



NEW YORK TIMES AND USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

PIPER DAVENPORT

*Road To*

**RUIN**

DOGS OF FIRE BOOK #13

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**Liz:**

Thanks again. Your insight is always so spot on!

**Brandy:**

Thank you for keeping the characters and timelines right!

Thanks for being the greatest Ziggy EVER!

**Mary, Gail, Trudy, and Carrie:**

Thanks for your willingness to read and give feedback so quickly!

You are all so loved and appreciated!



### **Daisy Carver**

Who knew a wardrobe malfunction would change the trajectory of my life? My father is the VP of the Dogs of Fire MC and I've grown up believing that I was destined to fall in love and marry a biker of my very own, but a pair of patent leather pants and a broken zipper changed all that.

### **Huck Wilton**

I was a starting rookie for the Hurricanes, but my NHL career ended before it even had a chance to begin. Now I'm back home, licking my wounds, and trying to figure out what the hell I'm supposed to do with my life.

But then my sister's sexy neighbor walks into my life, and I have to peel her out of her pants... literally... and I now know exactly what my destiny is. I'm just not sure if it'll lead to my ruin.

**For Sylvana!**

*If your zipper hadn't gotten stuck, this book would have been so different!!!*

*Thanks for the inspiration!*





*Daisy*

“OH MY GOD, I can’t believe you’re finally twenty-one,” my bestie, Teagan, shouted as she raised her third margarita to clink with my second.

Technically, Teagan wasn’t twenty-one, but she would be soon enough, considering we were only a few months apart. The problem was, if her dad, Mack, knew we were at a club, she’d be in a world of hurt, but what he didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him.

“I can’t believe *you* had the balls to come here with a fake I.D.,” Tillie teased. Tillie was Ace and Cassidy’s daughter, and five years older than us. The fact she was razzing Teagan at all was bullshit considering she was the one who hooked Teagan up with her ‘buddy’ who got her the I.D. to begin with.

Teagan rolled her eyes. “Whatever.”

“Are you sure your dad doesn’t know?” Cambry asked.

Cambry was Kim and Knight’s daughter and she rounded out our little girl group for the night. Kim was my mom’s bestie, and Cambry and I were tight, but Teagan was my ride-or-die. Normally, Huxley would be here too, but Teagan didn’t

want her big sister involved in her illicit activity, so my surprise birthday night out didn't include her.

I loved Hux and if I'd had a say in it, I would have objected to her absence, but, alas, I did not have a say in it, so she was not here.

Teagan waved her hand in dismissal. "It's all good. I told them I was staying at Huxley's tonight, so they won't even know I'm gone."

"Why didn't you just say you were staying with me, then actually do that?" I asked.

I lived in my parents' old condo down on Naito. After they'd had me, they'd decided to buy a home in suburbia, opting to move up to Vancouver, closer to many of the club members. They'd kept their condo, which meant when I'd wanted a little space and independence while I was in school, I was able to live there.

"Because then I couldn't surprise you." She gave me a slow blink. "Duh."

"Babe, you *did* surprise me. You had to pick me up, remember? You could have just said you were staying over as part of my birthday celebration."

"I didn't even think of that." She wrinkled her nose. "Well, shit."

I chuckled. "Have another drink, honey."

She grinned. "Good idea."

We ordered another round of margaritas and Cambry insisted on appetizers to soak up the booze.

"Eating is not a good idea." I groaned. "Do you know how hard it was to get into these pants?"

I was wearing a pair of patent-leather pants that zipped up at the side and I literally had to put half a tub of baby powder in them to slide them on.

"Maybe, but they look 'chef's kiss' on your ass," Teagan said, making the chef's kiss sound and motion.

I laughed. “I know, right?”

Our drinks and food arrived just as one of our favorite songs blared over the speaker and I jumped up, insisting we all dance. I took a few swigs of my margarita and yelled, “It’s Melody Morgan, bitches! Let’s go!”

We headed to the dance floor and danced until we could barely stand. It was Cambry who finally called it quits and dragged us all back to our booth...

To find two somewhat amused, and one very angry biker... waiting for us.

“Daddy?” Teagan squeaked.

Mack was pissed, and if I didn’t know him and love him almost as much as my own father, I’d be scared to death because he was built like a semi-truck, hence his name.

“Get outside, Teagan. Now,” he growled.

“I need to pay—”

“Your tab’s been settled.”

“I need to drive—”

“You fuckin’ think you’re drivin’ Daisy home in this condition?” he growled.

“Well, no. We were going to get a car. My mama didn’t raise a dummy.”

“You need to dial down that sass, baby girl. Jesus Christ, your mother’s gonna have a coronary.”

“Sounds like you’re the one doing that, big man.”

He pointed to the door. “Teagan Elizabeth Reed, get your ass outside now.”

She grabbed her purse with a huff, pulling me in for a hug. “Sorry my dad’s Captain Buzzkill, Ducky. I’ll text you when I get home. Happy birthday.”

My family had called me Daisy Duck for about a week after I was born, before my brothers shortened it to Ducky, and now a few of my club family called me Ducky as well.

“The boys’ll drive you ladies home,” Mack said, pulling me in for a hug. “Happy birthday, beautiful. We’ll celebrate properly another day.”

“Thanks, Captain... I mean, Uncle Mack.”

Mack gave me a very pointed smirk, and then walked Teagan out the door and I focused on my little friend group as we figured out who was being chauffeured by whom.

“I’ve got you,” Case said to Cambry.

“Ah, no, that’s good, I’ll go with Razor,” Cambry hissed.

Case chuckled. “No, you won’t. Jesus, Cambry, outside of the fact your bullshit is makin’ us miss the game, don’t add sass to your list of sins.”

Lincoln “Case” James was Hawk and Payton’s son and he and Cambry’d had a love-hate thing going for a while now. More hate on Cambry’s part than love, but Case was awesome, so I couldn’t figure out why she didn’t like him and she wasn’t saying so it was a mystery.

“What’s the game you’re missing? Twister?” Cambry challenged. “Or are you more of a Boggle kind of a guy?”

“First of all, if we were playing a boardgame, it would be Mouse Trap, and I would kick your ass.”

“Impossible. It’s a scientific fact that every single box of Mouse Trap is missing at least one piece.”

“Sounds like someone who’s afraid,” Case retorted.

“You just name the time and place, buddy. You roll the dice, and I’ll move my mice.”

“Will you two give it a fuckin’ rest?” Razor ground out. “We’ve already missed the first half. By the time we get back to the club it’s all gonna be over.”

What the club loved more than Harleys and pussy was sports, and if someone interrupted any one of those three things, the boys tended to get a little testy. And when I say sports, I mean *all* the sports. Football, basketball, soccer,

hockey, women's underwater curling, take your pick. If someone was keeping score, the club was watching.

"Tillie and Daisy live close to each other," Razor pointed out. "You'd be out of my way, Cambry. Sorry, sweetheart."

"You're a fucking traitor Razor," she hissed.

"Just callin' it like I see it, honey."

She threw her purse over her shoulder, tilted her nose in the air, and rolled her eyes. "Whatever."

"Ready?" Case asked.

"I'm going to hug my friend first. Is that a problem for you?"

He smirked. "Hug away."

Cambry pulled me in for a hug and then walked out with Case as Tillie and I followed Razor out the back.

Razor dropped Tillie off first, then walked me up to my door. Once I was inside, I headed to my bedroom and unzipped my pants.

Well, I *tried* to unzip my pants.

The zipper was stuck. Like, jammed stuck.

For the next ten minutes, I tried everything, including laying on my back on my bed to let gravity suck in my stomach, sprinkling more powder down the side just in case I could get a little more 'slick' happening, then rubbed some olive oil over the zipper...and nothing worked.

Either I found an alternative or I was going to have cut myself out of them and I seriously didn't want to do that. They'd cost me a mint.

I peeked my head out of my front door and heard music coming from my neighbor Louisa's place, so I took a chance and knocked on her door.

She was not the one who answered, however.

Oh, no. Because why would *she* be the one who would answer in my time of need?

No, it was some gorgeous, tall, built like a fullback, with muscles on muscles, dark hair, dark beard, Tom Hardy-looking, tight shirt, grey sweatpants wearing, sex god.

I scanned the room and saw an open bottle of wine and a candle in the center of a table with the remnants of a dinner for two. The lights were dim and romantic music was playing in the background, not to mention, the place smelled delicious, so it was obvious I'd interrupted a date.

I was mortified.

“Daisy?” Louisa walked out of the kitchen. “Everything okay?”

“Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.”

Louisa set her wine glass on the coffee table and scoffed. “Don't be silly, what's wrong?”

“I... um, well, I'm kind of stuck.”

She frowned. “Stuck? Stuck, how?”

I blushed. “Like, ah, my zipper. It's totally okay, you're obviously in the middle of—”

“Don't be silly.” She waved her hand. “Come in here. Let me have a look.”

I stepped inside and presented my hip. Louisa promptly attempted to tug the zipper down, which did not work.

“Lord, what have you done here?” she muttered.

“I tried to undo the zipper, but the little handle thingy broke off in my hand and the tracks of the zipper got stuck together and I can't breathe in enough to get enough leverage, and now I'm having a panic attack,” I panted out. “And my legs are being strangled to death.”

The man chuckled.

I glanced up at him and he gave me a chin lift. “Hey, I'm Huck.”

Of course, it was. Even his name was hot.

“As in Huckleberry?” I asked, trying to be funny but probably sounding like a dork.

“How’d you know? No one ever guesses my full name,” he returned with a sly smile.

I bit my lip. “I’m Daisy. I’m Louisa’s neighbor and these are my pants which are currently trying to eat me.”

*Oh my god, why did I just say that? I’m so awkward. I deserve to die like this. Via a mixture of lack of oxygen to my lower half and acute embarrassment.*

At least the guy I was making a fool of myself in front of was *her* date and not mine, which meant a zero-chance probability that he would ever look my way twice. Louisa was both stunningly beautiful and sweet as sugar. I couldn’t compete with her if I tried.

“It’s not budging,” she breathed out. “Come and sit down... or lay down, whatever you need to do and I’ll get my toolbox.”

I did neither. I stood right where I was, awkwardly waiting for her return while trying not to stare at her drop-dead gorgeous date.

She returned with a rather impressive sized toolbox and set it on her coffee table. Pulling out a crescent wrench, Huck chuckled. “No, LouLou, that’s not gonna work. You need the needle nose pliers.”

*Oh my god, he has a nickname for her.*

I swallowed down my jealousy.

“Oh,” she said, dropping the crescent wrench back in the box. “Which one are those?”

“Here, let me show you.” Huck stepped over to the toolbox and pulled out the pliers, handing them to Louisa.

For the next ten minutes, she tried her best to work my zipper with no luck. My pants were fused to my body, and it was looking more and more like I was going to have to cut them off.

“Do you mind if I try?” Huck asked, and I felt my cheeks heat.

“Um, well, um... sure,” I squeaked.

He smiled gently, taking the pliers from Louisa, and stepping to my side. “Let me know if anything hurts, okay? I’ll stop immediately.”

I nodded, and his strong hand slid under the waistband of my pants as he grabbed the zipper with the pliers.

It took him less than a minute to pry the teeth apart, freeing me from my prison, but also revealing the fact I wasn’t wearing panties.

“Oh my god, thank you,” I breathed out.

“No problem.”

He glanced at the gaping side of my pants as I tried to hold it somewhat closed for modesty before he turned away and dropped the pliers back in the toolbox.

“I seriously thought they were a goner,” I said as Louisa walked me to the door.

She grimaced. “You’ll probably need to replace the zipper.”

“Yes, but much cheaper than replacing the pants.”

She grinned. “Very true.”

“Thank you.” I looked over at her boyfriend. “And thanks, Huck, I appreciate it.”

He nodded. “No problem.”

I headed back to my condo and peeled my pants off, readying myself for bed.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

“Who the hell was that?” I asked Louisa.



“My neighbor.” She nodded toward her door. “She lives across the hall.”

“Oh, yeah?”

She rolled her eyes and sighed. “Calm your tits, little brother. She is not the one for you.”

“Why is she ‘not the one’ for me?”

“Because she’s a biker princess.”

I frowned. “I’ve never known you to turn your nose up at anyone, regardless of what they’re into, LouLou.”

She shook her head. “That’s not what I meant. Her father’s like the head honcho of a motorcycle club or something. I highly doubt you’ll be able to get anywhere near her.”

“Knowing you and where you get your information from, he’s probably the third-ranked salesman of certified, pre-owned Honda ATVs in the Pacific Northwest.”

“Shut up,” she retorted. “No, seriously. I’ve seen him around here before. He’s got the beard and the leather vest, the whole nine yards. And even though I haven’t met him, he looks like the kind of guy who’d put his cigar out on your eyeball if you so much as looked at his daughter.”

“I’ll make sure I *ride easy* when I’m around her,” I said, making the revving gesture as I said, ‘ride easy.’

“Oh my god, don’t ever do that again,” she admonished. “You on a motorcycle is about as believable as Mom on a zipline over a volcano.”

“What?” I cocked my head. “I’m cool.”

“You’re *jock* cool. That’s way different than being hot, motorcycle cool... and riding dirt bikes around grandad’s farm doesn’t count.”

“What? Now you don’t think I’m hot enough for her?”

“Oh my god, I’m not about to talk about where my brother rates on the hotness scale.” She made gagging noises

as she pretended to choke. “Now, finish your beer while I pull the pie out of the oven to cool.”

I took a swig of beer and stared at the front door as my sister walked back into the kitchen. MC princess, hm? Daisy didn't look like a biker woman. Not that I knew the first thing about biker culture, but she was blonde, curvy, obviously knew fashion, and soft in all the right places. She didn't appear to be hard or tatted out, and if she knew how fucking gorgeous she was, she certainly wasn't acting like it.

There was an innocence about Daisy, and I intended to find out more about her... used ATV salesman father or not.



*Huck*

**T**HE NEXT MORNING, I had just stepped into the hallway with two bags of trash when I heard an angry male voice growl, “What the hell, Ducky? Why the fuck were you at Elixir without us at your back?”

I looked up to see two men crowding Daisy at her door and saw red. I didn’t notice the patches on the backs of their jackets, didn’t notice the motorcycle boots or the fact they might be carrying weapons, just reacted to the fact they appeared to be threatening her.

I dropped the trash and rushed to the bigger of the two, checking him face first into the wall, and forcing one arm behind his back.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” I snarled.

Daisy gasped, while the other guy pulled out a gun. The guy I was holding just chuckled.

“Oh my god, Arch, put that away.” Daisy turned to me and reached for my arm. “It’s okay, Huck, these are—”

Before she could say anything further, cell phones pealed in the silence of the hallway.

The guy I was holding struggled, albeit not particularly hard. “Get the fuck off me, man.”

“No,” I snapped.

“Hi, Mama,” Daisy breathed out as ‘Arch’ said, “Hey, Pops.”

I heard an angry voice coming from the man through the phone, but Arch walked away while Daisy continued to speak with her mother.

“Hold on, Mom,” she said, and focused on me again. “Huck, that’s my brother, Cash. Can you please let him go?”

I gave him one more shove before releasing him, and Cash scowled as he pushed off the wall.

“Thank you,” Daisy said, then went back to her call. “Okay, Mom, it’s all good now. Can I call you back? Yes, Archer’s talking to Daddy now.” She sighed. “Will you please talk him down off the ledge?” She glanced my way. “Daddy absolutely does *not* need to come here. No. I have finals next week and I have to study. If he comes down here beating his chest, just like Cash and Archer did, then I’m going to lose my ever-loving shit, and I’ll be forced to forget I’m a lady.”

I bit back a laugh as I watched this glorious woman spear her brother with a look I knew she’d hoped would kill, but only made her look cute as a fucking button as she did it.

“Okay, Mama. Thanks.” She smiled. “Love you, too. Bye.” She hung up and slid her phone into her pocket, then crossed her arms. “Cash, this is Huck. Huck, meet Cash.”

We both glared at each other, and Daisy sighed. “Jesus, why can’t I just have quiet, meek men in my orbit?”

Archer came jogging up a few seconds later and Daisy turned to him. “Did you talk him down?”

He shrugged. “Not sure.”

She threw her hands in the air and let out a frustrated squeak. “Big brothers, get inside. Now.” Turning to me with a grimace, she said, “Huck, I’m sorry these two idiot-sticks dragged you into our family drama. They’re good guys, well,

mostly. But I'm sure you have more important things to do than worry about me and my dumbass siblings. I'm so sorry they wasted your time."

I was summarily dismissed, so I nodded, turned around and grabbed the trash, before heading to the chute. Once I'd dumped the garbage, I made my way back to my sister's to find the hallway clear, so I stepped inside her apartment and made my way to the shower.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

"Oh my god, if I had time to murder both of you, I would."

"Who's the douche?" Cash asked.

"First, he's not a douche," I hissed. "And he's Louisa's boyfriend."

Archer groaned. "Fuck, your hot neighbor's got a man?"

"Can we please stop talking about Huck?" I snapped. "Why are you here?"

"Because you went to Elixir without one of us having your back and you took Teagan who's underage," Cash said, in a 'duh' tone.

"I didn't take anyone anywhere. *She* surprised me with a girls' night out for my birthday." I let out a frustrated squeal. "*Not* that I need to justify my actions to you two dickheads."

"The second you got there, you should have texted one of us," Cash said.

"Why?" I challenged.

"Because—"

Before Cash could finish his sentence, someone pounded on my door and then it opened, revealing my father.

I settled my hands on my hips. "Really, Daddy?"

“Baby girl, some random asshole puts his hands on my kid, you don’t think I’m gonna do somethin’ about that?”

My hallway was wired for picture and sound, and it went so much further than a doorbell cam. My parents, the club, my brothers and I had access to over six cameras outside my building, in my stairwell, in my elevators, on my floor, and directly outside my door. My father knew the second Huck made contact with Cash and was probably on his bike before my brother’s face hit the wall.

I threw my hands in the air. “He thought they were threatening me!”

“And why the fuck would some random guy care if your brothers were threatenin’ you?”

“First of all, he didn’t know they were my brothers and second of all, I would hope that *anyone* would care if someone, *anyone*, regardless of who they were, would be concerned if I were being threatened, and that you would also want said anyone to care if I were being threatened, and be happy they did *something to stop it*,” I screeched.

“Well, those were a lot of words there, Ducky,” Daddy murmured, stroking his beard with an amused expression on his face.

I took a deep breath and glared at my family. I tended to get flustered when I was irritated. To be honest, I tended to get flustered when I was emotional, and I often had a hard time getting my words out.

Daddy thought it was cute, Cash thought it was weird, Archer wasn’t *quite* sure what to do with me, but Mom would just wait for me to gather my thoughts until I could get out what I needed to say.

I bit back tears and took another deep breath.

“Aw, don’t cry, Ducky,” Archer said, pulling me in for a hug.

See? He had no fucking clue what to do with me.

“I’m not crying because I need a hug, Arch,” I snapped. “I’m crying because it’s my body’s way of releasing stress and negative emotions. The kind of emotions that make me want to *murder* you.”

He stepped back slowly, raising his hands in surrender.

“Okay, boys, head out,” Dad said. “I’ve got Ducky.”

My brothers grumbled, but gave me a hug, then left us alone. I padded into my kitchen and turned on the kettle. “Do you want some coffee? I have instant.”

“Coffee’d be great, honey.”

“As much as I love having you here, I really do have to study, Daddy, so how long are you planning on staying?”

He smirked, sitting up at the island. “Long enough to drink the coffee and find out how my baby girl’s doin’. Then I’ll get outta your hair.”

“I’m good. I have a firewall to break through for a company in Seattle which is ‘impenetrable.’” I rolled my eyes. “I’ve already found two back doors.”

Dad chuckled. “There’s my girl.”

I did cybersecurity for several companies in the Pacific Northwest. I’d been in the racket since I was sixteen and I’d saved a mint. Of course, nobody knew how old I was. My father had figured out I had his ‘gene’ for hacking when I was ten and I’d infiltrated my neighbor’s wi-fi router. He was an asshole kid bullying my friend at recess, and I’d written some basic code to fuck with one of his video games. It had scared the shit out of him and made him back off of Lucy, but I’d been simultaneously grounded (by Mom) and high-fived (by Dad), and then Dad had taken me under his wing and started to actually teach me everything he knew.

And it was a *lot*.

My dad could hack pretty much anything anywhere and if he couldn’t do it, Rabbit out in Savannah or his sister, Sierra, who was in Monument could.

Of course, in order to use my skills at a ‘legit’ company, I had to have a degree, so I was in school for that reason, graduating in a few weeks. True to form, I decided to *make my life even harder* and minored in French, which was the stupidest decision ever, because becoming fluent in French is *super hard!* And now I really did have to study, whereas, if I’d just gone with a basic old computer engineering degree, I could have cruised through until graduation.

Just as I slid Dad’s coffee across the island to him, Mom walked through the front door, and I rolled my eyes. Mom’s long, blonde hair was piled on top of her head into a messy bun, and she wore skinny jeans, knee-high boots and a Dogs of Fire MC hoodie. Just like me, she wore glasses, however, hers were more cat eye shaped with little rhinestones on the sides.

“I told you to tell him not to come, and that kind of meant you didn’t need to come either, Mama.”

She shrugged, setting her purse on the island, and pulling me in for a hug. “I wanted to make sure you were okay.”

She then made her way to my dad who slid his hand to her ass and squeezed before kissing her in nothing less than the R-rated fashion he always did.

“Hey, baby,” he said, smiling at her as he patted her bottom.

“Hi, honey.” Mom tugged on his beard. “Thanks for making sure she was okay.”

“Always.”

“Oh my god, I knew it,” I hissed.

Mom smiled at me as she leaned against Dad. “Baby girl, when you have a child of your own, you will understand.”

“Which one of you sent the Kray brothers to harass me?” I asked, pouring my mother a cup of coffee.

“They did that on their own,” Mom said.

“Well, can one of you make it stop, please? They’re quite *literally* making me crazy.”



“I’ll talk to them,” Mom promised, but Dad just chuckled into his coffee.

“What?” I asked.

“Nothin’, Ducky.”

“I give up.” I narrowed my eyes at him. “You know you’ve raised mini-yous, right? They are carbon copies, although, maybe Cash is a bit more like Mack, you know, bossier, but that’s not saying much, because you’re almost as bossy as Uncle Mack. Why can’t you be more like Uncle Hatch? He’s so sweet, and Flash and Jamie are kind and sensitive souls who treat women with respect. Poppy is so lucky to have brothers like that and Tate’s beyond lucky to be married to Flash. I bet Hatch was always gentle and calm when he was raising them, too.”

Dad did a spit take as he burst out laughing and mom rushed to grab towels to clean up the mess.

“What’d I say?” I asked.

“I don’t wanna burst your bubble about Uncle Hatch, baby girl, so I won’t. All I’ll say is that we protect our own, Daisy, and that ain’t gonna change. Mom and I’ll talk to your brothers about layin’ off a bit, but shit like what happened out there”—he thrust a thumb over his shoulder—“ain’t gonna fly and you’re gonna have to get used to us bein’ here if and when somethin’ like that ever happens again.”

I looked to my mom for backup. I shouldn’t have bothered.

She merely shrugged. “He’s right, honey.”

“Fine.” I sighed. “Whatever. I love you, but I really do have to study.”

“Right, we’ll get out of your hair,” Mom said, and took their dishes to the sink.

“I’ll do those, Mom,” I said, desperately trying to move them toward the door.

I ushered them to the door and the elevator opened just as they walked out, revealing Louisa who smiled at my parents.

“Hi. Are you visiting Daisy?”

“Yeah. How are you, Louisa?” Dad asked, guiding Mom inside.

“I’m great. You?”

“We’re great. Good to see you, sweetie,” Mom said.

“You, too.”

Louisa gave a little wave and grinned at me.

“Hey Louisa,” I said. “Can you please apologize to your boyfriend for me again? I’m sure he’ll fill you in.”

“Boyfriend? How do you know about Tyson?” She frowned. “I mean, I wouldn’t really call him my boyfriend. We matched last week on Hinge, and he’s taken me on one date to the Lobster Barrel.”

“Wait, Tyson? You went on a date with a guy named Tyson, but had a romantic dinner with Huck last night?” I shot finger guns at her before mock holstering them, then blushed, because seriously, I’m a dork. “You go girl.”

“Huck? Oh my god.” She burst out laughing. “Huck’s not my boyfriend, honey, he’s my brother.”

“What?” Heat rushed to the back of my neck. “He is?”

“Yes. He’s staying with me for a few months until he figures out what he wants to do...” Her sentence trailed off as she waved a dismissive hand. “Oh, that’s a long story and I know you have finals. We’ll get dinner when you’re done, and I’ll fill you in.”

“I would love that,” I said.

“Perfect. Good luck with your studying.”

“Thanks,” I said, and closed myself back inside, leaning against my door. “Brother, hmmm. This is an interesting turn of events.”

I sighed, forcing my thoughts back to the task at hand before wrinkling my nose and letting out a quiet curse.

I'd rather think about Huck than focus on French, but  
alas, *il était temps de se concentrer sur le français.*



*Huck*

I HEARD THE key in the lock and glanced up to see Louisa walk in, rifling through the mail. “Hey.”

“*Hey.*” She gave me a lopsided smirk.

“What?” I asked, pausing my NHL 23 game on the PS4.

“Did you *know...*?” She paused, continuing to stare at me like she had a secret.

“Did I know what, LouLou?”

“That Daisy thought you were my boyfriend?”

“What the fuck?” I scowled. “Why’d she think that?”

“She got the impression we were having a romantic dinner last night. I can only assume it was because you didn’t change that light bulb above the table before we ate rather than after. Think about it. We had candles lit, a table for two, etcetera.”

I rolled my eyes. “Jesus, sissy, I was tired. And it’s not like you couldn’t have changed it yourself.”

“You know my stepladder doesn’t reach that high. Besides, I’m a lady. I shouldn’t have to do all that manual

stuff,” she retorted. “I save all that shit up for when you or Dad come to visit. It makes you feel useful.”

I laughed. “God, we’ve created a monster.”

“You sure have.” She dropped the mail on the coffee table and flopped down beside me on the sofa. “What happened this morning?”

“What do you mean?”

“When I ran into Daisy, she asked me to apologize to you, and I quote, ‘Can you please apologize to your boyfriend for me again. I’m sure he’ll fill you in.’ So, what happened?”

“It was nothing,” I said, unpausing my game, and focusing back on the screen.

“Hmm-mm,” she murmured, standing, and grabbing her purse. I didn’t think anything of it until she let out a gasp and suddenly smacked me on the arm. “You slammed Cash Carver up against the wall?” she screeched. “Why the hell would you do that?”

“What the hell, Lou? How did you even know about that?”

She waved her phone in the air. “Doorbell camera, Huck.”

“Right.” I shrugged. “Whatever. He was being a dick to Daisy, and I didn’t know he was her brother, but it doesn’t really matter. No one should talk to her that way.”

“He’s a *biker*, Huck. Part of a club you don’t mess with. Oh my god, you didn’t just blow out your knee, you got a traumatic brain injury as well.” She groaned. “No wonder her dad was here.”

I paused my game again. “Why are you freaking out, Louisa? If Daisy apologized—which she didn’t need to do, I’ll point out—then obviously, no one’s concerned.” I narrowed my eyes. “Unless you’ve got a thing for this Cash guy.”

“No, I don’t have a thing for Cash,” she said on a huff. “Cash is kind of a dick. But, still, you don’t mess with the Dogs of Fire, Huck. Okay?”

“It’s done, LouLou. Yeah? Besides, I can handle myself.”

“Fine.” She sighed. “Are you hungry?”

I shrugged. “I could eat.”

“Sandwich?”

“Yeah, that’d be great. Thanks.”

She nodded and headed into the kitchen while I went back to my game.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

Two weeks later, finals were over (and passed, thank god), and I had taken an entire week off work. I mean, I ran my own company, so it wasn’t like I couldn’t do that whenever I wanted, but I hadn’t for a long time, and I *needed* it. Teagan and I’d originally planned to fly to Vegas just the two of us, but her dad had locked that down pretty quickly after the birthday fiasco, so we were trying to find something else to do far enough away from the parentals, but close enough for them not to freak out.

I was graduating early, but the ‘walking’ ceremony wouldn’t happen until June, so I had to make a decision about whether or not I wanted to do the pomp and ceremony with my class. My initial blush was a big fat no, but I needed to talk to my parents first. They’d paid for my education so they may want a say in that decision. Tonight was family night at the club, so I planned to talk to them then.

My phone rang just as I pulled a pint of Mountain Blackberry Revel ice cream out of the freezer. I glanced at the screen and smiled as I took the call. “Hi, Daddy.”

“Hey, Ducky. What time do you wanna be picked up?”

“Picked up?” I frowned. “What do you mean, picked up? I was going to drive.”

“Baby girl,” he growled.

“I’m *kidding*,” I retorted, prying off the lid of the tub.  
“Wow, you’re in a mood.”

“Well, if my spawn didn’t consistently try my patience...”

“Ha. Ha. Ha,” I sassed. “I’ll be ready any time after six.”

