know something pretty important.”

Her little brows crinkle as she waits for my very important question.

“Hot dogs or chili?”

“Hot dogs,” she smiles, her brows smoothing. “With ketchup.”

“Yum. Do you want to come with me while I do some paperwork in my office? It might be a little boring but I have coloring books and a TV you could watch.”



“Yes, please,” she says, practically jumping on the bed.

“Alright,” I laugh. “Let’s go.”

I don’t know her story but there is one thing that I do know.

I will protect this little girl with everything I have.

### \*\*\*Venom\*\*\*

It’s been a long day. The newbies I’m training were not as prepared for the ring as they thought they were. Not a single one could make me fall. Hell, I had all three of them come at me at once and they still couldn’t get me down to the mat.

*“People who have trained for years can’t get you to fall,”* Miles tells me.

*“That may be the case,”* Xander adds. *“But it doesn’t change the fact that these boys need intense training before Venom puts them in the cage. They wouldn’t last and would lose the club a hell of a lot of money.”*

Xander isn’t wrong. I train men to fight for the Obsidians. Not only at the Cage but at other locations around Harborbrook. These men won’t be ready for a while yet.

“Hey, John,” I greet as I walk through the doors of UNITY. “How’s everything?”

“Quiet. Which is always a good thing,” he tells me. “Boss lady is in her office with the witness person.”

Anxiety rushes through my body as I nod my thanks and head for Sophia’s office. She already knows how much I hate her being near someone who needs to change their identity for safety reasons.

I don’t care who it is. Man or woman. They need to stay away from Sophia because if she gets harmed because of them I’ll put a bullet right between their eyes.

I open the door to Sophia’s office and take in the scene.

Fuck.

A child. The witness is a child.

“It’s okay,” Sophia tells the young girl who ran to her side the moment I opened the door. “This is my very special friend, Travis. I promise that he won’t hurt you.”

“He looks like the man who killed my parents,” I hear her whisper.

Sophia’s face contorts and I can tell she’s trying to control the anger and sadness she’s feeling for this child.

“How about we do an experiment?” she suggests. “Would you be willing to try?”

“Will you help me?” she asks.

I haven’t moved from my spot because I don’t want to frighten the poor thing.

“Of course. Do you trust me?”

The little girl nods. Her blond hair is wild around her cute little freckled face. When she turns those frightened eyes in my direction, a pool of unshed tears glistens in her big blue eyes.

“Travis, would you please come inside and shut the door?”

“Of course, baby,” I smile.

The little girl moves to stand behind Sophia as I advance to the empty chair and sit. She can’t be more than ten years old.

“Alright, here’s what we’re going to do,” she tells the little girl. “We’re going to walk over to my friend. He’s not going to move or talk. He won’t touch you. All I want you to do is to take a good long look at his face and his body. I know you think he looks like the man who hurt your family, but he’s not him. And I think if you trust me enough to just take a look, you’ll be able to see the differences. Do you want to give it a try?”

Her little head bobs up and down.

The look the girl gives me as she gets closer breaks my heart. She’s so scared.

“Okay, now just look, sweetie.”

I hold absolutely still as this precious girl slowly looks at my face. After several moments her tense shoulders loosen and she seems to be breathing easier.

“Can you see the difference?” she nods. “Tell them to me so that if that happens again I can help you.”

“His hair is not as dark,” she says. “And his body is bigger. He doesn’t have a star tattoo on his hand. And his eyes aren’t mean.”

“That’s good. Would it be alright if my friend talked to you now?”

“I’m sorry,” she tells me, taking a brave step forward. “I was scared.”

“That’s okay, sweetheart,” I smile. “That was very brave of you to come over here. I’m so incredibly proud.”

“Really?” she says, a small smile forming on her lips. “Did I do a good job?”

“You did, sweet girl. My name is Travis, but the only person who calls me that is Sophia.”

“Not even your mommy?”

“Nope. Well, sometimes,” I admit. “Mostly when I get into trouble.”

“Old people don’t get in trouble,” she says.

“Well, this old man does,” I laugh.

“What does everyone else call you if they don’t say your name?”

“Venom,” I answer. “Everyone calls me Venom.”

“Like the snake poison?”

I nod.

“Why?”

“That’s what my brothers started calling me when I was a teenager,” I answer. “But being completely honest, I can’t

really tell you about the meaning behind the nickname because you're not old enough to understand it."

"I'm a whole eight years old," she says, tossing her hands on her hips. "When I was a little girl I wasn't smart, but I'm not a little girl anymore and I can understand big things."

"When you were a little girl, huh?" I smile. "Was that a long time ago?"

"Yeah," she sighs as if she's dragging up old memories of years ago.

"What's your name, sweetheart?" I ask.

"Oh," her eyes go to my woman as she leans down whispering something in her ear."

"Sophia says I can tell you but you can't call me that name where the bad man can hear."

"You have my word," I say, trying to keep the anger in my voice down.

"Well, the cop person says my new name is Zoe, but I don't really like it."

She walks over and crawls up in my lap, cups my ear, and whispers, "But my real name is Alice but I like to be called Allie."

Pulling back, she looks up into my eyes but doesn't hop off my lap.

*"Protect,"* Xander growls. *"Keep."*

*"You're not a caveman, Xander,"* Miles sighs. *"But I agree. She's important. We need to keep her safe."*

*"And healthy,"* Doc adds.

"It's nice to meet you, Allie," I smile. "Would it be too much trouble if I asked for a hug?"

Moving fast, sweet little Allie wraps her arms around my shoulders and shoves her face into my neck.

Looking at my woman, I watch as she smiles before wiping the tears from her face. Her eyes are both happy and sad and I

can't help but wonder if we will have a family like this one day.

*"Keep,"* Xander repeats.

I roll my eyes and Sophia laughs. She knows someone is talking in my head though. People who know me can always tell.

# Chapter Twenty-One

## Sophia

Two weeks have passed since Allie came to UNITY. They found and arrested the man responsible for killing her parents last night and now people are here to collect her and take her to her new home.

“I don’t want to go,” Allie tells Travis. “Why can’t I stay here?”

“This place isn’t made for little girls like you to live in,” he tells her. “This is a place where people who don’t feel safe at home come to stay until it becomes safe for them to return. Just like how you were here because it wasn’t safe. But, they have the bad man now which means it’s safe for you to go home.”

“But I’ll be all alone,” she cries and I have to bite my lips to keep quiet.

“What do you mean, sweetheart?”

“My parents are dead,” she yells. “I don’t have a family anymore. I’ll have to live there all alone.”

