



Reverse Harem: Book Eight

Owning
the Prez's
Ol' Lady

Quinn Ryder

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Ol' Lady

**A Lewd Outlaws MC
Reverse Harem: Book Eight**

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Synopsis

We all thought we owned her, and that she belonged to us all. But loving Shasta Hall had proven to be detrimental to her own mental health. Now she was gone, disappearing from our lives forever. I thought I could cope with her absence like all the others, going on with my life and finding someone else to love. But loving someone other than Shasta was an impossible feat, and the only option I had was to leave everything behind: my club, my brothers, and my responsibilities, to find the woman who meant the world to me.

Locating her wasn't easy, but now that I've found her again, I'm determined to claim Shasta as my Ol' Lady and bring her back home to where she belongs. But convincing her to return wasn't going to be easy, especially since becoming another Outlaw's Ol' Lady again was the furthest thing from her mind, and I quickly realized I wasn't the only man vying for her attention.

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Trigger Warning

This book is different from the others in the series. It's meant to be more emotional, and follow the aftermath of Sabbath's demise. It's the club picking up all the pieces, and Shasta's attempt to live without them. You won't see sex in this one until almost the end. The triggers are less, but the emotion is supercharged.

- Emotional Cheating
- Minor physical cheating by a main character
- Loose Ends
- A Love Triangle
- FF relationships

Despite the lack of triggers, I hope you enjoy this final read. It's the conclusion to the Reverse Harem part of this series.

Note from Author



Owning the Prez's Ol' Lady is the final book of the inner connected series The Lewd Outlaws Reverse Harem and is **book eight**.

I strongly advise reading the first seven books before continuing to read this part of the story.

[Tempting the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)

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Each book in the Lewd Outlaws MC Reverse Harem Series will be connected and lead directly into the next story by the use of cliffhanger ends and suspense.

I hope you enjoy this series and find yourself falling in love with an Outlaw!

Thank you so much for reading.

Chapter One

Shasta

There was a fearful skip to every beat in my heart when my fist connected with the solid wood of Ramona's door, my anxiety rising with every passing second.

They're going to come after me.

They're going to catch us.

They won't let us go.

Seconds felt like eons as I waited impatiently for my friend to answer the door.

Finally, it opened, and a bleary-eyed Ramona rubbed at the sleep in her eyes.

"Shasta? What's up?"

"Get your shit together; we're leaving."

"Leaving?" Her eyes widened, and you could see the hope resonating within her.

"I don't have time to explain," I said, almost panicked. "Because we have no time left. They'll be here soon."

She nodded her head, obviously knowing my impromptu visit was of the utmost importance.

Following her into the house, I grabbed a few of my own things that I had left there and stuffed them into my duffle bag. Starting over was my only choice, and in order for this to work, we'd have to go completely underground.

My plan was to drive well into the night, and keep going until we ended up somewhere they'd never find us. Far from the corrupted streets of Austin, and my shitty life.

Be with all of them?

How could they even think that was possible? After everything that happened, the last thing I wanted to do was be connected to this club a second longer.

Ramona came out of her bedroom, tugging a suitcase. It looked heavy, so I moved across the room to help her.

“Thanks,” she said, with a confused smile.

“Come on, we don’t have much time.” When I heard what sounded like a motorcycle in the distance, my adrenaline spiked. “If we don’t leave now, we’ll never leave.”

She nodded her head, grabbing a few more things before following me to the vehicle Priest gave me.

I don’t know why he transferred everything over to my name, but I was so thankful he did. It made it easier to get away and then dispose of the car when the time was right.

Downstairs, we threw our bags in the trunk of the car, and shared a look.

This was it... the end of our lives as part of the Outlaws forever.

The thought was a bit overwhelming. I’ve dreamt of this moment for so long... the day when I didn’t have to answer to clubs or overbearing men who thought they owned me.

The second I pulled that trigger, my ties to the club were severed. They needed to let me go, and I was determined to bring my best friend with me, so she and her child didn’t have to endure the stress of living in a biker world.

For a moment, my head swiveled around me, staring at all the familiar places that had been such a major part of my life... but also the haunting memories that came with it all. None of it meant anything to me anymore. I was done with the Lewd Outlaws. There was nothing that could change my mind about that.

But then my thoughts started to wander, and I realized there was one thing that could change my mind...

Him.

Which is why I desperately needed to get away before I was stuck here forever.

My fingers clenched the steering wheel as I pulled out of the clubhouse parking lot and onto the street, going in the opposite direction from which the guys would ride back in.

Ramona looked over her shoulder as we pulled down the road, staring at the building that had been our home for years.

“Shasta, what happened?” she asked quietly when the clubhouse was no longer in view.

“They weren’t going to let you go, Ramona. They weren’t going to let either of us go.”

“What do you mean?”

“Snyder said that anyone was free to leave the club if they wanted to... but then Clash contradicted that. Clash said that because he and other club members had slept with you, and the fact that you are pregnant, that you aren’t able to go. They didn’t want any woman trapping their members with a child, nor leaving with a child that might be theirs.”

She straightened in her seat, placing her hand on her stomach in an act of protection. “That’s bullshit! This is my baby; I should be able to decide where and with whom I raise them.”

My head bobbed in agreement. “I totally agree.”

“And you? Why won’t they let you leave?”

My fists tightened on the steering wheel, their words hitting me hard once again.

“Because apparently I belong to all of them, and they want to enter some poly-type of relationship where they share me and shit.”

Ramona’s head swiveled in my direction, her jaw practically on the floorboards of the car.

“They didn’t say that...”

“They did.”

She ran a hand through her long black locks, her jaw tightening. “And I’m guessing that’s not what you wanted?”

My eyes darted her way, unable to mask the tears that were starting to pool in them.

“Oh, Shasta, I’m so sorry.”

Focusing back on the road, I gritted my teeth, keeping my emotions locked away. “It’s okay, Ramona. What I need is a complete break from the Lewd Outlaws. No more club. No more ownership. No more men. It’s time for me to find myself without the Lewd Outlaws trying to dictate my every move.”

“Amen, sister!” Ramona exclaimed.

She gave my hand a friendly squeeze, one that had me glancing her way again. “We’ll get through this together, Shasta. Just you, me, and this little one growing in my belly.”

Chapter Two

Snyder

Everything inside me told me to ride faster. I had forgotten my keys upstairs, so by the time I came back down to hop on my bike, Shasta had a good ten-minute lead on me.

But I wasn't alone. Wasp was riding just as fast, both of us trying to be the first to get to her.

Deep down, I knew he was my biggest competition. The man never got attached to any woman, but I could see the way he looked at Shasta, the way he seemed to be just as enamored with her as I am.

Well, fuck that!

Shasta is mine!

No other motherfucker is going to take her away from me. I know I said I'd share her with the others, but that's not what my heart truly wanted. I wanted her all to myself, to be my Ol' Lady and for the others to keep their slimy paws off of her. Especially Wasp. That asshole didn't need to fuck her up anymore than she already was.

Our bikes skidded into the clubhouse parking lot, and the second my kickstand was down, I was on my feet, running for the clubhouse doors.

A few of the club girls were standing outside, frowning when they saw the urgency in my eyes.

"Where's the fire, Snyder?" Havarti asked.

"Where's Shasta?" I questioned, completely out of breath and desperate.

Havarti wrinkled her nose in disgust. "That bitch left about fifteen minutes ago with that whore Ramona."

The palms of my hands rested on Havarti's cheeks. "Call her a bitch again and your ass is gone. Got me?"

Fear filled her eyes. "Ye—Yeah, Snyder. I got you."

"Good. Now, tell me, which way did she go?"

Tiffany pointed the opposite direction of the hospital. "They went that way, Snyder. She was driving a small green car; one I've never seen before."

It must've been the car Priest gave her since hers was totaled. When she fled the room, Priest told us all about her wrecking her car in front of his secret place, then him taking the car to be destroyed so Sabbath couldn't find her. Priest, being the nice guy he is, gave her one of his burner cars, and signed over the title and everything. Now the car was Shasta's... and she was gone. The bastard gave her the perfect getaway vehicle.

"Thanks," I said, my face softening as my hands dropped off Havarti's face.

Before I could take two steps, I felt Tiffany's hand on my back. "Is it true what everyone is saying, Snyder? Is Sabbath really dead?"

Turning to face her, I nodded, doing my best to keep my wits about me.

"Yeah, it is."

"So, what does that mean for the club?" Havarti questioned.

Wasp stepped up behind me. "It means shit's about to change. So, if you want out. Now's your fucking chance. Stay or get the fuck out."

And before I could add anything, Wasp was on his bike, heading in the direction that Shasta had supposedly left.

Chapter Three

Wasp

Gone? How could she be gone? Yeah, it was weird for me to be this pissed over her leaving. I definitely didn't have the same connection Snyder did to her, but for some reason, that didn't seem to matter to me.

My little minx had left me, and I was in my own fucked up turmoil. It was a torturous place to be in. I was riding this guilty wave of feeling like I was the one mostly responsible for her leaving. I pushed Snyder into making it a joint ownership. I didn't want to let go of that tiny bit of control she gave me. So, if she was going to stay with the Lewd Outlaws, I wanted a piece of her, one I could mold and make submit to me whenever I wanted.

If I let Snyder have her all to himself, I'd have to find a new girl to train, and frankly, I felt too broken to do that. Look at what happened with Keelie. The girl played me... me, of all people... her fucking supposed master. She made it seem like I had all the control, when really, I was just a fucking pawn in her sick, twisted games. Was I glad the bitch was dead? Not really. Was I relieved to know she was a rat? Yeah, no. Knowing that made me feel even more worthless. How did I fall for her stupid trap the way I did? When did I lose control? Was I ever in control at all? It's why I still wanted Shasta... she needed my control... she needed my grooming.

Who was I kidding?

I needed the control, thirsting to manipulate and train another submissive that would cater to all my dark desires.

Shasta was my only hope for that now.

Somewhere along the way, Snyder had joined me on the road, but it seemed like neither one of us knew where the fuck we were going, and by the time we hit two towns over, we

both slowed to a stop, staring at the road ahead of us like a couple of idiots.

Removing my lid, I shot Snyder a sideways glance. “She’s gone, man.”

The look of pain and panic in his eyes made me feel like absolute shit. The man had real feelings for Shasta, and here I was, chasing after her for my own selfish reasons.

I really am a miserable prick.

“I know, Wasp, but there’s no fucking way I’m going to give up on her. She means too much to me.” He ran a frustrated hand through his hair. “Fuck, she’s goddamn everything to me.”

You could see the devotion in his eyes. The man was head over heels in love with Shasta, but that bastard inside of me didn’t care. A part of me still wanted her, the selfish part that didn’t give a fuck about him being in love with her. The part that needed to own her, to control her, to groom her, and to dominate every part of her.

I looked him dead in the eye, refusing to back down. “Then I hope you realize, Snyder, that I’m not giving up on her either. May the best man win.”

Chapter Four

Sandman

My head felt like a ton of bricks. The headaches weren't as bad as they were in the beginning, but I still had days where my head throbbed like I'd been chopped up by a thousand ice picks.

"How's my favorite patient today?" Imogen's sweet voice practically sang as she flounced into the room without a care in the world. The woman has almost single-handedly saved my life.

"G—good," I stuttered out.

I was surprised Ranger wasn't here sniffing around. Since he laid eyes on Imogen, the man has been at my bedside practically every day. The poor guy really has a thing for her, but Imogen doesn't seem interested. She has some weird hang-up about bikers, one that she won't explain.

She frowned. "Still stuttering I see."

"Ye—yeah."

"The doctors say that it should clear up on its own, eventually. Today we're going to work on your mobility, Jesse."

She helped me to my wheelchair and wheeled me down the hall, stopping at the physical therapy room.

Parking the wheel chair, she helped me to my feet. None of my brothers knew how much I was progressing. I actually could walk on my own now, but I wanted to make sure I had full strength before returning home.

"Good!" she exclaimed, her eyes shining as her smile widened. "Jesse, you're doing amazing!"

The first steps were always the hardest, but I found it easier to move the more steps I take. Now, if the rest of me could catch up to my feet, I'd be sitting pretty.

"I—It's ge—getting e—easier."

"It will. But I'm so happy with how much you've progressed. What's changed? What sparked this sudden motivation to move?"

The look of sheer panic and dread on Shasta's face right before she fled my hospital room returned to my mind. I felt bad for her. The pressure the rest of the guys put on her to be their woman was a bit much. They should've just let her do things on her own. Did I want to be with her? Yeah, but I also knew that my love for her, despite the physical connection we shared, was more of a friend level than anything else. It is hard to be in love with someone when your heart is conflicted about another.

Hyper focused on walking, I didn't even notice the familiar frame filling the doorway of the physical therapy room.

"Looks like you have a visitor, Jesse," Imogen said, redirecting my attention to the woman who stood in the doorway.

Lindy.

Our eyes met, and I could see the indecision in her eyes—the pity too.

"Hey, can we talk, Jesse?"

Imogen smiled and took a few steps back. "I think you'll be okay on your own for a few minutes, Jesse. I'll leave you two alone."

My neck bobbed in slow motion. *God, why was everything above my neck moving like a snail?*

Lindy forced a smile, hugging her waist with her arms as she stood far enough away to keep her distance. A few weeks

ago, she was sitting by my bedside, helping me. Now she was treating me like a leper.

“W—What d—do you want L—Lindy?”

She frowned.

“Are you getting any better?”

“I—I’m walking. “J—Just n—not talking w—ell.”

Her teeth worried her lip, and she kicked at the carpet on the ground.

“I’ve tried to figure out how to tell you this a million times, Jesse.” Carefully, she lifted her head, and for the first time since I’ve known her, vulnerability swam in her beautiful gray eyes.

“What?” I asked with no stuttering involved.

Her response was nothing but a whisper, and I had to strain to hear her. “I’m pregnant.”

“What?” I asked again, my voice raising just a tad.

Her guilt-filled eyes met mine, and she removed her arms from over her belly, showing off the bump that was very prominent.

“I’m pregnant, Jesse. The baby is yours...”

My heart soared with a million possibilities. *A father? Me?* Just the thought of it brought the biggest, yet slowest, smile to my face. *Why won’t my muscles work faster?*

“Th—that’s a—amaz—”

She held up a hand, shushing me. “Don’t say another word. I need you to hear me, Jesse. I’m only telling you this because I want you to sign your parental rights away. You’re a biker, a wounded one at that, and I’ll not have my child growing up in this barbaric world of yours. It’s this type of world that got you hurt in the first place. You’re in no condition to raise a child, and I know how loyal you are to your club, so leaving it is out of the question. And because of

that, I need you to do what's right for the baby, and just leave me and him alone."

"H—Him?"

"Yes, I'm having a boy."

I'm having a boy. No, Lindy. We're having a boy.

My fists clenched. How could she even think for a second that I would turn my back on my child? There's no way in hell that's ever going to happen.

"N—No."

Her eyebrow quirked up. "Excuse me?"

"I—I won't d—do it. H—He's my son too, L—Lindy."

Those brows arched menacingly as her eyes narrowed in on me.

"You need to do what's right for our son, Jesse. Bringing him up in a biker world isn't fair to him. Don't be selfish and stupid. This isn't about you or what you want. This is about a defenseless little boy, one that doesn't need someone like you as a dad."

That was the last straw...

My hand curled around the dumbbell next to me, and with all my muscles working like they should, I hurled it, shattering the mirror a few inches left of Lindy's body.

She screamed, cowering when the glass shattered behind her.

"Y—You can't t—take him a—away from m—me. I—I won't l—let you."

When she stood up, she smirked, looking back at the door where some pansy-looking dude with a camera stood.

"You got that on camera, Elroy?"

Elroy? Who the fuck names their kid Elroy?

“Yeah, Lindy. I got it all. There’s no way he’ll get custody of the baby now.”

A set up? She fucking set me up, and I fucking fell for it.

“Sc—Screw you L—Lindy.”

“No, Jesse, screw you. Thanks for the video. I’ll see your ass in court.”

Lindy exited the room with her stupid pansy ass boyfriend, just as Imogen jogged into the room, her jaw almost hitting the floor when she saw all the damage I did.

“S—Sorry,” I stuttered out, just as the tears started to prick my eyes. “I’ll p—pay for the mirror.”

Chapter Five

Shasta

I was on the longest road trip of my life. We'd driven through the night, stopping only to get food, go to the bathroom, and stretch our legs here and there. Once we crossed the Texas border, I finally felt able to breathe.

"Which way should we go?" I questioned, looking at the crossroads we were at.

Ramona shrugged. "I've never seen real snow before. Maybe we can drive north?"

"North sounds great," I replied, my foot feeling not heavy enough to get the gas pedal moving. My anxiety was through the roof, and I knew that I needed to ditch the car before going much further.

We drove through several small towns in Oklahoma before reaching Kansas.

"Kansas?" she asked, obviously exhausted from our two-day trek.

"Yeah, we need to ditch the car."

"Smart," she said, her smile widening further when I pulled into the shifty looking used car lot.

I needed a place like this to get rid of my vehicle.

A seedy looking man in a suit came out all smiles. *Dude, I see right through you.*

"How can I help you two beautiful ladies today?"

"I need to ditch the car," I told him. "I'm running from an ex and my car is going to get me killed if I keep it." I produced the paperwork I had for the vehicle. "Can I trade it in for something similar?"

His shifty smile made my skin run cold.

“Look, dude, before you go into some spiel about me needing a certain type of vehicle, one that is below what my car is worth, don’t. I just want a working car that I can trade in for my current vehicle. I’ve done my research. It’s worth ten grand.”

He nodded. “I may have something around here that can work.”

Following him across the lot, he led me over to a little black corvette. “This runs good, and I bet you two will look real pretty behind the wheel,” he said, patting the side of the car.

“Let me take it for a spin, and then we’ll start talking.

The moment I sat behind the wheel and turned the key, I knew this baby was mine. One test drive, a swift check of the vehicle’s Carfax, and a shit ton of paperwork later with the biggest putz in all of used cars salesman history, we were driving away in our new getaway car, exhausted from a very long afternoon.

The second we hit the road again, I felt like it was me and Ramona against the world—a *Thelma and Louise* of today’s time, both of us ready to find our forever home somewhere up north where there was snow and no fucking bikers. This car probably would suck in the snow, but at that moment I didn’t care.

All I wanted was to put the top down, let the wind take my hair on a wild ride, and put enough dust between me and Texas to hide me from the Lewd Outlaws forever.

Chapter Six

Clash

“So, who’s going to call the first Church without Sabbath?” I asked, looking around the room. None of my brothers were interested in the Prez’s spot, maybe because only one of us should have it.

But fuck that shit. I’m just as capable of stepping up in the club as he is.

“Snyder should,” Ranger exclaimed.

Snyder’s pathetic head looked up from the beer he was drinking and shrugged. “Clash can be Prez. I don’t give a fuck.”

Beaming, I faced my brothers, chest puffing out, ready to take on the role I was born for.

“No, fuck that!” Skid exclaimed. “You’ve been running this club behind the scenes forever, Snyder. If anyone should be Prez, it’s you.”

Fucker. I’ll note that insubordination when I patch in as Prez.

“He’s right,” Priest piped in.

Another motherfucker to add to my list of insubordinate bastards who may need to get kicked out of my club.

“All in favor of Snyder being patched in as Prez, say aye!” Ranger yelled.

“We aren’t even in Church. You can’t do that shit!” I argued. *Consider my feathers officially ruffled...*

Snyder shot me a wounded look. The guy was still pining over Shasta. Who even does that? Was she a hot piece of ass? Sure, but I’m not sitting over here pining over some chick that

basically turned our club upside down. Did I like the chick? Sure, but I'm not in love with her.

Wasp sauntered in, glaring at Snyder, who was still nursing his beer.

Him too? What the fuck was this club turning into?

Most of our members fled when Sabbath lost his fucking mind. Now, only a handful of us remained. Most of them said they'd only come back if the club was put back in its former glory, but the only way to do that is to have a Prez with his head on his shoulders. Me.

“Look, we all know that Snyder was born a leader, but look at him. He's a mopey, dopey dickweed that needs to pull his head out of his ass. She left us! All of us. The woman wants nothing to do with the Lewd Outlaws anymore, so we should just let her go. This club is falling apart, and we need a strong Prez that's going to do what's right for the Lewd Outlaws. Obviously, I'm the right choice for that patch because I'm not the one that's pussy whipped over some chick that fucked us all.”

Snyder's chair hit the ground with a thud as he rose to his feet. “She fucked us all because you fucking forced her to, Clash. You put it in her head that she needed to fuck us all to get back at Sabbath, all for your own sick enjoyment!”

“And I'd do it again too, motherfucker. None of us deserves that girl. Not you, not me, none of us. We fucked her up, which is why she needs to be gone. She has turned this club upside down, and I, frankly, would like to go back to a time where Shasta Hall and her stupid Hall Passes weren't a thing.”