“Okay. I think Razor’s on you, but it might be Harm.”

“Cool. Whatever.”

“Love you, baby girl.”

I grinned. “Love you more.”

“See you tonight.”

“Okey dokey, artichokey.”

He chuckled, then hung up.

I grabbed a spoon, carrying the carton with me into my office. I still had a little work to finish before I could fully relax, and I needed a little sugar high to get it done.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

Just before six, I stepped out my sister’s front door to head downstairs to get the mail for her to find yet another biker in the hallway outside Daisy’s place.

*How many fuckin’ bikers does this chick know?*

“Yay!” Daisy squealed, wrapping her arms around the man’s waist. “I was hoping it was going to be you.”

Fuck she looked gorgeous. Dark skinny jeans, knee-high boots and Harley-Davidson T-shirt she’d apparently modified into a deep V-neck hugged every delicious curve of her incredible body and her long blonde hair hung in wavy curls down her back.

He chuckled. “Hey, sweetheart. You ready?”

“Yep. How’s Bryn?” she asked, pulling the door closed and locking it.

“Good. She’s already at the club.”

Not wanting to be caught hovering, I headed to the elevators and pressed the button, a car arriving just as Daisy and her pal walked up.

“Oh, hi, Huck, how are you?” she asked as we stepped inside.

“Good, Daisy. How are you?”

“I’m great.” She smiled. “Um, Huck, this is Harm.”

I gave him a chin lift, which he returned.

“You look familiar,” Harm said. “Do I know you from some place?”

“Doubt it. Just moved in with my sister a couple of weeks ago. New to the area.”

Harm cocked his head, then nodded, and I focused back on Daisy.

“It’s family night at the club tonight,” she said as the elevator doors closed.

“Cool.”

“You should come. If you’d like to, that is.” Her cheeks reddened. “Of course, you probably have plans, so you don’t have to if you have plans... or don’t want to. I mean, it’s probably not your scene or whatever. Louisa’s invited too, unless she’s out with Tyson.” She shook her head, and damn if she wasn’t the cutest fucking thing ever. “Never mind. You’re both probably busy. Forget I said anything.”

“Hand me your phone,” I said.

“Huh?”

“Your phone,” I repeated.

She dug in her purse and pulled out her phone, unlocking it then handing it to me. I put my contact information in it, then texted myself.



“Text me the address to this shindig and if we can make it, we will,” I said.

The elevator dinged and the doors slid open.

“Okay, sounds good,” Daisy said, and I stepped into the lobby.

She and Harm were obviously continuing down to the parking garage, so they stayed put. I smiled and gave her a wave, heading toward the mailboxes as the doors closed again.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

“Who’s the dude?” Harm demanded as we made our way to his truck.

“Louisa’s brother,” I evaded, texting Huck the address before I lost my nerve.

“Daisy,” he bit out.

“What?”

“Who the fuck is Louisa?”

“My neighbor.”

He turned to me and crossed his arms. “Daisy Mae Carver, nice try with the verbal evasion, but it won’t work, and you know it.”

“Fine, whatever.” I rolled my eyes. “Huck’s Louisa’s unbelievably sexy as fuck brother.”

“Wait, is this the guy that slammed Cash up against the wall?”

I smirked. “Yes.”

Harm raised an eyebrow.

“Cash deserved it.”

“Knowing your brother...” Harm nodded. “Probably.”

“Whatever. I just made a total fool out of myself because I’m a total dork,” I squeaked.

“Why are you a dork?” Harm asked.

“Um, because he’s like the hottest guy *ever*, and I’m me. A man like that would never be interested in someone like me. Oh my god, I’m totally awkward, and I just invited him to a club night which is totally not his scene.”

Harm sighed. “Family night’s a big deal, sweetheart. Does he mean something to you?”

“I... ah... shit, I don’t know.” I bit my lip. “I just made a complete fool out of myself, didn’t I?”

Harm cocked his head before opening the passenger side door. “Are you being serious right now?”

“Yes,” I hissed. “Why?”

He shook his head. “Get in the truck, Daisy.”

I climbed up in the truck and he closed the door, heading around to the driver’s side and sliding behind the wheel. “I’m gonna say something as respectfully as I can,” he said starting the truck. “You’re kind of clueless.”

I gasped. “Rude.”

He chuckled. “Does Huck know who your dad is?”

“I’m pretty sure Louisa’s filled him in.”

“He walked out his door and waited until he was sure you were safe before he headed to the elevator.”

“How do you know that?” I asked.

“Because I know shit, Daisy.”

“It might have just been coincidence.” I shrugged. “I doubt he was waiting to make sure I was safe.”

“He was sizing me up, Daisy.” Harm pulled out onto the freeway and headed toward the club. “He was tryin’ to be cool, but I could tell he was waiting to make sure.”

“Oh my god, that’s so sweet.”

“And that phone move? Baller.”

My heart raced. “You think?”

“I *know*,” he said. “Us guys are morons, sweetheart, and barely scrape through life most days. I was lucky enough to find Bryn and believe me when I say it took some convincing to get her to give me a chance. You are beautiful, funny, and smart as hell. Any man would be lucky to have you.”

I rolled my eyes. “You have to say that. You’re like my uncle.”

“Jesus, Daisy, I *don’t* have to say that and don’t make me sound old,” he growled.

Harm was in his thirties, and he’d been with the club since I was a kid. I adored him, but I know his life had been troubled. He’d been riding with his girlfriend back when they were kids and they’d had a wreck. She’d died and it had nearly destroyed him. He’d recently met Bryn and I was so glad he’d finally found happy again because he deserved it.

“Huck’s interested,” Harm continued. “He’d be an idiot if he wasn’t. The question is, does he have the sac to stick around once he figures out what it means to date a biker princess?”

“Maybe I should have insisted Razor pick me up,” I grumbled. “He’s nicer to me.”

“Liar.” Harm laughed. “He’s just dumber. He wouldn’t have noticed Huck had even walked out of his condo.”

I scoffed. “I’m gonna tell him you said that.”

“Do it,” he taunted. “He’ll agree with me.”

I sighed. “You’re probably right.”

“And stop talkin’ shit about yourself, sweetheart. You’re fuckin’ awesome, got it?”

I let warm fuzzies fill my soul. “Okay, Harm, I’ll try and let that sink in.”

“Good.”

We pulled into Big Ernie's lot and Harm parked the truck. Teagan was already running for the door and opening it, practically dragging me from the cab.

"Oh my god, you took your time getting here!" she admonished.

"Hi, bestie, how are you? Congratulations on passing your finals," I teased.

"I already texted you all that flowery bullshit earlier." She took my hand and dragged me toward the door.

"Thanks for the ride, Harm," I called.

"You're welcome," he called back.

"Where's the fire?" I asked as she nearly pulled my arm out of its socket.

"New recruits," she whispered.

"Okay, honey, calm your tits."

She paused briefly and fluffed up her boobs. She was ample in that regard, so she started to spill out of her V-neck T-shirt. "I will *never*."

I chuckled, following her through the little lobby area, then into the great room. It was already full of our family and friends.

My mother made a beeline for me, pulling me in for a tight hug. "Hey, honey. How's my girl?"

"Good, Mama." I leaned back and took her in. "Good lord, you're supposed to be getting old, woman. Why do you just get prettier?"

And it was true. She was in her fifties and looked closer to thirty, her blonde hair still long and her face still void of wrinkles. She currently wore a pair of skinny jeans and a Harley-Davidson long-sleeved T-shirt with a pair of knee-high boots. I couldn't stop a laugh, considering the fact we almost matched. I glanced around the room, and no surprise, my dad's eyes were locked on us and started his way toward us as we hugged.

She narrowed her eyes. “What do you want, Ducky?”

I laughed. “Nothing. But I reserve the right to keep that compliment in my back pocket for a later date.”

She cupped my face. “I’m so proud of you and acing your finals, baby.”

“Not sure I aced them.”

“Of course, you did. With how hard you work? How could you not?” She wrapped her arm around my shoulders. “You’re a rock star.”

I leaned into her. She was my biggest fan. She always had been, and I didn’t know what I’d do without her.

“Thanks, Mama.”

“Hey, baby girl,” Dad said once he reached us, leaning down to kiss my cheek.

“Hi, Daddy.”

“Any issues gettin’ here?”

“Harm delivered me *tout de suite*, safe and sound, as you can see,” I sassed.

“I see that French degree is payin’ off,” he retorted.

I smiled. “Speaking of that... do either of you care if I skip the walking ceremony in June?”

“Hell, no,” Dad said.

“Not at all,” Mom said.

I sighed in relief. “Oh, thank god.”

My parents laughed and Dad pulled my mom against him. “You kids go have fun. I’ve got plans for your mom.”

“Ew, gross, way too much information,” I complained.

Dad pulled her away, his hand squarely on her ass and I rolled my eyes turning to face my bestie again.

“Did you get the hot neighbor’s number?” Teagan asked.

I groaned, pressing my hand to my stomach. “Oh my god.”

“What?”

“Sort of?” I grabbed her arm and dragged her into the kitchen. Luckily, it was empty. “He totally gives me the collywobbles, Teagan. I made a total fool out of myself.”

“Spill,” Teagan demanded.

I filled her in on my exchange with Huck in the elevator, and subsequent conversation with Harm while Teagan grabbed a bottle of wine and opened it.

“Well, Harm’s totally right.”

“About which part?” I asked, as she poured the wine.

“All of it.” She smiled. “You’re way too hard on yourself, for one, and I think Huck’s totally interested, for another.”

“I just don’t understand why I lose my ever-blessed mind around him,” I breathed out.

“Yeah, that’s the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question.” She shrugged. “You’re usually so eloquent around boys.”

I grabbed an orange sitting on the island and chucked it at her head, missing her by a mile.

“Well, your career in the Majors is over. Back to the farm teams for you,” Teagan joked as she picked the fruit up off the floor and dumped it in the trash can.

I laughed. “I better gas up my tractor.”

“The farm league isn’t made up of actual farmers... you know what? Never mind.”

Suddenly, the building went eerily quiet. If there’d been a turntable present, you’d have heard a needle scratch.

Followed by...

“What the fuck are you doin’ here?”

Was that Buzz’s pissed off voice? Buzz didn’t get pissed off. Shit, this wasn’t good.



*Daisy*

**“HUCK THE PUCK?”** Buzz bellowed. “I’ll ask again. What the fuck are you doin’ here?”

“Is he talking about *your* Huck?” Teagan hiss-pered.

“No, I’m sure someone else just happened to invite someone else named Huck to family night by coincidence,” I hissed back sarcastically.

Teagan waved her hand toward the door. “Well, go out and see.”

“I can’t believe Huck the Puck is here at this party,” Buzz continued. “Now I can personally kick your ass.”

“Oh, shit, you better go out there,” Teagan said.

“*You* go out there,” I snapped.

Teagan threw her arms in the air. “Huck the Puck isn’t the guy I’m trying to fu—”

“Okay, fine, I’ll go out there!” I growled, grabbing her hand, and pulling her toward the door. “But you’re coming with me.”

“You cost me twenty-grand on that playoff game against Philly last season,” Buzz accused.

I walked out to find Huck giving Buzz an amused grin. “Well, I’m not usually one to throw my teammates under the bus, but I have to say, it was technically our right wing who cost us that particular game.”

“Yeah, maybe, but Cherkowsky ain’t here,” Buzz pointed out.

My heart was in my throat as I rushed to close the distance between us, scared that Buzz might try to fight Huck for some unknown reason.

Huck shrugged. “Well, I don’t usually fight off the ice, or without pads.”

“Yeah, figured you’d need pads to throw down.”

“Oh, no the pads are for you,” Huck retorted, putting his hands up in a boxer’s stance.

Buzz bust out laughing. “Come on, man, I’m just fuckin’ with you. But what the hell’s a Stanley Cup winner doin’ in our house?”

“The team won the cup, and I won a trip to an orthopedic surgeon.”

“Yeah, man, I was real sorry to hear about that. I thought you were a shoo-in for rookie of the year.”

I frowned.

*Huck plays hockey?*

Great. Hockey was a kind of a big deal around here. Ever since the Ducks had become a team back in the early nineties according to Hatch. I mean, football, basketball, and baseball were also a big deal, but hockey for Buzz was life.

“Um, I invited him,” I squeaked. “Hi, Huck. I see you’ve met Buzz.”

Huck smiled at me. “Hey, Daisy.”



“God damn, Buzz, hockey?” Fletch admonished. “Is there anything you *don't* bet on?”

“The kids are playin’ hide-n-seek, why don’t you see if you can get in on the action on the boys’ team?” Chigger suggested.

“I would never do that,” Buzz scoffed. “I already got twenty ridin’ on the girls.” Buzz turned to Huck. “Let me ‘buy’ you a beer.”

“Thanks, man.” Huck nodded toward me. “I’m gonna hang with Daisy for a bit, cool?”

Buzz gave him a chin lift, but I could see disappointment in his eyes. “Oh, yeah, sure. Find me later.”

Huck smiled and focused on me. Oh my god, he looked so good. He wore dark jeans, a tight, black T-shirt, and a pair of Nike high-tops, and it was so different than what I was used to seeing. No cut, no leather jacket, and certainly no motorcycle boots.

I licked my lips and tried to control my breathing as I asked, “Did you find the place okay?”

“Yeah.”

“Hi, I’m Teagan.” Teagan reached out her hand.

“Oh, my god, sorry. This is my bestie,” I explained as they shook hands. “Did you bring Louisa?”

Huck shook his head. “Nope, just me.”

“Nice to meet you, Huck. I’ll let Daisy show you around.” Teagan hugged me, whispering, “Into you, honey. *Into you.*”

She walked away and I slid my hands into my pockets. “I’ll show you where everything is. Are you hungry?”

He shrugged. “I could eat.”

We made our way out to the back where we had picnic tables set up. It had been raining earlier, so the awnings had been pulled open for cover. Both grills were going so we

started there, passing coolers stocked with various drinks on the way.

“Help yourself,” I said, and he grabbed a beer.

Hatch, the club president was manning one of the grills, as was Harm.

“Daisy!” Hatch called, a giant grin on his face, holding his arm out to me.

“Hey, Uncle Hatch,” I said, walking into his embrace.

He gave me a squeeze, kissing the top of my head. “Who’s your friend?”

“Hatch, this is Huck.”

“Holy shit, you’re Huck the Puck,” Hatch said, holding his hand out.

Huck shook his hand. “I am.”

Harm reached out and shook his hand as well. “I knew I knew you from somewhere.”

Huck smiled but didn’t reply.

“Sorry to hear about your knee, man,” Hatch said.

“Thanks.”

“You want a burger, dog, or steak?” Hatch asked.

“Steak would be great, thanks,” Huck said.

“How do you like it?”

“Medium,” Huck said.

I grabbed a bun and nodded to Harm. “I’ll take a burger, please.”

Once our food was procured, we sat at one of the tables and did our best to eat. I’d noticed an open bottle of wine and a wine glass had already been set out for me (bless my bestie).

What I hadn’t anticipated was that Huck was famous. Like, *famous*.

Every time he'd go to take a bite, someone would yell out, "Holy shit, it's Huck the Puck," or something of that nature, and he'd sweetly take a minute to talk to them.

After the tenth person interrupted our meal (I counted), I stood up and bellowed, "Enough! Shut your pie holes and let the man eat. Jesus, you didn't treat Melody this poorly."

"Yeah, well... Train," Chigger pointed out.

"Pretend I'm scarier than Train," I growled, taking my seat again.

Huck raised an eyebrow and chuckled.

"They should leave you alone now."

"Remind me not to piss you off."

I smiled. "They're just excited to have new blood and you're kind of famous."

"Who's Melody?" he asked, taking a bite of steak.

"Morgan."

He started to choke on his bite, and I waited for him to get it all out. "Holy shit, seriously?"

I nodded. "Yeah. She's probably around here somewhere."

"And they think *I'm* famous?"

"I guess so."

He wiped his mouth. "Did you know who I was when you invited me?"

"No clue. I still don't." I bit my lip. "Sorry. I don't know much about sports."

"Don't be sorry." He grinned. The type of grin that nearly made me lose my panties. "It's cool."

"Hatch said something about your knee." I cocked my head. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"Eventually. But not tonight," he said. "Tonight, I just want to get to know you."

I nodded, focusing back on my food.

“Who the fuck invited you?”

I raised my head to the sound of my brother’s angry voice and scowled. “I did, Cash.”

“Daisy,” he growled.

“You got a problem, man, we can go talk privately,” Huck said. “But you’re not gonna use that tone with your sister. Understand?”

Cash crossed his arms. “Yeah, who’s gonna stop me?”

“Well, if he doesn’t, I sure as hell am,” Dad warned. “What the fuck, Cash?”

Cash rolled his eyes. “Jesus, Dad, you know I’d never do anything to Ducky.”

Dad raised an eyebrow. “Yeah, then what’s with the attitude?”

“You know what?” Cash said. “It’s family night. There’s no attitude.” He turned on his heel and walked back inside.

I sighed. “Sorry about my brother, he can be a bit overbearing.”

“It’s all good.” Huck stood, making his way to my dad. “I’m Huck, Mr. Carver. It’s nice to meet you.”

Dad shook his hand. “Call me Booker. Good to meet you, too.”

“Is Cash okay?” I asked.

“Gonna find out,” Dad said, turning to Huck. “But do I need to worry about you checking Cash into the boards again?”

Huck met my dad’s eyes. “Depends on if he’s gonna keep taking a threatening tone with your daughter.”

“Right.” Dad sighed. “I see we’re gonna need to keep an eye on this.”

I dropped my head to the table with a groan.

*Jesus, these alpha men are going to kill me.*

A hand settled on my lower back. “Daisy?”

“What?” I grumbled, my head still on the table.

“You good?”

I lifted my head and looked at him. “Are you going to get into some kind of knock-down-drag-out with my brother?”

He grinned, popping another piece of steak into his mouth. “Depends.”

“On?”

“On whether or not he learns some respect when it comes to you.”

“My brother isn’t a bad guy, Huck. He’s overprotective to a fault and I’m the baby,” I tried to explain. “It’s not intentional, he just has resting bitch voice.”

He studied me before smiling gently. “Don’t care. He’s gonna have to learn to control the bitchiness. Nobody talks to you like that.”

I cocked my head. “Are you like this with everyone, or is there something about me that makes you think you have some dominion here?”

“Look.” He sighed. “I like you, Daisy. Obviously, you’re beautiful, but you’re also smart, independent, plus my sister adores you, so you’re a quality human, and these people respect you. I don’t hold dominion over anyone but myself, and I certainly wouldn’t want to make you feel like I’m doing that to you. What I do have a problem with though, is other men doing it to the women I care about, whether it’s inadvertently or not. I’d like to get to know you more and you getting to know *me* might mean putting up with a little overprotectiveness of my own. Now, within that, you have the freedom and the power to tell me to back off. Can’t say I will, necessarily, but you can tell me to.”

I mean mugged him. “Back off.”

He chuckled. “Damn, you’re cute.”

Buzz sidled up to us, set a fresh beer on the table, and slid onto the bench seat across from us just as my brother walked out one of the sliding glass doors and motioned me inside.

I squeezed Huck's arm. "Give me a second."

I stood and made my way to Cash, who pulled me in for a hug. "Sorry I was a dick."

"I'm not really the one you need to apologize to, am I?" I pointed out.

"Well, that's not gonna happen, Ducky, so how about you let me have this?"

"Why are you so amped up?" I gave him a squeeze.

"Honestly? Just pissed Teagan did something so fuckin' reckless. But I shouldn't have taken it out on you."

"Thank you for saying that," I said, holding up my wrist and pointing to my bracelet. "But y'all seem to forget that we are all locked and loaded. You can track each and every one of us with the push of a button."

Eons ago, Doc, the president of the Dogs of Fire Savannah (and the man who delivered me) had insisted the old ladies wear some piece of jewelry equipped with GPS. Or maybe it was his wife, Olivia. It doesn't really matter now. The end result was that old ladies and kids of the club members were tracked and protected at all times.

I personally wore a bracelet. Others wore necklaces, some wore rings, and there were rumors that one of the Primal Howlers' women out of Colorado had a tracker in a very private piercing, but I had never been nosy enough to confirm.

"I know that, Ducky," Cash said. "But a lot can happen between some asshole drugging you and your finger pressing that button."

"Which is why you can activate it remotely."

He sighed. "You're right, you're right. I overreacted. I'm sorry."

"Thank you. Now, please go and apologize to Huck."

“Fuck, no.”

I shrugged. “It was worth a shot.”

He grinned, kissing the top of my head before releasing me.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

I’d been listening to Buzz prattle on about hockey stats for more than ten minutes and I was about to lose my mind when Daisy finally walked back outside.

I rose to my feet trying my best to form some kind of neutral expression on my face, when I really wanted to grin like a fuckin’ schoolboy and wrap my arms around her.

“Everything okay?” I asked.

She smiled and nodded. “Cash wanted to apologize. Everything’s great.”

“Good.”

“Are you done eating? I don’t mean to rush you, but I thought you might want to meet everyone else.” She nodded toward the door. “There’s also pie inside.”

“Did Maisie make the pie?” Buzz asked.

Daisy laughed. “Yeah, buddy, Maisie made the pie. Several pies, actually.”

I’d never seen a man move so fast.

“I take it this Maisie person makes good pies,” I said as I gathered my trash.

“Maisie is Hatch’s wife.” Daisy grinned. “And ‘good pies?’ That’s basically the understatement of the year.”

I dumped my trash in the can by the door and said, “Load me up, then.”

“Come on.” She led me back inside, and over to the table where the pies were already being picked through. Hatch was standing with a gorgeous blonde, practically groping her as she tried to set more pastries out. I could only assume this was Maisie.

“Hatch, love, I swear to god, I’m going to brain you if you don’t stop,” she warned in a sweet British accent.

He laughed, kissing the back of her neck as a tiny, blonde toddler came running up to him. “Pop Pop!”

“Hey, Tenley girl,” he cooed, picking her up and holding her close.

“Oh my god, Daisy, there you are!”

“Hi, Poppy, have you been here the whole time?” Daisy asked as she hugged a young woman who looked quite a bit like Maisie.

“Um, yes. I’ve been stuck in the back with the kids because Tenley was having a meltdown.”

Daisy nodded toward Hatch and Tenley. “Looks like she’s happy now.”

“That’s because she got what she wanted,” Poppy said. “Pop Pop was the only cure.”

Daisy laughed. “Sorry, honey. Sometimes you just want Hatch.”

She sighed. “Apparently.”

“Poppy, this is Huck.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry for being rude.” She held her hand out to me. “It’s nice to meet you. I belong to Devon. I’m also Hatch and Maisie’s daughter. Um... my hubby’s around here somewhere. Oh, there! Devon!”

She waved her husband over and that was pretty much where my memory lapsed as far as names went. This club was big and every single person in it adored Daisy. A couple of the younger guys, a little too much for my liking.



At this point, Teagan had rejoined us, and Daisy had handed me a plate loaded with four different slices of pie.

She blushed. “You don’t have to eat them all.”

“I was gonna ask for five, but if you insist on underfeeding me...”

She let out a quiet snort. “Oh, I see how it is.”

I grinned, starting with the chocolate. “Fuck, this is unbelievable.”

Daisy smiled. “Told ya.”

Daisy’s mom walked over to us. I’d had the chance to meet her earlier and it was obvious where Daisy had gotten her good looks from. “Baby, are you staying or heading home?”

“Well, Harm drove me, so...”

“I can drive you home,” I offered.

Mrs. Carver shook her head. “I’m sorry, honey, but you have not been vetted.”

“*Mom*,” Daisy hissed, frowning at her.

“Baby girl, if Huck’s gonna be part of this, then he’s gonna be part of it. And there’s no way in hell your Dad’s going to let you out of his sight unless he knows where you are.”

“One day, I’m going to move to Scotland,” she threatened.

“We’ve already got a chapter in London, honey, which isn’t that far from Scotland. And don’t think Hatch won’t open one there if he needs to. He’ll open one wherever any of you girls go. You can run but you can’t hide, and you know it.”

“It’s all good,” I said, wanting to deescalate the situation. “Run the background checks. I’ve got nothing to hide. I’ll drive you home another time.”

“No, wait,” Daisy said. “Give me a few. This is ridiculous.”

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

Dad wasn't in the great room, so I made my way down the hall and found him in his office. I knocked on the door, pushing it open before he bid me entry.

He was sitting at his desk, his laptop open and he smiled at me as I walked in. "Hey, Ducky."

"Huck has offered to drive me home and Mom seems to think you're going to stop him from doing that because he hasn't been 'vetted.'" I crossed my arms and leaned in. "But that's ridiculous, *right?*"

"No, baby girl, she's absolutely right... under—"

"Are you high?" I scowled. "Every single brother in the room knows who Huck is. I didn't even know he played hockey when I invited him. Lord almighty, Buzz was practically offering to carry his baby twenty minutes into talking to him. Why do they even call him Huck the Puck, anyway?"

"Because you give him three inches and he'll find a place for that puck. He's a goalie's worst nightmare. His accuracy is dead-on. His scoring ratio is off the charts."

"It's weird that you know that."

"It's not weird, Ducky. We've been watching this kid since he played in college for Minnesota. He was a star back then, and we knew he'd be a star in the pros. We also predicted the Hurricanes would make him an offer he couldn't refuse. He's the best fuckin' rookie that's to hit the ice in twenty years, so the fact he had that knee injury was a goddamn tragedy."

"Well, it's exactly why it proves my point!"

Dad leaned back in his chair and smiled.

"What?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Are you done?"

“Are you going to let me be an adult and go home with whomever I please?”

“If it’s Huck? Yes,” he said.

I wrinkled my nose. “You already did a background check, didn’t you?”

“Sure did.” He linked his fingers and slid them behind his head. “Huckleberry Granville Wilton is cleared to date my daughter.”

I dropped my head back and growled at the ceiling, “Sometimes I want to murder people.” I met my dad’s eyes. “And it’s because of you.”

“Thank you.” He grinned. “That means I’m doing my job.”

“I can’t believe I have to ask my daddy permission to have a man drive me home,” I murmured. “It’s stupid.”

“I know, baby.”

“I’m moving to Scotland,” I threatened again.

“I’ll talk to Hatch about opening a chapter there.”

I let out a frustrated squeal. “Timbuktu, then.”

“You hate the heat, Ducky.”

“Timbukthree, then.”

“I’d venture a guess it’s even hotter there.”

“I’ll learn to like it,” I sassed.

“Then I’m sure something can be arranged.”

I threw my hands in the air. “I’m not going to Timbuktu.”

He rose to his feet. “I know, baby girl.”

“Are you ever going to unlock the chastity belt?”

Dad moved out from behind his desk with a gentle smile and pulled me into his arms. “One day, when you have a little girl who takes your whole heart, Daisy, you’ll understand the need to protect her from all the evils in the world.”

I dropped my head to his chest and wrapped my arms around his waist. “This is why I can’t stay mad at you.”

“I know.” He chuckled, kissing the top of my head. “It’s my superpower.”

“Okay, I’m going to go now before Huck gets fed up and leaves without me.”

Dad lifted my face... like, my whole face. Gently, of course, but he didn’t fuck around when he wanted to get his point across. “If he gets fed up with you, for any reason, he’s not the man for you. Got it?”

I rolled my eyes. “Yes, Daddy, I got it.”

“Come on, I’ll walk you out.”

I followed him back out to the great room where Huck and I said our goodbyes and headed out to his truck.



*Daisy*

“SO, I PASSED the background check, huh?” Huck asked as we drove.

“How did you know he ran a background check?”

“I didn’t... until just now.”

I sighed. “Shit.”

Huck chuckled. “It’s all good, Daisy. Seriously.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. It’s good you have people looking out for you.” His expression grew somber. “Not everyone’s as lucky.”

I gasped. “Oh my god, did something happen to Louisa?”

“No, thank god. If anything ever happened to my sister, I’d be in prison.”

I felt warm fuzzies again. Of course he’d protect his sister with his freedom.

“It happened to my friend, Robin, in high school. A guy she’d only just started dating released a video of them having sex. Honestly, if it happened to her now, I’d probably be in

prison, too, but back then, I was too young to fully understand all of it. My dad stepped in to handle some of it as well, so it was out of my hands a bit.” He frowned. “She dropped out senior year.”

“Oh my god, that’s awful.”

“Not the worst part, though.”

I scrunched up my face in horror. “How could it get any worse?”

“What the authorities first thought was revenge porn turned out to be video of him sexually assaulting her. What they discovered in the investigation was that he’d drugged and raped two other girls earlier that same year.”

“Oh my god.” I bit back tears. “I can’t even imagine.”

“Yeah, it was bad.”

“Wait, your dad got involved? You told your dad?” I squeaked.

“No way in hell. Louisa told my mom because she was worried, and that’s how Dad got involved,” he said. “Mom’s the math teacher at the high school.”

“*Your* high school?”

“Only one in town,” he confirmed. “We come from a small town in Montana, not quite a one-stop light kind of thing, but close.”

“Whoa, what was that like?”