“Oh, honey,” I say, moving to kneel down next to Travis. “They wouldn’t make you stay somewhere all by yourself. You’re going to go and stay in a new home. There are adults there that are going to take care of you and I was told there are even a couple of girls your age that you can play with. Everything is going to be okay.”

“No,” she cries throwing herself against my body.

I look desperately at Travis. He’ll know what to do or say to make her understand. If I’m being honest with myself, I’ve become attached to Allie. I don’t want her to leave either but

she can't grow up in a place that houses homeless people and domestic abuse victims.

"Gentleman," Travis says to the two men who came to take Allie to her new home. "Could we please have a few minutes alone?"

Nodding, they walk outside.

"This is going to sound crazy," he tells me. "But, why not have her come home with us?"

What?

"You mean, back to your house?" I ask softly, knowing Allie can hear us but not wanting her to know how big of a conversation the two adults holding her between their bodies are having.

"Our house, baby," he corrects me, pulling me into a hug affecting pining Allie. "You are mine, baby," he whispers in my ear. "I'm not ever letting you go. I can see you getting softer and softer about us as the days go by. You're it for me, baby. I'm it for you."

He leans back and cups my face.

"I love you, Sophia," he tells me. "And I know you love me. We didn't meet in a normal way but I'm so fucking thankful that we met, regardless of the reasons why. I know it's a lot, baby, but something inside of me, mainly Xander, is telling me that this is the right move."

"You love me?" I ask. "Are you sure this isn't Miles in charge trying to make sure Travis speaks the right words for me?"

I laugh at my poor attempt at a joke knowing damn well that it's a legit fear of mine.

"You haven't had the chance to meet Miles or Doc yet," he laughs. "Trust me, baby, you'll know instantly that it's not me. Miles is way too flirty to the entire world and Doc has a British accent. Plus, he's a grumpy bastard."

"And Xander?"

“He doesn’t talk nearly as much as I do,” he tells me. “Plus, he will instantly let you know who he is. Now, back to the current situation. Allie.”

“Who are all of those people you’re talking about?” Allie asks from where her face is pressed against my chest.

Travis grins, “A story for another time, sweetheart.”

He pauses and looks at me with a gleam in his eyes. “What do you think, baby? How about the two of us taking on the role of foster parents?”

Foster parents? Is he crazy? I’m just now getting to a point in my life where I can breathe again and he wants me to foster a child? He won’t even kiss me. Sure, he’s told me the things he wants to do to my body but he’s never made a move to do so. How can we possibly navigate the challenges of parenting a child who has been through so much when he doesn’t seem to believe I’m strong enough for even a simple touch?

I open my mouth to say exactly that.

“Let’s go see what they say,” I say instead.

Both Travis and Allie jump back and shout their excitement. I simply shake my head and follow them out of the room.

“We want to foster her,” Travis tells them. “She can stay with us.”

“I’m sorry, sir, but that’s not how this works. You have many steps to go through just to see if you’re approved to even be foster parents. Then, and only then, would it be decided if she were to stay with you.”

“Fine,” Travis says. “Put it through whatever steps you need to. Until then, I’m taking my girls and going home.”

“Again,” the man says looking uncomfortable at the animalist growl coming from my man. “She would have to go to another home until your approval came through.”

I can tell that Travis is one more comment from losing his mind, so I jump in.



“What if she were to stay here at UNITY until we can do what we need to do to take her home?” I suggest. “I mean, she’s already been here for two weeks. As much as I hate the idea of leaving her here for a while longer, in the end, it will be worth the wait.”

“That might work,” the other man says. “Let me make a phone call.”

“I don’t want her staying here,” Travis tells me. “I’d rather take her home but maybe having her go to the foster home until we’re able to get her will be best. We could always go over there daily to see her.”

“I don’t like the idea of her staying here for who knows how long either but if she doesn’t then she’s going to be sent to some house with adults that only care for the paycheck they’ll get for housing her. Think about your childhood, Travis.”

Guilt floods me at the shock in his eyes but I need him to think rationally. He told me stories about how he was thrown from one foster home to the next after his parents were killed. Some of the adults didn’t treat him very nicely.

“Not fucking happening,” he says. “We’ll move in here until we can take her home.”

I nod and decide to stop waiting for him to make a move. I take a step forward, lean up, and press my lips against his. When he doesn’t seem to be responding, embarrassment floods my body and I move to step back. But his hand flies up and grips the back of my head, effectively holding me in place. With a low grumble, his tongue traces my lips.

“Open up, baby,” he says. “Give me what I fucking crave.”

Shocked that he’s talking like that in public, I gasp, giving him the opening he’s ordered. I try to use my tongue to explore his amazing taste, but he’s dominating my mouth and I have no choice but to submit.

“Fucking delicious,” he says against my lips, giving them one more soft peck. “Fucking mine. But you shouldn’t have done that, baby.”

“Why?” I ask breathlessly.

“Because I’ve been trying my best not to trigger you or scare you with the amount of need that I have for you. Now that I’ve gotten a taste, I won’t be able to keep my mouth away.”

“Good,” I whisper. “I won’t break. I’m also an adult. If things get to a point where I feel myself crack, I’ll tell you.”

“I love you, baby.”

“I love you, too.”

“Grownups are gross.”

Travis leans away and looks over at a smiling Allie.

“They really are, aren’t they?” he says, going over and picking her up.

“You’re a grownup,” she reminds him.

“Which is why I know that you’re telling the truth. Grownups are gross.”

“Good news,” one of the men says as they return. “She can stay here. Technically speaking, the paperwork discharging her from this location hasn’t been sent through yet so we’re just going to let her stay until you file your paperwork to become foster parents. Since her staying here was a favor for the Mayor, he’s having your case moved to the top of the list and everything should be pushed through in about a week.”

“Yay,” Allie shouts causing us all to laugh.

I may have had a rough couple of years, but my future is starting to look promising.

# Chapter Twenty-Two

## Sophia

“Can I play with these?”

Allie is standing next to my office desk with a box of Legos.

“Travis bought those specifically for you, remember?” I tell her.

“I know, but I didn’t know if I was allowed to play with them whenever I wanted.”

“They’re yours to play with as much as you want,” I tell her. “Just not in the middle of the floor, please. Those suckers hurt when stepped on.”

Allie hops a couple of times before rushing to the table I set up for her in the corner of my office. Yesterday was an emotional day for her. I’m so thankful she’s allowed to stay here while we wait to see if we’re approved to foster her. I’m still trying to wrap my mind around everything and I have a feeling the truth of the matter won’t kick in until we get her to Travis’s house.

I mean, our house.