Wasp's eyes narrowed. “Speak for your fucking self, Clash. You may not want her, but there are plenty of us in the club who fucking need her.”

“For what? You guys are getting your heads all fucked up over some chick? Some chick that was easier to sleep with than a goddamn sweet butt?”

Snyder's fist met with my chin with a sickening crack.
Damn, that motherfucker hits hard.

“Stop talking about Shasta like she's some common whore. You may act like you don't give a fuck about her, but we all know you care about her just as much as we do. If I somehow manage to bring her home, I know you're going to turn into the same selfish asshole you are now. You'll want a piece of her and try to claim her as your own.”

Straightening my jaw, my glare intensified. “My only focus is putting this club back together, Snyder. Can you say the same?”

He remained quiet.

My point exactly.

I turned toward my brothers, staring them all down. “Do you want to follow a man or a fucking love-sick mouse?”

Wasp's hand shot out, gripping me by the throat. “What the fuck did you just call me?” he growled.

“Not you. Him. I know you aren't as hung up on her as he is.” Wasp's grip tightened.

Then he bent down, whispering in my ear so only I could hear. “Talk about Shasta like that one more time, motherfucker, and I'll slit your goddamn throat.”

Point taken. Looks like Shasta has worked her magic on at least two of my brothers.

This was going to be interesting. If two of my brothers wanted to be with her, then what did that mean for the club? Would we go into another war-type situation? Enemies within ourselves?

“See, this is exactly my point. My main focus is this club, not a chick that ripped us all apart. Why would you guys want someone like these two dumbasses in charge?”

Skid moved forward, pulling Wasp off of me. “Because we need someone who is going to lead us into what the club

should've been in the first place, not someone who is going to revert us back to the club Sabbath created. So, I'll say this again, all in favor of Snyder being patched in as Prez, say Aye!"

"Aye," Wasp growled. "But under protest," he said softly.

Ranger, Priest, and Skid all said aye as well. Followed by Axl, who had decided to stick around and stay with the club.

"Aye," Zeppelin said, striding through the door with Motley and Poison right behind him. "We'll come back as long as Snyder wears the patch."

Snyder looked around the room, that look of sheer misery floating around in his eyes. "But what if I don't want it?"

Ranger walked across the room, slapping the patch in Snyder's hand. "We'll only follow you, Snyder. If you don't want the patch, we understand, but you're the only one that should wear it."

Snyder looked down at his palm. The flimsy patch sat heavy in his hand, and after a few minutes, he clenched it in his fist, fighting what looked like tears in his eyes. He wasn't in the right mindset to be Prez, but I could tell the club's faith in him was enough to change his mind.

"Fine, I'll step up and be Prez."

Cheers erupted throughout the clubhouse, even though this was the most backasswards way of promoting him up the ladder. We should be in Church, not in the common room drinking beers with each other and sweet butts milling about. This vote should be done around the table, but it was obvious my brothers didn't give a fuck about rules and traditions.

These assholes don't know what a good Prez looks like. Maybe I should pull out my cock and start waving it around like a sword. Then, maybe these motherfuckers will actually see me.

"But on one condition," Snyder said, his hand unclenching the patch in his palm.

“Yeah, what’s that?” Priest asked.

“I get to pick my VP.”

“Done!” Ranger said, obviously thinking he was the perfect brother for the job. “Who’s your choice?”

Snyder’s head slowly moved up until his eyes were trained on me. I wasn’t sure why he was looking at me when there were a bunch of us standing in the room.

“I’ll only take the patch if Clash steps in and takes on the VP roll.”

“Clash? Why him?” Ranger questioned; you could hear the shock in his tone, and see it on our other brothers’ faces.

Snyder shrugged. “He’s right. He would be the best suited for the Prez position right now. And if for some reason, I’m not fit to hold that title, I would hope that you all would have enough respect for Clash to give him the patch that he has earned.”

Everyone nodded.

“Okay then, it’s settled. All in favor of Snyder’s request to make Clash his VP, say aye,” Ranger shouted.

The room was silent.

Fuckers.

“Fuck you all...” I started to say, just as the room erupted into boisterous laughter.

“Aye,” they said in unison.

Snyder clapped me on the back, giving me the biggest damn smile he could muster in his pit of despair.

“Hear that, Clash? You get to be in your favorite spot after all.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” I growled, pushing away from him.

Snyder grinned. “Under me.” Then he winked.

That bastard. At least his smile was genuine for once.

“God, sometimes you sound so gay, Snyder. I’m beginning to think you may have a little crush on me.”

He socked me again, this time in the arm. “Fuck off, Clash. I just respect you and like giving you shit. We both know there’s only one woman I want in this world, and when I find her, I’m going to bring her home and make her my Ol’ Lady.”

Wasp frowned. “Don’t you mean *our* Ol’ Lady?”

Snyder shook his head. “Sharing her is what made her run off in the first place, Wasp. In my opinion, if and when I get Shasta back, I’m going to let her choose what she wants. If she wants to be with all of us... fine, but if she doesn’t, well, like you said earlier, let the best man for her, win.”

Chapter Seven

Shasta

My eyes were feeling extremely heavy, and the lines in the road were starting to blur. I felt the car veer to the left and heard a horn blare.

“Shit!” I screamed, righting the car before hitting the oncoming semi. The sudden jolt and noise made Ramona stir next to me.

“What happened?” she asked, yawning as she stretched her arms.

“I almost killed us both. I need to pull over soon, otherwise, it’s not going to be pretty.”

Ramona nodded. “Okay. Hey, there’s a twenty-four-hour diner up ahead, maybe we can pull in there? I’m starved anyway.”

Nodding in agreement, we pulled into the tiny parking lot of the diner and parked. “You go get something to eat, Ramona. I’m gonna sit in here and just rest my eyes for a while.”

Ramona smiled. “You do look pretty crappy.”

“Thanks.” I couldn’t mask the sarcasm that invaded my tone.

Giggling, she exited the car, practically skipping up to the diner.

Where are we anyway? I looked at the GPS on my phone and found that we were in South Dakota, some little town called Platte.

The diner’s sign had a few lights out so instead of saying Diner it said Die.

Interesting.

Through the big glass windows, I could see Ramona chatting up a woman behind the bar, and my stomach began to grumble. It was two thirty in the morning, and I was hungry as all hell.

Screw it, I better eat something as well. Reluctantly, I dragged my tired and sore body out of the car, then joined my friend inside.

“Change your mind about wanting food?” Ramona teased as the woman handed her a glass of orange juice.

The woman’s eyes were a bright blue-borderline white that seemed to twinkle in the overhead light. “Hi, welcome to my diner. I’m Josie.”

She was drop dead gorgeous with her long black hair pulled back into a tight ponytail that swayed along her back, and the friendliest smile I’d ever seen on anyone ever. She had pronounced cheekbones, and no makeup whatsoever. She was literally a natural beauty with her flawless olive skin and trim figure.

“You do realize your sign out there says *die* right?”

Josie laughed. “Yeah, I keep telling my brother he needs to get that fixed, but it’s not high on his priority list right now. Where are you two coming from?”

Ramona and I shared a look, then shrugged. “Someplace we never plan on going back to,” I answered for us both.

“Ah, so you’re running from something! Well, don’t worry, Platte is the perfect town to settle your boots in. We accept everyone here, and not a lot of people know about us.” I couldn’t help but notice the way she kept sending flirty eyes Ramona’s way, and how Ramona was giving them right back to her.

Hmm, did Ramona find a potential girlfriend without really trying?

“Are there any hotels or travel stops in town we can stop in for the night?”

“There’s some kind of event going on in town right now. All the hotels are taken, but my brother and I have a guest cottage you can stay in for the night if you would like?”

Ramona’s smile grew even bigger. I could tell the idea of staying anywhere Josie stayed really made her happy.

“Sure, but we don’t want to put you and your brother out.”

“You won’t. I’m about to get off work, and Joe will be coming in for his shift. We have a few cooks, like Raymond back there.” She motioned to an enormous blonde guy with a big scraggily beard. “But we’re super short on help right now. I’m the only waitress, and my brother has been filling in when I need to get off.”

Ramona gave me another smile. I could see her wheels turning. She wanted to stay in Platte, South Dakota. We didn’t really talk about where we wanted to end up, just some place that got a lot of snow.

“Well, if you’re looking for help, we’re looking for work,” I told Josie, shooting Ramona a smirk when her eyes brightened.

“Really?” she asked in excitement. “That would be awesome!” But then her eyes moved to the big window, and she frowned. “There’s just one problem.”

“What’s that?” Ramona asks, following her gaze.

“My brother...”

The bell clanged above the door, and in waltzed a man who seemed to command the room. His gaze swept over me, and instant chills moved up and down my body. When those big blue eyes that mirrored his sister’s met mine, I felt my knees go weak.

No. Not again.

I refuse to be swept off my feet by another man...
especially since my heart still belongs to another.

Chapter Eight

Ranger

We were finally starting to feel like a family again. With the return of Zeppelin, Poison, and Motley, our club was getting back the numbers we needed to start recruiting again.

Pissed off would be an understatement of what I felt when Snyder announced Clash as his VP. But if him taking the Prez's patch, meant promoting that buffoon to his second in command. So be it. What it did mean was that we were down two members, and we're going to need to rethink the whole structure of our club. But first, I needed to try to recruit our old members and see if they would be interested in returning.

Standing outside of the bar I knew the others frequented, my heart felt heavy. The fact that they left and haven't even thought about coming back, makes me wonder exactly where their loyalty lies?

When I entered the building, everyone that was inside turned to face my way, but none of them looked friendly, especially one in particular. Ratt.

The way his eyes narrowed in on me, his glare only intensifying the further I stepped in, made me suddenly uneasy.

"What the fuck do you want?" Ratt growled, his fists clenching by his sides as the chair slid out from beneath him and he slowly stood up, towering way above me.

"I came to get you guys back in the club. We need you, Ratt."

His hand ran through his greasy locks. It was like he never took a fucking shower. Pockmarks littered his face, a clear sign he was still using. He looked a bit skinnier if that was even possible, but his size is what made him intimidating. At

6'7, he towered over everyone in the club. He got his name for his mouse-like nose that he hated to be called out on.

When Leppard created the club, he was really big into 80s hairband music. So, naturally the club adopted names based on his favorite bands. Leppard for Def Leppard. Sabbath for Black Sabbath... and me Ranger for Night Ranger. Some names weren't as easy to assume. Like Axl was for Guns 'N' Roses Axl Rose, and Slaughterman got his name from Slaughterhouse. But Ratt's name was very specific, the second his mouse-like nose entered the club, we all knew he'd be named Ratt. I just never expected him to turn into one himself.

“Why in the fuck would we return to a weak-ass fucking club that murders its own members?” Ratt growled. “Nobody gives a fuck about the Lewd Outlaws anymore, especially anyone in here.”

My eyes roved over our former members and prospects, most of them were wearing new cuts—cuts with a very familiar crow on them.

“You're with the Crows? How is that possible?”

Ratt laughed. “Anything is possible when you sift through the ashes.”

I noticed that Riot and Slaughterman both weren't wearing a cut, they were just drinking a beer at the table with the others, looking out of place and a little scared.

“Look, I know you were loyal to Sabbath, Ratt, and I wish things went down differently than they did, but Sabbath was ruining the club, he needed to go.”

Ratt pulled out a gun and toyed with it before pointing it at my face.

“But did he deserve to die? Couldn't he have just been stripped of his patch?”

“It wasn't that easy.”

He shot his gun, causing the bartender behind the bar to scream and duck behind it. The bullet whizzed by my face,

striking a neon sign behind me.

I shouldn't have come alone...

“Oh, that’s right. It wasn’t that easy because you and those other sick fucks were passing around his woman like she was some cheap two cent hooker. How’d it feel to fuck the Prez’s Ol’ Lady, Ranger? Did you enjoy getting your dick wet in her used-up hole?”

He sounded jealous as fuck.

“Are you jealous, Ratt? Are you pissed that she wanted nothing to do with your lanky ass and wanted us instead?”

Another shot fired, this one a little too close for comfort. He nicked the top of my cut, tearing a hole in the leather.

“You guys betrayed the club!” Ratt roared. “None of you deserve that fucking cut on your backs! You’re all traitors! The whole lot of you!”

A chorus of agreement came from behind him, where I noticed Jackyl and Floyd were wearing cuts that said Member and not Prospect. Interesting. Why didn’t he promote Slaughterman or Riot? Riot was already a member of our club and proved his worth, and Slaughterman was next in line to get patched in as a member after Poison.

Riot stood to his feet, placing his hand on Ratt’s arm. “Calm down, Ratt. He just came to try to get the club back together.”

Ratt backhanded Riot, hitting him in the nose with the gun. “Shut the fuck up! I’m talking here. See this VP patch on my chest? That means I’m fucking in charge when the Prez isn’t here, and if you and Kyle want any chance of being in my fucking club, then you better shut your fucking face.” Kyle was Slaughterman’s real name.

Riot shot me a pained look, blood oozing from his nose.

“Ranger, I used to fucking like you, but when you and the others took out Sabbath, you lost my respect. However, I’m an honorable man, and unlike you fucks, I’m going to let you

walk out of here alive because I need you to relay a fucking message to the rest of the traitors. The Dismembered Crows are back and better than ever, and they got the Outlaws in their crosshairs. So, go ahead. Put the club back together the best you can, because you're going to need all the numbers you can get. A war is coming, and when the Crows take flight again, we're going to burn your club to the ground until it's nothing but ashes and dead bodies, just like the fallen Crows you torched in your wake."

His message was received loud and clear, but the question was, who was running the Crows if he was the VP? Somebody was pulling the strings to this fucked up nightmare, and I had no idea who it was.

"Oh, and Ranger. Take these two sorry fucks with you. Neither one of them are fit to wear the cut of a Crow." He pushed Riot and Slaughterman toward me. "I don't think I need these two fuckers, anyway."

Slaughterman and Riot followed me out of the bar, just as another shot rang out behind us, causing all three of us to duck and run. Ear-piercing laughter followed as we fumbled to get to our bikes, sounding like it was a den of Hyenas instead of a bar full of our former brothers. Who really were the traitors now?

Slaughterman and Riot both gave me a look, one that said they were uneasy about returning. "Snyder's wearing the Prez patch now," I informed them.

"Does that make you VP?" Riot asked as we fired up our bikes.

"No..." I answered cryptically. "He appointed Clash."

"Fuck," Slaughterman growled. "Now I'm not so sure I want to come back."

"Just give it a chance, Slaughterman. Anyone is better than Sabbath."

Riot laughed. "Amen to that, Brother."

And with that, we rode back to the club with new information to give my other brothers about an old enemy rising from the ashes of our carnage.

Chapter Nine

Shasta

The man stared at me like he was deep in thought, those blue eyes soaking up every inch of my body until it felt like he was undressing me with his eyes.

“Joe, this is... sorry, I didn’t get your names,” Josie said with a grin.

“I’m Ramona, and this is Shasta.”

Joe studied us curiously. “And why is this important to me?”

Josie’s smile faded. “You said we needed help, Joe, and these girls are looking for a job.”

“Do you have experience waiting tables?”

Both of us shook our heads.

“Then they are of no use to us, Josie.”

He started to walk by me, but I grabbed his arm, forcing him to a full stop. “But we can learn. Please, we really could use the help right now. Let us help you a few days, and if we don’t do a good job, we’ll hop in my car and keep on driving.”

He eyed my corvette in the parking lot, then looked back at me. “You running from something?”

Only my heart.

“Yeah, but we’re tired of running, and poor Ramona needs to rest.”

Josie’s smile spread when she noticed Ramona’s pregnant belly. “I offered them our guest house for the night.”

“You did what?” Joe practically yelled. “They’re strangers, Josie. You can’t just invite complete strangers into our home.”

“I’m not inviting them into our home. Just our guest house. It’s only for the night, Joe, and you won’t even see them, you’ll be here.”

“And what happens when they end up murdering you, and I return to the house in the morning to find you dead and our house ransacked? I don’t want to deal with that shit.”

My hand was still on Joe’s arm for some reason, and I gave it a squeeze, getting his full attention. He looked down at my hand, jerking his arm from beneath it.

“I promise you nothing will happen to your sister. We just need somewhere safe to crash for the night. We’ve been driving for days, and I’ve barely slept. I almost wrecked the car before we pulled in here. I’ll pay you if that helps. We don’t have much money because we used most of it to fill my gas tank, but I can give you what I have left after we buy our food.”

He took a step back, staring at Ramona’s pregnant belly, and her plate of food, then frowned.

“Fine, but they need to be out by morning.”

“What about the waitress jobs?” Josie asked.

“I said what I said, Josie. Don’t test me.”

She held up her hands and grinned. “Fine. Fine.”

Joe disappeared into the back just as Josie turned to face us.

“You’re in! Consider yourselves hired!”

“But he just said...”

“Joe is a big softie underneath all that disgruntle bear. Trust me, by next month you’ll be calling Platte your new home. I’m about to clock out, then I’ll take you to our guest house to get you guys settled.”

Ramona’s belly growled in protest. “Shasta, if I don’t eat this plate of pancakes and eggs, I’m afraid this baby is going to have a fit. Can we eat then sleep?”

Chuckling, I plopped down on the stool next to her, and shot her a wink. “Let’s get this pregnant lady fed. Can I have the same as she’s having?”

Josie squealed with delight. “Yes!”

Ramona watched Josie dance away, her eyes trained on the two big globes of her jiggling ass. When Josie was out of view, she shot me the biggest smirk I’ve ever seen on her face. “I think I’m going to like it here.”

Chapter Ten

Skid

My heart felt like a heavy brick inside my chest. Today was the day of Warrant's funeral, and everything felt so surreal.

My club, broken, wounded, and down numbers, stood in silence as his heavy body was lifted down into a grave—one that for some reason, had already been picked, and paid for.

Did he anticipate his own death? Why would someone so young already have a grave plot ready for him?

I felt someone's hand on my shoulder, and I looked up to see Wasp standing there staring at me like he somehow knew these tears were deeper than the ones on all my brothers.

He didn't say a word, just left his comforting hand on my back, as if he was saying everything would be okay. But would it?

Warrant's life was taken far too soon, and it made me wonder if our time with Shasta was to blame? If we had not touched her, would he still be alive? But on the other side of the coin, had we not touched her, would I know what it felt like to have him inside me, to possess me the way he did?

Wasp gave me a few pats, then moved on, taking his place next to the rest of my brothers. We were sending him off in honor, unlike Sabbath, who we buried out in the middle of nowhere with no way of identifying his body. Everything that made him who he was, was stripped and burned. His cut... his teeth... his fingers. Anything that could identify him, short of his DNA, was gone and scattered all over Austin.

It was the one thing I took pleasure in after everything was over, dismembering and disposing of the pathetic corpse of the man who took my lover's life.

I didn't mourn Sabbath's death. No one did. Well, maybe Shasta. But none of us would ever know because the second she had the chance, she fled, leaving us all behind for good.

And honestly, I'm glad she's gone. She tore our club upside down, and I still partially blamed her for Warrant's death. If he and I never had touched her, he'd still be alive, and I wouldn't be burying my brother, friend, and lover right now.

Another tear fell down my cheek, one that I quickly wiped away. I didn't want the others to see how distraught I was. It was an act of weakness, and if anyone found out my sexuality, I'd already be portrayed as weak.

No, I had to suck my emotions down. Internally suffering while the rest mourned his death openly, celebrating his life even after death.

Our bikes were parked just outside the gravesite, and when the ceremony was over, his body firmly lowered six-feet underground, we returned to our bikes for one last rev.

"Let Skid have the honor, Prez," Wasp said to Snyder.

Snyder looked at me curiously, but shrugged. Motioning for me to begin. I gripped the throttle in my hand, then stared up at the sky, wondering if the big guy was staring down at me from above.

"This is for you, Warrant," I whispered, my voice being drowned out by the sound of my bike roaring to life. The rest of the members followed, giving Warrant one last Rev—a final sendoff fit for a man who gambled with his life to protect our love.

It was bittersweet because I knew he was gone forever. That last rev was for our lost brother, who always thought about the club and never about himself. If it wasn't for him, who knows who would've died at Sabbath's hand. He didn't deserve the overkill or to be toyed with and played with the way Sabbath had. The man was a monster, and a good man was dead because of him... countless women too. God, the

carnage our former Prez had following him was coated in blood, and I for one was done being his lackey.

Snyder motioned for us to follow him back to the clubhouse, but I couldn't. I needed to say goodbye. Properly this time.

So, as my brothers rode away from the cemetery, I approached the grave once again, too ashamed of my feelings to let anyone else see.

“Hey there, big guy.”

You couldn't see his coffin anymore, not unless you looked all the way down, but I was perfectly fine sitting on the grass beside the hole where his body now laid because I could feel him around me, surrounding me with those brute arms of his.

“I'm sorry this happened to you, Victor. You didn't deserve any of this. If we had just not given in to the temptation of being together, maybe you'd still be alive, and we wouldn't have gotten tangled up in this fucked up web like two unsuspecting flies.”