“Complicated.” He chuckled. “Especially, considering Dad’s the principal of the same school.”

“Oh my god,” I breathed out. “Did your dad have to...?”

“Watch the video?”

“Yeah.”

He grimaced. “No. He refused.”

“Did you?”

“Fuck, no.” He frowned. “I figured she’d been through enough with half the school seeing it. I wasn’t gonna add to the pile.”

Oh my god, this man was *such* a good man. No thought to how it might affect him, just that it would hurt her if he saw it.

I nodded, unable to form words right at that moment.

“Mom did though,” Huck continued, “and she said it scarred her for life.”

I bit my lip. “My friend, Sierra, works for the FBI and her main job is finding missing kids and putting pedophiles away. She has to watch more kiddie porn than anyone should be forced to, so I totally understand that.”

“Tough gig.”

“The toughest.” I nodded. “Did he get off?”

“No fucking way. Dad got him expelled, arrested, and put away. Cyrus had his full ride to Texas A&M revoked and his life was pretty much ruined. Don’t really give a shit.”

“Cyrus *totally* sounds like a creepo name.”

Huck shrugged. “Don’t know a whole lotta Cyruses, so can’t speak to that.”

I sighed. “What happened to Robin?”

“Louisa kept in touch with her over the years. Still does, I think. She’s doing much better. Graduated remotely, became an author, healed. She’s married, has a couple of kids.”

I let out a quiet sob, tears now slipping down my face.

“Shit, sorry.” He reached over and took my hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. “I didn’t mean to make you cry.”

I grimaced. “I’m one of those weirdoes who cries at everything.”

“I don’t think it’s weird that someone being hurt bothers you, though, Daisy,” Huck pointed out. “It *should* bother you. I think the world in general has become hardened and it’s nice

to see someone who's genuinely kind." He gave my hand a squeeze again. "Don't ever let anyone change that."

"I won't," I promised, squeezing his hand back. "But you should probably be warned about something."

"What's that?"

"When I say I cry at everything, I mean, I cry at everything."

He smiled. "Yeah?"

I nodded. "The holidays are the worst. Those sappy coffee commercials? Forget about it. I'm a puddle on the floor."

He chuckled. "I'll make sure I buy stock in Kleenex."

I lowered my head and bit my lip, trying not to let out a schoolgirl sigh. He didn't scoff or tell me I was weird. He just smiled gently and said he'd make sure to have tissues at the ready, indicating, one, he'd still be around at Christmas and two, he wasn't bothered that I might cry at coffee commercials. He also hadn't let go of my hand. Lordy, I was really starting to like him.

I was also starting to turn in on myself and feel extremely uncomfortable with my vulnerability. "Um, can we change the subject?"

"Sure."

I cocked my head. "What did you think of Melody?"

"She was nicer than the rumors."

I laughed. "That's a very diplomatic answer."

Melody Morgan was the biggest pop and movie star on the planet and currently home planning her summer tour.

"I am *not* her demographic. Louisa's more her audience," he said. "I mean, I get that she's talented, but I've never understood someone with that much money and opportunity bitching about their life, you know?"



“Definitely.” I nodded. “She doesn’t do that anymore, to be clear.”

“That’s good. Sounds like her man and kids have helped heal whatever ailed her.”

“Truer words were never spoken.”

Huck chuckled. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, she invited us over for dinner. Whenever we’re free, of course. But now that I’ve said that out loud, it’s all very random and quick, and, well, Jesus, sorry—”

“Hey,” he interrupted, squeezing my hand. “Dinner sounds great.”

“There’s no pressure and you can absolutely say no. She just happened to mention it—”

“Daisy.” He squeezed my hand again. “Dinner’s good.”

I shifted in my seat and forced a smile. “Okay, awesome. I’ll let her know.”

We pulled into the parking lot, and I suddenly felt bereft that our time together was ending.

“What’s your schedule like this week?” Huck asked as we rode the elevator to our floor.

“I don’t think Melody meant dinner that quickly,” I joked.

Huck smirked. “Cute.”

“Um, I’m supposed to be going out of town.”

“But...?”

“I don’t think that’s going to happen now. Teagan’s dad’s kind of pissed she used a fake ID—never mind, it’s a long story.” I shook my head. “Anyway, unless something changes, I’m somewhat free. Finals are over and I told my clients I was taking the week off. Why?”

“I’d like to take you out. On a proper date.”

“Well...” I smiled. “I’d love to go out.”

We arrived at my door, and he asked, “Are you a little black dress kinda girl, or do you want to throw axes?”

I chuckled as I unlocked my door. “I love it all.”

“I see how it is. You’re gonna make me work for it.” He leaned down to kiss my cheek. “Just so you know, I like working for things.”

I shivered and felt heat creep up my neck. “Good to know.”

“You need to get inside, Daisy, or I’m gonna kiss you.”

“I’d be okay with that.”

“Yeah, but would your dad or your brothers?”

“Goddamn cameras,” I hissed.

“I’ll text you.”

“Okay.” I smiled. “Goodnight.”

“Night.”

I stepped into my home, then closed and locked the door, grabbing my phone and immediately calling Teagan.

“Oh my god, girl, spill.”

“There’s nothing to spill,” I said, dropping my keys in the bowl on my island and heading to my bedroom. “He dropped me off and now I’m home and alone.”

“No kiss?”

“On the cheek,” I said, dejectedly.

“That’s no fun.”

“I know,” I breathed out. “He did say he was going to take me out this week.”

“Okay, good, because I definitely can’t go away with you.”

I wrinkled my nose. “I figured that. That’s why I told him I was probably free.”

“Sorry my dad’s being a total Debbie Downer.”

“It’s fine.” I sat on the bench at the end of my bed and unzipped my boots. “Let’s set something up when you actually turn twenty-one. Deal?”

“Absolutely. Let’s do Vegas for my birthday.”

“I’m in,” I said. “I’d like to go on the record that I want Huxley there this time, okay?”

Teagan chuckled. “Me too.”

“Okay, good.”

“I’m gonna let you go. I bet your brother fifty bucks he couldn’t beat me at pinball.”

“Which brother?”

“Cash.”

“Why would you do that?” I admonished. “He’s kind of unbeatable.”

“We’ll see.”

“Well, it’s your funeral and your money.”

Teagan laughed. “I’ll text you the result.”

“Can’t wait. Have fun.”

We rang off and I headed to the bathroom to get ready for bed. After I took off my makeup, set my contacts in their solution, and pulled on my glasses, I climbed into bed and grabbed my tablet, suddenly realizing I’d left my jacket in Huck’s truck.

I fired off a quick text, letting him know that I’d grab it tomorrow and went back to my book.

I was barely a chapter in when my phone buzzed and there was a notification from my doorbell camera and a text from Huck.

**Huck:** Open your door, it’s me.

I scrambled out of bed and grabbed my robe off my bench, rushing to my living room. I entered the code for the alarm and pulled open my door. Huck stood in the hallway, my jacket hanging from the end of his index finger.

“Hi,” I said.

“Jesus, fuck.”

“What’s wrong?”

His eyes raked over me. “Your hair’s piled on top of your head, you’re wearing glasses, and your face has absolutely no makeup.”

“Um, hello.” My stomach roiled. “I didn’t ask you to stop at my home—”

Before I could finish my diatribe, his hand was suddenly at my waist, my jacket was in a pool on the floor, and I was up against my wall with his mouth covering mine. I opened my lips, so his tongue had access, grasping his waist in an effort to stay upright.

Unfortunately, it was him who broke the kiss, dropping his forehead to mine as we both tried to catch our breath. “I seriously planned on waiting a little while to do that, but you... fuck... I just didn’t think you could get prettier.”

I scrunched up my face in horror. “You think *this* is pretty?”

“Everything about you is pretty, Daisy.” He ran his finger down my cheek. “But you without any kind of barrier? It’s out of this world.”

“Oh,” I breathed out.

He grinned, kissing me again. “Okay, I’m gonna let you go, because, well, fuck.”

I blushed. “Thanks for grabbing my jacket.”

We glanced at the floor and Huck chuckled as he bent down to pick it up. “Shit, sorry.”

I shrugged. “You kissing me like that means you don’t have to say you’re sorry.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Does that apply to everything?”

I laughed. “Absolutely not.”

“I pushed it too far.” He gave me a sexy smirk. “Okay, I’m gonna go.”

“Okay.”

“Right now.” He nodded to my door, his hand sliding back to my waist. “I’m gonna walk across the hall and lock myself inside.”

“Yep, so you’ve said.”

“You need your sleep, right? So... I should go.”

I shrugged. “I’ve got the whole week off. If you want to stay, stay.”

He groaned. “Jesus, woman, don’t say that, I’ll stay forever.”

“I’m not gonna put out, but if you want to hang out and watch a movie, maybe make out a little more, I’m all for it.”

“Oh, did you think *I* would put out?” He put his hand on his chest and scoffed. “I’m not that kind of guy, Ms. Carver.”

I chuckled. “Well, that’s good to know, Mr. Wilton. Do you want popcorn?”

“Yeah, that’d be great. I’ll just lock up and let Louisa know where I am.”

I nodded and my phone buzzed as I pulled a bowl down from the cabinet. I rolled my eyes as I answered it. “Hi, Daddy.”

“Ducky.”

“What’s up?”

“Why am I gettin’ a notification Huck’s at your place at almost one a.m.?”

“I left my jacket in his truck,” I said. “He brought it back.”

“*Austin Carver, hang up that phone,*” my mother demanded in the background.

“*Dani—*”

There was some rustling and then my mother's voice came over the phone. "Daisy?"

"Right here."

"Ignore your father."

I chuckled. "Oh, I plan to."

"Good girl. *No, I swear to buddha, Booker, if you go over there, I will move out. Don't test me. Do you want me to suck —?*"

"Mom!" I squeaked in disgust.

"Sorry, honey. Desperate times call for desperate measures."

I groaned. "Oh my god."

"I'll deal with your dad. Call us if you need us."

"Thanks, Mama."

"Love you, sweetie."

"Love you more." I grinned and hung up, pouring kernels into the bowl, then sliding it into the microwave.

Huck walked back in and locked up behind him, cocking his head. "Everything okay?"

"Yes." I smiled. "I have beer in the fridge if you want one. Help yourself."

"Sure, thanks." He pulled open the fridge and chuckled. "You're well stocked."

"A dad and brothers who visit often. Not to mention a gaggle of 'uncles' and club brothers who bring a case or a six-pack every time they come. There's more in the pantry."

"How often do these 'club brothers' visit?"

I pulled the popcorn out of the microwave and divided it up before pouring butter oil and salt over it. I glanced up at him and smiled. "All the time, why?"

"Just wondering."

"Are you jealous, Mr. Wilton?"

“Do I have a reason to be?”

“Not even a little bit,” I said. “I like you, Huck, and I’m not really a serial dater. I’d like to see where this goes, and I don’t really share, so hopefully, you don’t either.”

Oh my god, I cannot believe that just came out of my mouth. I’d never had the guts to talk to anyone like that but with Huck I felt both comfortable and emboldened and I did not want anyone else’s mouth on his but mine.

He smiled slowly, closing the distance between us, and getting nose-to-nose with me. “I’m not a serial dater, either. I also don’t share. Now that I’ve tasted that pretty little mouth of yours, I’m confident I’m gonna like the rest of you even more. We’re gonna wait a little while and get to know each other and explore more, which I’m looking forward to doing, but I’m glad to hear we’re on the same page.”

I nodded with a swallow.

“Gotta admit, it’s gonna be hard.”

“Yes. Um, yes, it really will be,” I agreed, lifting my chin for another kiss.

It was slow, it was deep, and it was almost feral.

“What do you want to watch?” I asked.

“Anything. I’m not picky.”

That turned out to be a damn lie, and it took fifteen minutes for us to finally agree on a movie. I wanted romance, he wanted either action-slash-adventure or some kind of sports movie (shudder), which I was not in the mood for, so we compromised. And that compromise was, *The Cutting Edge*.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

We’d barely made it an hour into the movie when Daisy fell asleep against me. I could have nudged her awake. I also could

have carried her to bed and left her to sleep. I did neither. I pulled the blanket from the back of her sofa and laid it over her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders while I changed the channel to an old NHL game.

She didn't make a peep.

Jesus, she was cute even in sleep.

I slid a stray hair away from her face, her skin soft under my finger, and smiled. I didn't know what it was about this woman. All I *did* know for sure was she was mine.

At about four a.m., her phone started buzzing and there was a knock on her door.

"Daisy?" I whispered, shaking her gently.

"Mmm?"

"Baby, someone's knocking on your door."

She jumped up, grabbing her phone, and swiping the screen. "Oh my god. Stewart? What the fuck?"

"Tell me."

She glanced at me, then back at her phone. "Mrs. Eaton's son. He usually visits over the holidays, but Mrs. Eaton has been having some health issues, so she said he was coming—oh, god. He's jacking..." She covered her mouth with her hand. "I'm going to be sick."

"Call the cops," I ordered, pulling open the door.

Stewart was in his thirties, maybe, with a receding hairline and a bad case of adult acne, and he was standing in the hallway, his micro peen in his hand, and he was, in fact, jacking off in front of Daisy's door.

I didn't hesitate. Just tackled him to the floor, shoving my knee in his back, and I knocked him hard enough to render him unconscious.





*Daisy*

**I** DIDN'T CALL the cops. I called my father, entering the code for the alarm to stop the incessant beeping as I scrolled down to his number.

“What the fuck, Ducky? Who is that on the cameras?” Dad demanded, his voice gruff since he'd obviously been woken up.

I bit my lip and forced back the bile. “Stewart. Mrs. Eaton's son.”

“Fuck, okay. Flea's closest, so he's on his way. I'm coming as well. You still got those cable ties I bought you?”

“Um, yes.” I headed into the kitchen. “I think so.”

“They're on the second shelf in your pantry.”

“Right,” I said, diverting my steps, and heading into my pantry. “Found them.”

“Baby girl, have Huck secure this asshole, okay?”

“Yes.”

“We'll be there soon.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

I hung up, then rushed into the hallway and handed Huck the zip ties.

“Did you call the cops?” he asked, securing Stewart who was groaning under the weight of Huck’s body.

“Uh, no, we don’t do cops.”

He scowled. “What do you mean, you ‘don’t do cops?’ This pervert was—”

“Don’t growl at me, Huck,” I hissed as I heard the faint ding of the elevator down the hall. “You don’t understand our world.”

Frowning, he slid his phone out of his back pocket and swiped the screen. “If you’re not gonna do it, then I will.”

“Put your goddammed phone away, man,” Flea ordered.

Huck dropped his head, and I could tell he was warring about whether he was going to actually put his phone away or fight Flea.

I was relieved he chose the former, as the latter would likely result in damaging the face I’d grown quite fond of. As Sergeant at Arms for the club, Flea didn’t fight to fight, he fought to win.

“What’s going on?” Louisa asked, peeking through her slightly open door. “Oh my god, is that Stew?”

Luckily, there were only three condos on our floor, and Mrs. Thatcher was older and wore hearing aids.

“Go back inside, LouLou,” Huck ordered, standing, and letting Flea take over.

Instead of listening to her brother, Louisa pulled her robe closer around her and made her way over to me. “What happened?”

I shuddered. “You don’t want to know.”

She slid her arm into mine and frowned. “I seriously do. Tell me.”

I filled her in on everything as Flea dealt with Stewart. My dad arrived about twenty minutes later, along with Hatch and a couple of the other brothers.

“I’d feel better if you were locked up safe in your place, Louisa,” Dad said. “We’ve got Daisy covered, yeah?”

“Oh, ah, sure.”

“I’ll call you later,” I promised.

She nodded and headed inside.

Uncle Hatch made his way to me and cupped my face. “Baby girl, look at me.” I met his eyes and he smiled gently. “This asshole is never gonna bother you again. Got it?”

I nodded. “You’re not going to kill him, right?”

He frowned. “What’s the rule, Ducky?”

I wrinkled my nose. “Well, excuse me for making sure you don’t unalive someone because of me.”

He turned to my father. “You can field that one.”

Hatch followed Flea and the others down the hall and Dad made his way to me and Huck. Instead of making me feel any better, or answering any of my questions about what they planned to do with Stewart, however, Dad just turned to Huck and asked, “You got Daisy?”

Huck wrapped an arm around my waist. “Yeah.”

And then Dad was gone. It was like no one had ever been there, and Huck was closing us back into my condo, locking the door and resetting the alarm.

“Daisy?” Huck called.

“Hm?” I turned to face him.

“Baby, I’ve called your name four times.” He crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow. “Are you freaking out yet?”

I met his eyes, nodding my head, and making a run for him. He opened his arms and I crashed into him as I burst into tears. He pulled me close as I melted down, stroking my back and letting me cry it out.

“Hey, it’s over now. No one’s ever gonna get close enough to touch you,” he whispered.

“I know. I’ve never worried about that,” I rasped. “It’s just all so…” I shuddered. “Gross.”

“Yeah, I get that.”

“What would have happened if you weren’t here?” I looked up at him.

“I suspect your dad still would have taken care of it.”

“Yes, but who would have taken care of *me*?”

“Fuck,” he breathed out, his mouth covering mine as he lifted me high enough so I could wrap my legs around his waist.

He carried me back to my bedroom, dropping me gently onto the mattress where he stretched out beside me and continued his delicious assault on my mouth. I slid my hands under his T-shirt, running my fingers up his chest, desperate to get closer. I switched positions, pushing him onto his back and straddling his hips, before yanking off my robe and pulling my shirt up over my head.

“Fuck, Daisy,” he breathed out, cupping my breasts, and then before things could get good, he suddenly flipped me onto my back and knifed off the bed, covering me with the blanket draped over my bench.

“Daisy?” my mother called from somewhere *in my goddammed apartment*.

“Shit!” I hissed. “Shit, shit, shit! Where’s my shirt?”

“I’ll stall your mom while you find it,” Huck said, and walked out of the room.

In the end, much like the left sock in a dryer, my shirt had disappeared into the ether, so I had to grab a new one.

“Hi, Mrs. Carver,” I heard Huck say.

“Call me Dani, honey.”

“Right, Dani.”

Mom said something, but it was too low to hear.

“Oh, yeah, she’s okay, I think,” Huck replied. “She’s back here. *Resting*. I was just gonna grab her some water.”

I rushed to scramble into the bed, taking several deep breaths to calm my racing heart, and regulate my breathing.

“Baby?” Mom knocked on my open door and leaned in.

“Hi, Mama. You can come in.”

Mom made her way to me and sat on the edge of the bed. “How ya doin’?”

“I’m okay.” I pushed myself up and leaned against the headboard. “It’s all just so... gross.”

“Yeah, sweetie, it was.”

“Do you know what Uncle Hatch is going to do with him?”

“No. I don’t ask about those things.”

I frowned. “How can you not?”

“Baby girl, you’ll find the less you know about club business, the better you’ll feel.”

“Oh my god, they’re going to kill him, aren’t they?”

Mom gasped. “No, they don’t kill people, Daisy. Lordy, you’ve been watching too much TV.”

Huck walked in with a glass of water and set it on the nightstand.

I smiled. “Thanks.”

“Is something burning?” my mom asked, glancing around the room.

It was then I realized I’d thrown my T-shirt over the lamp in the corner, and it was starting to smoke. Luckily, Huck saw it too and managed to grab it before Mom saw it, throwing it into the bathroom before peeking back into the lamp.

“Huh,” Huck said. “Looks like a fly got fried in the bulb.”

Mom sighed. “You seriously need to use the LED bulbs, honey.”

“I use that one for my wax melts,” I improvised as Huck covered his mouth, obviously trying to bite back a laugh.

My phone buzzed three seconds before my doorbell pealed and I grabbed my phone to see my brothers standing in the hallway. I let out a groan. “It’s the Kray brothers.”

“Will you stop calling them that?” Mom begged. “The Kray brothers were evil nefarious killers. Your brothers, on the other hand, are only trying to protect you.”

“Do they know that it’s the twenty-first century and women are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves, and we don’t need to be watched over by knuckle-dragging, chest thumping, neanderthal, macho, manly men?”

“My, that was a lot of adjectives.”

“I get descriptive when I’m irritated.”

Mom rolled her eyes and sighed. “I’ll go get the door and make everyone breakfast.”

She left the room, and I slid out of bed. “My family has absolute perfect timing, as always,” I muttered sarcastically.

Huck chuckled, wrapping his arms around me. “It’s okay. I don’t have protection with me anyway, so it’s all for the best.”

“Right.” Heat flooded my cheeks, and I pulled back from him. “Well, um... I think you should probably go now.”

“Hey.” He frowned. “What just happened?”

I shook my head. “I just think with everything that’s happened, it would be best you go home. I’ll text you later, okay?”

“Dais—”

“It’s fine.” I crossed my arms to keep myself from reaching out to him. “I’ll text you.”

He studied me with narrowed eyes, then walked out the door and I burst into tears.

“Ducky?” Mom walked into my room a few minutes later and found me exactly where Huck had left me. “Oh, baby girl, what happened?”

“I just made a total fool out of myself,” I cried as she wrapped her arms around me. “Huck’s never going to talk to me again.”

“Oh, sweetness, what happened?”

“It’s not important. I just told him to go home, and now I think he’s going to hate me forever.”

“He’s not going to hate you forever, honey. I highly doubt he hates you now. Not even for a second.”

“Mom, guys don’t like drama. And I’m kind of all drama these days.”

Mom let out a quiet snort. “If you knew how much crap I put your daddy through, you’d know how wrong you are, baby. If he’s worth his mettle, no amount of drama will keep him away.”

“But *I* want to be worth it, Mama. I really like him.”

She lifted my face and smiled. “You are always worth all of it, sweetheart. Don’t ever doubt it.”

I bit my lip and nodded, not entirely convinced I believed her.

“Come on, Daddy’s on his way with breakfast.”

I sighed. “Okay.”

\* \* \*

*Huck*

I walked back in Louisa’s condo trying to figure out what the fuck just happened. I didn’t think I’d done anything to hurt Daisy’s feelings or offend her. Jesus, I was falling hard for her,

and to hurt her would be akin to cutting off a limb. I dragged my hands down my face and took a deep breath.

“That bad, huh?” Louisa asked, walking out of the kitchen. “What happened?”

“Not sure,” I admitted. “Daisy asked me to leave.”

Louisa frowned. “Walk me through everything.”

I did. Sort of. I left out the more R-rated portions, and once I was done, my sister gave me a sympathetic smile.

“What?” I asked.

“Daisy’s shy, Hucky. Like, almost painfully. She probably felt a little embarrassed.”

“She doesn’t have anything to feel embarrassed about,” I breathed out.

“Yeah, but she probably does all the same.” She squeezed my arm. “Coffee?”

I nodded. “Yeah, sis, thanks. You want me to make waffles?”

“Does a frog fuck on a lily pad?”

I chuckled and followed her into the kitchen.

“Keith called again,” she said as I whisked up the batter.

“Why’d he call you ‘again’?”

“Because you’re not calling him back,” she said.

Keith Cherkowsky had been my right wing, but he now held my place on the team. He’d been trying to call me over the past few weeks, but I wasn’t really in the mood to ‘chat.’

“What did you tell him?”

“I told him you’d call him when you were ready.”

“Thanks.”

“He’s your best friend, Hucky. You don’t think he’s hurting too?” she asked.

“Yeah, I get it. But he’s playing. I’m not,” I growled.



“I get that. You just need one or two more surgeries, right? Then you’ll be good to go.”

“That’s what the doctors hope, Lou, but that could take years, and by then, I’ll be out of the game.”

“Don’t say that. You’ve got time. You’ve also been skating almost every day with the Oregon team to keep up your chops, so to speak.”

“A few laps around a rink doesn’t keep up one’s chops so to speak, LouLou.”

“With how hard you work, little brother, I highly doubt you’re only doing a few laps around a rink,” she countered.

I grunted in response, and she squeezed my arm.

“Okay, no more talk of hockey,” she said with a smile. “Focus on Daisy. You’ve got this.”

As we made breakfast, I thought about what Louisa had said. My sister had always had an insight I didn’t, and it was one of the reasons we were so close.

I needed to figure out a way to let Daisy know she could trust me. With everything. I just had no idea how to do that.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

Mom and I walked out to the kitchen and Archer made his way over to us with a frown. “Why are you crying, Daisy?” He glanced at Mom and asked, “Why’s Daisy crying?”

“Did that asshole do something to her?” Cash demanded.

“That asshole has been taken care of by Dad,” I pointed out.

“Not *him*,” Cash hissed. “Huck.”

“Huck is *not* an asshole, dickhead.” I jabbed a finger in his chest. “And if you say anything like that again, I’m going to cut your nut-sack off.”

“*Children!*” Mom admonished. “Enough!”

“Sorry, Mom,” we grumbled, but I shot Cash a warning glare as he flopped onto my sofa.

I headed into the kitchen and put on a pot of coffee, my emotions all over the place as I internally processed everything that had happened this morning. I was mad at myself for kicking Huck out because I just wanted to crawl into bed and snuggle up against him. I felt safe with him. Something I didn’t think I’d ever feel again with a man, at least in a romantic sense. Despite the fact I was well-protected, I didn’t find it easy to trust, but I trusted *him*, and I’d blown it.

Royally.

I squeezed my eyes shut. Huck was probably never going to speak to me again and that made me feel sick to my stomach, but I’d made my proverbial bed, so I was stuck lying in the cold, scratchy sheets.

Dad walked in a few minutes later, forcing me to shove my emotions down deep inside. Pasting on what I hoped was a genuine smile, I helped him unpack the bag of bagels and cream cheese, then joined my family for breakfast.

\* \* \*

“You still freaked?” Dad asked once my brothers had said their goodbyes (conveniently without helping to clean up).

His arms were crossed, and he was leaning against the counter while I loaded the dishwasher. Mom was currently in my bedroom because she’d insisted on folding at least one load of my laundry before they left. Since I loved it when my mom did my laundry, I didn’t object.

“About Stew?”

He nodded.

“No,” I said.

“Then what’s up?” he pressed.

I studied him for a few seconds, debating on whether or not I should make up a story. Unfortunately, and because my dad wasn't stupid and could read me like a book anyway, I told him the truth in the end, because if I didn't, he'd know I was lying, so subterfuge was futile.

"I think I fucked up with Huck."

He frowned. "How so?"

"I was...well... *me*."

"I really wish you didn't do that, Ducky," Dad said with a sigh.

"I know. But I'm a lot for some people to take and I really like him, Daddy, so the fact that I might have lost him kind of hurts."

He let out a heavy sigh and shook his head. "Baby girl, if you've lost him over this, he's not the man for you."

"Easier said than felt."

"I get it."

"How could you possibly get it, Daddy?" I huffed out in frustration. "You're a boy."

He chuckled. "You're right, I am. So, let me fill you in on a little something about us boys."

I wrinkled my nose and slammed the dishwasher door closed. "Do tell."

"When we find a woman who rocks us to our core, we will do whatever it takes to make her ours. And I've seen how Huck looks at you, baby girl." He frowned. "I don't like it, but I see it."

"Ew," I squealed.

I couldn't figure out what was worse, the thought of my father rocking my mother or my father thinking of Huck rocking me. Either way, I wanted all the rocking in my head to stop immediately.

"What?" Dad asked.

“Nothing.” I sighed. “It’s just awkward talking to your father about your love life.”

“Should it be?” he challenged. “You knew that I was aware you’d grow up one day, right?”

I shrugged. “Yeah. I guess.”

“Believe it or not, as much as I loved when you were my little girl, I also looked forward to the day we’d be able to talk about important stuff.” He raised an eyebrow. “And what’s more important than fighting for the person you love?”

I gasped. “Who said I loved Huck?”

“Well, don’t you?”

“It’s only been a week.”

Dad gave me a sweet smile. “Do you remember Mr. Flopsy?”

“Of course. He was my very first pet.”

“No,” he corrected. “He was your first love.”

I chuckled. “What are you talking about?”

“You know those cartoons where the characters lock eyes and the red hearts appear above their heads?” he asked, and I nodded. “Well, that’s what happened when you were eight and you saw that bunny at the farmer’s market. I swear I saw it with my own eyes... little hearts over your head, the second you saw him. He was the runt of the litter and missin’ a foot, but you didn’t want any of the other bunnies in the pen. Just him.”

I chuckled. “Well, he was special.”

“See? That’s what I’m talking about,” he said. “You latch onto who you latch onto. And you’ve always loved who you love, no matter what anyone says. You have an innate ability to not only see, but foster, the absolute best qualities in a person. It’s something that I admire about you and strive to be like myself.”

I burst into tears. “Really?”

“Yeah, baby, really.”

“Well, mark me down for all future adult father-daughter talks.”

He pulled me into his arms and kissed my temple.  
“Welcome to the club, Ducky.”

We stood in the kitchen, our arms wrapped around each other, and I let the love that only a father could show seep into me. By the time my parents left me, I was feeling much better about my world and my place in it.



*Daisy*

**A**T ALMOST FIVE that afternoon, I got a notification on my phone that there was movement in my hallway. I opened the app and watched as Huck paced outside my door, a paper bag in one hand, his other scrubbing the back of his neck.