Smiling, I blindly reach for my phone when it buzzes. I’m still wearing the same clothes I wore yesterday because I have yet to go home. Travis had to go train some fighters and is returning a little later with some clothes so I can take a shower.

I unlock my phone and open the unread message. I don’t recognize the number but that’s not an uncommon thing since I use this phone for work purposes as well as personal.

The second the message opens, I can feel my stomach turning. Without clicking the image to enlarge it I can already see blood everywhere. Blindly, I click the image. It’s a picture

of two people, a man, and a woman, dead in their bed, and a smiling man holding a bundle in his arms standing next to them.

I glance over to make sure Allie isn't paying attention before I scroll down to read the message.

**Hello, Seven. I took the liberty of retrieving your daughter. Don't worry about the ones who bought her. They're dead. If you want her back all you have to do is meet me at Sydney's in one hour. There will be an unmarked white van in the back of the parking lot. Simply get it so we can have a chat. Then, we'll call and wait for your boyfriend to retrieve you both. If you are not in that van in one hour, not only will I kill your daughter, but I'll also kill the young girl currently playing with blocks in your office. One hour, Seven. Don't even bother sending out a message to your boy toy. I don't want him to get here too early. And trust me, I'll know if you do.**

Fear courses through my body. This has to be Malachi. I rack my brain to try and remember if I ever saw his face. I know that I was in the same room with him once, but I was on the doctor's table and my eyes were squeezed shut in fear and humiliation.

"Hey sweetheart," I say to Allie as softly as I can. "Listen, I need to run out to the store."

"Can I come?"

"Not just yet, sweetie. How about you pack up your toys and go out with John in the security office until I get back."

"Okay," she says happily. "I wonder if he'll let me check the cameras again."

Someone has obviously been in this room and placed a camera somewhere. Allie only started playing with her Legos moments before I received that message. When I get back, I'm going to need to talk to John and see if he can go over the feed to see who has been in my office lately.

If I'm able to get back.

"Hey John," I smile as we walk into his office. "Would you mind if Allie hung out until I get back? I need to run to the store."

"Of course, she can hang out with us," he says. "The guys love having her in here, don't we?"

The three men cheered and Allie laughed.

"Alright. I'll try and be back in an hour. If Travis gets back before me tell him that I'm going to stop by Xander's house to grab the jacket he left the other day."

"Sure thing," John says. "We will be just fine here. Go do your running."

It takes a lot for me to hold back the tears as I kiss Allie on the head whispering, "I'll be back as soon as I can."

I run to my car and turn to head to Sydney's. A large grocery store about thirty minutes away.

Memories of my baby's cries as they took her away haunt the drive. Fear is in control of my every action right now and I'll do whatever I have to in order to get my baby back and have both my daughters safe with Travis and his family.

Because I know now, with a shadow of a doubt, that I'm meant to be with Travis. Which makes me, and my daughters, Obsidians. And everyone knows that the Obsidian MC will start a war over their family.

Smiling, I feel a little lighter as I make the turn into the parking lot in front of Sydney's. I don't know what is about to happen to me but I know that Travis and his brothers won't be far behind.

This whole thing is an elaborate trap to capture Travis. I know it to my very soul. Malachi is pissed that his whole operation is blown because of him and that detective. But, I have a plan of my own.

I just hope I'm brave enough to get it done.

# Chapter Twenty-Three

## Venom

“Well, hello there, my pretty princess,” I greet a smiling Allie when I walk through the doors of UNITY. “What are you doing out here?”

“I’m doing rounds with John, but he went to potty,” she says seriously. “We have to make sure that people are safe, you know.”

“Of course,” I say seriously. “I’m going to take Sophia her clothes so that she can take a shower. Come to the office when you’re done with your rounds so that I can cuddle you.”

“She’s not here.”

“She’s not?” I ask, ignoring the wave of fear. It’s not the first time Sophia’s had to go somewhere while I wasn’t here. I just don’t like her being out there alone is all.

“She went to the store.”

She’s always texted me before leaving. Maybe I just missed the message.

I pull out my phone but don’t see any unread messages.

“Oh, hey Mr. Montgomery,” John says as walks out of the bathroom. “Boss lady wanted me to tell you that she’s stopping at Xander’s place on the way back from to store to pick up the jacket you left.”

“She said what?” I ask, my heart stopping. “Whose house?”

“Xander’s?” he asks.

“Are you sure she said Xander’s house?” I ask slowly.

“I’m positive,” he says. “My best friend’s name is Xander so I knew I wouldn’t forget it when she told me.”

“Fuck. How long ago was that?”

“Actually, come to think about it, she should have been back by now. It’s been almost two hours. How far out does this man live?”

Pulling up my messages I type one out in the family chat and hit send.

**Someone has Sophia. Get to UNITY now.**

Before I can shove my phone back in my pocket a message comes through from Sophia.

**You have a choice. Save the woman or save the baby. You can save them both if you do it right. The bitch tried to save you by lying to me so I haven’t exactly been gentle with her. The baby, however, is left on its own somewhere in this big bad world. I will only give you one location. Simply ask. As soon as you save one, I will give you the location of the other one. However, just to let you know the risks, the baby will be dead if you don’t choose it first. Mother nature can be a bitch this time of day. Choose carefully.**

I forwarded the message to my brothers.

What the fuck am I going to do? The baby? Are they talking about the one they stole from Sophia?

“John, some shits gone down,” I say quietly. “I need you to keep her safe. Can you do that? She might even be at risk just sitting here.”

“Don’t worry,” he says, feeling the urgency of the situation. “I’ll take her back to the security room and lock the building down.”

“Come give me a hug, princess,” I call to Allie. “I’m going to go find Sophia and then we’ll order a pizza. How does that

sound?”

“With cheese?” she asks hopefully.

“No other way I’d eat a pizza,” I say, kissing her head. “Be good for John.”

“Bye, Daddy,” she says, hugging me close. “Please rescue my new mama.”

At first, I’m taken aback by her calling me daddy. I want nothing more than for this little girl to be mine but then what she said registers.

“What do you mean, Allie?” I ask, holding her tightly.

“She said she was going to Xander’s,” she tells me. “I heard you talking to Mama one time about your friends in your head. How can Xander have a house if he doesn’t have his own body? It was a secret message mama said knowing I would understand with my big girl brain and tell you. Silly daddy.”

“The silliest,” I say, my voice thick with worry. “Thank you for telling me, princess. But I don’t want you to worry. I’m going to go and bring your new mama back home, alright?”

“Alright,” she says. “I know you’ll save her. Mama told me that you’ve already saved her twice so I know you can do it again.”