Tears fell down my cheeks, and I was too lost to wipe them away this time. “You were my best friend, and my feelings for you ran deeper than I ever could've imagined. You opened up a whole new world for me. One where I felt free in my own skin. But now... now you're down there, and I'm still here. Why? Why was my life spared and yours so tragically taken?”

A sob got lodged deep within my chest, and I buried my head in my legs, too afraid to let the feelings of regret and loss take over me.

“How do I go on without you, Victor? How can I keep pretending to be something that I'm not?”

My words got lost in the quiet breeze that flitted over me, breathing over my skin like a silent final breath.

“Damn you for being so fucking brave,” I cried out. “Why couldn't you just keep your mouth shut like the rest of us?”

Silence overwhelmed my emotions, and I couldn't believe the devastation I was choking on. Was this what it felt like to love someone? Were my feelings for him even real, or were they just superficial to placate my sexuality. Can you lust after someone and it still be considered love?

"Why is this so fucking hard?" I shouted to no one in particular.

"Because it's hard to let go of someone who changed your life," an unfamiliar voice said from behind me.

Weakly, I turned my head. My gaze traveled up from the worn cowboy boots, to the thin legs covered with tattered blue jeans with too many holes, and along the lean torso of a man I didn't recognize.

My heart immediately stopped beating when eyes the color of cool sand on an endless beach focused in on me. His right eyebrow was slit by a strange looking scar, and his blond hair looked dirty and like it hadn't been washed for weeks. But for some odd reason, I felt drawn to him, like somewhere under that scraggly beard and unkempt disposition was a handsome devil ready to corrupt me.

"Who the fuck are you?" I asked, suddenly trying to hide my vulnerability.

The man's sandy eyes focused on me, his jaw clenching just slightly before he fell into a frown.

"Let's just say that I'm an old friend of Victor's. One that deeply regrets everything I ever did to him..." He let out a forlorn sigh, one that I felt deep within my own broken soul. "I came here to ask for his forgiveness... but the dead can't forgive your sins, so I guess I'll have to stay eternally damned, suffering in silence just like you."

Chapter Eleven

Shasta

(Two Months Later)

“Shasta, did you get the drinks for table eight?” Josie questioned.

The diner was jumping with patrons today. I guess there was some big football game in town, and everyone was coming here to celebrate.

“Yeah, I’ve taken their food order as well.”

Ramona was manning the cash register because her belly was getting so big that it was getting harder and harder for her to be on her feet. She only had a few months to go before the baby would be here.

Joe somehow, by the grace of God, allowed us to continue to stay in the guest house and gave us jobs. Josie was right, he was a big ole softie underneath that big, mean exterior of his. He was just the kind of man a girl could easily fall for if she was looking.

But I wasn’t.

My heart was still back in Austin, a jumbled mess of broken puzzle pieces that seemed to belong to different puzzles. How can someone have feelings for multiple men? It wasn’t right and identifying that was the first step in recovering from my time with the Lewd Outlaws.

“You’ve gotten better,” Joe said, startling me. His breath was hot and heavy on the back of my neck, and a cool excited shiver crept down my back as his lips cusped my ear. “Behind you,” he said in a seductively wicked voice.

My entire body tensed, and I quickly moved out of his way, allowing him to pass by, so he could get food out into the restaurant.

Josie giggled.

“The sexual tension between you and my brother could light a fucking fire,” she said with too bright of a smile.

“Don’t say that,” I bit back, trying to ignore the heated glance he stole over his shoulder at me.

Josie shrugged her shoulders. “Hey now, what’s wrong with liking my brother?”

Ramona cleared her throat. “Nothing, but Shasta’s been through some shit and she’s not looking for a relationship right now. She’s still hung up on her past.”

“I can respect that. But I will say, that Joe is actually quite the catch around town. He’s one of those guys that every woman wants. So, the fact that he has eyes for you, Shasta, is something special. Since his ex, Joe doesn’t date.”

My back straightened just a tad. “Well, I don’t either. So, that’s something else we have in common.” I quickly found out that Joe and I had more in common than I liked to admit, including our favorite TV shows, movies, and music. The man was basically a clone of me.

Every night, he would pop into the guest house, and we would fall into an easy conversation over one of our favorite movies while hurling popcorn at each other. It was cute, fun, and fucking dangerous as hell. I wish I could stop feeling such a strong pull to him, but it was hard, especially when I felt so fucking lonely right now.

“Well, I still think you guys would make the cutest babies!” Josie exclaimed.

The word baby had my heart clenching inside my chest, and the emptiness in my womb never felt heavier. The fact that Ramona was only months away from having her child, gave

me an unhealthy amount of baby fever, but then I remembered I was damaged goods—and the mother I'll never be.

“I need some air,” I quickly said, unable to hide my emotions a second longer.

From over my shoulder, I heard Josie say, “Was it something I said?” just as the door leading into the kitchen swung shut behind me.

I didn't stop running until I was outside, breathing in cool puffs of air as I tried to fight the emotions clogging my chest. Anxiety and panic weighed me down, and I felt like the world was caving in on me.

“Breathe, Shasta, honey, you need to breathe,” Ramona's voice broke into my chaotic thoughts, forcing me to take a breath.

“Girl, I got you,” she whispered. “Just take a deep breath.”

How she got out here so fast, I'll never know. The woman waddled like a slow penguin most days, carrying that heavy baby in front of her like a bowling ball beneath her shirt.

“What's wrong, Shasta?”

I stared at her pregnant belly, and jealousy sparked inside of me. I wanted what she had.

“I'm sorry,” I whispered, sinking down until my back was pressing against the cool concrete of the exterior walls of the diner. “I'm just going through a lot right now.”

Ramona's hand moved through my hair. If she wasn't seven months pregnant, she would've sat down right beside me, but we both know how hard it is for her to get up.

“Tell me what's going on.”

“Is it bad that I miss them?” I asked, unable to hide my feelings anymore.

“No, of course not. They were your family, Shasta—our family, I guess. They were fucking bastards most of the time,

but they also were pretty good guys. That doesn't change the fact that they fucked you up something fierce."

"I know." My voice was a choking sob as I did my best to battle my tears that I was losing the war against.

"Tell me something, Shasta. What are you holding on to anymore? You've gotten what you always wanted, you're free of the club. You can't tell me that you love each one of them."

"No, you're right. I don't love all of them..."

Ramona frowned. "Which means you did fall for some of them... or maybe just one of them?"

My heart clenched inside my chest, so I buried my emotions in my knees. "There are parts of each of them that helped strengthen me, Ramona, and I'm still trying to figure out why I can't just let them go. Everything was so fucked up and unhealthy back in Austin, and yet, every night I go to sleep, I close my eyes and all I can picture is him..."

She nodded her head, but I don't think she truly understood what I was saying.

"It's hard to love someone for most of your life and just let them go, Shasta. It's understandable."

Shaking my head, I tried to push the grizzly image of Sabbath's blood on my body out of my brain, filling it with images of the smile that warmed my heart, the one that gave me so much strength when I felt so goddamn weak.

"Please, I don't even want to think about that bastard."

"Then who are you referring to?"

But before I could let his name leave my tongue, Joe appeared in the doorway, his blue eyes shining with worry as he stood there looking down at me, his presence creating even more chaos inside my fucked-up head.

Chapter Twelve

Snyder

Piece by piece, my brothers and I were slowly working towards stitching ourselves back together. But then Ranger came back with news that the Dismembered Crows were reforming, and were using our own fallen brothers to do it. Now the club was starting to fall apart all over again.

How were we supposed to fight the dead? How were any of them still fucking alive? I tried to think back to that night, and suddenly, it dawned on me. Jackyl, Floyd, and the rest of the prospects had stayed behind to make sure no one got out alive.

“Poison, Slaughterman, get the fuck in here!” I shouted into the common room, causing both men to look up with worry.

Clash appeared in the doorway first, obviously not wanting to be left out of the loop.

He smirked. “What? As your VP, I feel like I should be here as well. We all know how much you miss me when I’m gone.”

Rubbing my temples, I tried to eat the regret I was choking on for promoting him to VP. I should’ve gone with Ranger; he doesn’t talk as much and is less of a cocksucker.

Poison and Slaughterman entered the room, staring at me and Clash like they were about to get murdered.

“What’s up, Prez?” Poison asked as he warily sat in one of the chairs in front of me.

“I need information,” I started, glancing over at Clash who had his arms crossed. “The night we slaughtered the Crows, you all were ordered to stay behind and make sure no one was left alive.”

Poison and Slaughterman both shared a look, one I knew all too well.

“Fuck, tell me what happened.”

Slaughterman cleared his throat. “Well, when you guys all left, Ratt showed back up. He said that you wanted us to head back to the clubhouse before shit got worse.”

Poison continued, “But it was only us. Floyd and Jackyl stayed behind with him.”

“So, you’re saying there’s a possibility the Crows could still be alive?”

Poison shook his head. “Not all of them. But someone was still trying to get out when we left. I don’t know if they got out or not. The second we were told to go, we left. I’m sorry, Prez, I just couldn’t stay there a second longer. That smell of burning flesh is something I’ll never be able to forget.”

Nodding, I shot another look at Clash. “You know what this means, right?”

Clash nodded. “That Ratt was a rat, and he turned some of our prospects into rats too.”

“It also means that what Ranger said was true. The Crows are reforming, and it’s quite possible that some of them are still alive.”

Poison and Slaughterman both shared a look. “I’m sorry, Prez. We should’ve stayed behind,” Poison apologized.

“Nah, you did exactly what you were told like you always do, Poison. Don’t worry about it. Why don’t you two go get a drink? I think you need it.”

They both quickly stood and exited the room, leaving me alone with Clash.

“Does this mean what I think it means?” he asked as he threw his big, dumb body down in the chair and stretched out like he owned the place.

“Yeah, it means the war isn’t over... it’s just gone cold.”

Chapter Thirteen

Shasta

Ramona's smile was getting brighter every day. I could see she had a bit of a crush on Josie, and it was freaking adorable.

"Why don't you just tell her how you feel?" I questioned when I noticed Josie sending her a flirty wink.

"What? No way! I can't do that."

"Why not?"

Ramona nibbled on her lip. "Look at me, Shasta, I'm seven months pregnant with a child, and who's to say she swings my way?"

"You never know until you ask."

Ramona shook her head, quickly looking down at the register when Josie returned.

"Man, that table just gave me a twenty-dollar tip!" she squeaked in delight. "It pays to have boobs and curves sometimes," she said with a giggle.

"Did that guy just ask you out?" I questioned, noticing how one of the men at the table was undressing her with his eyes.

Josie held up a piece of paper with a phone number scribbled on it. "Yeah, but I won't throw his number away until he leaves."

"Why would you throw it away?" I asked, knowing the answer.

She snuck a look towards Ramona. "He's not exactly my type."

Hearing those words made Ramona slowly raise her head, and for a split second they shared a heated look, one that had

both of their cheeks flushing pink. Ramona quickly looked back down at the register, unable to take it a second longer.

Josie frowned, then went back to taking people's orders.

"You're screwing this up, Ramona, just go for it!" I encouraged.

She shook her head. "I'm not about to drag someone into my life, Shasta. When this baby comes out, there's a huge possibility that the father might come looking for them... and what happens then? I'll just get dragged back into that life we both are desperately trying to run away from."

She had a point. It was exactly one of the reasons why I wasn't allowing Joe's flirty eyes to affect me. Though they did. Every time he smiled it was like electric shocks ricocheted through my body. The man was too damn handsome for his own good, but he didn't hold a candle to the one that still possessed my heart.

It was like I could feel his presence before he even moved in behind me, the heat of his body too damn tempting.

"I give it another week before they're making out."

Turning, I found myself boxed in his arms, and the lack of space between us alarming.

"Who?"

He nodded toward Ramona. "Ramona and my sister. Everyone can tell those two are falling for each other."

"Wait, you know Ramona likes your sister?" I whispered, keeping my voice low.

"I didn't until now, but I sure hear about how much Josie likes her every night. My sister is borderline obsessed with her. She just doesn't think she has a chance because, well, you know."

"Yeah... I know."

Ramona's hand was on her stomach, and she smiled like she does every time the baby kicks.

“Is the baby kicking again?” I questioned, moving out of Joe’s arms.

“Want to feel?”

I wasn’t sure if I should, but curiosity got the best of me, and I found my hand on her belly.

“Just wait for it,” she said, her eyes smiling just as much as her lips. The glow about her was goddamn adorable, and that spark of jealousy started to rear its ugly green head. Then I felt a strange movement under my palm, and I gasped.

“Was that a kick?”

She nodded, tears pricking her eyes. “It always brings tears to my eyes. I wish I knew the gender sometimes, but the surprise of not knowing is also exciting.”

“You only have a few months left. Then you’ll finally meet your baby face-to-face.”

She beamed. “And when that day finally comes, my heart will be one hundred percent full for the first time in my life.”



My feet were aching. An entire day of being on my feet serving customers was rather exhausting. How could people do this every day and not have feet full of calluses?

A knock on the door made me groan, and in protest I got up to answer it. Josie and Joe were standing behind the door, holding up a case of beer.

“Surprise! We brought alcohol. After the day we’ve had, I think we all need it.” In Josie’s other hand was a jug of

lemonade—Ramona’s favorite. “You, sweetie, can’t have alcohol of course, but I did bring you refreshments as well.”

Ramona’s face lit up. “Thanks.”

Joe gave me a delicious wink as he marched through the door, making himself at home on our little couch. We paid them three hundred dollars a month to rent out their guest house. The funny thing was, they never had guests. Joe and Josie were both homebodies that barely ever left.

“Want to play a game?” Josie asked excitedly.

“Sure, but I’m beyond exhausted, so if I suddenly fall asleep, I’m sorry.”

Joe chuckled. “You’ll get used to it after a while.” Not long after we started working for them, the diner changed their hours. We now closed at twelve and didn’t open again until eight the next morning. They said they always did this in their off season, but it made me wonder if us showing up had something to do with it?

“Hmm, let’s play truth or dare!” Josie said excitedly. “I’ll go first.”

Joe shot his sister a look, but she seemed to shrug him off. “Ramona, truth or dare?”

“Um, I guess truth?” Ramona said warily.

“Is it true you’re single?”

Ramona laughed. “Yes, very, very single.”

Josie practically bounced on the couch cushion. “Eek! Good to know! Your turn, Ramona.”

Ramona turned to me. “Shasta, truth or dare?”

I took a swig of the beer in front of me and sighed. “I guess dare.” The second I said it, I immediately regretted it. I could see the wicked gleam in her eyes.

Fuck...

“Dare, huh? Okay, well, I dare you to kiss Joe.”

Instantly, Joe's head snapped toward me and his smile grew. "I like this dare."

"Can I change my answer to truth?"

Joe frowned, his brow wrinkling in disappointment.

"Nope, once you say it, it's final," Josie exclaimed, goading me on. "Now, kiss my brother."

Embarrassed, I moved across the couch until my face was inches away from his. "Sorry about this, Joe."

He shrugged. "I guess I'll have to suffer through it," he said with a laugh.

Our lips met as the heat of our bodies intensified. At first it was just lip to lip, but then tongues somehow got involved, and his arms were around my waist, tightening more with every passing second.

When I finally pulled away, I was flushed from the cheeks down.

"Phew," Josie yelled, fanning her face. "That was fucking hot as hell."

Joe grinned. "It sure the fuck was."

I needed air. The tension in the room was getting hotter and hotter by the second.

"Shasta, it's your turn."

I turned to face Josie. "Okay, Josie, truth or dare?"

"Oh, I always take the dares."

"She really does," Joe said, downing all of his beer in two gulps, his eyes never leaving mine.

"Okay, I dare you to kiss Ramona."

Ramona instantly went still, her eyes shooting daggers in my direction. I gave her a pointed look, knowing this was the only way a union between them would ever get started.

“Eek, I thought you’d never ask.” She moved across the room, and took Ramona’s face in her hands, staring deeply into her eyes before they shared the most panty-wetting, passionate kiss I’d ever seen in my life.

When they finally came up for air, Josie held her arms up in triumph. “Yes! I finally got to kiss the woman I’ve been secretly in love with for months.” She covered her mouth. “Oops, I should’ve saved that for a truth.” Without skipping a beat, and definitely in need of a change of subject. She turned to her brother. “Okay, big brother. Your turn. Truth or dare?”

The heat of his stare intensified when our eyes met again, and I had to force myself to look away.

“Truth.”

“Is it true you got the hots for Shasta?”

He opened another beer bottle with his bicep. It wasn’t even a twist top! God, who knew opening a beer bottle could look that hot? Taking a long pull from his beer, he glanced his sister’s way before looking back at me, the corner of his lips quirking up into a slight smirk. “That’s absolutely one hundred percent true.”

Fuck my life.

Chapter Fourteen

Priest

“You look lost, Prez.”

Snyder was sitting in his room staring out his window at a storm brewing in the sky. He'd been mopey since Shasta left, but he seemed overly depressed today.

His blond hair flopped over his brow when his head turned my way, and he took a melancholy drink from the beer he was nursing.

“I'm so fucking goddamn empty without her, Priest.”

Nodding, I stepped into the room, closing the door behind me. He obviously needed someone to talk to, and even though I didn't feel like the right person for that job, I'd step into the shoes, anyway. Ever since everything went down with Sabbath, I've been questioning my faith, and I've quickly realized that my connection with God has been severely severed. It was this realization that pushed me in the direction of changing my rank, and asking for Warrant's old Tail Gunner spot instead of being the club's chaplain.

I didn't want to be a fluke and throw out words I wasn't sure I believed in anymore. Something inside me had deeply changed. There was a bitter emptiness hollowing me out, a decay that was slowly crumbling every damn part of me.

Was it Shasta that left me feeling so lost and without purpose? No. She was a nice girl, one that didn't deserve the torment she was feeling inside. But it wasn't her leaving the club that destroyed my faith, it was my own guilt, and bloody inner demons. I felt fucking empty too, but my emptiness revolved around the only person who had ever been there for me, and I somehow fucked that up, not even realizing it until it was far too late. Without Aileen in my life, my faith was non-existent.

Snyder finished off his bottle of beer, then threw it against the wall. The solid glass didn't even break, it just hit the floor with a hollow clang.

“That bottle is a representation of my life, Priest. I somehow keep it together, even when everything inside me has been drained and depleted to fragmented air and space.”

I wasn't sure how to help him. My own inner turmoil mirrored his; only my salvation was a lot closer to reach than his was.

“Snyder, tell me something. If you knew where she was, what would you do?”

“I'd go after her.”

“Why?”

“Because without Shasta, I feel incomplete, Priest. I can't explain it, but I seriously feel like the woman is meant for me.”

“Then why did you share her with all of us?”

He sighed, looking back out the window just as the sky lit up with a flash of lightning. “Because I thought that's what she wanted.”

“And now what do you think?”

Without looking my way and his voice dripping with regret, he said, “And now I've lost her forever.”

The information I'd been sitting on for weeks was burning in my mind. If I told him what I knew, would he resent me for keeping it from him? Would he hate me for helping her leave?

“Snyder... there's something I need to tell you...” But before I could tell him anything, the door banged open, and in rushed Clash with the biggest fucking smile on his face.

“Get off your lazy asses and follow me. I've got something to show you that you're not going to fucking believe!”

Chapter Fifteen

Shasta

The TV light illuminated Joe's face as he turned my way for the tenth time of the night. Ever since we shared that dared kiss, he'd been trying to get closer and closer to me.

But if I had to be honest, even though the kiss was hot and made parts of me come to life, there wasn't the emotion behind it, not like I felt when *his* lips touched down on mine. Every night that I went to bed, I'd see Snyder's eyes in my dreams, looking at me with all the love in the world, and then the sadness in them as I drove away, refusing to look back. The hurt, the longing, the devastation. All of it killed me inside.

I missed him. I guess a part of me missed all of them, but my heart yearned for Snyder the most, and the safety and peace just being near him brought me. I felt that kind of safety with Joe too, but it just wasn't the same.

"They're really going at it in there," Joe quietly said, turning up the volume of the TV to drown out the moaning coming from his sister's room.

Ever since Josie's little confession, Ramona and Josie have been fucking like rabbits. Ramona blames it on the pregnancy hormones, but I really think it has to do with their connection. Both of them are head over heels for each other.

"I have to admit," he continued. "I'm a bit jealous."

"Why?" I questioned, turning my body toward him.

A shy smile quirked the corners of his lips, and I swear he was blushing in the glow of the TV. "Because I haven't stopped thinking about our kiss since that night. You're special to me, Shasta. I haven't felt this way about a woman in a very long time." His hand somehow found mine on the couch, and

he gave it a squeeze. “I’d like to repair all those broken parts of you that I know are there. If you let me, of course.”

My mouth went dry. Joe’s confession was sweet as hell, but it was giving me way too much anxiety. I wasn’t ready to move on, not when I was tethered to someone else’s heart—a heart I wasn’t sure I’d ever be able to let go of.