I was currently wrapped in one of my blankets on my sofa, reading a romance novel on my tablet, so I sat up and made a move to answer the door.

But I stopped myself.

Huck was obviously working something out and I needed to let him do that.

I set my book aside and stayed glued to my phone, watching as he stepped to my door, then stepped back, lowered his head, and shook it, then squared his shoulders.

I smiled. God, he was so cute as he obviously tried to bolster his courage to knock on my door.

Finally, the knock came, and I waited a few seconds before rushing to the door. Taking a deep breath, I pulled it open and bit my lip. God, he was gorgeous. "Hi."

“Hey, beautiful.” He lifted the bags and smiled. “I was wondering if you were hungry.”

“Well, that depends.”

His expression grew a little guarded. “On?”

“Are you joining me?”

“If you’d like me to.”

I stepped back and waved him in, setting the alarm after I closed the door.

He walked over to the kitchen island and set the food on it, then turned to face me. “I’m really sorry—”

“For what?” I asked.

He shrugged. “Honestly, I don’t know. I just figured I’d apologize and get it out of the way.”

I sighed. “Well, you have nothing to apologize for. It’s me who should be apologizing.”

He frowned. “What the fuck for?”

“I’m not that girl.” I settled my hand on my chest. “I don’t throw myself at a man two seconds after meeting him and get naked when I barely know him. I’m not a slut—”

“I swear to god, Daisy, if you say that again, I’m gonna lose my shit.”

I met his eyes. “Which part?”

“The part about you being a slut. I know you’re not a slut. Jesus, you could run a train and I still wouldn’t think of you as a slut.”

I grimaced. “Well, I would need to have slept with more than one guy to qualify for a train.”

He leaned against the island. “And you haven’t?”

I shook my head. “Nope. Just the one. And it ended three years ago.”

“Fuck, seriously? Why so long?”

I sighed. “He was my boyfriend in high school. We did the deed a couple of times. He was a douche canoe, and I was a conquest, apparently. The bet being, could he get the biker’s daughter?”

“Jesus, Daisy, I’m sorry.”

“Oh, don’t be sorry. He’ll be walking funny for the rest of his life.”

Huck raised an eyebrow.

I shook my head. “You don’t want to know.”

“I *do* want to know,” Huck countered.

“First, how long has it been for you?”

“About a year. It wasn’t anything serious, though.”

“Fuck buddies,” I deduced.

He shook his head. “Not even that deep.”

“So, you’re saying it was a puck bunny.”

He chuckled. “You’ve picked up some new lingo, I see.”

I shrugged. “We’ve got sweet butts, you’ve got puck bunnies. There’s always someone out there ready to label a woman something for fucking a man because the feminist movement hasn’t quite done its job yet.”

“Sad but true.” He cocked his head. “Just so you know, I’ve never called anyone a puck bunny. Her name is Charlene and although we weren’t good at the feelings part, the sex worked, so we had some fun for a time.”

I rolled my eyes. “There’s always a southern Charlene, isn’t there?”

He smirked. “I’m having a real hard time not touching you, Daisy.”

“You are?”

“Yeah, why are you surprised?”

“I was sure you were mad at me,” I admitted.

“Baby, why would I be mad at you?”



“Because I—wait, you just called me ‘baby.’ So, you’re not mad at me?”

He was apparently done with our distance, walking over to me, and sliding his hand to my neck. “You’ve done nothing to warrant me being mad at you, Daisy. And even if you had, we’d talk about it and work it out. There’d be no icing each other out.”

“So, you want to be in this with me?”

“Hell, yeah I want to be in this with you,” he said. “What made you think I didn’t?”

“There’s just a lot with me and the club sometimes.”

“A lot, meaning...?”

“Drama.”

“Daisy, I can handle drama. What I can’t handle is you shutting me out.”

“My dad thinks I’m falling in love with you,” I admitted.

“Yeah?” He ran his thumb over my pulse.

I nodded.

“And what do you think?”

I licked my lips, studying him for a few seconds before I whispered, “I’m already there.”

His mouth covered mine, slipping his tongue between my lips, and I slid my hands around his waist as he deepened the kiss. I was the one who broke the connection this time and dropped my head to his chest. “Okay, so not mad at me.”

He laughed. “Not mad at you. Not even close. You’ll know when I’m mad because I’ll tell you.”

Without warning, my stomach growled loud enough for both of us to hear and I grimaced. “What did you bring that just happens to smell so incredible?”

“Golden City?”

“No way,” I breathed out, rushing to the kitchen island and ripping open the bag. “Oh my god, *yum*.” I glanced at him,

then back at the food. “How did you know it was my favorite?”

“I didn’t. Louisa said it was the best Chinese in town.”

“Well, she’s right about that. I’ll grab plates, you grab beer,” I bossed, and he grinned, moving to do my bidding.

We set everything on my coffee table and settled into my sofa to eat. He pulled my feet onto his lap with a grin, then grabbed a pair of chopsticks and dug in.

“You gonna tell me what happened with your ex?” he asked as we ate.

“It’s not pretty,” I said, and sucked a noodle into my mouth.

“I don’t need pretty.”

“You know about Dad’s club. You saw how they handled Stewart this morning, right?”

Huck nodded.

“Well, when Cash found out what Eric did, he raged, and in that rage, he’d lured Eric to some private trails out in Ridgefield.”

“How’d he do that?”

“He catfished him.”

Huck finished chewing and frowned. “How’d he catfish him?”

“Eric had a crush on the homecoming queen, so Cash used the promise of sex with her, and shocker, Eric rushed right over. He figured out way too late that it wasn’t his crush waiting for him, it was my brothers. Archer and Cash beat the shit out of him and then...”

“Then, what?”

I shook my head. “I don’t think you’re ready.”

“Daisy, just spit it out.”

“Cash sliced one of Eric’s Achilles tendons.”

“Fuck, seriously?”

“Seriously,” I confirmed. “Eric had been a track star, so it ended his running career.”

“Did he call the cops?”

“My brothers aren’t idiots. They had ‘airtight’ alibis and no one other than Eric saw anything. It would have been a ‘he said, they said’ situation and since Eric went to meet a technically underage girl, who was he going to tell?”

Huck scowled. “Asshole.”

“Indeed.”

“I woulda cut his dick off, too.”

I nearly choked on my broccoli beef as I bit out a laugh.

“Shit, are you okay?”

I nodded, holding my hand up. “Yes, give me a second.”

I managed to get my coughing under control, taking a sip of beer, then settling back into my seat. “I honestly thought you’d find everything my brothers did unacceptable.”

“Yeah, well, like I said, if this Eric guy had done that to Louisa, I’d have cut his dick off. If Dad hadn’t intervened with Robin, I might have done some serious damage to Cyrus’s dick given half the chance.”

“Good to know.”

He settled his hand on my calf and squeezed. “You’re safe with me, Daisy. Always.”

“I’m figuring that out, Huck.” I jabbed a chopstick at him. “You’re just gonna have to give me a minute to get used to it.”

“I can do that.”

“I am going to make you wait a little longer though,” I warned. “But for future reference, I’m on the pill.”

“I’ll wait as long as you need, honey. But I’ll make sure I have protection with me for when you’re ready.” He smiled. “And I’ll get tested.”

“I will too, then,” I said.

He focused on his food with a slight smile, and I pressed my foot into his leg. “What?”

“Nothing.”

“Um, no, we’re not playing that game. What was that look for?”

“I don’t think you need to get tested,” he said.

“Why not?”

“Because you’ve been with one guy, briefly, and it’s been three years since. Pretty sure if you had an STI, you’d know it by now.”

“Well, I’d still like to make sure just in case.”

“That’s fair, honey, but I’m not worried.” He smiled, squeezing my leg again.

I dropped my utensils onto my plate. “I’m not some total innocent.”

“I’m not implying you are.”

I pulled my feet off his lap and stood, making my way to the kitchen.

“Daisy, what the fuck just happened?” he asked, following me into the kitchen.

“It’s just that sometimes I feel like I live in a snow globe. People look at me and assume that because my dad’s the VP of a motorcycle club, then I’m like one of the club women... worldly. But the truth is, I’ve been sheltered my whole life,” I said, setting my plate in the sink.

“There’s nothing wrong with that, Daisy.”

“Well, it makes me feel stupid sometimes.”

Huck frowned. “Why does it make you feel stupid?”

“I have no fucking idea.” I let out a deep sigh. “I mean, I look at Teagan and I want to be more like her, I guess. She’s so confident and beautiful, and she knows exactly what she wants. She walks into a room and every head turns, while I

walk into a room and immediately look for the longest curtain to hide behind. I feel more comfortable behind a computer screen and with my people than I do out in the real world sometimes, and I guess that makes me a little naïve at times. Ergo, I can end up feeling stupid because I bury my head in the sand on occasion.”

Placing one hand on each side of the counter, essentially pinning me against it, he leaned down and got nose-to-nose with me and smiled. “There is nothing, and I mean *nothing*, that makes you stupid.”

“I know that, Huck. I just sometimes forget and then I spiral.”

“Then I’ll make sure I remind you just how smart, witty, talented, capable, and beautiful you are.”

“Not sexy?” I teased.

“Daisy, do you know how many times a minute I have to think about hockey stats just to keep my dick soft when I’m around you?” he bit out. “Sexy’s a given.”

I blushed, unable to stop a smile. “Well, that’s nice to hear.”

“Now, you need to stop being cute or I’m gonna fuck you over your sofa.”

I shivered. “That’s not a threat, Huck.”

He smiled slowly. “Didn’t bring condoms, Daisy.”

“Why not?”

“Because we’re gonna wait a bit. Get to know each other first. I want to make sure you feel totally comfortable and safe.”

“Okay.” I smiled, leaning in, and kissing him gently. “Bringing me Chinese on a sleepy Sunday is a great way to make me feel comfortable and safe, just FYI.”

“Whatever you need, Daisy, I’m here for it. But if I fuck up, you gotta tell me. Don’t shut me out, okay?”

I nodded. “I’ll do my best.”

He grinned. “Now, are we watchin’ a movie, or do you want to go do something?”

“How do you feel about bowling?”

“I love bowling,” he said just as my phone buzzed.

“Hold that thought.” I grabbed my phone and saw Teagan’s text.

**T:** Busy?

**Me:** With Huck.

**T:** I’m more important.

I chuckled, deciding to call her rather than continue to engage in a text battle.

“Bitch, I’m sick of you ignoring me,” she said, answering on the first ring.

“Teagan, I just saw you less than twenty-four hours ago.”

“Well, I miss you and you know how codependent I am, so what are we doing today?”

“I have no idea what *you’re* doing, but Huck and I are going bowling.”

“Ooh, bowling. KingPins? Fun! We’ll meet you.”

I glanced at Huck. “Teag—”

“It’s fine,” Huck whispered. “The more the merrier.”

“Who’s we?” I asked Teagan but she was already gone. I rolled my eyes and set my phone back on the counter. “Tornado Teagan has left the building.”

Huck chuckled. “It’s all good, baby. It’ll be fun.”

“Well, then let’s invite your sister.”

He grinned. “She’ll love that.”

The plan was made, so we got ready to go, then picked Louisa up, and headed out.



*Daisy*

TEAGAN'S 'WE' CONSISTED of her sisters Harper and Huxley, and their brother Grayson. Also, Cambry and her brother, Jagger, were there, along with Harm's bonus kids, Briggs and Baylor. Hawk's other son, Hunter, had joined the fray (Case was glaringly absent), and Maverick and Lily's daughter, Charleston. Everyone was already spread out over three lanes as they chose balls and put on shoes, so we joined them, and once I'd introduced Huck and Louisa to everyone they didn't already know, we picked a lane and entered our names into the system.

Huck had failed to mention he was a pin shark, so by the time it was my turn again, my score was abysmal.

"Just tell everyone you played par, Ducky," Charley joked.

Charleston was also an amazing bowler (curse her to hell), but she was also sweet and funny and one of my best friends so I couldn't hate her for it. I grinned, flipping her off before stepping up to the line.

Huck sidled up to me with a grin and crossed his arms. "Want some pointers?"

“Oh my god, absolutely,” I breathed out. “Why didn’t you ask five frames ago?”

“First of all, I didn’t want you to know how good I was in case I decided to hustle you.”

“So does this mean I’m safe, Fast Eddie?”

“Ish?” He raised an eyebrow. “I mean, I’m not gonna show you all my secret moves.”

“How very disappointing to hear that,” I retorted.

“Also,” he said, getting us back on track, “I figured if you wanted help, you’d ask for it.”

“That is very true.” I leaned in closer and whispered, “But you need to know something about me and take it to heart.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Tell me.”

“I never ask for help. It’s one of my red flags. You have to learn to read my mind, but if you try to help me do it when I’m not ready, I’ll bite your head off, so you have to navigate a teeny-weeny emotional minefield on occasion.” I bit my lip. “You’re welcome?”

“Thank you for the heads up.” Huck laughed. “First we need to get you into a heavier ball.”

“Oh, but I like this one,” I whined. “It’s pink.”

“Color doesn’t knock pins down. Mass at an accelerated rate does,” he explained. “You need more mass.”

“Ahh, the words every woman dreams to hear from a man.”

“Are you going to be this difficult for the entire lesson?”

“Yes, but I’m adorable when I’m obstinate, so I have that going for me.”

“Here,” he said, holding out a standard-issue, black bowling ball. “Put your fingers in the holes.”

“Ahh, the words every woman—”

“Just see if the ball fits.”



I rolled my eyes, slipping my fingers into the hole. “They fit, but, Huck, it’s *ugly*.”

“It doesn’t matter. It’ll do the job,” he said. “Now, the first thing you have to do is name your ball.”

“What do you name something that looks like the first solid poop you make after being sick for three days? You know the kind of poop that makes you so concerned that you schedule an appointment with an oncologist?”

“Wouldn’t you call a gastroenterologist?”

“Not if your poop looks like this.” She nodded to the ball. “I think you go straight to a cancer diagnosis.”

“Name it, Daisy,” he growled, but I could tell he was trying not to laugh.

I cocked my head and studied the ball for a few more seconds, then said, “Mr. Bowl Movement.”

“Jesus,” he hissed. “Okay, great. Let it be written.” He positioned himself behind me. “Now, with your stance.”

“Wait a minute, is this just an elaborate ruse so you can pull your smooth guy moves on me?”

His eyebrows raised in question. “I have smooth guy moves?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know, do you?”

“I promised I wasn’t going to hustle you.”

“That’s just the kind of thing a hustler would say.”

He mean-mugged me. “Face the pins, ma’am.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Stand here... on these dots,” he said, pointing to the series of black dots on the floorboards. “Start with your feet together with the ball cradled in your left hand with your fingers firmly but not too tightly in the holes. You’re going to start with the ball extended to your right side, so when you downswing, it clears your right leg.”

“Oh sure, so easy.”

“This is all going to feel awkward at first, but with a little practice you’ll get it.”

“I trust you,” I said. “Sort of.”

“Now, do you see those arrows out there.”

I nodded.

“I want you to imagine rolling the ball right between the center arrow and the one to the right of it.”

He continued his instructions until it was time for me to put his tutelage into action. Huck stood behind me to ‘study my form,’ so he said, and I confidently approached the line, released the ball, which promptly rolled straight and true... right into the gutter.

“Some coach you are,” I grumbled, making my way back to Huck.

He continued to give me pointers and little by little, my game improved, until at last, I rolled my first strike.

“Oh my god, I made a bowl movement!” I shouted as I rushed back to Huck.

“Good thing, too,” Huck said, hugging me. “I don’t think they have Metamucil on tap at the bar.”

After about an hour, I noticed Huck flop down in one of the chairs and rub his knee. I frowned, making my way to him while Louisa bowled, sitting across from him. “You okay?”

“Yeah. I just twisted weird that last turn.”

I frowned. “What can I do?”

“Nothing. I just gotta lay off it for a minute.”

“Do you want me to roll your next frame?”

“Yeah, that’d be great.”

I grimaced. “Wow, you must be in pain if you’re willing to let me abolish your streak.”

He pressed his lips into a thin line and took a deep breath.

“Fuck,” I hissed. “I have ibuprofen. Will that help?”

“Yeah, Daisy, that’ll help.”

I grabbed my bag and rifled through it, pulling out my pill bottle. “Baylor always has his vape and you know someone in the group will have edibles if you need something stronger. Probably Teagan.” I sighed. “Don’t tell her dad.”

“Not a narc.” He smiled. “Since I drove, let’s start with the Advil.”

“I *can* drive home, Huck.” I rolled my eyes. “If you need the pot, I can get you the pot.”

“I’m good.” He popped the pills, downing them with a swig of beer, and I kissed his cheek before heading up to the line to bowl his frame.

I returned to find him leaning forward, squeezing his knee, his expression neutral, but his mouth was tight, and I could tell he was struggling to keep the strain off his face. I sighed, turning, and making my way over to Teagan.

“Hey, honey. Your score’s improving,” she said.

“Yeah, thanks, um, do you have your edibles with you?”

She frowned. “Does a bear shit in the woods? What do you need?”

“Not me,” I admitted. “Huck.”

“Oh, shit.” She grabbed her purse and unzipped it. “His knee?”

“Yes,” I whispered. “How’d you know?”

“I’ve seen the video.”

“Video?”

She paused in her search for her gummies and asked, “You haven’t seen the video?”

“What video?”

“The video that took him out of the game?”

“There’s a video?” I squeaked.

“Yeah, Ducky, there’s a video.” She handed me a baggie of gummies, then grabbed her phone, pulling up the footage of the ‘incident.’

As I watched it, I nearly threw up. Huck’s lower leg basically went the opposite way that a leg should and the primal yell of pain as his body hit the ice was guttural, and heart wrenching.

It also wasn’t an accident.

I swallowed several times and nodded. “Email that to me.”

“Are you okay?”

“No,” I rasped. “But email it to me, anyway.” I met her eyes. “How strong are those?”

“Are those turtles?”

I looked down at the baggie. “Yep.”

“Thirty milligrams. Keep the bag.”

“Thanks.” I nodded again and headed back to Huck. “Here, honey, please take one of these. They’re thirty milligrams.”

“You got two in there?”

“There’s six.”

“Let’s start with two,” he said, and I handed him the baggie.

I cupped his cheek. “Do you want to go?”

“No, I’m good, we’ll just give it a few for this shit to kick in.”

I gently tugged on his beard. “Don’t be a hero.”

“I won’t.”

“We’re on the tenth frame now, so I’ll roll yours, okay?”

He nodded, and I leaned down to kiss him gently before heading back to the line to bowl my turn, then his.

\* \* \*

After calling the night a little short, I drove us all home and Louisa and I helped Huck into her condo. He was feeling no pain, and I couldn't stop a smile as he limped his way over to Louisa's sofa.

"How many of those edibles did he take?" Louisa asked.

"Two," he said.

"Okay, two," I confirmed.

He grinned. "There's two left in the bag."

"You took *four*?" I squeaked, then chuckled. "Well, no wonder you're flying high."

"You're so pretty."

"Thank you." I stroked his cheek. "Are you in pain?"

"I have no idea." He grinned, slinking deeper into the sofa. "You know, I'm gonna fuckin' marry you, Daisy."

"Oh, yeah?"

He tugged me onto his lap.

"Watch your knee," I warned.

"I'm good." He wrapped his arms around me. "Totally gonna put a ring on it."

"Okay, honey. Can't wait."

"Why is he acting so weird?" Louisa asked. "Did he O.D.?"

"I don't think it's possible to O.D. on weed." I grinned. "He just O.G.'d."

"What does that mean?"

"Over gummied."

Louisa sighed. "Well, I'm going to bed. You guys have fun."

She walked down the hall, and I focused on Huck. “I’m gonna go. Can you get yourself back to your room, or do you need help?”

“I absolutely need help.” He gave me a squeeze. “Especially if we get naked while you do that.”

“And risk you destroying your knee any further?” I challenged. “I don’t think so.”

He slid a finger down my cheek. “You always think about other people before yourself, don’t you?”

“I try to.”

“Prettiest girl I ever met. And I don’t just mean looks, Daisy.”

“I think that’s the nicest thing anyone’s ever said to me.”

“I doubt that,” he countered. “You probably just weren’t listening.”

I sighed. “Maybe not.”

I moved to get off his lap, but Huck held me a little tighter. “Don’t leave just yet.”

“Huck, you need to be careful of your knee. Those gummies are gonna wear off.”

“Let me worry about my knee,” he said. “Right now, I’m saying something important, and you need to hear it.”

“You’re high.” I rolled my eyes. “Literally.”

“Not so high I can’t impart some truth.”

“Oh my god. You’re not my dad.”

“And thank god for that,” he bit out.

“Can we just leave this alone?” I rasped, again trying to push out of his arms.

“Daisy Mae, settle.”

I let out a huff, but I did settle.

“Look at me,” he demanded, and I took a second to do so, partly because I knew he was about to compliment me and I

wasn't good at receiving those, but more because I was feeling a little sassy.

“Yes, my liege.”

He raised an eyebrow. “I like that, Daisy, and I get that you're trying to be cute, but all you're doing is makin' me hard.”

I shivered, suddenly wanting to strip him naked and find out exactly what he'd do if I submitted fully to him. “Can you just get on with it?”

He smiled slowly. “At some point, you need to understand your worth, beautiful. I get that you're on the shy side, but I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the voice in your head that tells you that you are less than.”

I bit my lip. I didn't want to admit how quickly he'd gotten to the heart of me.

“Who hurt you, honey? Because I don't get the impression it was your family. You seem close with your parents and your brothers might be overbearing asses, but they obviously adore you.”

I nodded. “They do. And my parents are awesome. It wasn't them.”

“Who do I have to kill, Daisy?”

“Can we leave this for a time when you're sober?”

He slid his hand to my neck and stroked my pulse. “I'm almost there now.”

“All the way there, Huck.”

He studied me for a few tense seconds, then nodded. “Yeah. I can give you that.”

“Thank you.”

“But I want a kiss.”

I smiled. “I can do that.”

I leaned down and kissed him gently.

“I’m gonna let you go, beautiful, but only because I’m afraid that if I don’t do that now, I won’t ever be able to.”

I bit back a snort. “Good lord, you’re ridiculous.”

“Just speaking the truth.”

I climbed off his lap, careful to avoid his knee, and made my way to his door, surprised to find him following me. “What are you doing?”

“I’m walking you to your door.”

“I can walk across the hall—”

“Daisy,” he hissed. “I’m. Walking. You. To. Your. Door.”

I took a deep breath and let it out. “Fine.”

He followed me across the hall, limping in obvious pain, and I unlocked my door, entering the alarm code to disable it. “Will you please go to bed now and ice that knee before you do?”

“Yeah, baby, I will.” He smiled, kissing me gently. “Text me before you go to sleep.”

I shook my head. “I have a few things to do before that, so you’ll be asleep.”

“Text me anyway.”

“Okey dokey.”

“Lock up.”

“You have to get out of my doorway for me to do that, Huck.”

He chuckled. “Right.”

“Night.”

“Night.”

He kissed me one more time, then I locked up and reset the alarm. Teagan had emailed me the link to Huck’s video two hours ago and I needed to study it. Actually, what I needed to do was send it to my dad because this shit would *not stand*.



Whoever did this to him needed to pay.  
And they needed to pay greatly.



*Daisy*

**“I GOT THE video,”** Dad said as he answered my call. “But I’ve already seen it.”

“What?” I gasped. “You have?”

“Yeah, I saw it happen live. I was watching the game the night it happened, honey.”

“Well, who the fuck is the asshole who so obviously took him out on purpose?” I hissed.

A deep sigh came over the line. “Okay, so that’s what you’re askin’ me to look into, baby girl?”

“Yes. I want everything on him. Deep dive. And then I want to destroy him.”

“You know, you *can* find all this information out yourself,” he pointed out. “You don’t need me.”

I bit back tears. “I don’t know that I can, Daddy.”

“Afraid of what you might find?”

“That’s the understatement of the year.” I closed my laptop. “Will you filter for me, please?”

“Yeah, Ducky, I’ll do that for you.”

“Thanks, Daddy.”

“You’re welcome. Now, when you think you have an opening, you might want to talk to Huck about seein’ Gina.”

Dr. Gina Christakos was married to Clutch who happened to be the VP of the Burnings Saints MC. The president of that MC, Minus, was married to Hatch’s sister, Cricket, so they were, by default, considered a friendly club.

Sort of, anyway.

Gina was amazing. Not only was she a gifted doctor, but she also knew everyone. And by everyone, I mean, *everyone*, including the head of orthopedics at OHSU.

“He’s probably already seen the best doctors the NHL can buy,” I said.

“Yeah, but they’re not unbiased, are they?”

“As in, you think this might have been an inside job?” I asked. “Are you saying this was some big conspiracy?”

“I’m not saying that, but I’m also not *not* saying that. But it’s probably not an inside job, Ducky.”

“Holy shit.” I frowned. “Well, don’t filter if it is, okay?”

“Okay. Does Huck know you’re doin’ this? Looking into his ‘accident.’”

“Nope,” I admitted.

“Right. Well, you’re gonna have to do that, honey. Tell him, I mean.”

I grimaced. “I know. But let’s wait and see what you find first, okay?”

“Dais—”

“Daddy, I get it. Lying is never good, and I get that this is *technically* lying by omission, but I cannot believe that no one has raised the alarm about this. He was attacked, seemingly out of nowhere, and his career’s just done? And who the

fuck's this Keith guy? He takes Huck's place, bada bing, bada boom, yada yada, whatever?"

"Keith Cherkowsky," Dad supplied with a chuckle. "In layman's terms, he was the second-best player on the team. They're buddies. Roommates in college and I think they grew up together as well. Not sure, but you can always ask your man about that. Doesn't matter. It's the natural order of things that Keith would take his place. But *he* wasn't the one who hurt Huck."

"I get that, but why didn't he say, 'You know, my best friend might never play again, so out of respect for him, I'll pass'?"

"Baby girl, life doesn't work like that."

"Well, it should!" I snapped.

"I need you to take off your daisy-rimmed, rose-colored glasses, honey, and take a breath."

I scowled. "Something's not right, Daddy, and you fucking know it."

"Not saying you're wrong, Ducky. I'm just saying that if you start looking for the devil around every corner, you're going to find him, and you can't start attacking his friends. Talk to Huck. Don't put words in his mouth. Ask him to fill you in on the shit you don't know."

I blew out a breath through flappy lips.

"But you're gonna have to go gentle. This is still fresh. He's lookin' at more surgery, and that's public knowledge, stuff he's shared in interviews, so he's still in the thick of his recovery. I have a feelin' that his thoughts aren't just on the fact he's gotta deal with this health shit, it's also on the fact he's met you and now he's gotta figure out how to navigate his feelings for you and his feelings for losing his career."

"Oh, yeah, I hadn't really thought about that."

"It's heavy, baby. Especially for a man."

"Why, 'especially for a man'?"

“Because it doesn’t matter that women have all the same rights and are just as equal, when a man is a real man, he wants to provide for his woman. Whether it be financially, physically, spiritually, or emotionally, and in the case of a man like Huck, or a man like your daddy, it’s all of the fuckin’ above. So, if he’s lookin’ down the barrel of the gun of what he sees as the end of his career, he’s probably worryin’ about how the fuck he’s gonna provide for the woman he’s just met and is fallin’ for across the hall.”

“He is not.”

“He is too. If he’s any man at all, that is.”

I dropped my head and glanced at my ring finger. Maybe my dad was right.

“I’m gonna do a deep dive in the morning, Ducky, and I’ll see what I can find. You think you can sleep?”

“I’m gonna do my best,” I breathed out.

“Good. Love you, honey.”

“Love you too, Daddy.”

“Night.”

“Night.”

We rang off and I texted Huck to let him know I was finally heading to bed. I was surprised to see him text back. I frowned as I read his message.

**Huck:** Good night, beautiful. Sleep well.

**Me:** Why aren’t you asleep? Pain?

**Huck:** I’m okay. Took a pain pill. Breakfast?

**Me:** Sure. 11? My place?

**Huck:** It’s a date.

**Me:** See you then.

**Huck:** <3

I plugged my phone in and went through my nighttime routine, then climbed into bed. It took me forever to fall asleep, however, because all I could see when I closed my

eyes was some asshole railing on Huck with a hockey stick, and his leg going the opposite way a leg ought to.

\* \* \*

Huck knocked on my door at ten-fifty-five and I opened it with a little trepidation. “Good morning.”

He smiled. “Good morning.”

“How’s your knee?”

“It’s better.” Lifting a pink box as he walked inside, he said, “I grabbed donuts.”

“Are those Top O’ the Morning Donuts?”

Huck smiled. “Yeah.”

“No way, really?” I breathed out.

“Yeah, is that okay?”

“Anytime you want to show up with Top O’ the Morning Donuts, is A-Okay by me.”

“Are they good?” he asked, following me into the kitchen. “LouLou told me the top five places, but I’ve never actually tried them.”

“Oh my god, they’re the *best*. Nothing stupid like fruit loops or shit on top, just the best donuts you’ll ever taste in your life.”