Fuck. I need to go.

“I will, princess. Give me one more hug so that I can take it with me.”

I hold my precious girl tightly, soaking in her tiny little hug before handing her off to John.

“Keep her safe,” I order.

“Go,” he tells me.

And I do.

“The tides,” Jax shouts as he turns off his bike. “It’s the only thing that makes sense.”



“What are you talking about?” I ask, racing for my own bike.

“The message said that mother nature is a bitch at this time of day,” he says as the rest of the club pulls into the parking lot. “It got me thinking. The only time mother nature is a bitch this time of day is when the tide comes in.”

“Wouldn’t someone notice a baby near the water all by itself?” Knox asks as he pulls his helmet off.

*“Harbor beach,” Xander says. “They closed it down.”*

“Xander’s right,” I say.

“What did he say?” Ghost asks.

“They closed down Harbor Beach because the high tide covered every inch of sand.”

“High tide is starting now,” Jax shouts. “We need to go.”

“The message said you needed to make a choice,” Ghost says. “If we’re right and the baby is at Harbor Beach, you can message and tell him you choose Sophia instead. Some of us will go and grab the baby while you and the others go get your woman.”

“What if we’re wrong?” I ask. “I fucking hate to not choose her but this is her baby which means it’s mine. Sophia will never forgive me if I let something happen to it. Hell, I would never forgive myself.”

“Someone is watching that beach,” Blaze says. “They would be stupid not to. I already have someone on his way to the beach to check it out. He lives not even three minutes out.”

“If he sees the baby tell him to not even acknowledge it until he messages us,” Ghost says. “That will give Venom time to text this fucker back and get Sophia’s location. If nothing comes of it, then we ask for the baby’s location.”

So, we wait. It doesn’t take long for Blaze’s phone to ding.

“He has eyes on the baby,” Blaze says. “But he also feels eyes on him. He’s confident that the tide won’t reach the baby for ten more minutes, so he’s walking away.”

“Tell him not to take his eyes off of that baby,” I order, pulling my own phone out to text Malachi.

**I don't care about some rapist's baby. Where the fuck is my woman?**

Less than a minute later, he responds.

**That's a bit harsh, even for you, biker. Rapist's baby or not, it's still a baby. Oh well. I can respect your choice. Bring whoever you want, just know they might not survive their visit. I have snipers all over the place. I give you my word that your woman will leave this property alive. You both will as long as you don't do anything stupid. I'm sending you a location ping. See you in an hour.**

*“It's a trap,” Miles says. “Just because he will let us leave the property alive doesn't mean they won't shoot us the second we're off the property.”*

*“That's psychopathic logic,” Doc says.*

*“It's also the most likely scenario,” Xander adds.*

“It's a trap,” Knox repeats Miles' thoughts.

“Miles said they'll try and kill us the second we leave,” I say. “You guys don't have to come. I don't want you risking your lives.”

Before I can finish my little speech every single member, apart from Ma and Pops, hops on their bikes.

I fucking love my family.

“Bitsy, you need to go back to the clubhouse and stay with Ma and Pops.”

“Don't tell me what to do, Viper,” Bitsy says, mounting her own bike. “Besides, I can handle myself just fine.”

Shaking my head I glance over at Knox.

“Why don’t you stay here with Allie?” I suggest.

“It’s ookkay,” he says, his voice laced with fear. Knox is an Obsidian through and through, but he’s not made for this part of the club. He’s too gentle. Hell, he doesn’t even like being on a motorcycle. I’m surprised he rode his own.

“Stay here, Little one,” Steel says. “Or better yet, head back to the clubhouse and research this location. Maybe you can find something out for us before we get there.”

“I want to help save her,” he says softly.

“And you will,” I say. “You may be the key to helping us all get out of there safely.”

“Go on back, son,” Ghost orders. “Do as I say, now.”

“Yes, Pres,” Knox says, but I can see his shoulders ease a bit. He wants to help but I know he’s scared. However, he would never disobey our president.

“Thank you,” Steel says. “If I would have made it an order he would have been mad at me for a month.”

Ghost nods before starting his bike.

“Here.”

I catch the keys Blaze tosses.

“Take my bike,” he says. “I’m going to take the car in case we need it.”

“Thanks,” I mutter. “Let’s head out.”

# Chapter Twenty-Four

## Sophia

Malachi is the most sadistic person on this planet. The second I entered the van I knew that I made a horrible mistake. I knew that I was most likely going to die but I thought I would get the chance to save my baby.

It turns out that he took her to some unknown location before I got here. When the van started moving, I tried to discreetly send a message to Travis but Malachi saw and took my phone away right before hitting me with the handle of his gun.

When I woke up from that nap, I was tied to a bed. Each of my limbs was tied to a bedpost and I was completely naked.

Which is still my current situation.

“Your boyfriend decided not to save the baby,” Malachi says, looking down at my phone in his hands. “He wants to save you instead. Smile, I want to show him what his prize is if he gets here in time.”

The light flashes indicating that he took a picture.

“He’s going to love this,” Malachi chuckles. “Oh wait, I have a better idea.”

He walks over to the door and I hear him chatting with someone before he steps aside and lets them in the room.

“I’m thinking right there next to her head,” he says. “What do you think?”

I watch in slow motion as the new man raises his head.

It’s the guard.

My stomach clenches in fear. Malachi scares me, sure. But this man, my guard, made vile threats to me for a year. I

witnessed the evil in his eyes every single time he looked at me.

“Hello, Seven,” he smiles, his eyes full of malice. “I have been waiting for this day for months now. I can’t wait to get you all to myself.”

“Not just yet,” Malachi says. “Not until I get her boy toy’s blood on my hands. Now, pull your cock out and go stand by her head.”

“Yes, father.”

“Father?” I ask. “That makes sense, I guess. I always knew you were a sadistic fuck.”

“Smile son,” Malachi says.

I glare up at my guard, Malachi’s freaking son, while he smiles his evil smile down at me. All while stroking himself. Again, the flash goes off and Malachi laughs.

“Yeah, this one works better. You better be careful, son. It looks like the second her hands are free she’s going to stab you in the heart.”

“I would have to have one for her to stab it, Father,” he laughs, tucking himself back in. “Are you sure the damn child is taken care of?”

“High tide has already washed away its body,” he says, causing me to whimper in pain. “Don’t worry. My boy here will make sure your belly is full again as soon as we get this Obsidian issue taken care of. I’m going to send this to your boy toy. What do you think?”

Turning the phone over, I look at the picture he took. I cringe but also feel damn proud of myself. I really do have murder in my eyes.