“Shasta, are you okay?”

Shaking my head, I fought back the tears that were starting to form. At one point in my life, I had become a strong, badass woman, capable of killing the one man who destroyed me. I realize now that I was only strong because of the men who stood behind me. Alone, I was nothing more than a mess of emotions, and damaged beyond repair.

“I’m damaged goods, Joe. You have no idea who I was before I came here. You wouldn’t think those things if you knew about my past.”

His gentle fingers lifted my chin, forcing me to look him in those soul-devouring eyes. I could feel myself unraveling, needing the comfort of a man even though he wasn’t the man my body yearned for.

“I can see you drowning in silent sorrow, Shasta. Whatever happened in your past, I don’t care. I absolutely adore you, and can’t hold back my feelings any longer. I know you’re broken; I can see it in your eyes, but that’s why this makes so much sense. We make sense. Haven’t you felt the connection growing between us? Fate brought you to my doorstep for a reason, Shasta. I’d like to think that reason is because the universe wants us to be together.”

It sounded so perfect.

Like the universe really did want me to have my own happy ending with Joe. But I didn’t love Joe. I wasn’t sure if I was capable of loving anyone anymore. Except maybe Reese... he always seemed to linger in my heart, like the sun peeking through a wall of storm clouds on a rainy day.

“Joe, I—” He cut my words off with a kiss, one that lit a fire between my legs. That part of me still wanted attention, and it didn’t matter who was giving it to her.

For a fleeting second, I got lost in the passion behind his lips, my mouth opening willingly, my body submitting to him.

His hand fisted my hair, his other cupping parts of my body that hadn’t been touched in eons. My tits pebbled, the needy little bitches molding perfectly in his massive hands.

It would be so easy to give in to the temptation, half of me was already there, gobbling up his affection like a hungry bear.

It wasn’t until he started to lay me back on the couch, his erection settling firmly between my legs, that I finally woke up from the lusty fog I was in.

“Please stop,” I begged.

He stilled above me, that familiar frown returning to his face. The second he pushed up on his arms, I was quick to move out from underneath him, desperate to put some distance between him and all the temptation he dragged with him. “I’m sorry, Joe. I like you; I really do. But I’m not looking for a relationship right now. I’m no good for you. The quicker you realize that, the better off you’ll be. I’m sorry.”

“Shasta, wait!” he called out after me.

But it was too late... the damage was done, and our tainted kiss felt like poison on my lips.

Why did it feel like I was betraying *him*?

Why couldn’t I move on?

It’s not like Reese is out there looking for me. I told him I wanted to leave, and he let me go... and now he probably moved on without me.

If life wasn’t so fucked up, maybe I’d be capable of moving on too. But my life is a conundrum trapped in a nightmare, that’s permanently on repeat, cycling over and over like one very fucked up *Groundhog Day*.

I feel your pain, Bill Murray. This constant loop of suck is a miserable existence, one that I wish would come to an end. But I only know of one way to do that, and I'm just not strong enough for it yet.

Chapter Sixteen

Sandman

My knees wobbled beneath me, and my legs felt weak, but with the support of a cane, I hobbled through the familiar doors of my club, returning home for the first time in months.

The familiar scent of beer and cigarettes hit my nose, and the second the door slammed behind me, everyone's head snapped up.

“Sandman!” Clash exclaimed. “What the fuck, man? What the hell is this?”

The corners of my lips slightly lifted as I waved at him. “O—Oh you, kn—know just h—hobbling along.”

That fucking stutter was getting annoying, but Imogen assured me that it would go away with time, it would just take some work.

“You’re walking!” Wasp exclaimed, pulling out a chair so I could sit down.

“Yeah.” The no stutter surprised everyone, including me. “Th—That part I—I g—got. It’s the sh—shit up h—here that k—kills me.” I slowly pointed to my head. Everything from the shoulders up, moved at a snails pace it seemed.

“Did you get discharged?” Axl asked, pulling up a chair next to me. It shocked the fuck out of me when I saw the secretary patch stitched to his chest. Then a bitter sadness overwhelmed me, and the loss of my friend took over. I wasn’t able to go to Warrant’s funeral, nor was I there to even the score when the club finally took the Crows and Sabbath out. The uselessness of the enforcer patch on my chest never felt more real.

“You g—guys should pr—probably take this.”

Axl's gaze followed my painfully slow movements and widened when my finger landed on my patch.

"Nawh, man," Clash exclaimed, patting me on the shoulder. "That shit fucking stays forever."

"B—But look at m—me. I'm a st—stuttering f—fool."

Ranger waltzed into the room with the biggest damn smile on his face. Out of everyone, he would always be my brother for life.

"Hey, big man, good to see you out of the bed. I bet you're going to miss those sponge baths."

Delayed laughing followed as his words caught up to my brain. "Y—Yeah. Those were f—fun."

Clash disappeared from the room and emerged a few minutes later with Snyder and Priest in tow.

Snyder's face lit up when he saw me sitting there, and without hesitation, he gave me the biggest bro hug ever.

"It's good to see you, Sandman. The club's just not the same without you."

Looking around, I noticed a lot has changed since I'd been laid up in the hospital.

"A lot of th—things have ch—changed."

Snyder and Clash nodded in unison. "Yeah, we're stronger now. Especially with you back," Snyder added.

"He's got a long road ahead of him, but I think he's got a fire lit up underneath his ass now," Ranger said.

With a slow nod, I kept my head held as straight as I could. "Th—That b—bitch is not g—gonna t—take my b—aby."

"Baby?" Clash asked, looking around the room. "Are you talking about Ramona?"

Axl's head snapped up, his brow crunching in confusion. "Ramona's pregnant?"

“Shit, you didn’t know? I thought for sure out of everyone here your ass would fucking know. That was your favorite fucking pussy. Yeah, the skank got knocked up and then ran off with Shasta. I bet you five hundred dollars in a few months she shows back up on our doorstep demanding money and shit.”

Axl shot to his feet, and without warning, nailed Clash in the nose with an angry fist. “Never call her a skank again, you fucking hear me, Clash? I don’t give a fuck if you out rank me. Don’t talk about Ramona that way.”

Clash clutched his nose, glaring back at Axl. “Geesh, don’t be so fucking touchy. It’s not my fault you’re hung up on a girl that’s fucked half the club. Besides, it looks like it wasn’t even you that knocked her up.”

“Wrong,” Ranger growled, his eyes narrowing in on Clash. “Lindy’s the one fucking pregnant with Sandman’s kid, so before you run your mouth, know your fucking facts.”

Everyone looked my way. “Is that true, Sandman? Is Lindy pregnant?” Snyder asked.

Nodding, and on the verge of snapping again, I held my temper the best I could. “B—but she wants m—me t—to give up my ri—rights.”

“Yeah, not gonna fucking happen,” Clash snapped as he grabbed a Kleenex to stop the blood from squirting out his nose. Axl hit him hard. “That baby is a baby Lewd Outlaw, and once you’re born into this family, you don’t leave. I’d like to see her try to take away your rights. It’s why I didn’t want Ramona to leave in the first place. If one of us knocked her up, we have the right to see the kid. And if that kid is mine, I’ll make sure she never sees the kid again”

Axl’s fists clenched by his side.

“Hey, just because you got that Secretary patch on your chest, doesn’t mean you can square up to me, young buck. Keep that red head in check, and know your place,” Clash growled.

“Then stop talking about Ramona like that. You guys just don’t know her like I do.”

Clash smirked. “Oh, we know her, just as much as you do. Some of us may even know her better.” Obnoxiously, Clash started making fucking movements with his pelvis, pretending to smack someone’s ass as he made lewd comments. “Oh you like that, Ramona? Yeah, you do, baby. Clash gives it to you good, doesn’t he? Oh god, Clash, you fuck me so much better than Axl, and your dick is fucking huge! I’m swearing off Axl’s pencil dick forever.” Clash smirked. He really was a fucked-up individual and deserved everything that was coming to him.

Axl lunged forward, swinging punch after punch at Clash who was laughing like a loon.

“Shut the fuck up!” Axl yelled. “Ramona is mine, you bastard!”

Before Axl could punch him again, Snyder grabbed him by the arms. “Clash, stop egging Axl on, and Axl keep your fucking temper.”

“I’m just giving our newest secretary a hard time. It’s not my fault he’s sensitive. Man, redheads have no fucking sense of humor.” Clash shook his head incredulously.

Axl’s glare intensified. But I couldn’t blame him for being upset. He just found out that the girl he’s hung up on, not only left the club, but was pregnant and there was a good chance it was his kid. Ramona preferred Axl over every other member. Despite Clash’s ramblings, I truly didn’t believe that he was responsible for knocking up Ramona, that was all Axl. And the fact that she was keeping the kid away from him was majorly fucked up. I knew that pain all too well.

A few of the sweet butts entered the room, and one girl’s face in particular lit up when she saw me.

“Sandman!” Havarti squealed, racing across the room until she was practically in my lap. “I’m so happy to see you.”

A slow smile crept across my face. It was good to see a familiar face again.

“G—Good to s—see you t—too,” I stuttered.

She didn’t even frown, or look concerned, she just kept on smiling, like seeing me was the best thing to ever happen to her.

When she gave me a kiss on the cheek, I noticed Snyder shift a bit. The man looked wounded, but not because she was giving me a kiss, it was because he was lonely and missing his girl.

“Any w—word on Sh—Shasta?” I questioned, looking around the room.

Everyone either looked away, looked pissed, or shook their heads. It was the sweet butts in particular that looked angry over hearing her name.

“Why are you guys worried about that bitch?” Tiffany asked, taking on the mean girl role Nina and Rose left behind.

Snyder’s back straightened, and he immediately got up in her face.

“Because, unlike you, Tiffany, we actually give a fuck about her, and I can tell you right now that if I find that woman again and can convince her to come back with me, you better show her the respect she fucking deserves, or I’ll escort you out of this club my goddamn self.”

Damn, the man really has it bad for Shasta. I can’t say that I blame him, my heart yearns for her too in a way, but I know I’m not the man she needs—I don’t think that I’m the type of man anyone needs anymore.

“I’m sorry, Snyder. I just thought with her and Ramona leaving the way they did, and Sabbath being gone, that you guys would be done with her for good.”

“Even if Sabbath was still here, I wouldn’t be done with her, Tiffany. I love her, and even if it takes me a million years, I will find her again. When I do, I’m going to show that

woman just how much she fucking means to me, and make her my Ol' Lady.”

“Over my dead body,” Wasp growled, stepping out of the shadowy corner he was leaning in. “You can’t just fucking claim her like she’s yours, Snyder. Wasn’t it you who said that she belongs to all of us?”

Snyder squared up to Wasp, ready to throw down. “Yeah, and now I’ve changed my mind. She left because of that statement, and when I find her, because I will find her, I’m going to bring her home, and show all you fuckers just who owns Shasta Hall.”

“And what if she picks me?” Wasp snapped. “Did she ever tell you she loved you? Do you even know if she wants to be with you?”

Snyder’s stance wavered.

“Exactly! So, like I said before, asshole. Let the best man for her win.”

My heart sank a little. Part of me wanted to throw my hat in the ring and fight for Shasta too. She was easy to talk to, and we had a great chemistry before everything happened with the Crows. But the other part of me knew that I needed to save my strength for an even bigger battle—the battle for my baby.

And despite my current ailments, I wasn’t going to give up, not until I made it painfully clear that my child will be a part of my life to Lindy and whoever else stood in my way. Because that was one vow I would never back down from. Just like my vow to always protect and fight alongside my brothers.

We Lewd Outlaws stick together, and despite the trouble that came from our last Prez, I was hopeful that Snyder’s reign would change all that, molding us back into the club we were always meant to be.

Chapter Seventeen

Shasta

The diner was packed again. This time it was crowded with a bunch of bikers, ones that made my anxiety rise tremendously.

After walking by one of their tables, I felt the familiar sting of a man's hand smack my ass, making my entire body tense.

Forcing myself to suck back the tears, I turned around, painting on the fakest smile I could.

"Please don't touch me," I said, trying to keep my cool.

The grizzly biker held up his hands, laughing with his friends. "I didn't do it," he said innocently, though his smirk said otherwise.

"Can I get you guys something?" The man reminded me of one of Hoax's men. His fading white beard and withered features aged him at least ten years. He smelt of pipe smoke, stale cigarettes, and alcohol. There was a significant gap in his teeth, and his eyes were steely and very menacing.

"Yeah, your number," he said with a grin. "Or you could get on your knees and start sucking my cock like a good girl."

This caused the whole table to howl with laughter, especially when the man started fiddling with his belt.

"I—I—"

"You got her speechless, Wingnut," another guy exclaimed, elbowing one of his brothers in the arm. "I bet she'll be sucking his cock by noon. Ain't that right, sweetheart? You look like the type of chick that likes to get bent over and fucked in every hole. Maybe we all can get in a round?"

The second man gave me a putrid smile, showing me his decaying teeth and obvious gum disease.

“I call dibs on her sweet pussy first,” Wingnut exclaimed.

Bile rose in my throat.

“Then I guess that leaves me and Dirt her ass and mouth,” the ugly biker demanded. “Would you like that, sweetheart? Want me to choke you with this thick long cock while Dirt gets dirty with your sweet little pucker?”

The men started laughing again as my heart rate increased, and memories of the night Hoax and his buddies raped me came flooding back. Then I started to think about Snyder and the rest of the members in the club, how each of them was able to elicit raptures of pleasure from me. The contrast was alarming. How could two situations so different be so similar?

Shuddering, I tried to block the flood of emotions that took over, but I couldn't. I felt unsafe, like at any second someone was going to grab me and take me without my permission.

Someone grabbed my arm and tried to yank me forward. The second I felt the unwelcomed touch, I screamed, jerking my arm back and almost stumbling backward.

“Don't touch me!”

Seconds later, Joe appeared, standing between me and the men in cuts who were at the table.

“I believe the lady asked you not to touch her.”

“Oh yeah, tough guy? What the fuck are you gonna do about it?” Wingnut asked, standing to his feet.

“This is my diner, and I'm not about to have some asshole bikers show up and mess with my workers. Either play nice, or I'll kick all of your asses out of here.” Joe wasn't backing down. The fact that he wasn't scared of the bikers at all was strange. It was like he was fearless, a trait I found sexy in a man.

The biker's glare intensified, but instantly diminished when the two cops in the corner stood up.

"You're lucky there are cops here," Wingnut growled. "Or I'd be mopping your face with this fucking concrete floor."

"You know where to find me," Joe clapped back, making my anxiety even worse.

I put a reassuring hand on his chest, forcing him to look at me. "Joe, it's okay. He just caught me off guard. It was just a misunderstanding."

Joe's jaw clenched.

"Yeah, Joseph, you heard the girl, it was all just a little misunderstanding."

Joe didn't back down, he just stood there staring at the men, and I swore I heard him growl. Like a deep guttural growl that made my lady bits purr.

Wingnut and his men must've heard it too because they all backed off, immediately going back to eating their food.

Joe turned to face me, his eyes dilated and nostrils flaring. "Are you okay, Shasta?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," I lied, still emotionally shaken up from the encounter.

He gently gripped my elbow then guided me toward the back door.

"Joe, I said I was fine." But this time I couldn't mask the emotion in my voice. It broke along with every other part of me.

The second we were behind the building, I collapsed into his arms, sobbing against his chest as he combed his fingers through my hair and did his best to soothe me.

"You're not okay, baby. I could see the trauma in your eyes. Something about them triggered you, didn't it?"

My head bobbed against his chest, weak and barely able to keep up with all the mixed emotions I was feeling. He led me over to a bench near a tree and sat down, then brought me onto his lap.

“Shasta, I can’t help you unless you tell me what’s wrong.”

“I can’t,” I whispered upon a shuddering breath. “It’s too hard to talk about and you’ll hate me.”

“I could never hate you, Shasta. You’re perfect.”

That word was also triggering. I was far from perfect. I was damaged beyond repair, and there wasn’t a single person in this world that could repair me.

“Please, stop being so nice to me. If you knew who I truly was, you’d see me for the monster I really am.”

He lifted my chin, pressing his lips against mine in the sweetest kiss I’d ever felt. “Talk to me, baby. I want to get to know you, the real you. The you that you try to hide behind this mask you always wear.”

I looked up into his ice-blue eyes getting lost in the frosty sense of peace they brought me. His arms tightened around me. The strength and serenity within those big, burly arms soothed every broken part of me for a fleeting second.

“Please, Shasta,” he whispered into my hair. “Let me in.”

The sound of motorcycles revving in front of the building had me clutching him even tighter, and I buried my head in his chest, desperate to be protected by this angel of a man I didn’t deserve in my life.

“Do you know much about motorcycle clubs?” I asked him.

“Just that most are troublemaking assholes who don’t know what the word no means.”

“Well, in the biker world, when a biker claims you, you become his Ol’ Lady. That’s what I was before I came here, the Ol’ Lady of the president to a biker club. I’d been with my

man for so long that I thought we'd always be together, and that I'd follow him anywhere. I didn't realize how dangerous clubs were until I was deep inside one—so deep that I had no way out. Once my man claimed me, I was the club's property—well, his property to be exact. That's what women are in the biker world. Fucking property. They don't respect nor care about the women they claim, at least my man didn't."

I stared down at my hands, the metaphorical blood of my ex-lover was suddenly visible again, making my palms feel like they were ten million pounds.

"I'm pretty sure he loved me at one point in his life, but then he caught his brother raping me and he fucking killed him for it."

Joe stiffened, his arms getting tighter around me. "I would've killed him too," he growled under his breath.

"I thought things would get better after the abuse stopped... but it didn't."

"My man's attention fell on other women, and I soon realized that he had fucked half the girls in the club behind my back, disrespecting me as both his partner and Ol' Lady. Shit like that isn't supposed to happen in biker clubs. Ol' Ladies, especially the Prez's Ol' Lady, are the highest in the club amongst girls. But the girls in the club didn't respect me, and fucking my man became a game."

Joe's hand was enormous and my petite one barely fit in his palm. He brought it up to his lips and gave it a kiss.

"I tried to take my own life once or twice, but never could pull the trigger. I was weak—he made me weak. But then all that changed when his VP took an interest in me. Suddenly, all the attention I was craving was being given to me by another man, one that truly showed his devotion toward me."

He loosened his grip.

"Then things got crazy. One of the other members caught us together, and suddenly I was working my way through all the officers of the club. I became tangled in this insane web of

deceit and sexual exploration... and then it all blew up.” I stared at my hands no longer in his, and could feel the rigidity of his back stiffening with judging uncertainty.

“During this time, I was raped by a rival MC, watched people close to me die, and learned how to defend myself, even if it meant taking the lives of others. That club turned me into this fucking monster I am. That’s why I’m running, Joe. I’m running from the people who corrupted and controlled me, and turned me into this...”

Emotion quaked through me. Every part of me was breaking by the second. I was literally ready for someone to handcuff me and take me away, pardoning me from this internal damnation that I was always fucking in.

He remained silent, stewing over my words... judging me... damning me with his eyes. The one person who looked at me like I was this perfect porcelain doll, was now seeing what was hiding beneath the surface. The monster... the murderer.

“Say something,” I begged. My fingers dug into his shirt, clutching him, forcing him to look into my eyes—those hollowed brown pools filled with a murderous past.

Then he opened his mouth, saying three words that caused a catastrophic cyclone of guilt to swarm around me.

“I love you,” he whispered. “Your past doesn’t change that for me. Not a single thing you said scared me, Shasta.” He nuzzled my cheek, creating havoc... confusion... and comfort to burn endlessly inside of me. “The only thing that scares me, is the thought of losing you forever.”

And before I could protest, Joe kissed me again, laying a silent claim on me that I wasn’t ready for.

Chapter Eighteen

Snyder

There was a strange breeze blowing through the trees, like a humming, or a silent song that followed me as I rode down the desolate road leading out of Austin. I shouldn't be out riding alone, but I couldn't help myself, I needed to get out of the clubhouse. Everything there reminded me of Shasta, and it was killing me inside.

For almost four months, I've done nothing but silently pine for her, wishing I could just jump on my bike and go searching for her like my heart wanted to.

Shasta was my fucking whole world, and without her, it was like a tornado of chaos was circling around me.

Even with Sabbath gone, the club was still falling into its old habits. We had to figure out a way to make money without going back to dealing drugs, or guns, or anything else nefarious that we shouldn't be dealing in.

You can't change a leopard's spots, and it looked like you couldn't change a Lewd Outlaw's either.

My bike swerved into the other lane, and I almost ate shit all over the asphalt.

"Fuck," I growled, feeling like a failure all over again. "I need to pull my fucking head out of my ass before I get myself killed."

But the only way to do that was to mend my broken heart. Sure, I could get my dick wet in some random chick, sufficing the silent carnal urges that came with being a man, but then what? I'd still be missing Shasta. I'd still be a lovesick fool, missing the only woman who could turn my head and make my heart sing at the same time.