He chuckled, setting the box on the island. “Who the hell would put fruit loops on a donut?”

“Right?” I said. “I made coffee, and I was gonna make bacon if you want it.”

“I always want bacon...” He made his way to me, and slid his hand to my waist, pulling me close. “But first I need a proper greeting.”

I smiled, raising my head for a kiss.

“Hi,” he said.

“Hi.”

“How’s your knee? Really?” I pressed.

“Hurts like a motherfucker.”

I bit my lip. “What does the doctor say?”

“Gotta have another MRI before my next surgery, so I have to head back to Raleigh in two weeks.”

“Two weeks?” I rasped.

He nodded. “I got the call this morning.”

“So, the donuts were to butter me up?”

“I was getting the donuts anyway, Daisy. But do they help?”

“No,” I grumbled.

Huck squeezed the back of my neck as I dropped my head to his chest. “I won’t be there long.”

“Well, that’s not entirely true if you’re having surgery.”

“I’m there for the MRI, surgery’ll come later.”

“What about having the MRI here?” I said, meeting his eyes.

“What do you mean?”

“Gina.”

He cocked his head. “Who’s Gina?”

“She’s Clutch’s wife, and she’s the most amazing doctor on the planet and is close, personal friends with the head of orthopedics at OHSU.”

Huck gave me a squeeze. “Baby, who the hell is Clutch?”

“Right, sorry.” I grimaced. “Okay, so you know who Hatch is, right?”

He nodded.

“His sister, Cricket, is married to Minus, the president of the Burning Saints, and Clutch is the VP. I can make a call to

Gina who will get you in with Dr. Patel. Or at the very least, she'll do the MRI and send it over to Dr. Patel to read."

He stroked my cheek. "Well, that would certainly take pressure off my leg. Not havin' to travel."

I blinked up at him, a little disappointed in his response. Because, yes, that would be true. But was that the only reason?

"Definitely."

"*Plus*," he added. "The thought of not seeing you, even for a day, was fuckin' with my head."

"It was?"

"Hell yeah, it was. Why do you think I got donuts? I eat when I'm pining over a girl."

I ran my fingers over his six-pack. "Yeah, feels like it."

"You're the first," he divulged. "Girl I've pined over, to be clear."

I smirked. "You were pining over me?"

He slid a hand to either side of me, gripping the island and pinning me against it. "Well, not yet, but I knew I was going to if I was forced to fly to Raleigh without you."

I let out a deep, dramatic sigh. "Well, *I* would have been inconsolable."

"Really?"

"Absolutely." I licked my lips. "Hypothetically, how would you have felt if a petite blonde would have hacked your flight information and perhaps showed up on your flight, maybe even sat next to you on your plane?"

He grinned.

"Hypothetically," I repeated.

"Before or after I filed the hypothetical restraining order?" he asked.

I gasped. "You wouldn't."



He laughed. “Well, *hypothetically*, you wouldn’t have had to hack my flight details, because I would have given them to you.”

“And how would you have felt if I came with you.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Would you really want to do that?”

“Yes. As long as you wouldn’t feel as though I’m smother —”

Before I could finish my thought, his mouth covered mine and I gripped his shirt to stay upright. He lifted me onto the island, tugging me forward, so my pussy was against his middle, and I looped my arms around his shoulders as I continued to kiss him.

It was he who broke the connection, dropping his forehead to mine as we both fought to catch our breath. “Wow.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “Why’d you stop?”

“Because if I didn’t, I was gonna fuck you on your kitchen floor.”

I shivered. “I’m okay with that.”

He smiled. “We’re gonna take this slow, Daisy.”

“Oh, yeah.” I wrinkled my nose. “Did I make that rule or did you?”

He stroked my cheek. “We made it together.”

“Well, we’re stupid.”

He laughed. “Yeah, maybe.”

I slid my hands up to his shoulders. “Help me down or fuck me, honey. I need to start the bacon.”

He kissed me one more time before lifting me down, then I fired off a quick text to Gina, and started the bacon.

My phone buzzed just as I poured my second cup of coffee. “It’s Gina.”

“Answer it,” Huck said.

“Hey, Doc.”

“Hi, honey. Your dad sent me the video of your friend.”

“Can you help?”

“Absolutely. If you give him my number, he’s welcome to call me.”

“He’s actually here now, if you have time,” I said.

“Oh, yes, of course. Hand him your phone.”

I handed the phone to Huck, and he put it to his ear, and walked down the hall. “This is Huck.”

I wrinkled my nose, disappointed he wasn’t going to let me listen in, as I turned back to the stove and focused back on the bacon.

I heard his voice a few minutes later and turned as he walked out of the mouth of the hallway. “Yeah, Gina, I really appreciate your time. Sure. Okay, thanks. Talk to you this week. Okay. Bye.”

He grinned, setting my phone on the island and I cocked my head. “So?”

“So, she’s going to get me in this week for an MRI, then we’re gonna go from there. She thinks she can get me in with Dr. Patel some time this month. He owes her a favor, apparently.”

“I have a feeling a lot of people owe Gina a lot of favors,” I said matter-of-factly.

Huck closed the distance between us, sliding his hands around my waist and touching his nose to mine. “Kinda wanna fuck you right now, beautiful.”

I shivered. “Who’s stopping you?”

“You sure?”

I pulled his hands away from my waist. “Yes, but... um... before that, I have to tell you something.”

“And I can’t touch you while you do that?”

“Full disclosure?” I turned the gas off on the stove and faced him again. “You might be mad once I tell you.”

He frowned, leaning against my kitchen island with a nod. “Okay.”

“I saw the video.”

“You’re gonna need to be more specific. I hope to fuck you’re not talking about the video of Robin.”

“Ah, no.” I shuddered. “The one of you being pummeled into the ice.”

“Yeah, everyone’s seen that, Daisy.”

“Well, I hadn’t seen it before yesterday.”

He raised his eyebrows and let out a sigh. “Ah, well, shit. Okay. So, why would that piss me off?”

“Because I asked my dad to do a deep dive into the guy who did it.”

“Did it?” He shook his head. “What do you mean, did it? He’s already been sanctioned by the NHL, Daisy. We had beef, we dealt with it on the ice.”

“Um, no way, no how, buddy. That was not *beef*. That was a paid hit.”

“Jesus,” he hissed, running his hands through his hair. “What are you talking about? Marc Cowan is a son of a bitch who didn’t get what he thought he deserved, and he was pissed. He came at me when I wasn’t prepared, end of story.”

“That was more than him being pissed off at you, Huck,” I argued.

“Why are you picking at this?”

“Because something else is going on. You got railroaded and it’s not fucking fair! Someone should pay for that.”

“Goddammit, Daisy, it’s none of your business.”

I let out a quiet hiss of pain. That went directly to my heart, and I swallowed back my tears as I nodded. “Yep. Okay, got it.”

“Fuck,” he bit out. “I didn’t mean... look, I’m sorry that came out so harsh. I just mean—”

“I know what you meant, Huck, and it’s fine. I had a feeling you’d be mad, and I was right. I should have never brought it up. Just forget I said anything.” I took a deep breath. “I think we’re rushing things a little and maybe we should figure out what we both want, because I’ll tell you one thing for sure, I’m not going to tolerate someone speaking to me like that.” I jabbed my tongs at him. “Ever.”

“Dais—”

“You can go now,” I said, pointing to the door.

He sighed, pushing away from the island, and walking out the door. I locked up behind him, then grabbed a donut, and called Teagan.



*Huck*

**I** WALKED BACK into my sister's condo royally pissed at myself for snapping at Daisy but still equally pissed at her. I didn't like that I'd gone off on her, but on the flipside of that, what the fuck right did she have digging into my past like that? I didn't ask for her help and I sure as hell didn't ask for her dad's.

Louisa stepped out of the kitchen, a cup of coffee in her hand, and stalled. "Hey, I thought you were hanging with Daisy today."

"Well, I just fucked that up, sissy." I dragged my hands down my face. "Not sure if I can walk it back, either."

She groaned. "What did you do?"

I filled her in on our conversation and Louisa let out a quiet hum of conspiratorial agreement.

"Why are you making that noise?" I demanded.

"What if Daisy's right?"

"What the fuck?" I threw my hands in the air. "You can't actually think Marc would have been paid off by someone to

fuck me up like that, LouLou? Who would have wanted to do that?”

“Did you ask her?”

“No, I kind of blew up before I had a chance to do that,” I admitted.

She sighed. “Well, it’s not outside the realm of possibility, is it? And it’s not like anyone else thought of it or was willing to go above and beyond to look into it, were they?” she pointed out before patting me on the shoulder. “You’re right. You fucked up, big time. And you were an asshole on top of it.”

“Thanks for the pep talk,” I grumbled.

“Lucky for you, Daisy’s surrounded by alpha holes, and she kind of loves all of them to a fault. I have a feeling that if you apologize and give her a good grovel, and I mean, crawling on your knees to her doorstep, hat in hand level groveling, little brother, she’ll probably forgive you.” She shrugged. “Maybe.”

I frowned. “What the fuck’s an alpha hole?”

“Alpha male, asshole. Her brother, Cash, for example.”

“Jesus, I’m nothing like Cash Carver.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Did you or did you not raise your voice at her, when all she did was some research on your behalf with only your best interests at heart?”

“Yes,” I mumbled.

She cupped her ear. “I’m sorry, I couldn’t hear that.”

“Yeah,” I said a little louder as I glared at her.

She nodded with a grin. “Exactly like Cash.”

“Fuck,” I hissed.

“There’s something about that guy I don’t like about myself,” she said, repeating something our dad used to say.

“Okay, no need to rub it in,” I said.

She smiled slyly over her the rim of her coffee cup. “Now, stop your grumbling and get to groveling.”

“But what if I—”

“I mean it, Hucky, get on your Zamboni and ride on outta here.”

“Fine.” I sighed. “There’s a florist on the corner, I could start there, I guess.”

“That’s a negatory, little bro,” Louisa retorted. “She’s not a flower kinda gal.”

“What? What kind of woman doesn’t like flowers?”

“The kind of woman who has a name like Daisy.”

I pressed my palms into my eye sockets. “Fuck me.”

“Time to get creative, Hucky. I’m going to take a nap,” she said. “Good luck.”

I flopped onto the sofa and pulled my phone out of my pocket. I had no idea how to get creative, but I figured the internet was a good way to start.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

After kicking Huck out, I busied myself with overcleaning my condo, then eating a tub of ice cream. When neither did the trick, I grabbed a controller from the charger, and powered up my gaming console, hoping to find a worthy opponent at this late hour.

Weapons of Warcraft Six had just been released and I hoped infiltrating a cell of zombie terrorists would help me blow off some steam.

To my relief, I didn’t have to wait long until **user:DeathStlkr69** entered the game, inviting me to a head-to-head match. A guy with a douchey, ‘macho’ name like that was the perfect target for my third-degree rage. After

accepting his invitation, I logged in as my avatar, and took my position.

At first, everything was going as planned. I was straight-up trouncing this guy, and it wasn't until my third, beatdown, that things took a turn. My chat box pinged with a message from my opponent.

**DeathStlkr69:** Hey, dude, lighten up, this game is supposed to be fun.

*Dude? See, this is exactly what I'm talking about. This piece of shit, male chauvinist, assumes that just because I'm playing a video game, that I must be a guy.*

I couldn't wait to flame this incel.

**DeadZmbeezRUs:** First of all, I'm not a DUDE. I'm a WOMAN. And second, if your punk ass can't stand the heat, I suggest you get the hell out of my kitchen. Cuz all I'm serving here is ass whoopins and tittie milk, but I'm fresh outta tittie milk. So if that's what you need, I suggest you call your mama for some. Oh, wait, your mama didn't want you, and left you on the doorstep of the loser factory. Maybe if you keep crying about losing, somebody will feel sorry for you and adopt you.

I pushed enter with a chuckle and waited for whatever weak sauce reply he was going to try and serve. Several minutes passed without so much as a peep. Until, finally, I got a notification. Or, more specifically, his mother replied.

**DeathStlkr69:** I don't know who you are, but this is Josh's mother, and I'm going to report you to the authorities for inappropriate language and harassment of a minor. What kind of sick monster berates a 12-year-old child on his birthday? All my sweet angel wanted was this game and now he's traumatized. If this harassment persists, you can expect to hear from my attorney.



Angel? Angel, my ass. That little pervert has sixty-nine right there in his username. I dropped my head to the desk. Figures I can't even play a video game without saying the wrong thing and pissing somebody off.

Maybe Josh's mom is right. Maybe I am a monster, frightening children and traumatizing the grown men around me.

As I continued to spiral, my computer pinged, and I glanced at the screen. A second chat box appeared with a message request from an anonymous user. I clicked accept and opened the message.

**GuestUser0429765:** Fuck with me again, bitch, and I'll tell my mother you requested naked pictures of me. You better watch your back. This is my house.

Little shit. I knew it. I slammed my laptop shut. I decided to sleep on this situation, because although he thought he had the upper hand right now, he didn't know who he was fucking with. Josh, not Huck, would now be the singular source of my rage.

I fell asleep thinking of ways to destroy him.

\* \* \*

Huck knocked on my door at just after one the next day, and I seriously considered ignoring him. I mean, I hadn't slept (at *all*) the night before because I was plagued with dreams of him either yelling at me, or his leg being amputated, or his leg being amputated and then growing a face and yelling at me (don't judge me, dreams are weird, and you can't tell me they aren't).

At the current moment, however, I was standing in my pantry, trying to decide between Cheetos Puffs and Doritos Cool Ranch for lunch, and my stomach took precedence over the jerk standing in the hallway right now.

Pulling up my doorbell camera, I put it on live view and set my phone on one of the shelves as I continued to look for junk food to consume. Oh my god, he looked edible. A long-sleeved T-shirt, grey sweatpants, and his Nike's. Jesus.

"Daisy, I know you're home. Open the door, please, so I can apologize."

I pressed the microphone button and said, "I'm not feeling it, Huck, so I'll pass."

His head dropped and I watched as I opened the bag of Cheetos and popped one into my mouth.

"Daisy, look, I was an asshole. Please open the door so I can give you a good grovel."

"What does a good grovel look like exactly?" I asked, then ate another Cheeto.

"If you let me inside, I'll show you."

"Mmm, no, I think I need to see the evidence first."

He leaned into the camera and whispered, "Are you saying you want me to grovel in the hallway, Daisy?"

"Yep, that's exactly what I'm saying, Huckleberry."

"Daisy, please—"

"I'd like to see this grovel with you on your knees, Huck."

"You seriously want me down on my knees?"

I nodded with an evil grin, even though he couldn't see me. "So much so, I want to see the rug burns."

"What if I told you I had apology cheeseburgers?" he asked.

I dropped the Cheeto I was holding back in the bag. "Cheeseburgers?"

"Yep."

"With fries?" I raised my eyebrows. "And pickles?"

"Of course I got fries and pickles. I'm not a monster."

I grabbed my phone, wiped my hands on my jeans, and headed for the door. Pulling it open, I stalled when I saw Huck holding what could only be described as a pallet of food. “Um, I thought you said you brought apology cheeseburgers?”

“I also have apology Chinese, apology Thai, and apology Indian.” He nodded toward the left-hand corner of the box. “And there’s four types of ice cream and a cake. I wasn’t sure what you’d be in the mood for, so I wanted to cover all the bases.”

“You didn’t happen to grab wine, did you?”

He stepped to his right and there was a paper bag at his feet. “Bottle of red, bottle of white.”

I bit my lip and forced myself not to jump his bones in my doorway. “You may enter.”

Huck grinned, and made his way inside, while I grabbed the bag of wine and followed, closing the door behind us. Setting the box on the island, he took the bag from me and placed it next to the food, then slid his arms around my waist, and pulled me close. “I’m sorry.”

“Me too.” I met his eyes and sighed. “I really was just trying to help.”

“I know. You have nothing to apologize for. I was a colossal dick.”

“I’ll try not to stick my nose in your business, Huck.”

“Fuck that,” he countered, cupping my cheek. “I *want* you to stick your nose wherever the hell you want to stick it. My reaction was bullshit, and I’ll do my best to make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

I tugged on his beard. “Yeah, you’re gonna rein that in, huh?”

“Yeah.”

I slid my hands up his chest. “Be all sweet and meek and agreeable and stuff?”

He shrugged, his blue eyes flashing with disdain, but he forced a smile and said, “Sure.”

“Get out,” I retorted, but gripped his shirt to keep him exactly where he was.

He chuckled before growing serious again. “I really am sorry.”

“Thank you. I appreciate that. You’re forgiven.”

“I’m gonna kiss you now.”

“If you don’t, I really will kick you out.”

He grinned, leaning down to kiss me and I wrapped my arms around his waist, pulling him closer.

“We better get that ice cream in the freezer,” he said, once he broke the kiss.

“Okay. I’m kind of in the mood for Indian now, so we’ll save the other stuff as well, okay?”

“Yeah. I’ll eat your burger and mine, then.”

“Stress eating?”

“Fuck, yeah. I hurt my woman and was afraid I wasn’t gonna be able to walk it back.”

I leaned against him. “I’m your woman, huh?”

“If you’ll have me.”

“I’ll have you.” I patted his chest. “Let me just tell my dad to stand down.”

“Has he found anything yet?”

I shook my head.

“Well, keep him on it, okay?” he said. “Let’s just see how it all plays out.”

“Yeah?”

He smiled. “Yeah. I’m kind of intrigued now.”

“If there’s anything, Dad’ll find it,” I said as we sorted our food. “He’s kind of a dog with a bone, no pun intended.”

“You didn’t want to do it yourself?” he challenged.

“Ah, no way, no how.” I opened a drawer and grabbed utensils. “I asked him to filter. If I came across another angle where you’re getting pummeled, I don’t think I could deal.”

“Jesus,” he hissed.

“What?”

He was at the fridge and had just pulled out a bottle of beer. “I have been one hell of a class-A dickhead.”

“Yeah, kinda.” I grinned. “But you apologized and you’re never going to do it again, because if you do it again, I’m gonna tell Cash.”

He rolled his eyes. “You know, Louisa told me I was acting like Cash, so I’m not sure that’s much of a threat.”

I gasped. “Oh my god, your sister’s got a mean streak. You’re nothing like Cash.”

“My sister thinks I am. At least, in this scenario.”

I closed the distance between us and looked up at him. “Trust me, I know my brother, and you’re nothing like him. Even in this scenario, you were tame compared to him.”

“That’s generous, Daisy.” He leaned down and kissed me gently. “I appreciate it.”

“Come on, let’s eat. I want an excuse to dig into that pecan praline.”

“You could always have dessert first,” he pointed out as we made our way to the table.

“I could, but I also want this chicken tikka, so…”

“Fair.” He chuckled and sat across from me, taking a swig of his beer. “What did you do after I left?”

“Who me?”

“Yes, you.”

“Besides almost getting a visit from *Benson and Stabler*?”

He laughed, almost doing a spit take. “What the hell?”

I filled him in on the Josh saga from the night before and his eyes widened in shock. “The little shit actually threatened you in a D.M.?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Can you believe that? But have no fear, I’m going to make sure he never gets into a good college.”

“Remind me to stay on your good side.”

I chuckled. “I’m kidding. I’m not that petty. This is how I process, because our fight kind of messed with my head. I mean, I’ve logged into the local Weapons of Warcraft server and scrubbed any and all existence of our chat, but of course, that’s just preliminary stuff. By next week, I will have forgotten all about DeathStlker69 and his shenanigans.”

“He’s still a little fucker.”

“Indeed,” I agreed.

“I’m really sorry I was an asshole.”

“I appreciate that.”

He leaned over and kissed me gently. “Is it time for ice cream?”

“Hells yeah, it’s time for ice cream.”

Huck grinned and took our plates to the sink.

\* \* \*

Later that night, Huck and I were on my sofa, the TV on some random channel, I was straddling him, enjoying the hottest make out session on the planet.

That is, until my phone buzzed on the side table, and I glanced over to see it was my father calling. “Shit,” I hissed.

“Take the call, Daisy.”

I let out a groan and slid off his lap, grabbing my phone. “Hi, Daddy.”

“Hey, Ducky. You got a minute?”

“Yep,” I lied.

“There’s a money trail.”

I gasped. “I knew it! His friend took—”

“Not Keith, baby girl.”

“What?” I squeaked. “Are you telling me no one did it on purpose?”

“Not what I said.”

“What’s going on?” Huck demanded.

“Hold on, Daddy, Huck’s here.”

“You sure you want him to hear this before you’ve had a chance to see it first?” he asked.

I bit my lip. “Well, it’s his life, so, yeah.”

“Give me the phone,” Huck demanded.

“I’ll put it on speaker.”

“No.” Huck held out his hand. “Give me the phone, Daisy.”

I frowned but handed it over.

“Hey, Mr. Carver, you can talk directly to me,” Huck said, pushing himself off the sofa and walking down the hall.

I threw my hands in the air and let out a frustrated screech. I was seriously going to need to chain my phone to my body so the man would stop walking away with it.



*Huck*

**“BUD, YOU CAN** call me Booker, no more o’ that Mr. Carver shit,” Daisy’s father said.

“Ah, right, Booker. Yeah.”

“You okay with Daisy havin’ me look into this shit?”

“Initially, I wasn’t, but we talked it out and now I’m seeing she might have a point.” I dragged a hand through my hair. “What did you find?”

“I found a money trail.”

I dropped my head back and stared at the ceiling. “Which means... what?”

“That it was a paid hit.”

“Fuck,” I breathed out. “Who?”

“Not sure yet. But I do know it wasn’t your buddy, Keith.”

I frowned. “Was there a question it might be?”

Booker chuckled. “Ducky was a little concerned he took your spot too quick, so she thought it might be, but she’s



protective to a fault when it comes to those she cares about.”

I smirked. “Yeah, I’m getting that.”

“Haven’t quite gotten to the bottom of the money trail yet, but there is one, so you need to keep your head on a swivel. Someone’s out to get you, Huck, and I don’t know if your knee was enough for them or if they want to finish the job.”

“Got it.”

“We got your back. Stay close to Ducky and the club. I know that might sound dramatic, but until we know the source o’ this shit, it’s better to be on the safe side.”

I scrubbed the back of my neck with my hand. “Right.”

“Now, how much do you want me to share with my kid?”

“Nothing. I’ll decide what I share,” I said. “I want to protect her as much as possible.”

“I like that,” Booker said. “Gonna let you go.”

“Okay. Bye.”

I hung up and made my way back to the living room where Daisy was right where I left her, glaring at me, her food untouched, but her wine glass cupped in her hands. “Don’t ever do that to me again,” she snapped.

“Do what?”

“Don’t be obtuse.”

I sighed. “I don’t want this shit to worry you.”

She scrunched up her face in what she probably thought would convey horror, but she only managed to look fuckin’ more adorable than normal as she let out a quiet hiss. “How exactly is any of this supposed to *not* worry me? I can barely sleep because I have nightmares of your leg being separated below the knee—”

I frowned. “You’re having nightmares?”

“We’re not talking about me right now, Huck,” she snapped. “What did my dad say?”

“Back up,” I said, taking the wine out of her hand and setting it on the table before pulling her over my lap so she was straddling me again.

She settled her hands on my shoulders and tried to push off of me. “Huck...”

“Baby, look at me.” She rolled her eyes and when they rolled back, I asked, “Are you seriously having nightmares?”

“I’ve had a couple, but it’s fine.” She dropped her eyes to my chest and sighed. “I’m not the one who got pummeled.”

Sliding my hands to her ass, I gave it a squeeze. “Well, that stops now.”

She smirked. “I don’t think you can control my dreams.”

“Are you saying I don’t have that kind of power?”

“Are you saying you do?” she challenged.

“Absolutely.”

She let out a quiet snort. “And exactly how do you have that kind of power, Huckleberry Wilton?”

“Well, it’s called sex, Daisy Mae Carver.”

“Are you saying you’re going to fuck me all night, so I don’t fall asleep?”

“No, I’m going to fuck you so hard you’ll sleep too deep to have one.”

“That sounds a little too good to be true.” She closed her eyes briefly and licked her lips before meeting my eyes again. “But first, what did my dad say?”

“Nothing you need to worry about.” She anchored her hand on my shoulder before grabbing her phone and I scowled. “Your dad’s not going to tell you anything, Daisy.”

“I’m not calling my dad, Huckleberry.” She raised an eyebrow and put her phone to her ear. “Well, hi there, favorite hacker extraordinaire. Did Dad have you look into anything for him... well, me? He did? Yep, okay, thanks, honey. I appreciate it. Sure. Say hi to Wrath for me. Bye.” She set the

phone on the table again and cocked her head. “There’s a money trail, it’s not Keith. Not sure who it is, and Dad’s concerned the job isn’t finished.”

I saw tears forming in her eyes and I let out a low growl. “Enough.”

“He’s worried they’re going to keep coming,” she whispered. “My dad doesn’t get worried unless there’s a viable threat.”

“This is why I told your dad I wanted you left out of it,” I said.

“This person is still out there, Huck.”

“I know.”

“How many people know you’re here?” she asked. “In Portland.”

“A few.”

“How many’s a few?”

“My team, my parents, a couple of buddies at home,” I said. “Home, home, in Montana, not Raleigh, just to be clear.”

Daisy let out a huff. “That’s too fucking many.”

“Baby, none of them know where my sister lives. Only my parents have that address. Not even my coaches. You can stand down.”

“Keith?”

“Yeah, okay, Keith might have it, but I doubt I’m on his Christmas card list.”

“Don’t joke about this, Huck,” she snapped, trying to shimmy off my lap again.

I gripped her hips and held firm. “I’m not joking, Daisy. I’m telling you I’ve got it covered.”

Her nostrils flared when she took a slow, deep breath. “What did my dad say?”

“That he’s got my back.”

She relaxed, sort of, and met my eyes again. “I mean, what’s the game plan?”

“Baby, there’s no game plan because there’s no threat.”

She narrowed her eyes and bit out, “Did he say, ‘stay close to the club’?”

“Yeah.”

“Then there’s a fucking game plan, Huck.”

I sighed. “I get the feeling you’re fixin’ for a fight here, Daisy.”

“I am if you don’t start taking your safety seriously.”

I cocked my head and frowned. “What makes you think I’m not taking my safety seriously?”

“Because you’re sitting here acting like it’s no big deal.”

“No, I just didn’t tell you all the nitty-gritty details about what your dad found, there’s a difference.”

She wrinkled her nose and let out a huff of derision. “ToMAYto, toMAHto.”

“I’m rapidly figuring out you’re a total worrywart, but believe me when I say, I’m taking this seriously.” I gave her another squeeze. “And your dad’s diving deeper into the money trail. You trust *him*, right?”

Daisy bobbed her head up and down, but her teeth gnawed on her lower lip. “To an extent.”

I reached up and pried her lip from her teeth. “What can I do to make you feel better about this?”

Her expression grew hopeful as she widened her eyes. “Never leave this building.”

I chuckled. “In case you haven’t noticed, I barely go anywhere as it is. My biggest outings have been to your dad’s club and KingPins.”

“And the rink,” she said.

“And the rink,” I confirmed.

“Well, no more of that for the moment,” she bossed.

“Yeah, that’s not gonna fly, beautiful.”

She threw her hands in the air. “Why not?”

“Because it’s unrealistic.”

“I’m just going to have to make it worth your while.” Her hands went to the waistband of my jeans, and she unbuttoned the top button.

“Oh, yeah?” I raised an eyebrow. “What did you have in mind?”

“It’s called sex, Huckleberry Granville Wilton,” she said, turning my words back onto me as she unzipped my fly and slid off my lap.

“You know my middle name?” I rasped.

“Background check, remember?” she reminded me as she tugged my jeans down my hips.

“Right.” I raised up slightly to assist her endeavor and my dick, already half hard, sprang free as she dragged my boxer briefs down my thighs.

I heard Daisy’s gasp and then she knelt on the floor between my hips and wrapped her lips around my tip, taking me deep.

“Fuck,” I hissed as I slid down further, dropping my head onto the back of the sofa as she let loose. Jesus Christ, I had never experienced anything like this before.

She took me deep, sucked, licked, then rolled and pumped with her fist, moaning like she was about to come with me.

*Major* fucking turn-on.

“Baby, I’m gonna come.”

She nodded without releasing me.

“Jesus, you gonna swallow?”

She nodded again.

“You sure?”

She glared at me as she took me deeper with a growl, which did things to my dick I wasn't expecting, and I came like a virgin on prom night. Daisy wasn't finished, though. No, she continued to work my dick until she'd milked me dry.

"I'm not gonna complain, baby, but I really shoulda gloved up," I said, once she stood and straddled me again.

She shrugged, leaning down to kiss me. "You can do that when you fuck me."

"Yeah?"

"Yes. Now would be good."

I stood, keeping her anchored to me and she wrapped her legs around my waist. I kicked my boxers and jeans completely off as I walked down the hall, careful not to slip in my stockinged feet.

"Careful of your knee," she warned.

"I don't feel a thing," I lied.

Once in her bedroom, I set her on the floor and pulled off the rest of my clothes, while she did the same, only she did it blushing bright red.