These assholes already broke me once. I don’t care what they do to me, they won’t break me a second time. I will get free and I will get my revenge for my baby.

“Sent,” Malachi laughs.

**\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

I'm sitting at some kid's park about twenty minutes away from where Sophia is.

"Are you sure?" Jax asks Knox.

"I wouldn't have said it if I wasn't sure, Jax," Knox says through the speaker phone sounding a little frustrated. "The fact of the matter is, there is nothing there except a log cabin. It's owned by a man named Gideon Brooks."

"That's Malachi's mother's maiden name," I say. "A family member?"

"That's my guess," Knox answers. "Apart from the cabin there's a small pond on the property and it's surrounded by trees."

*"Plenty of places for snipers to camp out,"* Xander says.

When my phone buzzes that a message came through, Ghost picks it up from where I placed it on the hood of Blaze's car.

"Just a second, Knox," he says. "I'm going to check this message in case it's Malachi."

I watch with bated breath as he looks down at the phone and then up at me. His anger is so thick I'm surprised I can't physically see it.

Dread courses through my body but I have to see what's on the phone.

"Fuck, brother," he tells me. "Maybe Xander should *front* first before you see this."

"Give me the fucking phone, Ghost," I growl.

With the phone in my hand, I take a deep breath and look down.

**Best hurry. My son is eager to take his prize. He was such a good guard to her don't you think? He didn't take**

**his turn a single time she was there. I think he deserves a reward, don't you?**

Red. Rage. Fury. Revenge.

That's what flows through my body as I see the image of my woman tied to a bed, naked, with her limbs spread out wide. She looks scared, but I mostly see rage shining from her eyes as she looks up at the man who smiles down at her with hunger.

Doing the only thing I'm able to do, I toss my head back and scream.

*"Venom, snap out of it" Xander orders. "Stay focused now. Be angry later. Sophia needs you. You're not going to save her in time if you can't control your damn outbursts."*

"Fuck you, Xander," I say out loud knowing everyone can hear me. "Don't you dare force me back. I won't ever forgive you for that. This is my battle and I want to be the one in control when I rip that fuckers dick off and shove it down his throat."

*"Don't kill him," he tells me. "They both need to be put in the chamber with the doctor."*

"When's King coming back?" I ask Ghost.

"He's already on his way," he tells me. "He'll arrive in a few hours. Why?"

"Xander thinks we need to put Malachi and his son in the chamber with the doctor."

"In the chamber?" Jax asks. "King plans on keeping the doctor alive for months. Years if he can pull it off. I'm with Xander."

"King is beyond furious that Malachi took Sophie," Viper says. "I'm sure he has fun things planned. He might even let you join, Venom."

"Fine," I sigh.

“It’s all clear guys,” Knox says. “He has no snipers watching.”

“How can you know for sure?” Jax asks.

“Because I’m good at what I do,” he answers. “I just sifted through the last two days’ worth of satellite surveillance and there hasn’t been a single soul to enter that property apart from the two of them.”

“It’s legal to tap into surveillance footage?” Jax asks.

“They’re most likely watching the road,” Knox continues, ignoring Jax. “I think Venom, Jax, Ghost, Viper, and Blaze should drive up like it was planned. Park and look around the trees as if you’re searching for those snipers he boasted about. Steel, I’m going to send you a map that will show you another way up where you won’t be spotted. You can take your bike most of the way but you should walk the last half mile. They won’t be expecting that element of surprise.”

“Good thinking, Little one,” Steel says.

“Alright, let’s head out,” Ghost says.

*“I might not be able to remove that asshole’s dick just yet,”* I tell my alters as I speed down the road. *“But I’ll be sure to let King know that I will be the one to finally end his life.”*

*“By ripping his dick off and shoving in his mouth?”* Miles asks.

*“Yep,”* I reply.

*“Well, at least that’s something to look forward to,”* Xander says.



# Chapter Twenty-Five

## Sophia

My guard, whose name I learned is Gideon, has been on his knees at the end of the bed just looking between my legs.

“Father says I can’t touch you yet,” he says. “But I spent a long time making plans for you, Seven. It won’t be long now. I wonder if I’m allowed to let you suck my dick?”

“Try it and see what happens,” I dare. “I don’t know if it’s physically possible to bite off a dick but stick that nasty thing in my mouth and we’ll quickly find out.”

“She’s feisty,” Malachi laughs.

Suddenly, the sound of bikes, many of them, fills the air.

“I thought you said he would show up on his own?” Gideon says, his voice slightly raised.

“I didn’t think he would risk his whole family,” Malachi says. “Hold on. I’ll take care of it.”

He leaves the room but I hear him opening the front door before yelling, “Only Venom can come in. The rest of you will stay where you are. One move towards this door and my men have orders to shoot you dead.”

“Where the fuck is my woman,” I hear Travis shout.

I bask in the fear on Gideon’s face as Travis storms into the room.

“Fuck, baby,” he says, coming to my side. He pulls the blanket out from beneath me and covers me up.

“You don’t look nearly as afraid as you should,” Malachi tells him. “You do know that you’re not leaving here alive, right?”

“But she is,” he says, working on freeing my hands.

When they're both free, I pull the blanket further around me and work on one foot while Travis does the other one.

"Wait, you said I could keep her, father," Gideon whines.

"I made him a deal, son," Malachi says. "He knew all along it was his life for hers."

"But father."

"Quit whining like a little bitch," Malachi yells. "Geeze, I wish your mother took you with her when she killed herself all those years ago."

Ouch.

"I'm taking her out to my brothers and they're taking her away from here," Travis says, lifting me into his arms.

"I got you, baby," he whispers when I yell out from the pain in my head at the sudden change in elevation.

"She can walk out while you stay put," Malachi says.

"Fine," Travis says.

"I don't want to leave you," I tell him.

"I need you to," he says. "For both of our daughter's sakes."

That last part was whispered so quietly that I almost didn't hear it. I look up into his eyes and nothing but love shines back down. He nods his head at my unanswered question. Both of my daughters are safe.

He places me on my feet and ushers me out the door.

"Tell them to take you out of here," he tells me. "Everything will be fine, baby. Trust me."

"I'll keep my word," Malachi said. "You've already killed her baby. I think that's enough punishment. You, however, are staying with me. You and I have plans."

"Go, baby," he says.

Reluctantly, I walk outside and into Ghost's waiting arms.

“He’s going to be fine,” he tells me when I start crying.  
“We have a plan.”

“He said my baby was alive. That both my girls are safe.”

“They are, sweetheart. A friend of Steel’s is on his way to UNITY with your baby as we speak. They’re both being protected. Let’s keep our focus on Venom right now.”