I was no use to my club in this state of mind. My bike came to a stop just outside the boundary that separated Austin from the next town over. Straddling it, I warred with my own inner demons, wondering what would happen if I just kept on riding, stopping in every fucking town until I found that sexy needle in this sea of haystacks that surrounded me.

I could still feel her soft skin on the tips of my fingers, and the whisper of her lips as her memories gave me ghostly kisses that wouldn't leave me.

It'd be so easy.

I could lose myself on the road. A rogue biker looking for the woman who left him breathless and gave him a fucking purpose.

The president patch on my chest felt like a million bowling balls, or a giant grand piano dangling from my chest. All the responsibility that came from running the club was weighing me down. My men were depending on me to lead them... but I was so wrapped up in myself that I felt useless and incapable of giving them the leadership they needed. Why did they choose me?

I'm just going to let them all down. Just like I let her down. She didn't want to belong to the whole club. She just wanted to be loved, truly, utterly, and deeply.

Fuck, why couldn't I give her what she needed, and look every one of those motherfuckers in the face and tell them that she was mine—that the only one who could ever own her heart was me?

It was like a part of me could feel her slipping away, almost as if I could sense her falling for someone else... someone better... someone who would put her first.

But that too was a lie.

I treasured her like a forsaken jewel, one that had to be put on display and worshiped accordingly. In my heart, Shasta came before everything, even the brothers of my club. That's

what made me a shitty president... my heart belonged to someone else, and wasn't in the club. At least not currently.

My phone rang, breaking me from the inner turmoil going on in my head. It was Priest.

“What's up, man?”

“Where are you?” he asked, his voice calm and almost soothing.

“Straddling the boundary between Austin and Driftwood, debating on whether a wild goose chase is a good idea, or the ramblings of a man who has loved and lost everything.”

Priest remained silent, then he cleared his throat.

“Can you meet me at the address I just texted you?”

My phone chirped, sending me the address of an unknown location.

“Sure, why?”

“Because sometimes wild goose chases aren't so wild. They just need some direction”

Chapter Nineteen

Priest

The church came into view, and the thundering in my heart started to race inside my chest. I needed guidance, and Father Joseph was the only man I knew who could give me it.

I found him wandering the garden on the side of the church, admiring the flowers and insects that fluttered from petal to petal. He had his arms behind his back, bending every few seconds to get a closer look.

“Your footsteps are heavy, my son,” Father Joseph exclaimed, his back still facing me. “What’s ailing you, Brother Oren?”

“How did you know it was me?”

He turned to face me, the sun hitting his face just right to light him up like he was being blessed by holy light. The man truly was a saint.

“We’ve known each other a very long time, Brother Oren, and I’d know those lost footsteps anywhere, even muffled in the blades of grass in a silent meadow.”

“My heart is full of guilt, loss, and sorrow,” I mumbled, finding a seat on one of the benches inside the garden.

“And why is that, my son?”

“Do you remember Shasta?”

Father Joseph took a seat next to me, the short strands of his peppered hair blowing with the wind. “Yes. I never forget those in need of my help.”

“I broke a vow with her, one that did more damage than good. It severed ties to people I cared about and created a catalyst that erupted my world into complete chaos. Because

of her, my demons returned, and so did the life I never wanted to revisit ever again.”

“I see,” Father Joseph said, looking up toward the sky.

“And you blame her for this dark side returning?”

“Yes.”

“I see,” he murmured again. “And how can I help you with this, Brother Oren? Did you come here to ask for forgiveness? To repent? To mend the broken ties that you said were severed?”

“Maybe all the above.”

For some reason, I felt someone watching us, and when I looked up, I saw Aileen looking down on us from a window. But when I waved, she retreated from my view, her rejection penetrating like an arrow sent to maim and bleed my conflicted heart.

Father Joseph followed my trail of vision and smiled knowingly. “You were just kids when you first fell in love,” he said quietly. “Both of you were too small to realize that the bond you were creating was more than just the friendship you clung onto.”

“Me and Shasta?”

He shook his head, chuckling. “We both know that you don’t love Shasta, Oren.” He pointed up towards the windows of the church. “Your heart is up there in that room, with a woman who’s broken and suffers in silence. Her bitterness stems from the betrayal she felt after finding you with Shasta.”

“So, you know about that.”

“These hallowed walls don’t leave much room for secrecy, Oren, especially when you forsake God in his own place of worship.”

My hands raked through my hair, and I let out a long sigh. “I’m sorry, Father. It was a moment of weakness, one I—”

“Do not regret giving into temptations, Brother Oren. No soul is free of sins, not even mine. I too have given into many temptations in the past. And even though I have sinned, God still loves me.”

“Can he love a dark and wavering soul? One whose sins are too heinous and unforgivable, that even the sinner can’t wash them away?”

“God has already forgiven you, Oren. Can’t you feel it? He forgave you the minute you committed them.”

“Then why do I still feel so lost? Why does it feel like all my sins are trying to suffocate and drown me at the same time? I live and breathe sin like it’s in the air circling around me, a constant vortex of corruption that’s just waiting to swallow me whole.”

“Because you haven’t forgiven yourself, Brother Oren. Once you do that, and you repent, releasing the guilt you’re holding on to so devotedly, that’s when you’ll feel his forgiveness surrounding you again. That peace inside you’re missing.”

“Can God forgive me for the heinous acts I’ve committed? For the secrets I still hold on to because I’m scared if I divulge them that the chaos will just return, and tear me apart again?”

He patted my shoulder. “I’ve watched you grow over the years, and though you keep this sheltered part of you shielded from the darker half of your soul, there are parts of your darkness that have peeked through, parts I know you wish you could snuff out forever. He sees that too and still surrounds you with the love and light you need to keep moving through this world in his shadow.”

Nodding, I silently agreed with his statement. “How do I fix the mess I have made of my life, Father? How can I get those I have forsaken to forgive me?” My eyes wandered up to the window, hoping that by some off chance, Aileen would be standing there again.

She wasn’t.

And my heart hurt because of it.

“First, you need to look inside yourself, Oren, and figure out what your heart truly wants. Then, you need to release all that guilt building inside of you. Sometimes, that means revealing things you may need to repent for later.”

Somehow, Father Joseph made perfect sense. In order to repent my sins, I needed to come clean, that meant telling Snyder everything I knew.

“Your eyes say you know the path you need to take in order to find your resolution, my son.”

“I believe I do, Father. Thank you.”

Slowly, we stood, his warm, caring eyes, twinkling in the sun’s bathing light.

“Should that path lead you back here, just remember that bitterness and betrayal are born from the roots of love. Roots run deep, Brother Oren. It takes a lot of poison to kill a root that runs that deep.”

“You’re probably the most philosophical man I know, Father Joseph. Thank you for always blessing me with your guiding light.”

He nodded.

“I will always be here for you, Brother Oren. I just hope you can find the absolution you are searching for.”

Reaching for my phone, I fired off two texts, then pulled up the number for the man who needed absolution of his own. I just hoped he’d forgive me once he realized how much I was actually keeping from him.

Chapter Twenty

Shasta

Another two weeks came and went. It seemed like I was living on the cusp of the fantasy life I always wanted, playing house with a man I didn't deserve, falling easily into the role of girlfriend without the words ever being uttered between us.

Besides small kisses here and there, our relationship moved at a snail's pace, and internally I knew that was my doing.

Guilt was always gnawing at me inside, leaving me desperately grasping at the small tendrils of hope and happiness being around Joe brought me.

But I didn't love him.

Not like he did me.

You could see it in his eyes when he looked at me, that look of complete admiration—a devotion I didn't deserve.

"Babe, want some popcorn?" Joe asked from the kitchen.

"Sure," I said, my thoughts cycling through the men who got me to this moment. I knew what Joe wanted from me. He wanted me to become his... mind... soul... and body. But once I did that, this emotional cheating would turn to physical, and once I crossed that threshold, I knew I would be lost to the Lewd Outlaws forever.

So, why was I still holding on?

Why did I still pine for Snyder from afar and wish for him to randomly show up and claim me as his own? Did I actually want to go back to that lifestyle? Returning to the toxic realm of bikers who lived and breathed death and destruction like it was molded into their DNA?

“Babe, I asked if you wanted water.” Joe’s voice broke through my thoughts, and a mysterious water bottle appeared before my eyes.

“Oh... um... sure...” I said awkwardly.

He sat on the couch next to me, his mouth setting into that familiar frown. “You okay?”

“Not really,” I said, debating on how to bring any of this up.

“What’s going on in that pretty little head of yours?”

I blew out a breath, knowing that this was one conversation that could go south very easily.

My mouth opened, but words got lodged in my throat. *Fuck, why was this so hard?*

“Babe, you’re scaring me. What’s wrong?”

Taking his hand, I gently placed my hand in his massive palm, almost losing it in the cracks and crevices that would be in any palm reader’s wet dreams.

“Joe, I hope you know that I really appreciate everything you’ve done for me and Ramona, and I know your feelings run deep for me, but I don’t think I can be the girl you want me to be. I’m not ready. I know you want to take this relationship and turn it into something more, but I’m just not able to do that right now...”

“That’s okay,” he said softly.

“It is?”

“Absolutely.” He smiled, and the entire thing lit up his face. Every white tooth, every twinkle in those mesmerizing bluish-white eyes, all of it made that chiseled face of his even harder to look at.

“I’m so broken,” I whispered, my voice coming out a hoarse croak.

“And I’m here to fix you,” he said, bending in for a kiss again.

But before his lips had a chance to touch down, Josie came blowing into the room, out of breath and smiling so big you’d think her face was about to split in two.

“Her water broke!” she shouted, right before doing a little dance. “Ramona’s about to have her baby.”

I didn’t even wait for Joe to get up with me. I was on my feet within seconds, racing towards the guest house where my best friend needed me.

Right now, my depressed state of mind would have to wait. My only focus was on Ramona, and the bouncing baby that would soon be part of our little made-up world.

Chapter Twenty-One

Snyder

Arriving at the address Priest provided, I was shocked to find both Axl and Wasp already there, sitting on the steps of a strange house I'd never seen before that was off the highway and sitting amongst the trees.

Priest rode up a few minutes later on his Harley, and the second he was off his bike, the three of us strode up to him, anxious to see what all the secrecy was about.

“Priest, what the fuck is this place?” Wasp asked, looking around the acres of woods that surrounded us.

“My home.”

“Home?” My look of astonishment said it all. “Is this where you've been hiding out?”

He nodded. “Amongst other places, but yes, this is where I usually go to collect my thoughts.”

“Why did you call us here?” Axl asked. His hands were shoved in his pockets, and he was kicking at the dirt with his toe.

“To give you something you've been looking for. Follow me.”

We followed him into the house, looking around at the modest dwelling and all the parts of him that none of us had ever seen.

“Damn, Priest, I never took you for a reader,” Axl said in awe.

The house opened up into a massive living room, one that was wall-to-wall covered in books.

“Have you read all of them?” Wasp asked, fingering a few books on the shelf. He went to pick up one on the shelf that

was displayed differently from the rest, and was opened to a page that was scribbled over with writing.

Priest quickly closed the book, glaring at Wasp.

“I don’t touch your shit, so don’t touch mine.” His eyes narrowed as Wasp held up his hands in defeat.

“Okay, okay, I get it. Don’t touch your shit. Now, are you going to tell us why we’re here or not?”

Priest took the book with him as he moved across the house, stopping at a computer printer that had a few pieces of paper on it.

He clutched them near his chest, took a glance down the page, then handed them to me.

“Here,” he said.

“What’s this?” I questioned, looking down at the page. It was a map, one that led from Austin to some small town in South Dakota.

Priest’s eyes softened. “Before I tell you, I want you to know that the reason I didn’t tell you before was because I was afraid it would only cause more problems for the club.”

He must’ve seen the synapses of recognition flash in my eyes because he took an immediate step back.

“We all fell for her,” he continued. “And we all ruined her.”

He shot Axl an apologetic look. “This part doesn’t exactly pertain to you, but you’ll see how it all lines up in a moment.”

Axl nodded, but my fists were clenching. He didn’t have to tell me anything. I already felt it in my soul the second I saw the name of the town. Platte.

I clutched the paper in my hands, my glare intensifying as my anger bristled across my backbone. “Priest, what is this?”

“It’s a location.”

He shot Wasp another apologetic look. “Her location.” His head swiveled to glance at Axl. “Their location.”

“Fuck!” Wasp growled. “You mean to tell me that you’ve known where the fuck she’s been this whole time, and you didn’t tell anyone?”

Priest shook his head. “No. Not the whole time. But most of it.”

“How?” I growled, the paper crinkling in my hand.

“Through the car I gave her. I found out she sold it in Kansas after she left Texas. I called the dealership, and after a little monetary coaxing, the salesman told me what the VIN# was of the vehicle he sold her. After a few weeks of digging, I finally found out what town they ended up in. I’m sorry, Snyder, I know I shouldn’t have kept this from you, but I really thought I was doing the club a favor.”

Angry tears bit at my eyes. My fingers clenched that paper until the edges started to cut into my skin.

“Why?”

Priest ran a frustrated hand through his hair, the dark locks getting tangled with the cross ring on his finger. “Because she fucked up the club. Everything went to shit when we all started sharing her. I thought we’d be better off without her.”

My hands connected with his chest, sending him flying backwards into one of his bookshelves. Books fell to the ground, and he groaned as he righted his stance, eyes darkening just a tad.

He could probably fucking kill me, but I didn’t fucking care. He knew where she was the whole time, while he watched me suffer without her. That bastard.

He stood up, rubbing at the place I hit him. “I deserved that.”

“Who the fuck do you think you are, Priest?” The tic in my jaw only got worse the longer I clenched it.

“Your brother!” he growled. “Someone who was looking out for his fellow brothers the best he fucking could.”

“And you don’t think holding this from us didn’t cause more problems?” Wasp asked, looking just as agitated as me.

“I realize now the mistake I made, and I’m asking for your forgiveness. You deserve closure. Whether it’s bringing her home to Austin, or leaving her there to fly on her own. You should have the chance to see her and at least confront her one last time. I shouldn’t have held this information from you, Prez. I’m sorry. I truly am.”

My fists clenched, unclenched, then clenched again. I was bordering on a catastrophic meltdown if someone didn’t hold me back.

Axl did.

“Prez, he meant well.”

I shot him an angry glare.

“Well, he did. He was trying to help the club heal from Sabbath’s untimely death, and help her find peace away from the club.”

My nostrils flared in anger. “Are you saying I should just leave her there?”

He shook his head. “No, I’m just saying don’t hate him for trying to fix the club. He was just doing what he thought was best, and like he said, he’s sorry for keeping it from you. You can see the remorse on his face. Give the guy a break. We’re all suffering in some way. Some of us are just better at hiding it than others.”

Priest’s sad eyes hardened.

Yeah, that motherfucker was in pain, too. But I don’t think it was Shasta he was upset over.

“So, why are you giving me this now?”

He shrugged. “It’s time.” He picked up a few books that fell on the floor and put them back on the shelves. “I told you

where they are. What you guys do with it now is up to you.”

Wasp and I shared a look, the same look we gave Axl. We all were in silent agreement... we were going after them.

But the question was, would they return with us, or did we lose them for good?

Priest finished picking up his books, then turned back around to face me. “You can punch me again if you want, but we both know it won’t solve anything.”

He was right.

Punching him helped a bit, but it didn’t fix the anger inside of me, and it only delayed me finding my girl.

“We’ll talk about this later,” I growled, already making my way toward the exit.

“Where are you going?” Axl shouted after me.

I didn’t even bother turning around to look at him or Wasp, I just kept walking, shouting over my shoulder at him, “To get my girl. And if you’re smart, Axl, you’ll get on your fucking bike and come with me to do the same.”

Two sets of heavy boots fell into step behind me, and as I mounted my bike, I shot a look over at Wasp, the determination in his eyes the same as mine. We both were chasing after the same girl, and I couldn’t help but wonder what we were about to ride into?

Would she be happy to see me? Would she be happier to see Wasp? Did she even love me as much as I loved her? Was I making the biggest mistake of my life? Or was I walking into an impossible situation? One where she would end up hating me forever for even bothering to show up, and trying to stake my claim on the heart I yearned for with every breath of my soul.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Shasta

Veins popped out of Ramona's forehead as she gripped my hand, teeth bared, pushing as hard as she could when the doctor told her to. Adrenaline spiked in my body as tears spilled from her eyes, exhaustion taking over.

"I can't do this," she cried.

She had no pain meds. We didn't have time. By the time we got to the hospital, she was already dilated ten centimeters, and the baby's head was crowning.

Josie held a vomit bag near her mouth, and she threw up again, the pain getting worse. When I asked her why she didn't go to the hospital when she started having contractions, she said she thought they were Braxton Hicks. They weren't.

Baby Ramona was ready to enter this world, and Momma was doing her best to bring her here.

"You got this," I encouraged. "Breathe, Ramona." I repeated the breaths the birthing classes told her to make, but her tears wouldn't stop, especially when the doctor asked her to push again.

"Come on, Ramona, one more big push. The baby is almost here."

She practically broke my hand as she bore down again, screaming so loud it hurt my ears. Sweat dripped down her tomato-red face, and she gave it everything she had, almost passing out when the baby's head finally was pushed out.

Seeing the crowning of thick red hair brought tears to my eyes. This was Axl's baby for sure.

"That's it, Ramona, one more push. We got the head out, now we just need to get these shoulders through."

She was so weak, her grip lessening as she tried to stay conscious.

“Stay with me, Ramona. You got this!” I told her, holding her hand even tighter. With all the strength she had left, Ramona pushed one final time, and the baby slid out of her and into the doctor’s arms.

It was the most gruesome, beautiful sight I’d ever bared witness to.

You could hear a pin drop as we anxiously waited for that first cry. Then it happened, and the baby’s cry filled the room, bringing us all to tears.

“You did it, baby!” Josie exclaimed, wiping Ramona’s forehead with a cold towel before bending in to kiss her.

Ramona looked at the doctor. “Doc, is he or she okay?”

The doctor smiled, nodding as the nurses worked to clear the baby’s nose of junk and wrap them in a blanket.

“Your baby is just fine. Would one of you like to cut the umbilical cord?”

Josie looked at me and smiled. “Go ahead, Shasta, you’ve been here longer than me.”

I carefully stepped forward as the doctor handed me the scissors. She showed me where to cut, and I did, my heart beating a million times inside my chest as I made the cut.

“Congratulations, Ramona,” the doctor exclaimed. “You have one very beautiful little girl.”

“Girl?” More tears appeared in her eyes, falling down her face in small rivers. “How did I know she’d be a girl?”

“Because a mother always knows,” a nurse said, placing the baby in Ramona’s awaiting arms. “Do you have a name for her?”

Ramona silently nodded, a look of true love flashed in her eyes as she silently cooed and fussed over her beautiful baby girl. “Summer,” she said without hesitation. “Summer Rayne.”

“That’s beautiful,” I exclaimed. “What made you come up with that name?”

She shrugged. “Because I think I know when she was conceived. It was during a summer storm, and it was one of the few times I actually didn’t mind being with a man. It was romantic, and I truly felt like Axl actually gave a fuck about me.”

“You know he never fucked anyone else, right? You were the only girl he ever slept with.”

She nodded her head. “Yeah, I know. He honestly is a really good guy.”

“So, why didn’t you stay with him?” Josie asked, suddenly looking very out of place.

“Because I’ve always been attracted to women. But if there was one man who sort of changed all that. It was Axl.”

Josie gave a sad nod.

Ramona squeezed her hand. “Hey, don’t worry. I never loved him, Josie. Not like I love you. You’re everything to me.”

Josie smiled just a tad, then shot me a look. “Can you go tell my brother that the baby is here? I can hear him wearing a hole in the floor outside the door.”

“You can hear him?” I questioned.

Josie nodded. “Years of living with him have given me supersonic hearing. I’d know those heavy footsteps anywhere.”

Exiting the delivery room, I found Joe, indeed, wearing a hole in the carpet. He was pacing back and forth, and immediately stopped when he saw me standing there.

“Is she okay?” he asked. “Is the baby okay?”

I nodded, and emotion started overwhelming me again. “They are both great. She’s the proud mama of a beautiful baby girl.”

“Girl? I had a feeling it was a girl.”

He must've seen the emotion in my eyes, because he was in front of me after taking two giant steps, wiping the tears away from the corners of my eyes with the pad of his thumb. “Now the bigger question is, are you okay?”

I started to open my mouth to speak, but suddenly every word failed to reach my tongue, and my entire body went weak.

“Shasta, are you okay?” he asked, though his voice sounded faint and far off in the distance.

I was in a catatonic black hole, one that was completely focused on the man who stood just inside the hospital doors, staring at me with an unmistakable devastation.

Every cell in my body sparked to life, and that familiar pull had me feeling weightless and out of breath.