I smiled. Jesus, she was cute.

"Daisy, you're not embarrassed, are you?"

She met my eyes as she licked her lips, still blushing bright red. "A little, yes."

"Why?"

She shrugged. "I don't *know!*"

I chuckled, pulling her to me and kissing her. "Jesus, the woman just gave me the best head I've ever had and she's standing here blushing."

"It was the best?" she whispered.

"Hell, yeah, it was the best."

She looked up at me. "Really?"

"Really."

“I really need you to fuck me right now, but I reserve the right to return to the subject of exactly why that was the best, okay?”

I chuckled. “Absolutely.”

“Grab a condom,” she demanded.

“Shit, they’re in my jeans.”

She threw her hand out, pointing to the door. “Well, go get them.”

I rushed out to the living room, returning quickly with the jeans, and the condoms.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

“God, you’re beautiful,” I breathed out once Huck walked back into my room.

“Hey, that’s my line,” he joked as he dumped his jeans on my bed and wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me to him.

My nipples started tingling as they brushed against his chest, and I was having a hard time finding my breath.

“Huck?” I whispered.

His hands slid to my butt, and he squeezed before lifting me and dropping me onto my mattress. “Yeah, baby?”

His eyes met mine and I suddenly forgot everything except him staring down at me, his expression just as hungry as I felt. “I don’t remember what I was going to say.”

And then his lips were on mine, his tongue was in my mouth, and I was gone. I couldn’t get enough, and I needed more. I was desperate for him.

Far too soon for my liking, however, he broke the kiss, and I let out a quiet cry of derision when he did, but then his mouth moved down my body, sucking a nipple into his mouth

and I sighed as he bit down gently before focusing on the other one.

A cold puff of air hit my nipples as Huck slid down my body, his mouth and tongue exploring as he went, and then he was kneeling between my legs, and his mouth was *there*. I tried not to focus on the fact he was babying his bad knee, putting on the pressure on his good one because, Jesus fucking Christ, his mouth.

I cried out as I arched into him, sliding a foot over his shoulder, and digging the heel of the other into the bed, using it as an anchor. Huck sucked gently on my clit before sliding his tongue inside of me, then pressed two fingers to my entrance and worked my pussy while his mouth focused back on my clit.

I fisted my hands into my comforter as he pumped his digits into me, building an orgasm so big, I was sure I'd never survive the experience.

Not that I'd want to.

"Huck," I breathed out. "Now, honey."

His fingers slid out and his mouth covered me, his tongue lapping at my core as I came, before kissing the inside of my thighs once I'd come down from my climax and grabbing a condom. I took deep breaths as I watched him tear open and roll on the condom and I almost came again.

Good god almighty, the man was illegally good-looking.

The second he got the condom on, he hooked his hands behind my knees and tugged me toward him again, hovering over me before sliding slowly into me.

His eyes met mine and I gasped. "Oh my god, Huck."

I could see the depth of his emotion in his eyes and even if he hadn't said the words yet, I felt every bit of it. "Fuck," he hissed. "I knew you would feel amazing... but... *Jesus*."

And then he moved.

Holy cow, the man *moved*.



Faster, deeper, harder, linking our fingers together and dragging my hands above my head as he buried his dick to the hilt, building another orgasm as he did.

“Huck,” I rasped as I felt the climax threatening to spill.

“Don’t come yet,” he demanded, slamming harder and faster.

I squeezed his hands as I arched into him, meeting his thrusts, my breaths coming in pants now, as he continued to move.

“Huck, honey, please,” I begged.

With one last thrust, he let out a grunt, and growled, “Now, baby.”

Huck released my hands, and I wrapped them around him as I buried my face in his neck. Taking in big gasps of air as I tried to catch my breath, I was unable to stop my tongue from darting out to lick a tiny, salty bit of sweat from his skin.

“Jesus,” he whispered, sliding out of me gently.

“Um, sure, we can blame or thank him,” I retorted. “But I really think we should take more of the credit here.”

He chuckled, leaning down to kiss me quickly. “Gonna get rid of the condom. Be back.”

I nodded, and settled deeper into the mattress like the slug I was.

“Need anything?” he called out from the bathroom.

“No, I’m kind of dead, dead people don’t need anything, but thanks.”

I heard him laugh and then he was stretching out beside me and pulling me against him, kissing me gently. “You doing okay?”

“I just had two mind-blowing orgasms. I’m doing great.” I grinned. “I vote we stay locked inside my condo for the rest of the week. We’ll order in and just be lazy.”

“Unless Gina gets me in for an MRI.”

“Huck!” I let out a quiet groan. “Do *not* ruin the love bubble.”

“My apologies.” He kissed my temple. “Bubble reinstated.”

“As it should be.” I snuggled closer. “How is your knee?”

“It’s fine.”

“Fine, fine, or holy shit it’s on fire, but I’m not gonna say anything because we’re in the love bubble and my woman will lose her shit?”

He chuckled. “Somewhere in the middle of that.”

I sighed, rising up enough to look at him. “Why didn’t you say something? Let me get you some ibuprofen.”

He tugged me back down. “Stay put, baby, ibuprofen won’t cut it.”

“I can get someone to bring gummies.”

“It’s good, Daisy, seriously. I’ve got pain stuff if it gets bad.” He gave my butt a squeeze. “Now look who’s fuckin’ with the love bubble.”

I settled my chin on his chest. “I’m not talking about leaving the house, though, am I, smartass?”

He chuckled. “Fair point, I suppose.”

“So, now that the love bubble has been restored, tell me how it’s possible that was the best blow job you’ve ever had,” I prompted.

“Why are you surprised?”

“Um, hello, hot as fuck hockey star. Puck bunnies abound. I’m sure they’re kneeling in front of you left and right.”

“You’d be surprised,” he countered. “Even if that were true, I’ve never been the kind of person who was into fucking for sport, no pun intended. So, yes, I’ve had a few in my life, but that by far was the best, and I know it’s because it’s you.”

“Okay, well, that’s only the second one I’ve ever given, so, you’re welcome.”

He chuckled. “Thank you.”

I smiled, kissing his throat. “How did you get such an *American* name?”

“My great, great, great, great... give or take a great grandfather was Granville Stuart,” he said. “He’s a big name around Big Hole Valley, Montana, and we live in a small town close to the valley. Huckleberry was all Mom. She might be a math teacher, but she’s book obsessed.”

“Ah, so that’s why Louisa is Louisa?”

“Absolutely. Mom owns a first-edition copy of *Little Women* and believe me when I say, should the house go up in flames, that book would be the first to be saved before any of her jewelry, and maybe even my dad.”

I let out a snort, trying not to laugh. “Oh my god, not funny.”

“Tell *him* that.” He grinned. “It’s his joke.”

“Your parents sound amazing.”

“They are. I can’t wait for you to meet them.”

I bit my lip and ran my finger over his chest. “Do you think they’ll like me?”

“Of course they will, everyone likes you.”

I scoffed. “Uh, no, everyone does *not* like me.”

“Who hurt you, Daisy?”

“What do you mean?”

“Who made you so insecure you’re insistent you’re unworthy?”

I sighed. “I don’t know, honestly. I mean, I guess, I do on a grand scale. Mean girls at school, the ex, brothers who feel it necessary to fight my battles, parents who hover, so then I feel like I can’t do it myself.” I shrugged. “Take your pick. But I can’t really blame them now, right? I have to take ownership

over my own actions, so I just panic sometimes, you know, get the collywobbles, and then I spiral internally. It's dumb."

"Baby, it's not dumb. We've just gotta get you to a place where you feel a little more settled in your head." He met my eyes. "But back up. What the fuck are collywobbles?"

"When your stomach gets all jittery. It's more than butterflies, it's almost painful." She sighed. "My English prof was British, and she used to say it. I've heard Maisie say it once or twice as well and it's kind of mine and Teagan's word. We use it a lot."

He grinned, kissing me gently. "Well, I'll get you to a place where there are no more collywobbles."

"Good luck with that, bub."

"Although, that is a fuckin' kickass word."

I chuckled. "Right?"

He rolled me onto my back and kissed me again. "You wanna eat or fuck again?"

"Mmm, eat then fuck."

"I like your style, Daisy Mae."

"I'm picking up on that, Huckleberry Granville."

We climbed out of bed, and he pulled on his jeans, commando, while I wrapped a robe around myself, then we headed into the kitchen to heat up leftovers.



*Daisy*

**T**HE NEXT NIGHT, Huck was snoozing in my bed, and I had the sudden need for a sugar bump, so I padded to my kitchen, stepping into my pantry, and flipping on the light.

I noticed a box of fruit roll-ups on the second shelf and grabbed it, pulling one out and walking back into the kitchen.

“There you are,” Huck said, and I jumped slightly. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“I don’t mind.” I bit my lip, admiring the view. He was buck-naked and I loved how he had no shame in his nudity. I personally wasn’t quite there, choosing to wear a white cami and a pair of bikini undies instead of being totally naked.

He chuckled. “What ya got there? Late night snack?”

I held up my treat. “Fruit roll-up,” I said with an emphasis on the ‘P.’

“Oh yeah?”

I nodded, tapping it against my palm. “But I think I have a better use for this.”

He grinned. “And what’s that?”

I peeled the fruit from the plastic and took his hand, leading him back to the bedroom, then gently pushing him toward the mattress and ordering, “On your back.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he retorted, and flopped onto the bed.

I grinned, licking my lips as I stripped, then straddled his hips. He was already hard, so I bound his length with the roll-up, and he raised an eyebrow.

“I *do* love your creativity, baby,” he breathed out.

I licked the tip of his cock, then wrapped my mouth around his length, unable to stop myself from rearing up with a groan, my mouth puckering in disgust as the sour from the fruit roll-up assaulted my salivary glands. “Oh, my god!”

“Fuck,” Huck hissed. “Shit. You okay?”

“Huh?” I scrunched up my face as I tried to scrape the taste off my tongue with my fingernails.

“Baby, what happened?” He sat up. “Are you hurt?”

“Oh, no, sorry.” I gagged, then shook my head. “I didn’t realize the roll-ups were sour.”

“Jesus.” Huck burst out laughing.

“Why are you laughing?”

“Aren’t they *your* snacks?”

“Well, no, actually, they’re not.” I paused in my cat-like cleaning. “I think my brothers left them here after a party. Someone brought them for the kids, and they were going to take them home. They *love* fruit roll-ups.” I took my sheet and wiped my tongue, pulling it away to see it was stained blue. “Oh my god, what the hell is this shit? Napalm?”

“Blue raspberry, I think.” Huck smirked. “Have you *never* had a fruit roll-up before?”

“Not that I can remember.” I glanced at the blue stain on my sheet. “I can’t believe it’s legal to give this crap to children.” The sour taste was still on my tongue, so I went back to trying to wipe it off, this time with my hands again. “I’m sure they have to be illegal in some countries.”

“You’re gonna need to brush your teeth to get rid of that taste,” he pointed out and I glanced at him. “Licking yourself to death isn’t really gonna give you the result you’re looking for.” He grinned. “It’s only gonna make me harder and with this fuckin’ piece of candy wrapped around my dick, that’s kinda uncomfortable.”

I huffed, sliding off the bed and rushing into my bathroom. “I’m not done with this!”

“You want me to try and find a different flavor?” he called out.

“Yes, please.”

I washed up and stepped into my bedroom to find Huck dumping the contents of the fruit roll-up box onto the bed. He was still naked, but the blue raspberry wrap was no longer around his dick.

“Taste test time,” he informed me, ripping open the strawberry packet.

There were four other flavors to choose from and unfortunately, they were all sour, and none of them were pleasing to my tastebuds.

I was near tears by the time we’d opened the last package and Huck gave me a sympathetic smile. “Daisy, it’s okay.”

“It’s not okay.” I threw my hands up before flopping onto the mattress. “I wanted to try something cute and spontaneous and it’s all ruined.”

“It’s not ruined.” He appeared above me with a lopsided grin. “And you know why it’s not ruined?”

“Why?”

“Because I happen to love fruit roll-ups, but more than that, I love your pussy, so we’re gonna reverse this little game for the moment.”

I shivered. “Oh, I can totally get behind that.”

He kissed me. “This week, we’ll make a little date to head to the grocery store and find some things that’ll work for you

to try at a later date. Sound good?”

“Love bubble,” I panted out.

“We’ll send someone with a list, then.”

“Yes,” I breathed out as he sucked one of my nipples into his mouth.

Kissing his way down my body, the fruit roll-up made its way between my legs and Huck sucked my pussy through the treat.

With the love bubble back in play, I relaxed and let him enjoy himself because, let’s be honest, I enjoyed myself more in the end.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

Wednesday afternoon, Daisy and I were driving back over the bridge from Vancouver to her condo. Gina had managed to get me in for an MRI that morning and we’d stopped for lunch at a little place by the water before heading back home.

I linked my fingers with hers as we drove and smiled. “Thanks for leaving the love bubble to come with me.”

She glanced around the cab of my truck. “Someone had to watch your six.”

I laughed. “Didn’t realize you did a tour in the marines, baby.”

Daisy wrinkled her nose. “Don’t joke. This is serious.”

“Daisy, no one knows I’m here. Nothing is going to happen.”

She let out the cutest little huff and rolled her eyes. “I’ll worry enough for the both of us and ensure nothing does.”

I lifted her hand to my lips and kissed her palm. “Okay, beautiful, you do that. We’ll get home and I’ll make sure you relax again.”



She blushed. “You better.”

I grinned. I loved how she still blushed despite the fact I’d seen every inch of her body, not to mention, tasted it.

“Did the woman say how long it’ll take to get your results back?”

“She was sending them over to Gina within the hour, so I should have a message in my chart by the end of the day. Gina said she’d call as well as soon as she sees the images.”

“I hope it’s fast.”

“Me too.”

Daisy’s phone pealed, muted by her purse, so she fished it out, then answered it. “Hey, bestie. Oh?” She glanced at me, then back at the road. “It’s Church, though.”

I frowned. I didn’t know Teagan was religious.

“Um, I’ll ask Huck. That actually sounds fun. Okay. Sure. Bye.”

I turned to her when I pulled up to a red light. “Not a big organized religion kind of guy, babe.”

“Huh?”

“You said something about church.”

“Oh.” She chuckled. “Right, sorry, let me explain. It’s Wednesday, so that means ‘church,’ which is the weekly club meeting for officers. I guess they’ve decided to turn it into an impromptu party. Feel like hanging out with everyone? The dads and kids, anyway. Since it’s a holiday weekend, our moms went out tonight. I guess they all took tomorrow and Friday off to start the party early.”

“You’re good to leave the bubble?”

“Nothing safer than the compound,” she pointed out.

“You’ve got a point.” I smiled. “Sure, that sounds fun. We’ll stop at the Freddie’s by the condo.”

“No, the club’s stocked.”

“My mom will skin me alive if she finds out I go to a party empty-handed, Daisy.”

“I won’t tell if you don’t.”

“Aren’t you being just a skosh paranoid?”

“Skosh?” she breathed out.

“Yeah, just a little. You know? Skosh.”

“I know what skosh means, Huck.” She let out a frustrated huff. “It’s called ‘better safe than sorry.’ If we’re missing anything, we’ll send a recruit out to get it.”

I sighed. “Okay, are we stopping back at the condo first, or heading straight to the club?”

“Heading straight to the club,” she said. “Unless you need to stop?”

“I’m good.”

“Are you sure, because we’ll probably be there until late.”

“Baby?”

She turned toward me. “Yes?”

“Take a breath,” I said, taking her hand again and giving it a squeeze. “Why are you so amped?”

She bit her lip. “I’m just worried about you.”

“Don’t be.”

“That’s like telling me not to breathe.”

“What helps more? Wine or tequila?”

“For what?”

“For you to chill the fuck out?”

She let out a quiet snort. “Oh, tequila, definitely.”

“Right, first order of business is to get you a shot.” I raised an eyebrow. “Or twelve.”

“I can get behind that plan,” she said with a grin.

“Remind me how to get to the club,” I said, and she directed me into Beaverton.

We pulled into Big Ernie’s twenty minutes later and parked around the back, then I followed Daisy inside.

The second we entered the building, Teagan rushed to Daisy’s side and pulled her in for a hug, while Buzz bellowed, “Huck the Puck, get your ass over here!”

Daisy grinned up at me. “Go with Buzz, I’ll find you in a few.”

“You sure you don’t wanna have my six?”

“Suck my dick, big man.”

I laughed, leaning down to kiss her quickly. “Later.”

She gave my beard a parting tug then followed Teagan into the kitchen, while I made my way over to Buzz. He slapped me on my back and handed me a beer.

“Thanks, man,” I said, and twisted off the top.

“Come on out back and I’ll introduce you to a couple of the recruits.”

I nodded, and we headed out one of the sliding glass doors.

“Huck, this is Grip, and this is Hammer,” Buzz said, leaning in closer to me. “As in, dumb as a bag of hammers.”

I’m pretty sure that last part was supposed to be for my ears only, but Buzz didn’t have a volume switch when it came to his voice, and Grip bust out laughing while Hammer flipped him off.

“Oh, wait, are you Huck the Puck?” Hammer asked.

“See?” Buzz said. “Little slow on the uptake, this one.”

I grinned. “I am.”

“Shit, man, sorry about your knee.”

“All good.” I took a swig of my beer.

“Buzz!” We turned to see Hatch at the slider, and he gave me a chin lift. “Hey, Huck, good to see you.”

I tipped my beer toward him. “You too.”

“You need me, Prez?” Buzz asked.

“Yeah. You need to settle a bet.”

“Right. Be back.” He grinned, jabbing a finger at me. “Don’t move.”

I gave him a salute and he jogged inside.

“Are you prospecting for the club, too?” Grip asked.

Before I could answer, Hammer jumped in. “We’ve been sloggin’ for almost a year. Word came down at tonight’s meeting, and Hatch and the officers said we could prospect, which means, soon we’ll have access to everything the club has to offer.”

“And what does the club offer?” I asked.

Hammer rubbed his hands together. “A fine selection of pussy for one.”

“All you ever do is think with your dick,” Grip lamented.

Hammer scoffed. “Like you’re one to talk.”

“I think with my dick and my liver,” Grip said, raising his beer. “Which gash is it this week?”

My blood pressure was starting to rise. I was no stranger to locker room talk, and had heard it all, but hearing these assholes refer to women like that was about to send me over the goddamn edge.

“I’ve got my sights on little Miss Daisy,” Hammer said.

I fisted my free hand at my side.

“Shit, Ham, the VP’s daughter? Are you high?” Grip hissed.

“No, but you gotta aim high if you want to reach that grade-A puss-A.”

As my arm began to cock back, I had a split-second of clarity, kind of like when the little cartoon angel appears to remind our hero to do the right thing, but before tiny Saint Huck could get a word in, my fist had already connected with Hammer's face.

"Whoa!" Grip exclaimed as Hammer's stiffened body hit the ground. "What the fuck, man?"

"Do you have something to say, or do you want to drag this asshole outta my sight?" I demanded.

"What the hell, Huck?" Buzz bellowed on his return. "I left for ten minutes and you're punching out my recruits?"

I pointed to the ground. "There's a couple of his teeth right there, you might want to pick them up. It'll help the dentist with the implants." Buzz raised his hands and shook his head in confusion, and I tapped my jaw. "Hockey player, remember?"

"You gonna tell me what the hell happened?"

"Y'all are thinking about having those two prospect for your club?"

Buzz frowned. "Yeah, why?"

"You might want to think again, unless you want the kind of guys who are willing to talk about the VP's daughter like a piece of meat."

"Aw, shit, they said somethin' about Daisy?"

"I'm gonna go check on her and make sure she's okay," I said, and walked inside.

I found Daisy and Teagan at the bar, six shot glasses upside down between them. Harm was serving and the girls looked like he'd been generous with his pours.

Daisy let out a quiet gasp and jumped off the barstool, a little wobbly, as she wrapped her arms around me. "Hi, sexy."

"Hey, baby. You feeling good?"

"So, so good. Are you having fun?"

“Actually, I need to go. You coming with me, or do you want to get a ride home later?”

“What?” She raised her head to meet my eyes and frowned. “Why do you need to leave?”

“Pretty sure I’m about to be kicked out.”

“Uh... *why*?”

“Huck!” Hatch bellowed.

“Fuck,” I hissed.

“What happened?” Daisy asked.

“In my office,” Hatch growled. “Now.”

“Shit.” Daisy’s face went white. “What the hell?”

I stroked her cheek and followed Hatch down the hall, Daisy at my heels. Walking into Hatch’s office, he waved a hand toward a chair, which Daisy promptly sat in, but I chose to stay standing.

“What the fuck’s this business about you hittin’ one of my prospects?” Hatch demanded.

Before I could answer, Booker walked in and closed the door.

“This does not concern you, brother,” Hatch said.

“Beg to differ, Hatch. Huck’s my guy, ergo, it concerns me.”

I didn’t realize I’d become Booker’s ‘guy,’ but I decided not to mention that at this juncture and crossed my arms, waiting for a further tongue lashing.

“You gonna answer my question?” Hatch asked.

“I’m not one to tell you how to handle your guys, Hatch, but when one of them makes inappropriate comments about your daughter,” I said, nodding toward Booker, “and *my* girlfriend, I’m gonna deal with it.”

“I’m your girlfriend?” Daisy cooed. “That’s the first time you’ve said that out loud.”

Hatch shook his head. “You know, for a guy who has spent most of his life on a team, you sure don’t play very well with others.”

“There’s a time for playing and a time for fighting,” I pointed out. “Are you gonna stand there and act like your club doesn’t know the difference?”

“Of course, we do,” Hatch said. “But I’m this team’s captain. And if you wanna make a play on my field, you run it by me first. And if I’m not around, you run it by Assistant Coach Booker here, since he’s so eager for the fuckin’ job.”

I shook my head. “But I’m not a member of your club.”

“Do you wanna be?”

Daisy let out a snort giggle and I raised an eyebrow in her direction.

“What? You can’t picture it?” I challenged.

She grimaced. “Not really.”

I smirked, then focused on Hatch. “I still have surgeries to deal with, and my contract isn’t up with the team. I don’t know what the future holds with my hockey career, so I’m not sure how that’ll work with the club.”

“We’ll work around it,” Hatch said.

I wasn’t sure why the idea of prospecting was so instantly appealing. Maybe it was because I missed being on a team, or maybe it was because I knew that getting closer to the club meant getting closer to Daisy. Maybe it was all of that. All I knew was that the Dogs of Fire were a true pack and I needed to run with them.

I turned to Booker. “Is that your bike with the Panhead eighty-two-inch Long Block?”

“It’s one I’m restoring, yeah.”

“Mind if I take her for a spin?”

Booker grinned. “Hell, yeah, we’ll get the boys and go for a ride.”

Daisy gasped. “*You can ride?*”

“Since I was old enough to hold up my first dirt bike.” I smiled.

“How come you never told me you could ride?”

“First of all, you never asked. And second, I didn’t want you to think that I was just another asshole trying to get into your—” I cut off my sentence, considering the fact her uncle and her father were standing inches from me. “Good graces.”

“Do you ride much?” Booker asked.

“I’ve still got my motorcycle license, but hockey has always taken up most of my time and my dad always said that ‘those damn motorcycles’ would lead me to my ruin.”

Booker chuckled.

“Okay, so you know how to keep your mouth shut, how to ride, and how to land a punch. Can you shoot?” Hatch asked.

“Yeah, I can shoot.”

“Well, we’ll head out to the range and see just how good you are this week, but in the meantime, what do you say, prospect?” Hatch asked. “We still got the ass end of the sun stickin’ out. Wanna chase it?”

I grinned. “Let’s ride.”

We filed out of Hatch’s office and headed out to the bikes.





*Daisy*

**H**UCK KISSED ME quickly and walked me back out to the bar where Teagan was now sipping on a margarita, only she wasn't alone. Poppy, Charleston, and Cambry had joined her and were all working on shots.

"Oh my god, what happened?" Teagan demanded as I arrived at the group.

Before I could answer, however, Hatch made his way over and pulled Poppy in for a hug, "Hey baby girl."

"Hey, Sid."

Poppy was technically Hatch's stepdaughter, but if you said that within hearing distance of him, you'd probably lose a limb. He'd married Maisie when Poppy was twelve, and she'd always called him her 'stand-in-dad,' hence the 'Sid' nickname, but she was his daughter. Period.

"What's this about Huck punching Hammer?" Teagan asked.

"He made some inappropriate comments about me apparently," I said.

“Does he do that?” Hatch asked. “Hammer? Make comments? Or any of the other prospects?”

Teagan snorted. “Oh, yeah. All the time. Grip’s okay. Hammer’s a douche.”

“Super creepy,” Poppy added.

“Why the fuck did no one tell me?” Hatch growled.

“Oh, no, club business is club business,” Cambry sassed. “Girls are second-class citizens, and we have no say.”

“Cambry,” Poppy admonished.

In most clubs, that might be true, but our dads revered their women and yes, there was an element of don’t ask questions when it came to club business, but if we ever had a real concern, every single one of the brothers would stand with and behind us and address it immediately.

“Right, going forward, if any one of these assholes creeps any of you out, I wanna know about it, yeah? Prospect, member, fuckin’ officer, don’t matter, I wanna know,” Hatch said. “Y’all mean the fuckin’ world to me, and I’d lay my life down for each and every one of you. Don’t ever doubt it.”

“Awww,” we all cried, rushing him, wrapping him in a girl hug.

“Jesus,” he breathed out, giving us each a pat on the back before extricating himself from the girlie sandwich. “Just let me know if anyone’s bein’ a turd so I can flush him.”

“Thanks, Uncle Hatch,” I said, and he kissed my temple before heading out the front door.

“Ducky!”

I turned to see my dad shrugging into his leather jacket and made my way to him. “Hi, Daddy. You’re going to make sure my guy’s safe, right?”

He smiled. “Yeah, baby. Always. How come you didn’t tell me Hammer was creepin’ on you?”

“I didn’t really know it was that bad, honestly. He’s just a general weirdo. You know me, I steer clear of those ones.”

He frowned. "How many of them have there been?"

"A few, but they didn't last long. Hammer's the only one who's slipped through the cracks."

"Is Grip a problem?"

"He seems okay." I shrugged. "So far, anyway."

Dad sighed. "Don't let that happen again, okay? Tell me next time."

"Nah, I got me a man now." I grinned. "I'll let Huck do my dirty work."

"Or that," he retorted.

Huck walked up to us, helmet in hand, and wrapped an arm around me. "You okay?"

"I'm good, honey. Please be careful, okay?"

He leaned down and kissed me quickly. "Absolutely."

"Meet you out there," Dad said, and Huck gave him a chin lift.

"I want to know everything that happened with Hammer when you get back, okay?"

Huck chuckled. "There's not much to tell."

"Of course there is. And I want it all. Got it?"

"Got it." He smirked, leaning down to whisper, "Don't get too drunk. I'm gonna want your pussy later."

I shivered. "I'll pace myself."

"Good girl."

He made his way outside and I headed back to my friends.

"So, what the fuck happened?" Teagan demanded as I slid onto a barstool.

"I'm not entirely sure," I admitted. "But I'll find out more later. I guess Huck's prospecting for the club now."

“Oh my god,” Teagan breathed out. “Are you okay with that?”

I shrugged. “Too late now.”

“Oh my god, you’re in love with him,” Cambry observed.

I set my elbow on the bar, then settled my cheek in my palm. “Totally and completely.”

“I thought your whole plan was to stay away from bikers,” Cambry reminded me.

“You said that?” Charleston asked. “How does that work, exactly?”

“Apparently it doesn’t,” I grumbled.

Teagan laughed. “No shit. You were so close.”

“I know, I know.” I tapped my palm on the bar. “Another shot, barkeep.”

Razor raised an eyebrow. “Tequila or Vodka, sweetheart?”

I cocked my head. “Um, *hello?* Tequila.”

“Okay, okay. I just got here. I can’t read your mind.” He laughed, grabbing the good stuff from under the bar and pouring three shots, then holding the bottle up to Charleston.

She was still a senior in high school, and although drinking was up to the parents once the kids could drive, Charley was the studious kind of gal, and shook her head. “I’ll stick to pop, buddy, thanks.”

I’d taken one shot when Buzz walked over to us, a very worried looking Grip following. “Ducky, you got a minute, honey?”

“Ah, sure.” I slid off the stool and followed him to the kitchen, where he waved a hand toward Grip.

“Ah, so, ah, Daisy, I wanted to, ah...”

“Jesus, man, just spit it out,” Buzz hissed.

“Right. Ah, sorry Daisy. Hammer’s an ass, and I want you know I don’t feel the same way and would never disrespect you like that.”

Buzz waved his hand. “Or any other woman.”

“Or any other woman,” Grip parroted.

I tried to keep the shock off my face.

“Hammer’s gone, sweetheart,” Buzz said. “And Grip’s on a super short leash. One fuck up and he’s out.”

“Oh,” I whispered.

“Which is not on you,” Buzz rushed to say.

“Okay.”

“You ever feel uncomfortable, you let me know,” Buzz said. “Okay?”

I bobbed my head. “Okay, Buzz, thanks.”