“He’s going to be alright?” I ask. “I can’t lose him Ghost. I just can’t.”

“And you won’t,” Blaze says. “My brother is about to do his thing. Now, come and give me a hug while we wait.”

“What exactly is his thing?” I ask as I move from Ghost’s arms to Blaze’s.

### **\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

“As soon as your men are gone, we’re going to head out.”

“Tell me what you want from me,” I demand, trying to stall. I could easily take the two of these idiots down, but I want to see what his endgame is.

“You ruined everything for me,” Malachi’s voice is laced with anger. “I lost everything because of you and that damn detective. This is all your fault.”

“Your choices led to your downfall, Malachi,” I tell him. “I’m not responsible for your mess. I just helped clean it up.”

“Well, now you’re going to help me rebuild it,” he smiles. “I’ve got a new batch of babies to make and you’re going to be the breeding stud. It’s poetic, don’t you think?”

“You’re completely demented if you think I’m going to rape women for you,” I tell him.

I catch movement out of the corner of my eye but I don’t acknowledge it. Steel has somehow gotten his large body inside without making a single noise.

“You won’t have a choice,” Malachi laughs. “The doctor knows ways to extract your semen without your help. We also have ways of making the woman do all the work while you’re tied up. You ruined my business, so you will be responsible for restarting it.”

“The doctor, huh?” I say. “When’s the last time you heard from him?”

“That’s none of your concern,” he snarls.

“Actually, it sort of is,” I say, leaning against the wall casually. “You see, the doctor is currently being held somewhere dark and very secure. So, I know for a fact that you haven’t been talking to him. What else are you lying about?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Malachi says frantically. “I’ll find a new doctor. The end result will be the same.”

“This is all rather anticlimactic,” I say as Steel prepares his attack behind Gideon. “I thought for sure you would actually be smart considering you’re the leader of the Death Skulls. Where are they, by the way? Why are they not here protecting you?”

“Not that it’s any of your concern but the majority of my men were either killed or arrested,” he says. “Once again, thanks to you.”

“All of them?” I ask.

“Only the ones that mattered,” he grumbles. “The ones who tucked their tails and ran were taken care of by my son.”

Looking at a nervous Gideon, I say, “Your son, the guard. I saw the way you were looking at my woman when she was defenseless inside those cages. You were full of balls when you were the one in power. When there were bars separating you from her. You from me. However, the second you don’t hold the power you can see how big of pussy you really are. Look at you, on the verge of fainting, simply because I’m standing here talking.”

“You’re being awfully cocky for someone about to become my father’s bitch,” Gideon says with false bravado.

“Is it really cocky when you’re just that confident that things will work in your favor?” I ask.

“Why is your club still out there?” Malachi asks. “They have the women. They need to leave.”

“You see, that’s where you made a mistake,” I say, straightening my body and making a play by cracking my neck. “You messed with an Obsidian. My family doesn’t take too kindly to our family being in danger. But, the worst part is, you had to threaten some of the most protected of us. Some of our most precious. You see, there are currently six of them. And today alone, you’ve threatened three of the six. You almost killed one and then took another. Had it been me or one of my brothers, you may have died a quick death. But you took my woman and degraded her, harmed her, and then you almost killed our baby.”

“What do you mean, almost?” Malachi says.

I take a deliberate step toward him, ignoring Gideon completely.

“We had that baby safe and secure before I ever sent you that message,” I admit.

“I’m getting bored, brother,” Steel says causing Malachi to turn around.

Steel has Gideon over his shoulder and is waiting for the next order.

“What did you do to my son?” Malachi screams. He turns back to me, his face red, and I can tell he’s about to run.

Using every ounce of strength I have I take two steps forward and punch Malachi on the nose causing him to pass out before his body hits the floor.

“I don’t think it’s fair that you can move that tank of a body around and not make a noise,” I say, grabbing Malachi’s hand and pulling to the door.

“You can do the same,” he reminds me.

“I also don’t think it’s fair that this went as easily as it did,” I continue. “I have a lot of fucking anger still in my body.”

“Once King gets them prepared I’m sure he will let you play,” Steel says. “Let’s go. This fucker is heavy.”

As soon as I’m out the door, I drop Malachi’s arm in order to catch the speeding bullet coming my way.

Sophia jumps into my arms, wrapping her arms and legs tightly around my body.

“I’ve got you, baby,” I whisper against her temple. “You’re safe. Our daughters are safe.”

“Thank you, Travis,” she cries.

“You don’t have to thank me for saving you,” I tell her.

“No,” she says. “I mean, yeah, you’re my hero. You always have been and you always will be. But that’s not what I meant. Thank you for coming back to me.”

Fuck.

“Always, baby.”

“Sophia, are you alright to ride on the back of Venom’s bike?” Viper asks. “I’m going to tie these bastards up and put them in the trunk of the car but I don’t think Venom wants you near them.”

“I’ll be fine on the bike,” she tells my brother.

“Alright,” I call out. “Let’s go.”

“Blaze, you take these two to the chamber and put them in separate cages,” Ghost orders. “The rest of us need to head back to UNITY. Sophia told me that Malachi had someone place a camera in her office. I want that whole building searched.”

“Wait,” Sophia says. “I have sensitive guests there. It wouldn’t go well having all of you very intimidating pissed-off men barging into the building and going through their rooms.”

“Let’s hit the security team first,” I suggest. “They have cameras up all over the place. I’m sure we’ll be able to figure out who snuck in and did Malachi’s dirty work.”

With a plan in place, we all get on our bikes and head back to UNITY.

*“Hurry it up, will you,” Doc grumps. “I want to check on our babies.”*

With Sophia’s arms wrapped tightly around my body, I smile. My family is riding behind me, my president beside me, my woman on the back of my bike as we all head to check on my children.

My body still screams with so much fucking anger towards those men and what they put my woman through, but I’m the happiest I’ve ever been.

And so, doing as Doc ordered, I hurry it up so that he can check on our babies.

# Epilogue

## Sophia

It turns out that it was one of the cooks who placed the camera in my office. She was offered ten thousand dollars to do so and I guess money was an acceptable payment for betrayal.

I don't know what happened to her but I was told that I didn't need to worry about it. I know Travis and his brothers get their hands dirty sometimes, and I honestly don't care as long as I'm not part of it. So, I don't worry about it.

However, seeing my baby for the first time nearly did me in. I couldn't breathe because of how full I finally felt. All that emptiness I felt vanished when I walked into Allie's room one evening at UNITY and saw Travis sitting in a chair with both girls in his arms, all three of them fast asleep.