Before I knew what was happening, my body swayed, and I lost all support of my knees. My body hit the ground, and the second my head connected with the concrete, everything went black.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Snyder

Seeing her in another man's arms made me question everything. We only stopped for gas and to take a piss, foregoing food and rest, just to get to them. We rode through the night on unfamiliar roads, hyped up on energy drinks to keep us going.

I was exhausted, and sleep was creeping in, but I had to see her. She was my only purpose.

The second her body hit the floor, I was on autopilot, rushing forward until I was kneeling by her side, scooping her lifeless body into my arms.

“Shasta, baby,” I whispered, clutching her even closer.

The man next to her stiffened, and I could feel his cold stare penetrating my back.

“Who the fuck are you?” he growled. Like the dude literally snarled at me. He towered over me by at least seven inches, and he was built like a goddamn tank; his shoulders and muscles doubling the size of mine.

Within minutes, Shasta came to, her eyes blinking as she tried to focus on my face. “Snyder?” Her fingers reached up, caressing the scruff on my face, her familiar touch dismantling every part of me. “Yeah, baby, it's me.”

“How is this possible?” she whispered. “Am I dreaming?”

“No, you're not dreaming.”

There was a large lump on the back of her head, one that I could feel with the palm of my hand. “Nurse, we need some help here,” I shouted as a nurse rushed past.

Stopping only to assess the situation, the nurse kept going, shouting over her shoulder, “I need a stretcher!”

Two minutes later, they had Shasta loaded up, wheeling her down the hall toward the emergency room.

I was hot on her heels, but so was the big burly ape that was previously touching my woman.

They wheeled her into a room, shutting the door so neither one of us could enter. For a moment, we just stood there in silence, staring at the door as it swung shut, blocking her from our view.

That silence was broken by the clearing of his throat, and another guttural growl that was actually very intimidating. "I'm not going to ask you again," he snapped. "Who the fuck are you?"

Sadly, I looked up at him, noting the jealousy and protection in his voice. It was obvious that Shasta had moved on, and this man was the man who had claimed her.

"Just a man from her past," I said sadly. "One that deeply regrets letting her go."

His eyes were a strange ice-blue and seemed to darken the longer we stared at each other.

"Yeah, is that so?"

He didn't intimidate me. The only thing intimidating in that moment was the bond the two of them shared. It seemed so genuine and unbreakable.

"Yes," I mumbled, doing my best to keep my temper.

"And why exactly are you here?" His voice dropped two octaves, and you could tell his tone was meant to be a warning. *Don't touch what's mine.*

"To bring her back to Austin."

His hand curled by his side, turning into massive fists.

"Over my dead body," he growled as concern turned to rage in his tone.

But the click of a gun had him second guessing starting something with me, as did Wasp's cold voice as he gritted out the words. "That can be arranged."

Chapter Twenty-Four

Clash

The chair stood no chance against my Hulk-like rage. Picking the fragile thing up, I hurled it across the room, watching in sick satisfaction as it fractured and splintered from the blow.

“Clash, calm the fuck down!” Skid yelled.

Rage consumed me as I grabbed a table by its edges, flipping it violently until it was on its back. One of the sweet butts screamed, and quickly fled the room, but I was seeing too much red to notice which girl it was. “Calm down! You’re asking me to calm down? Three of our men just up and drove off in the middle of the night, one of them was our fucking so-called Prez, all to chase after the two bitches responsible for tearing this club apart, and you’re asking me to calm down? Why aren’t you angrier?” I turned to face all my brothers who were standing there staring at me like I completely lost my mind.

“All of you should be in an uproar over this shit! And you!” I growled, turning on Priest. “This is your fucking fault! You should’ve kept your stupid mouth shut. The club was just starting to piece itself back together, and now we’re all fractured again.”

Priest shrugged his shoulders. “We were still fractured, Clash. We just got good at hiding it.”

“Yeah, well, I was ready to move on from all this shit. Now he’s God only knows where, attempting to bring back the temptress that destroyed our club. What if she comes back, huh? Are we all just going to welcome her back with open arms, singing Kumbaya by the campfire as we become one big, fucked up polyamorous family? Because frankly, I’m not interested in re-kindling anything with her. I got enough

bitches around here to satisfy any craving for pussy I may have.”

“You sound like Sabbath,” Ranger exclaimed.

“Shut the fuck up, Ranger. You know as well as I do that the second that girl returns; all hell is going to suddenly break loose again.”

“May—maybe not,” Sandman stuttered from his chair. “Sabb—Sabbath was the r—root of all the tr—trouble, not her.”

Turning to Skid, I smirked. “Tell that to Warrant.”

Skid glared at me. “Watch your mouth, Clash.”

Rolling my eyes, I returned to my soapbox with my chest puffed out and a true purpose. “If Shasta Hall returns to this club, it’s going to be a big mistake. Wherever that girl goes, trouble follows.”

Ranger cleared his throat. “There wouldn’t have been any trouble if you had just let her and Snyder sneak around and not try to throw your dick into the mix as well. You’re just as much to blame for the trouble in the club as she is. If not more. Hell, if you had left them alone, maybe none of this would’ve happened at all. Warrant would still be alive, and we could’ve overthrown Sabbath the proper way, stripping him of his rank and patch, instead of dismembering his miserable corpse and scattering it all over Austin.”

Waving him off, I continued my rant. “I’m just saying that bringing her back will be a huge mistake. We had our fun. She left the club. Why kick a dead horse?”

“Because Snyder actually loves her,” Priest answered. “And in order for him to lead this club, he needed closure. That’s why I gave him her location. They all needed to figure this shit out for the sake of the club.”

In a fit of frustration, I threw up my hands. “Forsaking the club in the process. This is bullshit and you all know it. Our Prez abandoned us when we needed him the most, taking two

of our men with him. What happens if the Crows decide to attack us now, huh? Do you think we even have a fighting chance with three of our members missing?”

Skid took a step forward and cleared his throat. “Maybe I can help with that a little?”

All eyes turned to him as he pulled out his phone and fired off a text.

“Who the hell are you texting, Skid?”

My eyes narrowed as an amused smile quirked the corners of his mouth.

“Some reinforcements,” he said cryptically, just as his phone pinged with a reply.

“Well, while you fuckers figure all this shit out, I’m going for a goddamn ride.”

“Yeah, you need to cool off,” Ranger agreed. “Go take a ride, and clear your head.”

In an angry huff, I stomped from the room, pissed off that my club was so eager to follow a man that was quick to abandon us all. He left us for a girl? Who the fuck does that to their own brothers? He didn’t deserve that patch on his chest, and the way everyone kept backing him was maddening.

For twenty minutes, I found myself lost on the open road, doing my best to keep my head even though I was on the verge of losing it all.

My tank needed a splash, so I pulled into a gas station parking lot to fill up, and maybe grab something to eat.

The man behind the counter greeted me when I entered, but his eyes were trained on the head of a small boy who was awkwardly staring at the candy bars in the candy section.

I grabbed a drink and a bag of chips, then rounded the corner to get a *Snickers* bar when I saw the kid grab a bag of *Skittles* and shove it into his pants. He then grabbed a granola

bar and did the same, stuffing at least seven things of food in his shirt and pants before eyeing the door.

The guy behind the counter and I shared a look, both of us knowing he was about to run.

He couldn't have been more than five or six, and was seriously about to rob the store of all its sweets. Where were his parents? Why was he alone?

“Hey, kid, you gonna pay for all that?” I asked.

He jumped at the sound of my voice, cowering just a tad when his small eyes rounded and his gaze traveled my long legs up to my face.

A bag of chips plopped out of his shirt, and tears instantly formed in his eyes. You could tell that this was probably the first and only time he'd ever tried to steal something.

“Hey, don't cry. Where's your mom?”

The kid sniffed. “Around the corner behind the big dumpster.”

I fell to a knee, meeting the kid at eye level. “Does she know you're here?”

He shook his head. “My mommy doesn't sleep much anymore, so I didn't want to wake her up because I was hungry.” He frowned. “I'm sorry, Mister. I wanted to pay, but I'm so hungry and have no money.”

“I'll tell you what, Kid. How about I pay for all this food, and maybe even something for your mom? That way, the man behind the counter stays happy, and you don't get into trouble, does that sound okay?”

“Okay.” He rubbed at his nose. It was red and dripping snot. He looked malnourished and a bit sickly, like he hadn't eaten in weeks.

After paying for the kid's pocketed food, I followed him out of the store, holding a cup of coffee for his mom and a banana muffin, which he said was her favorite.

We came to a stop by a big dumpster that was propped up behind an old building. There was a large cardboard box back there and a set of feet hanging out of it, covered by a tattered and ripped blanket.

“Mommy, I got us food!” the little boy shouted.

The feet began to stir, then the box started to move as a woman backed out, her mouth dropping when she saw me standing there with her son.

“Alex, what did you do?”

“Nothing, Mommy. I was hungry and this nice man bought us food. He got you coffee and your favorite muffin, and I got some Skittles!”

The woman stared up at me with curious eyes, but it was hard to see her underneath all the dirt and grime all over her face. Her hair was matted and dirty, and she seemed frightened, cold, and standoffish.

“Hi,” I said, handing her the coffee.

She eyed my cut, then grimaced, but she took the coffee from me without hesitation.

“Thank you, but you really didn’t have to do that.”

“Actually, I did. Your son was about to shoplift if I didn’t step in.”

Her eyes widened. “Alex, what were you thinking? You know better than that!”

His smile faded into a frown. “I was hungry, Mommy. I’m sorry. I was going to pay the man back after I found enough pennies on the street.”

She frowned, looking up at me with nothing but guilt and shame in her eyes. Then she just broke down, clutching her son so tight he could barely breathe.

“Don’t cry again, Mommy. It’ll be okay. Look at all this yummy food! We won’t have to eat from dumpsters today.”

The woman's eyes were filled with despair and loss. She silently begged me not to judge her for their situation, but who was I to pass judgment on a single mom just trying to survive in this world?

"Thank you for the food," she whispered. "That was a nice thing for you to do."

I shrugged. "What can I say? I have a soft spot for kids with toothy grins and SpongeBob T-shirts."

"It's his favorite shirt."

Alex laughed. "Mommy, it's my only shirt."

She went stark still as she warily looked back up at me, the shame returning, her shoulders slouching in defeat.

Everything from earlier quickly faded away, and something came over me that I couldn't quite explain. It was a carnal need to protect and shelter them, to give them everything they needed to survive.

"Pack your things," I demanded, giving the woman a stern look.

The woman's tear-filled eyes met mine, and she suddenly looked very afraid.

"Excuse me?"

"It's supposed to drop below freezing tonight, and there's no way in hell I'm going to let the two of you stay out here in the cold. So, pack your things."

The woman looked like a deer in headlights. "I don't understand. I don't even know who you are."

"Look, lady, your son is cold and hungry and you both look like you haven't showered in weeks. I got a big loft with plenty of room, food, and a nice hot shower calling your name. So, come on and take my hospitality for what it is before I suddenly have a change of heart."

"I don't understand..." she said weakly. "Why are you helping us? You don't even know who we are."

I shrugged again. “Like I said before, I guess I have a soft spot for kids with toothy grins and SpongeBob T-shirts.”

She gave her son a look, then nodded. “Okay, but just for one night.”

Nodding, I pulled my phone out and ordered a Lyft. There was no way both of them could fit on my bike.

“What’s your name?” she asked, falling into step behind me.

“The name’s Chuck, but most people just call me Clash.”

She eyed my cut curiously, then softly said, “I’m Gina, and this is my son Alex.”

Alex gave me a toothy grin, one that broke down every hard wall I erected around my heart. “Mister, do you have a TV?”

“I do,” I said with a smile. “A big one.”

The boy’s face lit up. “Mommy, did you hear that? The man says he has a TV! I can watch SpongeBob again.”

Gina laughed, but you could still see the shame in her eyes. “Well, maybe if you’re a real good boy, he’ll let you watch some SpongeBob.”

Alex shot me the biggest smile, one that tugged on every heart string I had. Something told me I’d let this kid watch all the SpongeBob in the world if he asked for it.

What I couldn’t understand was how one kid and his mother could suddenly make a cold heart like mine, feel so soft and spongy?

I’ll have to drink a lot of beer and fuck a massive amount of pussy to make up for this marshmallow Hail Mary I’m throwing their way.

Clash is definitely not a good-doer... unless you’re talking about in bed, because in that aspect I’m definitely good at “doing her”.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Shasta

My head was pounding as the bright lights swarmed my vision. I was on my back on a stretcher, in some room I didn't know.

"Where am I?" I questioned, attempting to sit up but failing miserably at it.

"You're in the ER," a woman said as she was checking my vitals. "You passed out and hit your head."

Memories of that moment came rushing back, and I had a dry tongue again. Snyder was here... he was actually here.

I wasn't sure if I should feel frightened or euphoric about that thought. Parts of me were over the moon that he cared enough about me to seek me out, but the other part of me dreaded why he was here. Would he drag me away? Would he demand I return with him?

"There are a few men outside that seemed to be very concerned about you," the woman stated, a hint of jealousy was evident in her tone. "Shall I send them in?"

"Can you just send one of them in?"

She nodded her head. "Which one are you requesting?"

My head swayed like a teeter-totter, moving between Snyder and Joe, wondering which way I should lean. Even though the decision was supposed to be difficult, the answer came way too easily.

"Reese."

She gave me another quick nod, then left me alone to go search for Snyder.

Anxiety rolled through me as I thought about him being here. Was I happy to see him? Every part of me screamed yes.

Was I dreading the reasons behind his sudden arrival? Well, maybe a little.

He appeared a few seconds later, his blue eyes just as vibrant as the day they melted my heart.

“Hey there,” he said, falling into a chair he placed beside my bed.

“Hey yourself,” I replied, looking shyly down at the blanket.

“I’m sorry you hurt your head.” He gently caressed the bump forming behind my hair.

“It’s okay. I never expected to see you again.”

He took my hand, and all those familiar bubbly feelings returned. “Why is that?”

My head weakly looked toward the clock on the wall, doing whatever I could not to meet his eyes—eyes so beautiful that a girl could get lost in them.

“Because I thought you didn’t care about me.”

He sighed. “I would’ve been here sooner had I known where you went before now.”

“How did you find me?”

“Priest followed your trail of breadcrumbs. They led us right to you.”

He had to be talking about the car.

I wonder how easy it was for them to bribe that slimy salesman to give over the information?

“Are you mad that I’m here?”

My shoulders lifted in indifference. “I’m not sure, Reese. Parts of me are happy that you’re here. Other parts of me want you to go away.”

He hung his head in shame, kissing the back of my hand with those soft lips of his. “I didn’t come alone...”

Oh god. Please no. I can't handle them all being here. It's not what I want!

“Wasp came with me, and Axl too.”

Relaxing just a tad, I sank even further into the comforting softness of the linens on the bed. “Did you come to take me back?”

He held my gaze, and I already knew the answer before he even said it.

“Yes,” he said, sadly. “But I can see you’ve already started to move on.”

Shifting, I turned to face him. “Do you mean Joe?”

“I see the way he looks at you, Shasta. It’s the same way I look at you. Sometimes, I even see a hint of it in Wasp’s eyes. He loves you, doesn’t he?”

“He says that he does.”

Snyder looked mortally wounded. “And do you love him?”

My eyes met his gaze, noticing the tears pooling around his iris, refusing to fall.

“I think I could love him eventually...” My voice trailed off, and I had to force myself to look at him again.

“But do you love him now?”

Shaking my head, I let go of his hand, overwhelmed by the conflicted feelings I was having. “I honestly don’t know. He makes me feel safe, and we have a lot of fun together.”

The corners of his mouth twitched into a frown. The fact that he was here, doing whatever he could to fight for me, said more to me than words ever could. My hands found their way to his cheeks, and I forced him to look up at me. “But he’s not you.”

There’s that smile I loved so much.

“I haven’t stopped thinking about you since I got here, Reese. Even in my darkest moments, my thoughts always

come back to you. You and I have something pretty special, but I can't be the club's Ol' Lady. I don't want that. We both know that most of them only slept with me to get a piece. Some didn't even want me at all. And others... well, they aren't sure what they want. But I do."

"And what's that?"

"To belong to someone. To be with someone who only wants to be with me and is going to treasure and love me and all my fucked up flaws."

He took my hand again, kissing the back of it with his sweet lips. "Shasta, I haven't been with another woman since you left me. My thoughts are always with you... wondering how you are, and if you are even happy. I only agreed to sharing you because I thought it was what you wanted. That shit fucking killed me inside. I've been in love with you for as long as I can remember... before the flirty winks... before the growing bond even started to kindle between us. When another man touched you, I died a bit inside. I left my club just to find you, because living without you has been a fucking death sentence for me. I know I don't deserve your forgiveness for asking what I did of you, but please believe me when I say that my only purpose in this world is to bring you happiness. If that meant sharing you with the others, men I know you care about, so be it. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make you happy."

The man was always so good with his words, and my fingers combed through his familiar blond locks, finding comfort in those big blue eyes.

"Even if it means leaving me here, and never coming back?"

He nodded, but you could tell it killed him to do so. "If leaving you here will bring you happiness, then yes. I'll walk out that door right now, leaving my heart behind, knowing that I'm doing what I have to in order for you to find peace."

He searched my eyes for answers and found nothing but blank blinks and indecision.

We both fell into an uncomfortable silence, and before either of our voices could break it, a familiar one cut in, making my head automatically snap his way.

“Hey, Little Minx, how have you been?”

Chapter Twenty-Six

Wasp

I knew I had lost the battle before I ever entered the room. There was something about their relationship that just seemed unbreakable.

Her wide eyes met mine, and she faked a small smile, one I could see right through. She didn't want me here, nor did she need me anymore.

"Hey," she said, dropping her hand from Snyder's. A look of guilt skimmed her eyes, like I was going to punish her for loving him.

That was one punishment even I wouldn't enjoy, unfortunately.

"I just saw the baby," I informed them. "She's got Axl's hair."

Snyder nodded. "I had a feeling the baby wasn't Clash's. Has Axl seen them yet?"

I nodded, reliving that awkward moment when Axl and I suddenly appeared in the delivery room and a look of sheer horror fell over Ramona's face. Unlike Shasta, she didn't seem happy to see us. You could see the fear in her eyes—it was an emotion I knew all too well.

"How's Ramona doing with him being here?" Snyder questioned.

I shrugged, refusing to budge from the doorframe. I knew where I stood in her world, and coming here to fight for her was a mistake.

"Can I talk to Wasp alone?" she asked, her big brown eyes meeting mine.

“Sure,” Snyder agreed, but you could see him hesitating to move. Finally, he did, giving us space.

Moving to the chair next to her, I took her hand, forcing myself to smile even though I knew I was losing her.

“Thank you for coming,” she said, staring deep into my eyes. That submissive look was gone, and I could see a strength that wasn’t there before.

“Did I ever have a chance?” I asked, chuckling

“Honestly?”

We both laughed, obviously sensing the tension in the room. I was an idiot for even thinking I remotely had a shot with her. Not when someone like Snyder already held her heart.

“Probably not,” she said, patting my hand. “You’re a good man, Wasp, but I don’t think I’m the right woman for you.”

I knew she was right, but it didn’t stop the bitterness that filled me. Moving my hand away, I slunk back in my chair, trying my best not to be an asshole.

“Are you going to come back with us?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I like it here. It’s safe, and there isn’t any drama.”

Laughing, I called her bluff. “The big burly dude in the waiting room says otherwise, Shasta. We both know that he’s in love with you.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“The question is, do you love him?”

She shook her head. “I care for him deeply, but no, I’m not in love with him.”

“But you are in love with Snyder?”

She sighed, then weakly bobbed her head. “Yes, and that’s why all of this is so damn confusing. I don’t want to return to that life, Wasp. It scares me.”

I couldn't blame her there. At times, it scared me too. Especially with the Crows reforming.

"Then you need to decide what will make you happier, Shasta. Returning to that life and having Snyder by your side, or staying here and keeping safe with that big, burly beast out there."

"Ramona won't leave," she mumbled, changing the subject. "I don't think I can leave her, not when she just had the baby."

"She looked like she has help."

"She does. Josie loves her very much." She didn't need to cover her mouth and pretend like she just divulged a secret to me. I already knew how much Ramona loved pussy. I was the one that fed those cravings and filled all her deep, dark desires.

"It's okay, Shasta, I already knew."

She relaxed just a tad. "Oh yeah... that night with you, her, and Keelie..."

We were cut off by a doctor entering the room. They told her that she was free to go and all her vitals and blood work looked okay.

"You can take her home," the doctor stated as he started to leave the room. "Right after she signs her discharge paperwork."

Shasta glanced my way, and I could see the wheels turning in her head. *Home...* we both knew she's questioning just where that is. Was it back in Austin with Snyder and the Lewd Outlaws again? Or was it here, deep in the heart of South Dakota, with that big bear of a man who was obsessed with her? We both know that home is wherever your heart is, and the only thing I knew for sure was that heart didn't belong to me.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Shasta

Snyder had a motel room just outside of town, so I told him I'd meet him there after I was done talking to Ramona and someone else that was waiting to hear from me.