Grip gave me another apologetic smile, then he and Buzz walked out of the kitchen, and I made my way back to my girls.

“What was that all about?” Teagan asked.

“Oh my god,” I breathed out. “Buzz just made Grip apologize.”

“What the heck is going on?” Charleston asked.

“Right?” Cambry said. “It’s like Huck has opened up a can of feminism.”

I grabbed a shot glass full of tequila and raised it in the air. “To Huck and feminism.”

“To Hukinism!” Teagan corrected.

We all took a shot, then dissolved into giggles. My mother and the rest of the old ladies walked in a few minutes later.

She headed my way and pulled me in for a hug. “Hey, baby, I didn’t know you were coming out here.”

“It wasn’t planned. How was girls’ night out?” I took in her little black dress and high-heeled booties. “You look amazing.”

“Thanks, baby. It was fun. Where’s Huck?”

“He’s out riding.”

“He rides?”

I bobbed my head. “Apparently, he’s a hockey player by day, and a secret biker by night.”

Mom stroked my cheek. “Do you need to process?”

I bobbed my head again.

She smiled, wrapping an arm around my shoulders. “Let’s go to your dad’s office.”

I followed her down the hall and we closed ourselves inside. She flopped into one of the chairs and I sat in the one facing her.

“I have to get these shoes off,” she said, unzipping her boots. “My feet are on fire.”

“Where did you go?”

“Blush.”

“I’m surprised Daddy didn’t go with you.”

The club owned the popular nightclub downtown, but it was a meat market, so the women were only allowed to go when Dad, Mack, or Knight could accompany them. Actually, any of the officers were approved, but it had to be at least two officers, no recruits. Hatch wanted firepower covering their women.

She smiled. “Mack and Knight were with us, so he let me off my leash.”

I sighed, biting back tears.

“Oh, honey, what are you wrestling with?”

“Hatch asked Huck to prospect.”

Mom let out a deep breath. “Oh, wow. That’s huge.”

“I *know*.”

“How will that work with his hockey contract?”

“Hatch said they’d talk about it more, but let’s be honest, the entire club has a crush on Huck the Puck, so I have a

feeling their shiny new toy's schedule will be accommodated. But saying that, I see what recruits go through. It's almost a full-time job. And he's got his knee replacement coming up, I just don't know how he's going to do it all."

"And where you fit in this?"

"Yes." I couldn't stop the tears now. "But saying that out loud makes me sound like a selfish bitch."

She leaned forward and took my hands. "Oh, my beautiful girl. It doesn't. You sound like a woman in love."

"We're so new and I want him to do whatever he wants, but I also hate it when I don't see him every second of the day," I admitted. "So, if he's prospecting, and I'm working, then he's getting ready for an intense hockey season, I'll never see him. Not to mention, one of the things I liked the most about him is that he wasn't in 'the life.'"

Mom chuckled. "Little girls always end up marrying their daddies in the end, huh?"

I grimaced. "Ew, Huck's nothing like Dad."

She raised an eyebrow. "Mmm, we'll see."

I grabbed a tissue from the tissue box sitting on Dad's desk and blew my nose.

"Look, I remember how conflicted I felt when I met Daddy. I mean, Grandpa was the police chief, can you imagine?"

"I know, he likes to remind Daddy he still has contacts in the force if he gets out of line."

Mom chuckled. "This life isn't for everyone, but I'll tell you one thing. Your dad always puts me first."

"I know."

"Okay, then why do you think Huck would be any different?"

I shrugged. "I know he'd want to, but sometimes it's not always within his control."

“Baby girl, believe me when I say, it will be. Your daddy, and even Hatch, aren’t going to let their precious Ducky want for anything and if that means Huck is spending too much time at the club, I have a feeling that will change.”

“But that will make me a bitch.”

“No, it won’t, honey.” She smiled. “It’ll make you an old lady.”

I let out a quiet snort. “I guess it will, huh?”

“Abso-fucking-lutely.”

I settled my head in her lap, and she stroked my hair. “Thanks, Mama.”

“Anytime, baby.”

We stayed like this for a while. I’m not sure how long, but it was enough time for me to finally feel like my world was back on its axis. I sat up and took a deep breath.

“Feel like joining the rest of the old ladies?” Mom asked.

“Hell yes.”

She chuckled, standing, and pulling me to my feet before hugging me. “Are you sure you feel better?”

“I feel good, Mama. Thank you.”

She cupped my face. “Any time.”

With one more hug, we headed back out to the fray.

\* \* \*

Later that night, we were back in my condo because Huck refused to fuck me under any roof my father, or worse yet, my mother, might happen to be, and I wanted to be *fucked*.

Dirty.

We both had been given clean bills of health, so tonight was going to be our first without condoms and I wanted to make it count.



“Okay, fill me in on the Hammer thing first,” I said, as I brushed my teeth.

“Do you want me to filter?” Huck asked, squirting toothpaste onto his own brush that had found its way into my bathroom.

“No. Tell me everything.”

And he did.

“He did *not* say puss-aaay, like some perverted Fonzie.”

Huck spit his toothpaste into the sink. “He sure did.”

“Douche.”

“Indeed.”

“And then you punched him,” I said.

“I did.”

“Just the once?”

“That’s all it took,” Huck said. “Poor little bastard was out before he hit the ground.”

“That’ll teach him.”

He frowned. “Yeah, normally, I wouldn’t fight below my weight class, but I have to admit, what he said really got under my skin.”

I slid my arms around his waist. “Thank you for doing that.”

“Baby, you don’t need to thank me for defending your honor.”

I looked up at him. “I’m still going to do it.”

He smiled, sliding his hand down to my butt and kissing me. “I appreciate that.”

“How was your ride?”

“Awesome,” he said. “I fuckin’ love your family, Daisy.”

I chuckled. “I fucking love my family too.”

“Are you good with me prospecting?”

“Is it something you really want to do?”

“I hadn’t thought about it until Hatch brought it up, but once he did, and now that I’ve ridden with the club, I’d love to. But I let Hatch know if all goes well with the surgery, I’m still under contract, so hockey has to come first, but he said he’s good with waiting to see how the knee thing plays out.”

“Well, where does that put me?”

“What do you mean?”

“On your list of priorities,” I said. “Where do I land?”

“I don’t follow.”

“You say you’re willing to commit to the club, however, your hockey career would come before that, but where do I fit in that list? Does hockey come before me as well?”

“I can’t believe you’d even think I’d lump you in with my career *or* the club.”

“I just...” I sighed. “Well, if we don’t work—”

“Don’t finish that sentence,” he growled.

“But—”

“Seriously, Daisy, I’m gonna get pissed if you keep going.”

“Well, if we break up, you realize I’m the one who’s going to have to walk away from my family, right?”

“What the hell did I just say?” he snarled.

“Don’t yell at me!”

“Then don’t say idiotic things like we’re gonna break up!”

“Don’t call me an idiot!”

“Jesus, woman, I would never call you an idiot, but for someone so smart, sometimes you say dumb things,” he bit out.

“How is being concerned about our relationship dumb?”

“Because we’re never breakin’ up,” he snapped.

“Oh yeah?” I snapped back.

“Yeah! I fucking love you, Daisy. I’m never letting you go. How do you not see that?”

“Wait.” I blinked up at him. “You love me?”

“Yeah.” His hand slid to my neck, and he tugged me forward. “Of course, I love you.”

“Well, I love you too.”

“Then why are you yelling at me?” he asked.

“Because you called me stupid.”

“I *never* called you stupid, but apparently, I *am* if I haven’t clearly made you see just how much I love you. Everything I do is measured against whether or not it’s something we’re going to do together.” He ran his thumb over my lower lip. “If I go back to Raleigh, I don’t want to go without you. If you don’t want to go, then I’ll leave hockey behind and stay wherever you are. I don’t care if I’m slinging popcorn at the local movie theater as long as we’re together, I’ll be happy. I’m gonna marry you, baby. Maybe not immediately, because your dad would probably remove my spleen with a spoon, but the second it feels right for us, then we’re gonna do it.”

I couldn’t stop tears as they slid down my cheeks. “I’ll go wherever you go, honey.”

He smiled. “You sure?”

I nodded. “One hundred percent. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“Yeah, you have just proved that... in spades,” I breathed out.

Before he could say anything else, his phone buzzed on the counter. He glanced down and said, “It’s Gina.”

“Take it.”

Picking it up, he pulled me closer, and answered the call. “Hey, Doc. Daisy’s with me, I’m going to put you on speaker,

is that okay?” He smiled, and set the phone on the counter again, putting the phone on speaker. “Okay, you’re on speaker.”

“Hi Daisy.”

“Hi, Gina, how are you?”

“I’m great. I have some news on your images, Huck. Are you okay with Daisy hearing what I have to tell you?”

“Yep, all good,” he said. “How bad are they?”

“Actually, they’ve improved since your first set. You’ve been doing some great work.”

“Thanks.”

“Dr. Patel has an opening in his schedule on Friday morning, are you available?”

“Yes, absolutely,” he said.

“Fantastic. Would you like me to be there with you? I don’t have to be but am happy to make myself available if you’d like.”

“Ah, wow, yeah, that would be great, if you have the time.”

“I will make the time,” Gina said. “I’ll text you all of the details and they will also be in your chart. If Daisy comes with you, maybe we can grab lunch after.”

“I will definitely be there,” I said. “And it’s a date.”

“Perfect. I’ll see you both on Friday. Bye.”

She hung up and Huck grinned. “See? Even your extended family is fucking awesome.”

“Oh, I’m aware.”

He squeezed my hip. “What do you want to do now, beautiful?”

“I want you to fuck me. Duh,” I sassed.

“How do you want me to fuck you, Daisy?”

“Filthy, Huck.”

“Feel like playing a little?”

I clapped my hands and nodded. “Oh my god, yes, please.”

“Get naked,” he ordered. “Then bend over the bench at the end of your bed. Spread those legs wide, and don’t say a word.”

I didn’t hesitate to do as he demanded, leaving a trail of clothing in my wake.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

I turned the bathroom light off, stripping out of the rest of my clothes, my dick already rock-hard as I joined Daisy at the end of her bed. Jesus, she was perfect.

She was bent over, her legs spread and her back arched just enough to raise her globe-shaped ass, ready for me to fuck her. I ran my fingers through her already wet folds, pressing two against her clit, before sliding them back, and slipping them inside of her.

She let out a quiet moan as she pushed her pussy into my hand, but I pulled away at her motion.

“Huck,” she begged.

“Don’t move,” I growled.

She whimpered, but I felt her plant her feet a little firmer and I slid my fingers inside of her again. As I fingered her pussy, I moved my other hand to the back of her neck and wrapped her long hair into my fist.

I felt her pussy tighten and flood as I worked her, so I pulled my hand away and positioned my cock at her entrance. Daisy once again pushed back against me, so I tightened my fist in her hair, a silent warning to stay still, causing her back to arch, and she let out a quiet mew as I slid slowly into her, burying myself to the hilt.

“Jesus,” I hissed as her pussy tightened around my dick.

“I can play, too,” she sassed over her shoulder. “Kegels.”

I grinned, releasing her hair, and gripping her hips hard enough so I could slam into her. She quickly lost her ‘sauce’ when I leaned over her and twisted one of her nipples into a tight pebble, continuing to bury myself deeper and deeper.

When I felt my balls tighten, I gave her ass a smack and she cried out as her pussy flooded with release, and I held her hips steady as I came fast and hard. She took gulping breaths as her cunt continued to contract, milking every ounce out of me.

“Oh my god,” she breathed out, and I leaned over to kiss the nape of her neck before sliding gently out of her. “That was amazing.”

I chuckled, making my way to the bathroom. “Ah, yeah.”

“Make up sex is the bomb,” she said, following me.

“I don’t know that we can count what we did as a real fight, babe, but if you want to call that make up sex, by all means,” I said as I turned on the shower.

“It felt like a real fight.”

I frowned. “Shit, baby, really?”

“Yes. I thought for sure you were going to dump me.”

I slid my arm around her waist and pulled her close. “That’s never gonna fucking happen.”

“I’m starting to believe that now.”

“Good.” I smiled, kissing her nose. “Now, you gonna let me soap you up so I can fuck you in the shower?”

She shivered. “Hell yeah, I am.”

I lifted her into the shower where I did just that.



*Huck*

**F**RIDAY, WE WALKED out of the doctor's office, our mood a little grimmer than when we'd walked in. It was looking as though I was going to have to have a full knee replacement.

"That's something like six months for a full recovery, right?" I deduced.

"Yes," Dr. Patel confirmed.

"Does that mean his hockey career is over?" Daisy asked.

Dr. Patel shook his head. "Not necessarily. A high percentage of my patients return to their normal activities once post-surgery physical therapy has been completed. Of course, most of my patients are not professional hockey players, but given your age and physical fitness, Huck, I think you have a great chance at getting back onto the ice."

"And you have me and the club to help you out with whatever you need," Daisy added.

I gave her hand a squeeze. "I know. I think I just need a little time to wrap my head around the whole thing. Is it okay if I think about it before giving you my final answer?"

Dr. Patel smiled wide. “Of course. Surgery of any kind is a big decision. Feel free to contact my office at any time once you’ve made your decision and we’ll book your pre-op appointment and surgery date should you decide to move forward.”

We thanked Dr. Patel, left his office, and made our way downtown. Daisy had set up a happy hour date with Gina and Clutch at McCartan’s, a family-owned chain of brew pubs that were scattered throughout the greater Portland area. Apparently, great grandpappy McCartan invented the little metal part that goes between the eraser and the pencil, which made him a gazillion dollars back in the day. These days it’s beer and wings that keep the McCartan family vault filled with gold coins.

“You doin’ okay?” Daisy asked.

“Yeah, why?”

“You haven’t said a word in the past ten minutes,” she replied with a smile. “I know you’re a bit on the quiet side, but c’mon.”

“I’m sorry, baby. I promise I’ll be good company at dinner—”

“It’s okay. You don’t have to apologize, and you can always be yourself around me. Gina and Clutch as well for that matter.”

“Thank you,” I said, taking her hand and giving it a kiss.

“You’ve got a lot on your mind, and I don’t want you to feel alone.”

I shook my head. “It’s the opposite. I’ve never felt more connected to a person than I do to you, and I think that’s what’s messing with my head.”

“What do you mean?” she asked, as we pulled up to the restaurant.

I parked the car, shut off the engine, and turned to face Daisy. “Whether or not I ever get to play pro hockey again has been a hypothetical question up until this point. A giant ‘what



if' in the life of a young single guy. But now, there's a chance that I could play again, and I'm scared."

"Why are you scared? What's changed?"

"You," I replied. "You walked into my life, and *everything* changed. And now when I picture my possible future in the league, you're with me."

"And that scares you?"

"No. What scares me is the thought of not being able to play like I did before, or something going wrong and not being able to play at all. Now that the possibility of returning to the game is on the table, I'm afraid of losing it. And if I do, how would I support our family?"

Daisy smiled. "Our family?"

"If you'd like to have one with me some day," I replied.

"Are you proposing to me?"

I shook my head. "When I propose to you, you'll know it. But I told you from the start that I don't play games off the ice. You asked what was on my mind and that's it. I'm afraid of any kind of future that doesn't have you in it. I want to play again, and I want us to start a new chapter of life together."

"Then let's do it. Let's get you back on the ice and take on everything else as it comes. I love you and I don't want to be apart any more than you do, so let's do this together."

"I love you, Daisy. And I will ask you to marry me someday."

She gave me a sassy grin. "Just know that my heart will take more than six months of rest and rehab if you break it."

"I'd rather break my other knee."

We leaned in together for a long kiss. A kiss that felt like the sealing of a promise, then we made our way inside to find Clutch and Gina already seated at a table near the window. They waved us over and stood to greet us. The ladies hugged and Clutch and I shook hands while we made our introductions.

“Should I still call you Doc or...?” I asked Gina.

“God, no. Please. It’ll make me feel like I’m at work,” she replied. “Gina’s fine, although most of the guys in the club call me Eldie.”

“Eldie? That’s a pretty name. I’ve never heard it before.”

“It’s L.D.,” Clutch clarified as we took our seats. “Stands for Lady Doctor.”

“A guy could get cancelled for a thing like that, these days,” I joked.

“Can’t get any more cancelled than dead,” Clutch said.

My eyes shot to Gina.

“*What?* I didn’t kill him,” she said to laughter around the table.

“Cutter was the Burning Saints founder and president, and he loved Gina almost as much as I do.”

“That’s why he got away with calling me Eldie, and why I never mind when others do. It reminds me of Cutter. So, feel free to call me Eldie.”

“Then Eldie it is,” I said.

A server arrived at our table with a large tray loaded up with pint glasses and shots.

“I took the liberty of ordering a few rounds in advance before y’all got here,” Clutch said. “I hope you don’t mind.”

“How could we?” I replied, taking a pint of what looked like stout.

“I had them bring a little of everything,” Clutch said.

“Is this tequila?” Daisy asked the server.

“Patrón,” she replied with a nod.

“Perfect. Bad tequila gives me a horrible headache, but good tequila makes me happy and horny.”

“I’m going to stock you up with so much fine tequila your liquor cabinet will look like Sammy Hagar’s,” I avowed.

Daisy shook her head. “Sorry, I’m a ride or die Diamond Dave gal.”

I sighed. “And it was all going so well.”

“Well then, how about we toast to Cutter?” Daisy replied, raising her shot.

“To Cutter,” Clutch said. “The sweetest mean old bastard you’d ever want to ride with.”

“To Cutter,” we said in unison, clinking our glasses together.

“Speaking of riding,” Clutch said. “I hear you’re prospecting with the Dogs.”

I nodded. “That’s right.”

“You know your ass is grass if any member sees you out in public without flying the flag,” he said.

I frowned in confusion. “The flag?”

“Where’s your cut? And your prospect patch?”

“Dad hasn’t given Huck his cut yet,” Daisy said.

“The offer to prospect kinda happened unexpectedly,” I said. “For both Booker and me, I think.”

“Boy,” Daisy said. “Word sure travels fast among you little club gossips, doesn’t it?”

“What can I say? The kid’s a big hockey star,” Clutch said. “Word gets around, especially when Smiley’s nephew gets kicked out to make room for him.”

“What?” I said. “Who’s Smiley? Who got kicked out?”

“I think he’s talking about Hammer,” Daisy said.

“The kid I punched?”

“You punched Smiley’s nephew?” Clutch asked. “He left that part out of the story.”

“Who the fuck is Smiley?” I asked. I was starting to feel like I was in the middle of a 1940’s screwball comedy film.

“Smiley owns a biker bar out in Colorado,” Daisy said. “Legendary place for those who know.”

“Right,” Clutch said. “And Smiley’s got a kid sister named Lacy, and Lacy’s got a kid named Scott, ergo, Smiley’s nephew.”

I shrugged. “What’s this got to do with me?”

“Booker agreed to make Scott a prospect in return for a favor Hatch owed Sundance, the President of the Primal Howlers’ who happened to owe Smiley a favor. Word on the street is that Booker welched on the agreement and cut Scott loose in order to give you his prospect spot. Now I hear you beat the kid up, which only adds a layer of mystery.”

“Don’t be an asshole, honey,” Edlie said.

“What?” Clutch protested. “That’s what I heard.”

“May I tell him the true story?” Daisy asked.

“Please,” I replied.

“Huck came to a club party where he met Hammer, aka Scott.”

“Why’d they call the kid Hammer? He swinging a big ol’ dick between his legs or something?” Clutch asked.

“Oh, Jesus,” Eldie said, selecting a shot from the table and slamming it down.

“Sorry, my good doctor,” Clutch said sarcastically. “Does the patient suffer from an enlargement in the groinal area of the sexual organ region?”

“No,” Daisy replied, trying, and failing at stifling a laugh. “When my dad brought Scott on, he warned Hatch that the kid seemed okay, but was dumber than a sack of hammers. Apparently, after working with Scott for a few days, Hatch had concluded that he was ‘dumber than a sack with only one hammer in it,’ thus his name.”

Clutch chuckled. “Why’d the hell did Hatch keep the kid on?”

“Like you said, my dad owes Smiley a favor. He and Hatch were being patient, hoping he could be trained to do something useful, but they’d all but run out of steam with the kid by the time Huck showed up.”

“Then what happened?” Eldie asked, now invested in the story.

“I was shooting the shit with Hammer and another prospect, when he started making comments about what he was going to do with Daisy when he got his hands on her,” I said. “That’s when I put my fist on his jaw.”

“And Hatch offered you Hammer’s spot.”

“I guess so,” I said. “That’s about it.”

“How come the truth is never as good as the bullshit story?” Clutch lamented.

We spent the next few hours talking about everything from family life to club life. Clutch was funny, disarming, and brutally truthful about what it means to patch into a club. As Daisy and Eldie locked into their own conversation, Clutch invited me to sit with him at the bar, where we could speak privately.

“Some things in your club might run a little differently than ours, given that your club has always been legit, while the Burning Saints only recently became civilians after originally being one percenters,” he said. “But then again, not everything is as it seems, you know?”

“I’m not sure I do,” I admitted.

“What I’m saying is that before you patch in with the Dogs, you should know what you’re getting into. What kind of life, I mean.”

“I just love the idea of having a solid bunch of guys to ride with. Brothers who have each other’s backs out on the road.”

“Membership is a lot more than that. Lemme tell you. A hell of a lot more.”

Clutch reminded me of a combat veteran as he spoke. There was a mixture of pride and PTSD in his tone and I wondered if I was in fact ready to patch in with the Dogs of Fire, or any club for that matter.

“Our clubs are not that different from one another,” Clutch continued. “We’re both doing our best to convince the locals that we’re safe as milk, but we both know that underneath our two percent patches you’ll find the stitches from a torn off one percent patch.”

“If you’re warning me that club life can get rough, remember I’ve spent my entire life playing hockey.”

“They use guns on the ice where you come from?” Clutch’s voice turned deadly serious. “How about hunting knives? I don’t follow hockey. Is the other team allowed to cut the goalie’s throat?”

“I get it,” I said.

“You don’t get shit. Biker culture may have gone mainstream, but the life is still the life. In fact, while the public’s been busy streaming pretty boy biker soap operas, some clubs have doubled down. This is no time for fucking tourists, so if you’re lookin’ for some weekend warriors to ride with, I can hook you up, but the Dogs are my friends, and they don’t need extra attention on their club by some washed up jock.”

I nodded. “This is the part where you test my mettle.”

“This is the part where I tell you I don’t have to test jack shit. If my president wants your ball sack on a pike all he has to do is give the word. And if I want your sack, I’ll take it, stuff it, mount it on my wall, and ask Minus’s forgiveness later.”

“I’m pretty sure Minus doesn’t have that say. Hatch does.”

“Yeah, well, Minus is his brother-in-law.”

I rose to my feet. “I respect you and the relationship you have with the Dogs, but I’m starting to feel a little disrespected here.”

Clutch stood, his face inches from mine. “If you want me to take any of my words back, you’re gonna have to make me.”

“Lead the way outside and I’ll make sure you can’t say anything for six months,” I replied.

We turned for the door only to find our women standing together, behind us, arms crossed, and they did not look amused.

“What the hell are you two doing?” Eldie asked.

“We were just...ah...,” Clutch stammered.

“Going out to the parking lot to fight,” Eldie finished her husband’s sentence.

“I thought you said you weren’t in the habit of getting into fistfights,” Daisy said to me.

“But he was the one who—”

“Save it,” she snapped.

“I’ve paid the bill. Stay right here and wait for me,” Eldie said to Clutch, before both women turned and made their exit.

I dragged my hands down my face. “Nice going, dickwad,” I snapped.

“We’re assholes,” he replied.

“Yup.”

“Anyway,” Clutch said, as if nothing had happened. “Remember. Prospecting goes both ways. It’s a time for the club to see what you’re made of, but it’s also time for you to figure out who you are, and why you need the club.”

I nodded. “I should probably figure out how I’m gonna make this up to Daisy.”

“She’s been around bikers her whole life. She’ll be alright. Give her some time to cool off and tell her you’re sorry. If that doesn’t work, let her give you a free stick to the nuts.”

I gave him a chin lift. “Thanks for the advice.”

“Hey, you’re alright, jockstrap. Sorry for giving you shit. I get kinda worked up sometimes, ya know?”

“We’re cool,” I said, walking away.

I passed Eldie on the way out, but she wouldn’t talk to me, and by the time I made it outside, Daisy was gone.





*Daisy*

I TOOK AN Uber to the club, way too pissed off to go home, and rushed inside to find my dad in his office. “Hey, baby girl, you okay?”

“No!” I seethed.

He frowned. “What’s goin’ on?”

Before I could fill him in, Hatch walked in. “Book, I need—oh, hey, Ducky.” He pulled me in for a hug. “Where’s your man?”

“Hopefully picking his jaw up off the ground.”

Dad and Hatch glanced at each other, then Hatch closed the door.

“What the fuck’s goin’ on, Ducky?” Dad demanded.

“Other than Clutch and Huck having a dick measuring contest? Nothing much,” I snapped, flopping in one of the chairs next to Dad’s desk. “Why does everything have to come down to violence with men?”

“What happened?” Hatch asked, his tone quiet, and I missed the lethality in it.

I filled them both in on everything Gina and I had overheard, and then Hatch walked calmly out of Dad's office without a backward glance, and I looked at my father. "Where's he going?"

Dad chuckled. "I have a feeling Clutch is about to get beat down from either Minus or Hatch... or both. Huck won't be the only one pickin' his jaw up off the ground."

"Why are you laughing?"

He shrugged. "Because anytime Clutch gets a beat down, it makes me exceedingly happy."

I rolled my eyes. "There's something seriously wrong with you, you know that right?"

"Your mom tells me that every single day."

"It's a wonder you've stayed together so long," I teased.

"I'm a charmin' fella, what can I say?"

I dropped my forehead to his desk and groaned. "He's gonna leave, Daddy."

"What do you mean leave?"

I sat back and looked at him again. "Leave the club, leave the state, leave me. I think Clutch has sufficiently scared him away from club life and now he'll probably decide he doesn't want to prospect. I mean, he has to have a full knee replacement anyway, which is going to mean months of rehab, so..." I burst into tears, the heaviness of it hitting me. "He's going to think it's all way too much trouble and just walk away."

"Jesus, Ducky, he's not gonna leave you."

A knock at the door interrupted any further meltdown and Huck pushed his way in. He frowned at my father, before sitting in the chair beside me.

"Baby, why are you crying?" Then to my father, he demanded, "Why is she crying?"

"How about we start with why the hell my daughter had to take a fuckin' Uber here *alone*," Dad growled.

“He didn’t know I left,” I snapped. “So, don’t you dare start in with that business, old man. It wasn’t his fault.”

“He’s right though, Daisy. I should have made sure we were together.” He focused on my dad again. “Do you mind if Daisy and I talk privately for a few?”

“Sure,” Dad said. “I’ll give you the room.”

Dad kissed the top of my head, then walked out, closing the door behind him.

“Hey,” Huck said, taking my hands. “I’m sorry about the Clutch shit.”

“Why did you let him get under your skin?”

“Because I’m competitive and can be a bit of an asshole sometimes.” He sighed. “Not my finest hour. But just so you know, Clutch and I are good.”

“Well, now Hatch and Minus might have a thing, so buckle up buttercup.”

“Fuck,” he hissed. “Sorry, baby.”

“Don’t apologize to me. That’s all club shit. But when you choose whoever you’re gonna fight to jump in, please, for the love of god, don’t suggest crossing club lines and choosing Clutch, because he’s a professional fighter, and with your knee, he will more than likely kill you.”

He grinned. “I’ve already picked my guy.”

I groaned. “Do I want to know?”

“Probably not.”

I sighed. “Tell me anyway.”

“Cash.”

“Cash?” I gasped. “My brother, Cash?”

“Yeah.”

“Does he know?” I asked.

Huck shrugged. “Told your dad that should I patch in, he’d be my choice, so don’t know if he told him.”

“Great, more dick measuring.”

“Pretty sure my dick’s bigger,” Huck retorted.

I rose to my feet with a huff. “I’m over talking about genitalia, so can we change the subject, please?”

Huck stood and pulled me into his arms. “I’m sorry, baby. I was an ass.”

“Something we can both agree on.” I slid my hands up his chest. “You didn’t drive here, did you?”

“No. Caught an Uber. Clutch was gonna get one his guys to drive my truck over.”

“I’m glad you were safe.”

“I may be a little drunk, but I’m not stupid.”

Dad opened his door and crossed his arms. “You should probably come on out here, Huck.”

Huck gave me a squeeze and we followed my dad out to the great room.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

We walked out to find Hatch standing with a tall, long-haired biker and a beautiful blonde woman at his side. “Thanks for getting my recruit’s truck back safe.”

“No problem, brother.”

“Am I gonna need to yank your VP’s chain?” Hatch asked.

“Nah, I get that pleasure,” the biker said. “And once I yank it, I’m gonna beat the shit out of him with it.”

Hatch chuckled, turning to the blonde woman. “And you’re here because...?”

“It gave me an excuse to visit my big brother,” the blonde said.