The pain of losing them brings me to my knees daily. I don't know what I would do without these three in my life.

Travis and I were approved to foster Allie less than a week after we submitted the papers. Now, we're working on adopting her.

"Do you still want me even after you found your real daughter?" Allie had asked us one night.

"You are our real daughter," I told her fiercely. "We love you so very much and want you to stay with us forever."

Needless to say, I cried myself to sleep that night because Allie had that small doubt for weeks before telling us. So, we make sure she knows exactly how much she's loved every second of every day.

As for me and Travis, well I'm angry at him. I know he's trying to protect me. He told me that he didn't want to touch



my body with all of the anger still coursing through him. He leaves every night before I fall asleep and returns hours later with freshly bruised knuckles. He won't touch me intimately, but he crawls into bed behind me and pulls me flush against his body.

He holds me so tightly, almost as if he's afraid I'll fly away if he doesn't.

Tonight, however, I know he's not going to the chamber to get out some of that anger because I may have told a little white lie.

Allie and baby Hope are staying with their Aunt Bitsy and Uncle Viper tonight so Travis and I can have this time without interruptions.

**I think I'm going to go to Obsidian Oases tonight. I asked Bitsy and Viper to watch the girls. I'll see you when I get home.**

I hit send and wait. It doesn't take my jealous man long to respond. My phone rings and I couldn't stop my grin if I wanted to.

"Hello?" I answer sweetly.

"I don't fucking think so," Travis growls into the phone.

"It's fine," I say. "You usually don't get home until close to morning so I should be back by then. Anyway, the cab will be here in fifteen minutes so I have to go. I love you. See you when I get home."

"Don't even fuc..."

I hang up the phone and laugh.

When he calls back, I simply ignore his call. I can see his face now and I just know he's heading to his bike as we speak.

So, I get ready. It's not going to take him long to get here.

I crawl onto our bed, lean against the headboard, and pull out my vibrator. It doesn't take long for me to become achy. I'm so sexually frustrated that all I need to think about to get wet is Travis' nose.

Setting the vibrations on low, I simply play around until I hear the front door slam open before it slams closed. His boots slam against the floor as he makes his way through the house.

"You will not be going to that damn club," he yells out. "You do know what kind of club it is, don't you, Sophia? You will literally see people tied up, whipped, and gagged. They have sex right there on the floor during a scene. Is that something you can han..."

When he finally walks into our room he freezes.

"I'm sure I could handle it just fine," I say, squeezing my exposed breast with one hand while the other holds the vibrator on my pussy. "I'm so achy, Travis," I whine. "If you're not going to take care of me then I'm going to do it myself using that."

I nod to the pink dildo lying beside me. "I can't get my own man to make me feel good so I'll have to figure out another way."

"Sophia," Travis groans while he adjusts himself.

I can see the bulge in his jeans. Actually, I can feel it each night.

"Don't tell me what I can and can't handle, Travis Montgomery," I say, knowing what he's going to say. "If you don't want me, just say it."

It's all a ploy. I know the man wants me. He just doesn't want to break me.

But damn it, I want him to break me. I want him to ruin me. I want him to cause me to shatter into a million pieces because I know he's the only one who can put me back together.

Travis unbuttons his pants and pulls out his cock.

And what a gloriously hard cock it is. My mouth waters with need.

“Does this look like I don’t want you, baby?” he asks, stroking himself slowly.

“I fucking crave you. I’m a starving man.”

“And I’m an achy and needy woman,” I say.

Spreading my legs wider, I drop the vibrator and grab the dildo. I place the tip against my entrance and start to press in. The pressure feels amazing but before I can go any further, Travis rips it from my hand and tosses it to the floor.

“My dick will be the only one allowed in your pussy,” he says. “Fuck, baby. I’ve been neglecting you.”

“Yes, you have,” I whine. “Please, Travis. I need you.”

“Then you’ll have me,” he says, pulling my legs up and draping them over his shoulders.

“Hold on, baby,” he says. He wraps his hands around my back and lifts me until I’m literally sitting on his shoulder, my pussy right at his mouth.

“Fuck,” he groans. “I’m going to be here for a while.”

His breath against my sensitive skin is almost my undoing.

“I won’t make it,” I cry as his tongue slides through my lips.

“You won’t have to, babygirl,” he says. “I want you to come as many times as you want. As a matter of fact, let’s make it a bet. I will make you come three times before I shove my dick inside of you, making you come again.”

“Too much,” I say as he flicks my clit. “Just once. Maybe twice.”

The vibrations of his chuckle partnered with the flicking of his tongue is all it takes. If he weren’t holding my back I would have fallen backwards with the force of the orgasm.

“One,” he laughs, tossing me on the bed. He forces my knees apart and smacks my pussy when I try to close them again.

“Too sensitive,” I cry as he dives back in. This time, he uses his fingers and shoves two of them inside of me. Once again, without warning, my body explodes.

“Two,” he says possessively. “One more baby and you get my cock.”

I can't. There's no way my body can come again.

Travis slowly licks me as he works his fingers in and out. Using his thumb, he uses my own slick to rub against my small hole. I tense for a moment before Travis starts flicking my clit back and forth at a crazy speed. I feel a little pressure as he inserts his thumb into my ass.

The sensations are too much and I feel myself building back up. The orgasm isn't as big as before, but it's still intense.

“Three,” he says, sitting up on his knees. “Now my baby gets my cock.”

With a smirk, he lines himself up and waits.

I close my eyes and just enjoy the cloud of pleasure my body is floating on.

“What are you doing?” I whine when he doesn't move.

“I'm waiting,” he says.

“For what?” I practically yell. I open my eyes and glare at the insane man.

“That,” he smiles before shoving himself completely and utterly into my body. “Don't close your eyes, baby. Don't take them off of me. Do you understand?”

“Yeah,” I whisper as he slowly moves in and out of me.

“I want your eyes on me the entire time,” he says calmly as if I'm not about to catch fire from the pleasure his body is giving mine.

Doing as he ordered, I keep my eyes open and watch. I know what he's doing. My heart knows it's him inside of me, but he wants to make sure my mind knows, too.

“I love you, Travis,” I say feeling the tears fall down my face.

“And, I love you, babygirl,” he whispers. “So. Fucking. Much.”

He turns my hips so his cock is hitting inside of me at a different angle and all forms of communication are lost. It takes everything I have just to keep my eyes open. His thrusts become erratic as he leans down and kisses every part of my body his mouth can reach.

“So. Fucking. Perfect.” He says. “One more time, babygirl. I need you to squeeze my cock dry. Play with your clit. Make yourself come.”