Joe's sad eyes met mine when Snyder and Wasp helped me out of the ER room. He looked so lost, almost like he needed me to survive.

I felt like I was disappointing him in some way, and maybe deep down I was, but I couldn't help feeling a stronger pull to Snyder, the man who would give his last breath to me if he could.

Snyder gave my hand a squeeze, then disappeared through the hospital doors, leaving me alone with Joe.

"So, was that him?"

I stared at him curiously. "Who?"

"The man who has your heart?"

Unsure of how to answer, I simply nodded my head.

His fists immediately curled by his sides, but he unclenched them when he saw the fear it was creating in me.

"Hey, don't look at me like that... please," he begged, stepping forward until those massive hands were gently gripping my shoulders.

"Like what?"

"Like you're afraid of me. Please, I hate that look. I've seen that look far too much in my lifetime, and I never want to see it on your face, Shasta."

God, why was this man so perfect? He should be the one I want to be with. He was so uncomplicated, so docile.

Everything would be so much easier if I hadn't fallen in love with a Lewd Outlaw.

"I just don't want to hurt you, Joe."

"Then pick me, Shasta. Choose the man that's not going to drag you into a world you don't want to go back to."

He made so much sense.

He was the logical choice... the one that should be the right answer. But he wasn't my answer.

My answer had soft lips, and eyes so blue you'd think you were looking at the ocean. My answer had a heart that burned only for me, and he didn't even look at other girls... not like Sabbath.

"It's not that easy, Joe. I wish I could say it was, but it's complicated. I told you before that I was broken and you should just forget about me."

He gripped my cheeks, grasping at invisible straws to keep me close to him. "I fucking love you," he said, those ice-blue eyes darkening in a way I'd never seen before. It made my blood run cold, and I had to back away, too afraid of the danger I saw in those eyes.

"There it is again!" he shouted. "You're afraid of me."

"No, Joe... I just."

"BULLSHIT!" he yelled. "I can see it in your eyes, Shasta. You fear me. I've given you everything, and for some damn reason, you're afraid of me. Why? Why can't you just give me a chance?"

He was losing control, and he started huffing out quick breaths. Each one made him seem larger and even more intimidating.

"Because I love him, Joe. That's why I can't give you a chance. I wish I could give you what you want from me, but I just can't. I'm a broken person, and the only time I feel at

peace and slightly put together is when I'm in that man's arms."

His scowl turned into a frown, finally hearing what I had to say.

"I'm thankful for everything you have done for me, and I want to keep you in my life, but I can't love you like you want me to, Joe, not when my heart belongs to him."

He ran a frustrated hand through his dark locks, turmoil burning vibrant in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Shasta, but if I can't be with you, I can't be there for you. It just hurts too much."

He started to walk away, leaving me even more of a mess than I anticipated. *Why was this so fucking hard for me?*

"Joe, please. You're one of my best friends. I can't lose you."

He gave me a sad pathetic look, one that broke me in two. He looked like a wounded animal, one that was wandering the woods, lost and alone.

"I wish friendship was enough for me, Shasta. But it's just not. I hope he gives you everything you want in this world, because I would've given you the world if you asked for it." And without another word, Joe stormed out of the hospital, leaving me alone with my own conflicted emotions, and even more doubt if I was making the right choice.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Axl

She definitely wasn't happy to see me. Ramona's mouth dropped open in shock when I entered the doorway, and out of fear, she shielded the child, as if she was protecting them from me.

I would never hurt her.

I would never hurt either of them.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, looking from me, and then to Wasp, who was standing next to me.

How we picked the exact day she gave birth to show up in Platte, is beyond me. But there she was, holding a tiny baby in her arms, one whose bright red hair peeked out from beneath the little beanie it wore.

"I came to find you," I answered, looking from her to the sweet baby in her arms. I didn't need her to tell me that the baby was mine, I felt it in my bones.

"Why?"

"You know why, Ramona."

The girl standing next to her was clutching Ramona's hand, holding it in a way I wished I could. I always had a feeling that Ramona was hiding something, and now I knew what... her sexuality. She was gripping this girl like she was her everything, and it was obvious that was something I'd never be.

But that didn't change the way I felt about her. Over the course of three years, I'd fallen madly and deeply in love with the woman, and now we shared a baby together, a baby she was still clutching close to her chest, desperately trying to protect them from me.

Wasp cleared his throat. “Well, I’m feeling slightly awkward now. It’s obvious the baby’s not mine, so before I make a fool out of myself, I’m just going to take my exit and go find Shasta. That’s the real reason I’m here.”

Ramona didn’t even smile, she just kept looking at me like I was the grim reaper coming to take her life. I wish she wouldn’t look at me like that.

“Is the baby mine?”

Ramona glanced down at the baby in her arms, then unraveled the blanket, showing off the most beautiful little face. Instantly, I was in love.

“Yes,” she said quietly. “She’s yours.”

“It’s a girl?”

She nodded again. “I named her Summer Rayne.”

My thoughts drifted back to that day we lost ourselves to the rain. She was all over me that day. Her feverish kisses still haunted my dreams. It was one of the few times she ever opened up to me. We laughed so much, and even cried together when we both came clean about our pasts.

It’s why I didn’t follow Ratt to the Crows. I knew what Sabbath and Leppard were capable of. They literally kidnapped her off the streets and held her at the club against her will. She was a prisoner... one that I had no idea about until she finally told me.

“I like that name,” I said quietly, meeting her eyes. “Can I hold her?” I asked, my fingers itching to get my hands on my daughter and meet her for the first time.

“Will you give her back?” There was a seriousness to her tone, and I felt bad that she was that afraid of me taking her.

“Despite what you think of me, Ramona, I would never take our baby away from you.”

Reluctantly, she lifted the baby up, offering her to me like some cult sacrifice. “Just don’t hurt her.”

“Never,” I breathed out, tears instantly moving over my eyes as my daughter was gently placed in my arms. I couldn’t hide the love I was feeling in that moment, or the sense of pride that washed over me when she smiled and cooed at the same time. “She’s so beautiful,” I murmured, nuzzling her little fingers as they curled around one of mine. “She’s perfect.”

Ramona blushed. “I think so too.”

The girl next to her tried to remove her hand, but Ramona was gripping it still, holding on to her for dear life.

“This is Josie,” Ramona said, introducing us.

Eyes the color of newly fallen snow met mine, taking my breath away for the briefest of seconds. She must’ve felt the zing too, because she sucked in an intake of breath, and then shyly smiled.

“Nice to meet you,” she said kindly. “Though I’m not sure of your name.”

“Darren,” I said, my focus returning to my daughter. “But my club calls me Axl.”

“I’m not going back, Axl,” Ramona quickly said, breaking my concentration. “I won’t go back.”

My head shot up to look at her, and the second I did, she frowned.

“I’m in love with Josie, and I’ve fallen in love with this town. I don’t want to raise our daughter in a club full of bikers. I want to raise her here where it’s safe...”

I wanted that too. But leaving the Outlaws wasn’t really an option for me. Not when I just took on the rank of Secretary and stepped into Warrant’s shoes.

Before I could respond, Shasta flounced into the room. She looked completely wrecked with her smeared makeup and tears silently streaming down her face.

The second Ramona saw her, she straightened, her mouth falling into a frown.

“Shasta? What’s wrong?”

“I’ve messed everything up, Ramona. I don’t know what to do. The last thing I wanted was to hurt Joe, but the second I saw Snyder... I knew... he’s the only man I wanted to be with.”

Josie gasped. “Shit! Did you already tell my brother that?”

Shasta nodded.

“Fuck, I need to go find him before he does something stupid. I’ll be back, babe. Don’t go anywhere.” They shared a hot as hell kiss, one that had my dick instantly hard.

Ramona’s focus returned to Shasta, and mine was back on my little Summer Rayne.

“Is that what you want, Shasta? To return to that life?”

Shasta shook her head. “All I want is to be with him.”

Ramona nodded in understanding, but then she looked sad again. “I can’t go back, Shasta. I won’t. I’m building a life here with Josie, and this is where I want to raise my family. I’m finally in touch with my parents again, and my life is finally starting to piece itself back together. If you go back, you’ll have to go alone.”

Shasta let out a sob. “I would never ask you to come back with me, Ramona. You belong here with Josie.” She shot me an apologetic look. “Sorry, Axl. I know you probably don’t want to hear that, but it’s true.”

She was right, I didn’t want to hear it, but I also knew that our daughter deserved a good life, one that wasn’t full of corruption and destruction.

“I know.”

Ramona’s head slowly lifted to look up at me, and I met her uncertain gaze.

“I won’t ask you to go back with me, Ramona, but I will ask you to let me stay. At least for a little while. I love you and our daughter. I know you’ll never share those type of feelings for me, but please don’t ask me to go. I grew up without a father, and I don’t want that same fate for Summer. I want to be there for her... for both of you... for all of you if you let me. You should know by now that I’m not like the others in the club. I will protect you until the day I die. Just don’t force me to walk out on my own daughter, I don’t think I’m mentally or emotionally able to do that. I’m already madly and deeply in love with her.”

Summer let out a little cry, and I gently placed her back in Ramona’s arms. She then looked up at me, those big brown eyes studying me very intently.

“As long as you can promise me that you won’t bring any danger to me or our daughter, then yes, Axl, you can stay. I’d never purposely try to keep Summer from you, I just want to protect and keep her safe.”

I wasn’t sure how to tell the club my decision, but without hesitating, I shrugged off my cut, and held it out for Shasta to take.

“Give this to Snyder for me and tell him I’m sorry. But my daughter means more to me than the club ever will.”

It was the first time Ramona had ever smiled at me without frowning at the same time.

God, I felt so naked without my cut, and even though I knew it was impossible to leave a biker club, I wasn’t about to abandon my daughter or her mother when they needed me the most.

Shasta took my cut, then smiled. “They keep losing good ones,” she whispered, patting me on the back. “But we all know this is where you belong right now.”

“And you? Where do you belong, Shasta?”

She looked out the window, staring at the big blue sky with white wisps of clouds, and big beautiful mountains off in the

distance.

“I belong wherever my heart rides.”

She clutched my cut against her chest, then looked back at Ramona. “If I leave again, I’ll make sure to come say goodbye.”

Ramona nodded. “You better, or I’ll hunt you down myself, woman.”

The two girls giggled, then gave each other a hug, just as Josie rushed back into the room.

“Is he gonna be okay?” Shasta asked, looking morally conflicted.

Josie shrugged. “He will be... with time... the man has been through this before. Eventually, he’ll find the right person, one that will accept him and love him for who he truly is.”

Shasta weakly nodded, and excused herself from the room, obviously ready to mend her own fences that were damaged beyond repair.

When we were all alone. Josie eyed my leather lacking body and smirked. “I have so many questions.”

“Axl is going to stay here for a while. He wants to be a part of Summer’s life.”

Josie eyed me curiously, her eyes perusing every inch of me until they landed on the bulge in my pants. She licked her lips, then went back to looking at Ramona.

God, my soul felt like it was being devoured by the cool ice of her eyes, and as she bent down to give Ramona another kiss, I had to slightly adjust my pants. The girl was fucking sexy as hell and seeing her with Ramona made their relationship that much hotter. Too bad I didn’t have a chance with either one of them, because that’s one sandwich this slab of beef would love to be in.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Snyder

When an hour had passed and Shasta still didn't show up at the motel, I thought I was waiting for a ghost. She had every right to not come. I wouldn't blame her if she ran again, leaving me lusting after her for the rest of my life.

It would be the smart thing for her to do. Returning to Austin was almost like a death sentence in a way. With the Crows returning, there was so much uncertainty of the future.

A soft knock wrapped against my door, and a visible lump appeared in my chest, almost as if I was swallowing my own hope and guilt at the same time.

She stood on the other side of the door, holding a cut in her hands... Axl's cut.

Fuck.

"He asked me to give you this," she said quietly. "Ramona won't leave, and he wants to be here for his daughter."

The faded leather felt heavy in my hands, and I fingered our logo on the back of it, wondering how I was going to explain this to everyone else... especially Clash.

"You're not going to kill him, are you?"

My head snapped up to look at her. "No. Why would I?"

"Because once you become a Lewd Outlaw, you can't leave, not unless you want a bullet in your head."

"That was Sabbath's and Leppard's rules, Shasta. We're trying to make this a different club."

"Are you going to let him go?"

"If he wants to stay, I'm not going to take him away from his child. That wouldn't be fair to him."

“Are you going to force Ramona to come back?”

“No. After everything she’s been through, she deserves to live a life where she’s not bound to the club. Every sweet butt and member had a chance to walk away, and Ramona is no different. Clash only said what he did because he was afraid it was his baby.”

She frowned.

“And me? Are you going to force me to come back with you?”

I cupped her cheek, staring deep into those big brown eyes that were my whole damn world. “No, Shasta. I would never force you to come back with me. If you come back, I want it to be because it’s your choice, not one where you felt like I was forcing your hand.”

A tear dripped down her cheek.

“I’m scared to go back, Snyder. Everything there reminds me of the past—a past I want to forget and move away from permanently.”

My thumb traced every tear, soaking up her sorrow until it was imbedded into every track of my thumb print.

“Do you want to stay here?”

“Would you stay with me?”

I shook my head, knowing I still had too many loose ends to clear up back in Austin. “Shasta, as much as I would love to stay with you and leave that world behind, I just can’t.”

She looked down at my chest, tracing the familiar patch that was now stitched to my cut.

“I knew they’d want you to fill his shoes.”

I took her trembling hand, bringing her fingers up to my lips and moving them over my pout.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered, knowing what seeing that title would do to her. “They wouldn’t follow anyone else.”

Another tear tracked down her face, and I drew her against me, squeezing her so tight, I was surprised she could breathe.

“I don’t know if I’m strong enough to be that girl again, Reese.” She pulled away from me, staring deep into my eyes. “I’m not sure when I fell in love with you, but sometime, over the course of our time together, you’ve become my person.”

“As you have become mine.”

She gulped down a sob. “I want to believe that you and I can overcome anything, but I won’t be shared, by you or with anyone else. If you and I are to be together, I need you to promise me that it will just be you and me. No other guys. Definitely no other girls. Just us.”

“Shasta, I told you before, I never wanted to share you. I was only doing what I thought you wanted.”

Shaking her head, she buried it against my chest. “I just wanted it to be over. And now that it is. I just want you.”

Lifting her chin, I placed a gentle kiss against her lips, falling victim to her seductive powers once again. “Then you will have me. Just you. No one else. I promise.”

“Then I’ll go back with you. Just promise me things will change, that there won’t be anymore torment or drama.”

I had to tell her. If I didn’t, and she found out, then she’d hate me for keeping secrets.

“I can’t promise that, Shasta.”

“Why not?”

“Because Ratt left the club, along with Jackyl and Floyd, and they’re now part of the Crows.”

“But how is that possible? The Crows are all dead.”

“Apparently, someone didn’t die.”

A look of genuine fear devastated her eyes. “Hoax?”

“We don’t know, but that’s why I have to return. I need to see this through and protect my club.”

She worried her lip with her teeth, and I gently tugged it away. “If that’s too much for you, I understand, and if you want to stay, I won’t blame you one bit for it. It’ll devastate me, but I won’t hate you for it.”

Another tear tracked down her face. “I only feel safe with you, Reese.”

She rested her head against my chest, and I kissed the top of her head. “And I vow to protect you as long as I can, Shasta. Even if that means leaving you here.”

She took my hand, lacing our fingers together. “You’re worth the risk, Snyder. I don’t want to lose you again. I’ve been so lost without you.”

Her words mirrored my own, words that I’ve been repeating over and over again since she left me at the hospital. I’ve thought of that day ever since. How she ran out of that room and didn’t look back. How my life was nothing without her.

“Okay,” she whispered, breaking the silence in the room. “I’ll come back to Austin with you.”

“Really?”

“Yes, but only on one condition?”

“What’s that?”

She led me to the bed, patting the mattress next to her until we were both eye level. “That we don’t live in the clubhouse. I want my own place, somewhere away from the sweet butts and the rest of the club. If we’re going to go back, I will only do it if we don’t stay there. There are just too many triggering memories, and I wouldn’t feel safe living there again.”

She had no idea that I already had a special place just for us. After seeing Clash’s secret loft, and hearing about Sandman’s secret property, I wanted a place of my own. Somewhere I could raise a family and not have to worry about it interfering with my club.

“Done.”

The smile that lit up her face warmed my heart, and it quickly turned animalistic as she removed the shirt covering her chest, exposing herself to me.

“What are you doing?” I asked, knowing exactly what her devious plans were.

“Tempting you,” she said with a little snicker. “I haven’t had a man in over five months.”

I found that hard to believe with the massive dude in the hospital lobby, chasing after her.

“There were points where I found myself emotionally cheating on you, doing whatever I could to forget and placate these feelings I have for you. But he wasn’t you. Nobody makes me feel the way you do, Reese.”

My hands traveled over her exposed skin, toying with the cups of her bra that were leaving the mounds of her breasts exposed.

“Make love to me, Reese. Show me what it’s like to truly be loved by an Outlaw.”

My hand worked its way into her hair, and I slowly lowered her down onto the bed, removing my shirt so that we were skin against skin.

“That’s probably the easiest thing you’ve ever asked of me, baby.” My hand moved down her front, until it disappeared behind her panties, toying with that part of her I knew drove her wild.

She gasped as my finger started to circle her clit, and the cutest little moans escaped her lips.

“More,” she begged. “I need more.”

Within seconds, her clothes were removed until she was completely bare in front of me.

“I need all of you, Reese. Every inch. Please don’t deprive me a second longer.”

After undressing, I settled between her legs, running the head of my cock through her folds and wetting the tip with her juices.

“Tell me you’re mine, Shasta. Forever, now, and always.”

She nodded breathlessly. “I’m yours.”

My cock sank into her, possessing her in ways I’ve always wanted. With each inward thrust, her fingers dug into me, clutching me, dragging me closer, drinking in our passion like she’d been craving it for months.

“I love you,” I murmured, brushing my lips over her neck, cheek, and ear. “So fucking much.”

“I love you too,” she moaned. “Faster. Please!”

The speed of my thrusts increased, and she started to scream, her whole body shuddering as the headboard banged violently against the wall.

The wood beneath us cracked, and the mattress hit the floor, but we were so consumed by our sinful reunion to notice the breaking bed. Pulling up her legs, I got even deeper, making the woman mine even more so than before.

“I’m going to come, Reese!” she moaned to the heavens, eyes rolling up into her head as her legs and ass jiggled beneath me.

Her walls clenched around my shaft, and without warning, my load shot into her, filling her to the brim.

We both laid there for a second, completely spent. She was fucking breathing so erratically, and it was a phenomenal sight to behold.

This woman was my whole damn world, and when I returned home, every damn asshole in that place would know it. I don’t give a fuck who has been with her before. Shasta Hall was mine to own, and the second we returned to the clubhouse, I was staking my claim, letting all those assholes know just who owned the Prez’s Ol’ Lady.

Chapter Thirty

Shasta

Every cell in my body was on high alert as we pulled back into the clubhouse parking lot.

Wasp had followed us home, but he was silent the entire time. He barely said a word to me anymore. Maybe it was out of respect for Snyder, but I think a lot of it had to do with disappointment.

But he knew I was right. He wasn't the right Lewd Outlaw for me. The only one that mattered, was the man I was currently clutching on to, both of us worrying about the backlash my return would bring.

Snyder had warned me that a lot of them were pissed, some of them even blamed me for what happened in the club. My thoughts mirrored theirs. Would Warrant still be alive if I had never fallen down this strange rabbit hole I found myself in?

Now I was standing on their doorstep, waiting for the firing squad to commence.

Snyder gripped my hand, forcing me to look up at him. "Hey, whatever happens in there, just remember that we can get through anything as long as we are together."

Nodding, I fell into step behind him, taking slow, deep breaths to fight the anxiety rising to the surface.

A lot had happened in two days. The worst was saying goodbye to Ramona, Axl, Josie, and Summer. I'd say Joe too, but the man went into hibernation the second he heard we were leaving.

Josie had given me a sad hug, whispering into my hair, "Don't worry, he'll come around."

But losing Joe's friendship almost broke me. For the last five months, he was the person who kept me together, while Ramona played doctor with Josie. His rejection of our friendship wounded me, but I understood why. It was the same reason I couldn't fully give him my heart... it just hurt to get too close.

Ramona and I gave each other a long hug, and we both had to wipe away our tears. "I don't think I'd still be living if you hadn't been there to support me all these years," I told her. "Thank you for being my friend and always being there for me."

She gave me a kiss on the cheek. "I'm going to miss the hell out of you, Shasta. Please come back to see us when you can."

"We will," Snyder said, holding out the cut that was in his hand. "This belongs to you, Brother."

Axl looked at the cut, before his mournful eyes met Snyder's. "I'm leaving the club, Snyder. Please don't try to talk me out of it. I'm doing what's best for my daughter."