Without hesitation, I reach down and massage my clit. I feel his dick with each thrust but I want to feel more. I take two fingers and carefully stick them inside of me as he thrusts in and out. The added pressure blinds me but I don't move. The feeling of him against my fingers while he's inside of me is so freaking amazing.

“Fuck, baby,” he cries out. “Those small little fingers, so, fucking good. Thrust them with me, Sophia. Let me feel you slide those fingers against my cock.”

I go slow at first, afraid that I'll hurt one of us because it's so damn tight. When I get the feel for it, I go all in.

“FUCK,” he screams. Using his free hand he roughly rubs my clit. Between his dick, my fingers, and his fingers, I'm a goner.

“That's it, baby,” he groans. “Squeeze me. Fucking own me.”

No longer able to keep my eyes open, I squeeze them shut and let the pleasure take over. Never in my life have I had an orgasm this intense.

Travis slams into me one last time and the stinging force causes my orgasm to continue. By the time he pulls out, I'm unable to move. I don't even think I'm breathing at this point.

“Oh,” I say when I feel him touch me.

“Shh,” he says. “I’m just cleaning you up, babygirl.”

After he’s finished, he crawls into bed and pulls me to his body. Tightly, like always.

“Are you okay?” he asks. “I was rough with you. You make me lose all control, baby.”

“It was perfect,” I whisper. My voice is gone after the amount of screaming he made me do.

Travis rubs his hands up and down my body slowly as I come back to earth.

“You’re still completely dressed,” I complain.

“Like I said, all control was lost,” he chuckles. “I didn’t have time to remove anything but my cock.”

“Well, I want you naked for round two,” I smile.

“Greedy baby,” he laughs. “My cock is exhausted and your pussy is already demanding more.”

I bask in the afterglow of our lovemaking session and I eventually fall asleep.

### **\*\*\*Venom\*\*\***

Life is perfect. I have my family, my two beautiful daughters, and my women. One day, I’m going to make this woman round with our third child. This time, a son, of course. I need a son to grow up and protect his sisters.

*“You don’t really need us, anymore,” Miles tells me as I listen to Sophia sleep in my arms. “We were created by your mind when you were breaking. But you’re whole, Venom. There’s nothing broken about you.”*

*“You’re my family, Miles,” I tell him. “All three of you are. I am not a whole person without you. My mind may be free from my past but that past molded me into who I am today. And today, I am not just Venom. I’m not simply Travis. I am*

*the creator of the system within. I am Venom. I am Miles. I am Doc. I am Xander. We are one."*

*"But, we don't have to be," Xander adds. "With a simple thought, we can vanish. Miles is right. You no longer need us."*

*"Maybe," I say. "But, without you, there's no me. You three are who I am. You are my thoughts. The very reason I'm alive today. Besides, you're all Obsidian. And anytime you want to front and hang out with our brothers, you let me know."*

"What are they saying?" Sophia asks huskily.

"They don't think I need them anymore," I admit sadly.  
"They're asking me to let them go."

"What?" she says, sitting up and turning to look into my eyes. But she isn't looking at me. "Why would you guys think that?" she asks, tears forming in her eyes. "Why would you want to leave? You're family. I didn't even get to formally meet any of you. Why would you want to leave me? To leave the girls? Your brothers? Why would you want to leave Travis?"

Miles pushes, asking for control.

Smiling, I take a step back.

"Because you make him whole," Miles tells her. "We were here to protect his heart. But, his heart no longer lives in there with us. She's right here next to him."

Sophia tilts her head in question.

"Miles," he answers. "I'm Miles."

Miles steps back.

"And I'm Doc," Doc says in his accent causing Sophia's eyes to widen.

Stepping back, Xander takes control.

"I'm Xander," he tells her. "Travis loves you so much. We all do. We only want what's best for you both."

"Did you ever stop to consider that what's best for us is to be complete? Travis isn't complete without his system. So,

stop being a jerk and go back to doing what you always do and make him zone out people while he's talking to you guys."

*"Listen to the woman, Xander," I laugh. "She's the boss of us all."*

Smiling, he leans forward and kisses Sophia's forehead.

"I'll always be here to protect you," he tells her.

*"Tell her we can hang out rate how hot men are together."*

*"You are not rating no men with my body, you fucker," I laugh.*

"Miles is looking forward to spending some time with you," Xander tells her. "We'll always be here for you, sweetheart."

With that, Xander steps back and hands me back the reins.

"Was the weird?" I ask.

"Talking to other people who look, smell, and sound just like you?" she asks. "Not as weird as I thought it would be. I didn't see you, Travis. I saw each of them. And I hope you don't make them go away."

"Not happening, babygirl," I promise. "They need to help me keep you and our family safe."

Miles, Xander, and Doc may have been created because of my past. But now, they're my voice of reason. My security. My very being. I am simply one part of four. No longer do they need to protect my mind from the echoes of my past. They simply need to exist as my echoes from within.

The End



# About the Author

Carol Dawn was born in Maysville, Kentucky, USA, under the name Carolyn Jacobs. Carol is a stay-at-home mom where she spends her days making pb&j sandwiches, picking up toys, and giving her kids more cuddles than they want.

At the young age of five, Carol received a reading medallion for reading over twenty-one books in an eight-week period. So, her literary journey began. She wrote poems, songs, short stories, and read many books.

Carol has a slight (MASSIVE) obsession with alpha male/insta-love romance books. If she isn't reading about them, she's writing about them.

When she isn't writing, reading, or playing mom, you will find her watching re-runs of Stargate SG1, Star Trek, cooking, coloring mandalas, or performing her favorite songs for her invisible audience.

# Also, by Carol Dawn

## *Infernal Sons MC, Series*

[\*Bear's Forever\*](#)

[\*A Very Beary Christmas\*](#)

[\*Chains' Redemption\*](#)

[\*Hawk's Choice\*](#)

[\*Ma\*](#)

[\*Trigger's Light\*](#)

[\*Brick's Fight\*](#)

[\*Ink's Second Chance\*](#)

[\*Sweet Baby Boy\*](#)

[\*Wolf's Hunt\*](#)

## *The Renegade Alpha Pack*

[\*The Alpha's Omega\*](#)

[\*The Alpha's Scarred Omega\*](#)

## *Once Upon A Forever*

[\*Red's Protector\*](#)

*Dark Souls Bound By Blood (Vampire Anthology).*

***The Phantoms MC***

*Cap*

*Axe*

*Beast*

*Reaper*

*Shadow*

*Bitsy*

***The Drexonians***

*The Drexonian's Mate*

***Audible***

*Bear's Forever audio*