"This cut belongs to you, Axl. I know you want to stay, and that's perfectly fine, but I want you to do it as a Lewd Outlaw."

"How can I be an Outlaw, if I'm a million miles away?"

"Because you'll be a nomad. That means you'll be a biker who's free to have the space he needs to create an amazing little family. I want you to still be a part of us, so please, keep the cut. We'll get you the nomad patch, and then maybe you can start your own branch out here."

Axl's mouth slightly twitched. "That would be something, wouldn't it? A whole new branch of the Lewd Outlaws, growing our club's loyalty one town at a time."

Snyder slapped him on the back. "The world is your oyster, Axl. No matter what, you're always going to be a Lewd Outlaw, so keep this, you earned the patch."

Axl slipped on the cut and grinned. “It’s good not to be naked again.”

We all laughed. Well, all but Wasp who was wallowing by his bike, ready to leave.

After giving Summer sweet kisses, and shedding more tears than I’d like to admit, I mounted the back of Snyder’s bike, waving goodbye to my best friend and all the people who loved her the most.

As we drove down the road, I saw a familiar figure step out from behind some trees, his massive build too unmistakable to be anyone else.

He watched us from afar, but when my hand raised, doing my best to say goodbye without actually saying it, he disappeared back into the trees, shutting me out of his world forever.



Before we arrived at the clubhouse, Snyder took me to our new home, showing off the cute little yellow house, clear on the other side of town. It had at least an acre of land, and I loved the farmhouse aspect to it. There was minimal work that needed to be done, but it was right for us—the perfect place to start a family.

But even though it was everything I ever wanted, I was sad that we’d never see little ones running around it. Would that be a deal breaker for him? The idea of never having children? Would he be like Sabbath and seek out another woman to fulfill that goal?

Snyder squeezed my hand. “We got this, babe.”

Wasp pushed past us, retreating through the doors without saying a word.

“He’ll come around,” Snyder encouraged. “They all will, eventually.”

Loud music hit my ears the second we walked through the doors, and it cut off the moment everyone noticed who had just walked in.

They were all there...

Clash...

Sandman...

Ranger...

Wasp...

Skid...

And Priest.

Each of these men still had a little piece of my heart, giving me the things I needed to let go of Sabbath once and for all.

Clash’s humorous outlook on life.

Sandman’s eternal need to protect and shelter those he cared about.

Ranger’s undying loyalty and trust in those he loved and respected.

Wasp’s dominant presence, one that commanded attention and could dismantle even the strongest of women—women far stronger than me.

Skid’s ability to keep a secret, especially the ones that were catastrophic and could change everything.

Priest’s wavering faith in God—the faith I needed to pull the final trigger that ended Sabbath’s miserable existence.

And finally, Warrant’s ghostly spirit, and his uncanny ability to put others first even if it meant losing your life in the

process.

Seeing them again, made all the memories flood back, and their unwelcoming smiles had me questioning if I had made the right choice. Maybe I should've stayed in South Dakota?

“Where’s Axl?” Clash asked, looking from me to Snyder, then back at Wasp.

“He’s gone nomad,” Snyder exclaimed. “He wants to stay in South Dakota with his baby and Ramona.”

“That’s bullshit!” Clash growled. “We just patched him in as Secretary.”

Snyder kept his cool, allowing Clash to continue ranting even though the asshole didn’t deserve it.

“His kid needed him, and I gave the okay, so calm your fucking tits and pipe down, Clash. I got something I want everyone to hear.”

Clash muttered something under his breath, then moved so Snyder could settle in the middle of the room.

“Do you all see this beautiful fucking woman?”

Everyone’s eyes fell on me.

“I want you all to hear me very loud and clear, and I don’t need Church to declare this... Shasta’s mine. Anybody have a problem with that, come and fucking see me. But I’m laying my claim. As president of this club, I’m officially dubbing her my Ol’ Lady, that means all of you fucks better not lay a fucking finger on her, and all of you sweet butts better give her the respect she deserves. The days of Sabbath’s reign are over, and as Prez of this club, I want us to move into a new direction, one where sex, lies, and mayhem aren’t our common values. We’re all good men, and we deserve amazing women to back us. That’s why I went after her. This woman is everything to me, and as soon as you fucktards find someone like her, you’ll see why going after her was so important to me.”

“Yeah, because you’re a pussy,” Clash griped.

Snyder squared up to Clash, getting up in his face. “Do you got a problem with me, Clash? Do we need to take this to the ring?”

Clash shook his head. “I’m just saying that going after her was a pussy move. You abandoned the club in a moment when we needed you, dragging two of our members along with you. What would have happened if the Crows showed up? We’d be sitting ducks. That’s what.”

“But they didn’t.”

“But they could have,” he argued. “That’s why I’m pissed. You left us fucking vulnerable, all so you could chase some tail.”

Snyder shook his head. “That’s where you’re wrong, Clash. She’s not just some tail, she’s my woman, and all I’m asking is for you and the rest of the club to respect that.”

Clash smirked. “Yeah, I fucking respect it, but that doesn’t mean I have to like it. I just don’t like the fact that you had to drag her back here by her hair, kicking and screaming.”

“I came back on my own, Clash. I missed him. I missed all of you. This club is my family just as much as it is yours.”

Clash’s hard demeanor softened. “Yeah, well...”

I left him speechless.

Priest took a step forward, smiling. “I’m happy that you’re back, Shasta. The club just wasn’t the same without you.”

“This coming from the man who kept her whereabouts hidden for four goddamn months,” Wasp growled.

“She’s here now, isn’t she?”

“Barely,” Clash piped in. “Who’s to say she won’t go running the second there’s trouble again?”

“And if she does, who cares?” Wasp bit out. “She chose him. The only person it will hurt is him, and maybe he’ll learn his lesson.”

“Bitter much?” Skid asked, coming to a stop in front of me. “Hey, Shasta, welcome back.” He gave me a hug, one that made the uneasiness lift in me just a tad.

Ranger and Priest did the same, and then someone I was surprised to see settled in front of me.

“Sandman!” I screeched, throwing my arms around his big neck. “You’re walking!”

“Y—Yup.”

“And he’s going to be a daddy now,” Clash added. “He knocked that bitch Lindy up.”

Everyone was having babies but me it seemed.

“B—But she w—wants me to gi—give up the baby.”

“Not gonna happen,” Snyder exclaimed, laying a friendly hand on Sandman’s chest. “We’re going to help you change that. Just like we’re going to change a lot of things around here.”

Faces I didn’t recognize stepped forward, and by the strange expression on Snyder’s face, it looked like he didn’t know them as well.

Skid held out his arm, motioning to a guy with long brown hair and a major scar over his eye. “This is Joaquin. He was a friend of Warrant’s. He’d like to prospect the club, along with these two... Gideon and Kody.”

Snyder outstretched his hand, welcoming them. “It’s good to see some new blood around here. Just remember that this girl is mine,” he said with a wink, keeping a possessive hand around my waist.

Joaquin chuckled, giving me a quick glance. “Oh, don’t worry, I have no interest in the Prez’s Ol’ Lady.” Was I dreaming or did he just shoot a look Skid’s way? Maybe Skid would get his happily-ever-after after all?

None of the sweet butts bothered to welcome me back, but that was okay. As long as they kept their filthy paws off my

man, we could live in harmony.

“So, what happens now?” Clash asked, looking around the room.

Snyder took my hand, then made sure he made eye contact with every man wearing a Lewd Outlaw cut. “We rebuild. We reorganize. We grow.”

“And what if the Crows come after us?” Wasp questioned.

“Then we take them down. But my goal is to turn the head of this club in a different direction, one that doesn’t give the Lewd Outlaws such a sour name.”

“Amen to that!” Poison shouted, holding up a beer. “I don’t know about you guys, but I’m sick of our tainted name. I’m ready to ride into a new era, one where mayhem and carnage doesn’t follow us at every bend.” He placed a beer in each of our hands, and held his up to the sky.

“Let’s drink for all of our fallen brothers and sisters. The ones that lost their lives far too soon. Let’s drink for our family, and this cut we proudly wear on our backs, but most of all, let’s drink to living life as an Outlaw. We ride through life one road at a time and have each other’s backs until the day we die!”

“I’ll drink to that!” Snyder exclaimed, downing his beer. He took another drink and gave me a wicked grin. “And I’ll drink for my men, may you all fall like I have, finding the person who completes every part of you, and makes you want to be a better man.”

Clash kept his beer away from his lips and lifted his mouth in disgust. “Ew, that’s never going to happen to me. There’s not a woman in this world that can handle a man like me, and I’d like to keep it that way. Single life suits me.”

Giggling, I had a feeling Clash was going to eat his words, eventually. There was someone out there for everyone, I was just happy that I found mine in the midst of my darkest hours, and he was there to uplift me and bring me out of the depths of Hell I was drowning in.

Snyder's lips covered mine in the sweetest kiss, and as the music turned back on, and his men went back to partying in the background, we found solace within each other's arms, knowing that as long as we were together, we could get through anything.

It was Snyder and me against the world, and if anyone had a problem with that, then may they suffer the same fate as all the men who dared to hurt me.

Epilogue

Shasta

(Three Months Later)

I stared down at my hand, my whole body shaking with both delight and fear.

How was this fucking possible?

Was life playing jokes on me again?

But the signs were all there. The constant nausea and vomiting in the mornings, the missed period for at least two months, and the tiredness I never got over. The faint second line was there, taunting me with endless possibilities and hope I didn't think was possible.

Tears saturated my eyes as emotions overwhelmed me, and I sank to the floor in a puddle of my own euphoric shock.

There was a soft knock on the door, but I was too far gone to answer it, so I just sat there crying instead, realizing a miracle sat in my hand that I didn't think was possible.

"Shasta?" Snyder's head peeked around the door. "You okay? You've been in here forever."

When he found me on the floor, he instantly dropped to his knees, gently grabbing my face until my head was lifted and he was met with tears.

"Shasta, you're scaring me. Why are you crying?"

My hand was literally shaking. I could barely hold the stick that sat so heavy in my palm.

For way too many years, my womb was left dormant, my mind convinced that a baby would never be possible for me again.

Was there really a child growing inside me? One that was conceived with nothing but pure love and devotion.

“Talk to me, Shasta. Don’t shell up on me again. I don’t think I can take it.”

My voice came out cracked with emotion, the itty-bitty miracle overwhelming every part of me. “Th—These are h—happy tears,” I choked out, mustering up enough strength to lift my hand and show him the stick in my hand.

His eyes widened when he saw the two lines side-by-side, one more faint than the other.

Taking the stick, he placed it in his palm, then his eyes glistened as tears of his own formed.

“Is this what I think it is?”

I nodded, too overwhelmed to speak.

“Baby, are you pregnant?”

My head bobbed up and down, emotion clogging my throat.

“I didn’t th—think it was p—possible.”

“It’s a miracle,” he exclaimed. His smile was infectious, and my lips quirked up to mirror his.

“You aren’t mad?”

“Mad? Why the hell would I be mad? The most beautiful woman on this goddamn planet is carrying my child. Do you realize how beautiful this child is going to be? If he or she looks half as good as their momma, we’re in for a heap of trouble later on.”

A breath of relief washed over me. “I’m so glad you feel that way.”

You could see the recognition flash in his eyes, and for a second, they darkened with concern. “Hey, I know where your head is going, baby. I’m not him. I would never force you to do anything you didn’t want to do, especially when it comes to my child. I want the baby just as much as I want you.”

Hearing him say that lifted so much weight off my shoulders.

“Good, because I want this baby, Reese. I want *our* baby.”

His hand tugged me forward, bringing me up close, so I could almost feel his lips on mine. “Good, because I want that too. You know what else I want?”

Shaking my head, my fingers dug into the leather of his cut, so I could steal that kiss my heart was craving.

“No, what?”

“For you to become my wife, not just my Ol’ Lady.”

The rhythm of my heart pounded inside my ears, as he produced a small black box from behind his back.

“No man should ever *own* you, Shasta Hall. A man should only honor, respect, and devote every minute of his life to loving you. I’m vowing here and now that if you become my wife, I will do all of those and more, giving you the life you always dreamed of, one where we can raise this child together as the family we were always meant to be. Wearing my cut may make you my girl in the eyes of my brothers, but taking on my name would show the world just whose heart you stole the moment you walked through those club doors. I know you’re scared of committing to club life again, and if you ask me to leave this life, I will, but only for you and our child.”

A single tear moved down my face, and I was too happy to bother removing it from my skin.

This.

This right here is what true love and devotion actually felt like. I didn’t need another man or men to piece me back together, I just needed Reese, the man whose tempting ways lured me to his bed, and a heart I never wanted to let go of.

“Yes,” I whispered.

“Yes, what?” he asked, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

“Yes, I’ll marry you, Reese. I love you. And you don’t have to leave the club, because it doesn’t matter to me anymore. I know you aren’t Sabbath. I know you would never hurt me like he did. Your love is real, and that’s something I feel deep down in my soul.”

“My love is definitely real, and there is no other woman in this world for me but you. I unintentionally hurt you once before, and that caused me enough pain to last a million lifetimes, Shasta. I don’t ever plan on doing that again.”

His fingers combed through my hair, then his lips touched down on mine, the warmth of our love searing through one pout to the other. It was like we couldn’t hold each other tight enough in that moment. And as we crumbled apart together, repairing all the broken parts of ourselves that were lost and alone for far too long, I realized that I didn’t need a harem to make me feel strong. Snyder’s love and devotion gave me enough strength to move mountains, and as my hands clutched his cut, my lips devouring his like I was hungry for my last meal, I let myself go, falling even deeper in love with the only man who would ever be able to own me.

Thank you!

I hope you enjoyed the conclusion of the Lewd Outlaws Revenge Reverse Harem Series, and Shasta and Snyder's happy ending.

If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review. Reviews help authors tremendously and I so appreciate every single reader that takes the time to read and review my books.

Thank you for reading the Lewd Outlaws RH Series, I hope you'll stick around for the other Lewd Outlaw MC books coming soon, and the rest of the harem's happy endings.

XoXo

Quinn Ryder

Note from Author

There are no loose ends... just new beginnings...

I know there were a lot of loose ends in this story, but this is how I always saw the end of Shasta's story with the club and the reverse harem aspect.

I never saw her ending up with anyone other than Snyder. His love for her was just too special to let go of. The reverse harem was only supposed to be temporary, just long enough to build her army and take down Sabbath once and for all. They gave her the strength to pull the trigger. But once that was done, I knew Shasta wouldn't be able to handle more than one man, which is why I chose to let the reverse harem aspect of the Lewd Outlaws go.

But leaving it also left some amazing men hanging—men desperately looking for their own happily ever afters. There were too many guys that still wanted their spotlights, so I decided to keep the ride going. This book sparks a spinoff series with no reverse harems involved, and will be a series of standalones where each club member featured in these stories finds their forever person.

Questions

These men deserve their happy endings too.

If you're like me, then you have some serious questions burning in your brain...

Who can steal their hearts?

What type of woman can tame someone as brash as Clash? Is there a girl out there special enough to deserve Sandman's deep, endless love? And what type of woman can mend Wasp's broken heart while still bending a knee?

What about poor Joe?

Well, I got really attached to his character, so much so, I've decided to write a duet. One book for him, one book for Josie. I don't want to reveal too much about it, but it will definitely be a new road in my writing journey, and a new **GENRE** as well! So, make sure you join my newsletter or follow me on Facebook and Amazon to find out when that duet will be available.

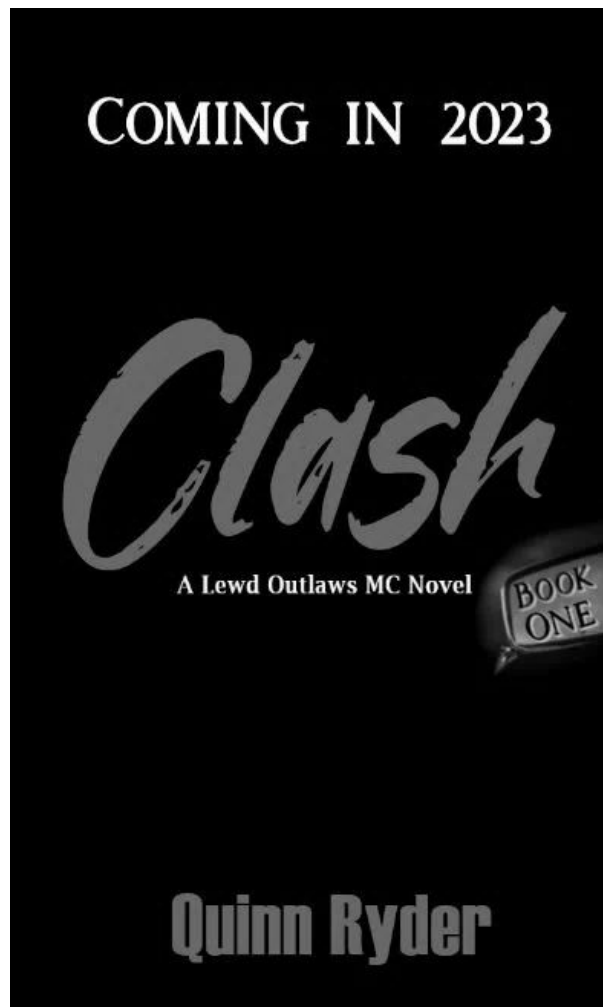
Are the Lewd Outlaws here to stay?

There's someone out there for everyone, and the Lewd Outlaws are ready to find their lovers for life.

So, keep an eye out in early to mid-2023 for the start of a new series of standalone books, and special duet in a new genre!

What book is coming first?

Well, since he's always the center of attention, Clash is ready to ride in and steal your hearts in the first book of the spinoff:



Club Members

Officers

Snyder (Prez)

Clash (VP)
Wasp (SGT at Arms)
Sandman (Enforcer)
Ranger (Treasurer)
Axl (Secretary, Nomad)
Skid (Road Captain)
Priest (Tail Gunner)

Members

Poison (Member)
Zeppelin (Member)
Motley (Member)
Riot (Member)

Prospects

Slaughtermen (Prospect)
Danger (Prospect)
Cooper (Prospect)
Pussycat (Prospect)

Lewd Outlaws MC Reverse Harem Series.

(Click the name below to purchase the next books in the Lewd Outlaws Reverse Harem Series)

1. [Tempting the Prez's Ol' Lady.](#)
2. [Blackmailing the Prez's Ol' Lady.](#)
3. [Pleasing the Prez's Ol' Lady.](#)

4. [Sharing the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)
5. [Dominating the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)
6. [Exposing the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)
7. [Saving the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)
8. [Owning the Prez's Ol' Lady](#)

Wanna know more about the Lewd Outlaws MC?

Make sure you Like the Facebook Page for all upcoming release information.

[Lewd Outlaws MC Facebook Page](#)

Other Books by Quinn Ryder

The Devil's Armada MC Series (*DARK MC*)

[Specter's Wake](#)

[Cipher's Code](#)

Scythe's Surrender (Postponed)

[Silent Love](#)



The Devil's Armada MC (O.L.) Series (*DARK MC*)

[Dusty's Tracks](#)

[Cami's Connections](#)

[Filly's Remorse](#)

The Celestial Sons MC Series

(Co-Write with Annelise Reynolds)

(*Light MC*)

[Zodiac: Book One](#)

[Scorpio: Book Two](#)

[Pincher: Book Three](#)



Harriers of Vengeance MC

(DARK MC/PILOTS)

[Hawk: Book One](#)



The Santoyo Brothers Trilogy

(Mafia Cartel: Part of the Social Rejects Syndicate Universe)

[Sergio: Book One](#)

[Emilio: Book Two](#)

[Mateo: Book Three](#)

Standalones and Collaborations

[Sinful Valentine](#)

(BDSM, KIDNAPPER, MAFIA)



[Voodoo](#)

(VOODOO, DEMONS, HORROR)

Author Links:

Click the links below to find out new information on Quinn Ryder and the men in the Devil's Armada.

- Facebook Page: [Author Quinn Ryder](#)
- Join her Facebook Group:
- [Quinn Ryder's Ride-or-Diers](#)
- Join the Celestial Sons MC Group: [Fallen Stars](#)
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About the Author



The Devil's Armada—Don't mess with the Devil if you can't stand the flames.

Quinn Ryder lives in a fantasy world full of badass bikers, feisty heroines, and chrome that's twitching to rumble between your legs.

She's been in the business for five years, so this author is no stranger to written words, but she must admit that the MC world is a bit new to her. Tempted by the corruption and chaos that follows the open road, Quinn created the Armada after one burly biker refused to leave her head until she finished telling his story. Now, Specter and all of his brothers are ready to suck you in with their rough exteriors, foul mouths, and hearts full of steel and chrome.

Are you ready to dive into the world of the Devil's Armada? Come join Quinn Ryder and her men of steel and be prepared to hang on for one hell of a ride!

Quinn Ryder, creating worlds full of danger and intrigue, while riding the road one word at a time.