“You mean, spy on me?” Hatch retorted.

She scoffed. “Why are you always so paranoid?”

“I’ll stop bein’ paranoid when you and my wife stop conspirin’ against me.”

“Did you hear that, babe?” she said to her man. “Hatch is accusing me of being shifty. Aren’t you going to defend my honor?”

“I would rather get in the ring with a grizzly bear than put myself in the middle of one of your brother-sister spats.”

“Coward.”

“Is this your new recruit?” the biker nodded toward me.

Hatch turned toward me. “Huck, meet Minus, president of the Burning Saints, and this is his old lady and co-pilot, Cricket. She’s also my pain in the ass little sister.”

“Rude,” Cricket sassed.

“Accurate,” Hatch retorted.

I nodded. “Nice to meet you. I appreciate you bringing my truck back. I owe you one.”

“Least I can do.” Minus crossed his arms. “I heard you and my VP got into a contest of who could piss in each other’s face better.”

I scrubbed the back of my neck with my hand. “Yeah, somethin’ like that.”

“Well, I’ve known Clutch for a million years, and I’ve seen him do a million and one stupid things, but this is no way for a new recruit to start out.”

“Yes, sir.”

“For instance, where’s your cut?” Minus demanded.

“We were gonna give it to him tonight,” Hatch said. “But seein’ as y’all are here, may as well do it now. Daisy, honey, go in my office and look in my closet.”

Daisy walked down the hall, returning with a leather cut, which she handed to Hatch.

“You understand what this is?” Hatch asked me.

“I think so.”

“I doubt it,” Hatch said. “But let me tell you. This cut represents two things. Freedom and brotherhood. Now those two things are diametrically opposed, which is exactly what club life is. The pursuit for absolute freedom while living by a strict code of self-enforced rules. Once you put this on, it never comes off. I don’t mean that literally, of course, although, you are expected to show the club colors whenever possible. What I mean is, once you’re a member of this club, you’re a member for life, unless I say otherwise. Now, although, you’re only prospecting to become a member, the rules and regulations of this club still apply. First and foremost, you must ride. Every day possible, your ass is on the road. I understand Booker is loaning you a bike. You either buy that one off him or get your own by the end of this week. Second, if I or any other officer tells you to do something, you do it, no questions asked. I don’t care if he tells you to clean out his ass crack with a toothbrush.”

“Ew, Connor,” Cricket said with a groan.

“I’m trying to prove a point, Christina.”

“You’re trying to make me puke.”

“And last, but most importantly,” Hatch continued, “you will faithfully and dutifully serve your club brothers and sisters and this community. Never disrespect the club, and never disrespect your patch. I’ve assigned Booker as your Road Captain. You’ll report to him, and he’ll present you with your cut. Oh, and one more thing, first thing tomorrow morning, you make an appointment at a tattoo shop and get some goddamn ink on that lily white skin. You don’t have the right to wear club ink until you’re a member, but if you’re gonna ride, you need to start looking like you ride.”

“Or, his body, his choice,” Cricket sassed.

“I got one for you,” Hatch replied. “How about my prospect, my boot, as in, up his ass if he doesn’t do what I say.”

I turned to Cricket. “It’s all good, I get it.”

Hatch crossed his arms. “I get that your coach will want you to look pretty for ESPN, but when you ride with us, you wear the uniform.”

Booker took the cut from Hatch and grinned. “Earlier you told me that your old man once told you that motorcycles would lead you to ruin, and that got me thinkin’. I believe you’ll make a good Dog because you know when to play as a team and when to cut your own path. So, I’m proud to present this cut to our newest prospect.”

He turned the cut around, revealing the name patch over the heart.

It read, “RUIN.”

I stood in stunned silence, struck by the same feelings I felt when I was presented with my first team jersey. I was overcome with pride, a sense of belonging, and a desire to live up to Hatch and Booker’s expectations. I was suited up and officially in the game.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

The second Dad slid Huck’s cut over his shoulders, I nearly burst into tears... or had a spontaneous orgasm. Or both.

I had my reservations about Huck prospecting for the club and even feared that I wouldn’t like seeing him in biker ‘garb,’ but him in that cut did things to me.

Unexpected and exhilarating things.

Things in my lady regions kind of things.

“What do you think?” Huck asked, once the group of well-wishers and congratulators had dispersed.

“Looks good,” I said, underplaying my reaction (let’s be honest, underplaying was the understatement of the century).

“Just good?” he asked, sliding a hand around my waist.

I swallowed. “Mmm-hmm.”

He frowned. “You don’t like it?”

“Huck.” I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. “If you move your hand, even an inch lower, I’m going to come.”

“Ah, so you like it.”

I opened my eyes and took another deep breath. “I know you have issues with fucking me under any roof my father happens to be, but I am holding on by a thread here, so either I drive us home right now, or we escape to the bunk room really quick.”

He smiled. “Bunk room.”

“Correct answer, handsome.”

I grabbed his hand and dragged him down the hall, pulling him inside the bunk room and locking the door.

“Quick, honey,” I ordered as I stripped out of my jeans.

I didn’t even get the rest of my clothes off before he slid his jeans halfway down his thighs, and lifted me against the wall, sliding his dick inside of me.

I anchored my hands to his shoulders and kissed him. “Hard, honey.”

“Hard, *what?*”

It took me a second to catch onto what he meant and then I smiled and breathed out, “Hard, *Ruin.*”

He obliged.





*Huck*

**TWO WEEKS LATER**, I had decided it was time to get out of the love bubble and take Daisy somewhere fancy for dinner. She'd been working so hard. In fact, after her week off, her schedule had been crazy, and with me prospecting for the club, time on the ice trying to 'keep my chops up' as my sister said, not to mention, the hours Hatch insisted I spend either riding or at the shooting range, we'd barely seen each other, except when we fell into bed at night. So, the date had been set, she'd worn the sexiest little black dress I'd ever seen, and we'd headed into the Pearl to a little steak house that had been some of the best food I'd ever tasted.

My knee replacement had been set for six weeks from now, and I had a conference call on the books with my agent in two days to discuss next steps as far as my career. I had no idea if the Hurricanes would want me back after rehab, and I couldn't remember what my contract had said about injuries, but I guess that's what I paid Reggie for. He was going to get everything together and let me know my options.

Now, we were heading back to the condo, and my phone rang, the sound reverberating through the cab of my truck. It was my mother.

“Hi, Mom, you’re on speaker.”

“Hucky,” she sobbed into the speaker.

“Shit,” I hissed. “What happened?”

“Your dad’s in the hospital. You need to come home. I tried to call Lou, but she didn’t answer. I didn’t want to leave this on a message.”

“How bad?” I asked.

“Bad, baby. A car accident.” She started sobbing again and Daisy grabbed my hand again.

“Okay, Mama,” I said. “We’ll get on a plane as soon as we can.”

“Good. Okay. Good,” she said with a sniff. “Let me know when you’re coming, and your uncle will pick you up.”

“Okay, I’ll text you as soon as I know.”

“Love you, honey.”

“Love you too, Mom. Tell Dad I love him, okay?”

“I will, sweetie.”

The call dropped, and Daisy released my hand, digging her cell phone out of her purse.

“Who are you calling?” I asked.

“Melody has a plane.”

“What?”

She didn’t answer me, as she had her phone to her ear. “Daddy? Something’s happened with Huck’s dad. He’s been in a really bad car accident and he and Louisa need to get to Montana, like, yesterday. Do you think Melody will let them borrow her plane? Well, no, I thought you could ask her, you know, because you’re the VP. Or, even better, Hatch could ask her.” She sighed. “I’m aware that her plane isn’t club business. I know. Yes, I get it. Fine. Yep, yep. Okay. I get it. Whatever. Love you too, but only conditionally. Bye.”

“What’d he say?” I asked as I pulled into the underground garage of the condo building.

“That I’m a grown ass woman who Melody adores, so it’s time for me to put on my big girl panties and call her my damn self.”

“Harsh.”

“Okay, maybe he didn’t quite say it like that. That might have been how I interpreted it.”

I parked the truck, turning off the ignition and facing her. “It’s fine, Daisy, I need to talk to my sister, then we’ll look for flights. I’m sure we can find something going out early tomorrow.”

She nodded, then we headed upstairs, and after making sure Daisy got inside her condo safely, I made my way across the hall.

“LouLou?” I called, closing, and locking the door behind me.

“Oh my god, Hucky!” she squealed, rushing out from the mouth of the hallway, a towel on her head, as she waved her cell phone in the air. “Mom—”

“I know, she called. She said she tried to call you first.”

“I was in the shower. I barely had a chance to get dry when she called.” She burst into tears, and I pulled her in for a hug. “It’s bad, Hucky. Someone ran him off the road.”

“He’s gonna be okay, LouLou. We’re gonna get a flight out as soon as we can.” I gave her a squeeze, then released her, grabbing my laptop. “You go finish up in the bathroom and I’ll look for flights.”

She wiped her tears away with a nod and headed back down the hall.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

I had just locked my door when my phone buzzed in my purse and I pulled it out to see Melody's name pop up on my screen. "Hi, Mel, were your ears burning?"

She chuckled. "No. Train was with your dad when you called."

I sighed. "Well, I really was going to get up the nerve to call you myself."

"Honey, you don't need to get up the nerve to do shit. We're friends, just ask."

"It's a *big* ask, Melody."

"And I can always say no."

"True." I grimaced. "Um, Huck's dad was in a bad car accident, and he's looking for flights, but—"

"Oh my god, babe, take the jet."

I gasped. "Really?"

"Yes. Absolutely. I don't need it for another month. I'll call my pilot. He's on a hefty retainer, so he's at my beck and call anyway and I'm sure I can find a couple of stews. I'll call you back as soon as there's a flight plan. Where are they going?"

"Oh, shoot, I'm not sure which airport. I'll text you."

"Okay."

"Thank you so much. I owe you."

"I may have you help me with some website shit. The current guy is fucking me around doing a really crappy job," she said.

I grinned. "I can absolutely do that."

"Perfect. Okay, get me an airport. It doesn't have to be a big one, and we'll go from there."

"Okay, I'll text you in a few."

We hung up and I headed over to Louisa's and rang the doorbell.

Huck pulled open the door and smiled. “Hey, everything okay?”

“Yes, am I interrupting anything?”

“No, Mom got hold of Lou. Come in,” he said, stepping back.

“Did you find a flight?” I asked, walking inside.

“Earliest one is the day after tomorrow, but we’d still need to rent a car and drive over three hours home.”

“What’s the closest private airport to your house?”

It took him a second and then realization hit his face and he breathed out, “No way.”

I bobbed my head. “Melody called and said you can use the plane.”

He slid his hand to my neck and pulled me close, kissing my temple. “I fucking owe you a kidney, baby.”

“Well, let’s get your knee sorted before we go offering up other body parts, okay?”

He smiled. “Good plan. Let me find that airport and let Louisa know what’s happening.”

I nodded.

“I have another ask.”

“Anything,” I said.

“Can you come with?”

I bit my lip. “Are you sure you want me—”

“Don’t finish that sentence,” he growled. “Of course I want you to come. If I could chain you to my side for eternity I’d do it.”

“Okay, no need to be dramatic.” I met his eyes. “But I kind of like that idea.”

He kissed me gently. “Thank you.”

“Thank Melody. I just asked, and barely at that.”

“I’ll give *her* a kidney, then.”

“I’m going to do some website stuff for her at a later date, so the deal’s been done.”

“Jesus, I love you.”

“I know.”

He stroked my cheek, kissing me one more time, then I texted Melody with all of the information about the closest airports, and she took it from there.

\* \* \*

Less than twelve hours later, we were in the air and on our way to Huck and Louisa’s childhood home. I was a nervous wreck. Mostly because I was worried about Huck’s dad and how badly he was hurt, but also because I was meeting his parents under these horrific circumstances.

“This plane is unreal,” Huck said as Holly, the head flight attendant, handed him a beer. Anders, the second attendant, was working on a batch of cookies apparently.

“Seriously,” I agreed. “I had no idea.”

Melody’s plane was some kind of Gulfstream and could fly over seven-thousand miles without refueling. It seated sixteen people, had a bedroom, a kitchen, and a small private office. To say it was luxury was an understatement and I had never seen anything like it.

“You’ve never been on it before?” Louisa asked.

“Nope, never.”

“*Flight attendants, prepare for take-off,*” the pilot said over the PA.

Holly made her way to us and checked our seatbelts, then headed back to her jump seat for take-off.

Huck reached over and linked his fingers with mine, giving my hand a squeeze, and I leaned against him as the

plane taxied down the runway.

“He’s going to be okay,” I whispered.

Huck nodded, bringing my hand to his lips, and kissing my palm.

Our flight was quick, less than two hours, and we landed in the small private airport less than twenty minutes from Huck’s parents’ home. Melody had organized a car as well, which was waiting for us, so Huck’s uncle didn’t need to leave the hospital to collect us.

Louisa called their mother from the car, and since she was already at the hospital, we decided to head there first.

The ride to the hospital was spent in tense silence and I had to forcibly stop myself from filling the quiet with chatter. This was virtually impossible for me, especially when Louisa started to cry.

Huck was in between us in the back seat, so he took her hand and squeezed it. “He’s going to be fine, LouLou.”

“Until I get eyes on him, I just don’t think I can believe that,” she said with a sniff.

I turned my head to the window, fighting my own tears. I couldn’t bear the thought of anything happening to my dad and I almost had a panic attack at the thought. But I had to keep my shit together and be strong for Huck and Louisa because this was not about me.

I felt Huck’s hand on my thigh and took a deep breath, leaning against him before meeting his eyes.

“You okay?” he asked.

“I’m good, honey.” I forced a smile. “I’m here for *you*.”

We pulled up to the hospital and with a promise from the driver to wait for us, we headed inside.

“I’ll hang back,” I said when we arrived at the surgery recovery floor.

“You won’t,” Huck said with a frown.

“This is not the way I wanted to meet your parents, honey.” I took his hand. “It’s way too much stress for your mom. Let her lead. I’ll be right here. But she needs people around her that she knows. Plus, your dad had surgery, and he’s in a vulnerable position, he won’t want a stranger in there. Trust me.”

“I need you, though.”

I smiled, pointing to a chair in the waiting room. “And I’ll be right there.”

“Hucky, come on,” Louisa prodded.

“I also think I should hold onto your cut,” I said.

“Why?”

“Because your dad just went through surgery. Do you really want to have the conversation about prospecting while he’s in the hospital?”

“You may have a point,” he said, shrugging out of it and handing it to me. “I don’t like going back on my word, though.”

“You’re not. I’m holding it so you can take care of your family. You can put it on the second you’re out of his room.”

He frowned, but finally leaned down and kissed me gently before following Louisa through the double doors that led to their father’s room.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

I followed my sister, further away from Daisy, which I was not happy about, and found my father’s room two doors down the hall on the right.

We knocked quietly on the door and peeked inside to find my mother rushing out of her seat with a quiet cry to wrap her arms around us. “You’re here.”



We hugged her tight and I swear, she'd gotten stronger with how hard she held onto both of us.

"Where's Daisy?" she asked once she'd let go.

"She wanted to make sure she didn't overwhelm you and she wasn't sure if Dad would feel weird being in a vulnerable spot. She's in the waiting room," I said.

"Well, if she promises not to look under my sheet, I'm good," Dad rasped.

"Daddy!" Louisa cried, rushing to the side of his bed, and gingerly hugging him.

Mom and I followed, and I pulled a chair closer to the bed so Mom could sit down.

"How are you feeling?" I asked, taking in my dad's two black eyes and padded bandage over his nose. He looked like some kind of demented raccoon, and the whites of his eyes were now blood red.

Dad smiled tiredly. "Good, bud. The painkillers are doing their job."

"What happened?" I asked, trying not to sound too demanding.

"Someone forced me off the road," Dad said. "Lucky for me, airbags saved my butt. It all happened so fast, I wasn't able to get a license plate. It was a black Ram 1500, Idaho plates, that's all I could really see before I was hit from behind. They then pulled up beside me and forced me off the road. The asshole was wearing a ski mask, so I couldn't see his face. The Nissan flipped and I got my nose shattered when the airbag went off, but other than the broken nose and a couple of bruises from the impact, I'm gonna be okay."

"They had to surgically restore your face, Jason," Mom said with a huff, looking up at me. "They were afraid the cartilage from his nose may have gone up into his eye or something. They were concerned it might blind him."

Dad grinned. "Yeah, but it didn't, and now I've got that Brad Pitt nose I always wanted, so win for me... and you."

She threw her hands in the air. “I can’t with him right now.”

I found myself relaxing. If my dad was joking, then he was obviously feeling pretty good, and it sounded as though the doctors were able to fix the damage without any permanent issues.

“When can you go home, Daddy?” Louisa asked.

“Tomorrow,” he said.

“That soon?” I asked.

“Yes. They’re just keeping me for one more day to make sure there aren’t any issues. I pushed for today, but it was a no-go.”

“Go get Daisy, honey,” Mom said. “We’d really love to meet her.”

I didn’t wait to be told twice and headed back down the hall to the waiting room, finding Daisy with her head buried in her phone, playing a game, or texting, or something, but her head came up as soon as she heard my footsteps.

“Hi,” she said, a worried smile covering her face.

“Hi, baby.”

“Everything okay?”

“Yeah.” I held my hand out to her. “My parents both want you there.”

“Are you sure?”

I nodded. “Dad just asks you don’t peek under his sheet.”

“Oh my god.” She let out a quiet snort as she stood and took my hand. “No problem.”

I smiled, kissing her quickly.

“So, if he’s joking, that means he must be feeling okay, huh?” Daisy observed as we headed toward his room.

“Yeah, he’s good. They’re sending him home tomorrow.”

She squeezed my hand, pulling me to a stop. “Are you okay?”

I nodded. “I am now. Being able to see him and hear him kidding around made all the difference in the world.”

She smiled. “I bet.”

I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her close. “Love you, baby.”

“Love you, too.” She lifted my cut, folded neatly over her arm. “I’ll hold onto this for now, okay?”

With one last squeeze, I nodded and led her down to my dad’s room.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

Jason and Tamara Wilton were a little older than my parents but not by much and they were gorgeous. Even with his face beat to hell, you could tell Jason was handsome. It was obvious where Huck and Louisa got their looks from, and they both gave off very middle America type warmth. I found it interesting that Louisa looked a lot like her dad where Huck looked like his mom. Totally unlike my family. My brothers looked just like my dad, and I was basically a carbon copy of my mother.

“I’m so sorry we’re meeting like this,” Tamara said.

“I know,” I agreed. “But it’s lovely to meet you all the same.”

A nurse walked in and said it was time for Jason’s vitals and meds, so we were shooed out of the room.

“Mom, how about we head back to the house?” Louisa said. “We can maybe stop by the store and get dinner ready. Whatever you need.”

“That would be great, honey,” Tamara said. “Although, dinner’s already good. A few of the neighbors have been dropping food off, so we’re okay for a few days. But I could text you a list of things your dad’s going to need if you wouldn’t mind picking them up.”

“No problem.”

“My car’s in the garage, and the extra fob is in the normal spot in the drawer,” she said. “You know where the key to the front door is.”

“I still have mine, Mama,” Louisa said, hugging her.

After quick goodbyes to Jason, we headed back down to the TownCar and then onto the Wilton family home.

“Oh my god,” I breathed out as we pulled up to the house. “Did you grow up here?”

The Wilton home was gorgeous and sat on a huge lakefront lot. The driver carried our bags to the porch and Huck tipped him before unlocking the front door.

“Yes,” Huck said as he led me inside.

“This is amazing.”

Louisa smiled. “It’s my absolute favorite place on earth.”

“I can see why,” I said.

Huck dropped our bags in the foyer before locking up again, then gave me a tour of the house.

The house was modest, but had four bedrooms and a den, along with a large kitchen and great room, plus a glass sunroom that overlooked the water.

“Dad built the sunroom a few years ago. Mom had been bugging him for a while because she wanted a warm place to watch the water and read during the winter,” Huck said.

“It’s gorgeous.”

“Yeah.” He wrapped an arm around my waist. “This is what I want, Daisy. The life they’ve built.”

“I want what my folks have, too,” I admitted, sliding my hand up his chest. “The trick is making sure we make it our own.”

“You want kids?” he asked.

“Absolutely. You?”

“Fuck, yeah. A gaggle.”

I chuckled. “Well, if we have a gaggle, you’re changing diapers.”

“I will change *all* the diapers,” he promised. “You won’t even have to ask.”

“I’m gonna hold you to that.”

“Can’t wait.” He leaned down and kissed me. “Now, let’s see what kind of food the neighbors dropped off and figure out lunch.”

I nodded and followed him into the kitchen.



*Daisy*

**TWO DAYS LATER**, Huck’s dad was home and recuperating and I had holed up in Huck’s childhood bedroom to get some work done. I was seriously behind but had woken up at six this morning to tackle my to-do list. At almost eleven, my phone buzzed on the desk beside me, and I saw a text from Huck.

**Huck:** Hungry?

**Me:** Starved.

**Huck:** (emoji of a sandwich)?

**Me:** Please.

He walked in a few minutes later, tray full of food in hand, and kicked the door shut. “Hey.”

“Hi, honey. Did you bring me the kitchen?”

He chuckled, setting the tray on the bed. “Close. I figured you’d need a break. Plus, I missed you.”

My stomach rumbled and I reached for one of the bags of chips. “I didn’t realize how hungry I was until you walked in.”

“Before you take a bite,” he said, leaning down. “Kiss.”

I grinned, raising my head to accept his lips.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” I said, popping a chip in my mouth.

“How much more work do you have to do?”

“A couple of hours,” I said. “Thanks for letting me focus. I was able to catch up quite a lot.”

“No problem.”

“How’s your dad?”

“He’s good, although, he’s not super happy that he has to stay in his easy chair. He wants to be up and moving around,” Huck said, handing me a soda.

“Like father like son, huh?”

“Fuck, yeah. No way in hell I can stay down for long. Recovery for complete knee replacement is three to six months, I’ll do it in six weeks.” He cocked his head. “Or less.”

“Okay, He-Man, let’s not rush things,” I suggested. “You’re going to follow every instruction the doctor, and *I*, give you, capisce?”

He grinned, taking a bite of his sandwich.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” I said.

“You wanna go out for dinner?” Huck asked.

“What about your parents?”

“Dad’s been falling asleep around six, and Louisa’s made plans with friends, so Mom suggested I take you out.”

I smiled. “That sounds fun, as long as your mom doesn’t need anything.”

“I think we’re good. I have a feeling she needs a little quiet.”

I nodded. “I’m in, then.”

“Great.” He stood, gathering our garbage. “I’ll let you get back to it.”

“Thanks, honey.”

With one last kiss, he left me to finish up.

\* \* \*

At about one, I was in serious need for a sugar bump, so I headed downstairs to see if I could find one.

I arrived to find Louisa in the kitchen alone. She was scribbling on a notepad, but put the pen down when I walked in. “Hey, honey.”

“Hey, Lou,” I said, hugging her. “How are you doing?”

“I’m good. Are you done with work?”

“Not quite. I need a sugar bump.”

“Oh, cookies and some chocolatey things are here.” She pulled open the pantry and showed me a couple of options.

I opted for the Oreos and leaned against the island as I opened the packet. “What are you working on?”

“A grocery list. My parents haven’t shopped in at least a week, so I figured I’d make a quick run.”

“Need help?”

She sighed. “Aren’t you busy?”

I shrugged. “I could take a break. I’m building a website, and my eyes are starting to cross. Where’s Huck?”

“He ran out to grab Dad’s prescription. He’ll be back soon. Do you want to wait for him?”

“No, I’ll text him on the way.”

“Okay, perfect. Let’s go.”

“I’ll grab my bag.” I headed up to Huck’s room and threw on some shoes and a jacket, grabbing my bag, then following



Louisa out to the garage.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

I had just walked out of the pharmacy when my phone buzzed. It was a text from Daisy letting me know she was with my sister at the store. I had my grandpa's old truck, so without Bluetooth, I had to sit in the cab to text her back.

**Daisy:** Be back in an hour or so.

**Me:** Where are you? I'll meet you.

**Daisy:** Can I just have some alone time with your sister?

**Me:** Head on a swivel.

**Daisy:** (thumbs up emoji).

**Me:** Love you.

**Daisy:** Love you back.

I didn't like that I didn't have eyes on her, but it's not like I could physically restrain her. I could, however, find her. I called my mother.

"Hey, Hucky."

"Hi, Mama. Any idea where Lou and Daisy went?"

"They ran to Safeway."

"Why so far? Polson's is closer."

"Because your dad likes their meat better."

I sighed. "Right. Okay, thanks. How's he doing?"

"He's good, honey. I gave him more meds, so he's out like a light."

"Okay, I've got his stuff, but I'm going to swing by Safeway first, are you okay with that?"

“Oh, sure honey, take your time.”

“Thanks. I won’t be long.”

I started the truck and headed toward the store, finding a parking spot relatively close to the entrance. Once parked, I called Daisy, but she didn’t answer. I tried again, still no answer.

I frowned, calling my sister.

“Huck?”

“Hey, Lou, why’s Daisy not answering her phone?”

“Where are you?” she demanded.

“Outside Safeway,” I said, sliding out of the cab. “Where are you?”

“Shit.”

“Louisa, where the hell is Daisy?”

“I don’t know,” she rasped.

“I’m coming in. Where are you?” I growled. “Exactly.”

“Customer service.”

I made my way to the customer service desk and found my sister standing next to a cart, her face pale as she talked frantically with an older woman behind the counter.

“What’s going on?” I demanded.

“I don’t know,” Louisa cried. “She was right behind me and then she was, just, gone.”

“What do you mean, gone?”

“Gone. Just gone,” she snapped. “I looked for her everywhere. I tried to call her but then I realized her bag, *with* her phone inside, was at the bottom of the cart.” She waved to the lady behind the counter. “I was hoping I could maybe look at the camera footage.”

“I was explaining we can’t do that, ma’am,” the woman said. “You’ll need to call the police.”

My phone buzzed in my pocket, and I pulled it out. “Shit.”

“Is it Daisy?” Louisa asked hopefully.

“No. It’s her dad. Give me a second.” I walked toward the exit and took the call. “Hey, Booker.”

“Wanna tell me why the *fuck* I’m gettin’ a 9-1-1 notification from my daughter’s bracelet in toad fuck Montana at two o’clock in the afternoon?” Booker bellowed over the phone.

“Shit, do you know where she is?”

“What do you mean, do I know where she is? You don’t?”

“Fuck.” I swallowed the bile threatening to spill. “I just got to where she was last seen. I’m trying to get to the bottom of it, but no one really knows anything.”

“How the hell did she go missing?”

“She and my sister ran to the store for my mother. Lou said she disappeared from there. I was about to call the cops.”

“No fuckin’ cops,” Booker growled. “Why the hell weren’t you with her?”

I dragged a hand down my face, trying to keep my irritation in check. “She didn’t tell me she was going anywhere. Focus, Booker, I’m holding on by a thread here, man, and I’m not happy I didn’t know about it, so instead of grilling me, how about we figure out what the hell to do?” I snapped back. “I have no fucking idea where she is, but apparently you do, so how about you start by sharing?”

“Razor and Cash are already there.”

“Where?”

“In Montana. At an Econo Lodge a few miles from you. They flew out yesterday morning because my kids don’t go anywhere without someone at their back.”

“As much as I’d like to be pissed off that you’re overprotective, if it means getting Daisy back safe and

sound..." I couldn't finish that thought because the alternative was unthinkable.

"I know who fucked you up."

"What does that have to do—"

"Does the name Cyrus Milhew ring any bells?"

"Yeah, he attacked a friend of mine and my father made sure he got locked away. He's still in prison."

"No, he got out about a month before your 'accident.'"

"Fuck," I hissed.

"Prison calls indicate he'd been planning your hit for a while. Had help on the outside."

"Family's got money," I said, even though I knew Booker probably already had that part figured out.

"He's in Montana, Huck. Any reason to think he'd target Ducky?"

"Jesus, fuck." I dropped my head and stared at the concrete. "I don't know."

"You got access to a gun?"

"Yeah, my dad's."

"Right, Cash is gonna swing by your parents' place and pick you up," he said. "Grab the gun, then we're gonna get our girl, yeah?"

*Great, can't wait,* I thought sarcastically to myself, but said out loud, "Yeah, man, that'd be appreciated."

"Ten minutes."

He hung up and I gave myself about three seconds before I hauled my ass back into the store. After helping Louisa out to our mom's car, we made our way home.

"Where's Daisy?" Mom asked when we walked inside.

"We don't know," Louisa said.

"What do you mean, you don't know?"

“She’s been taken,” I said.

“What?” Mom gasped. “By whom?”

“I’m not sure,” I said. “But I’m gonna find her.” I jabbed a finger at her and Louisa. “Stay put, lock all the doors and windows. Do not go anywhere until I say it’s safe. Got it?”

They nodded and I headed into my dad’s office and grabbed his 9mm Pinfire Revolver, loading it, then filling my pocket with extra ammo.

Whoever this asshole was. He was mine.

And if it was, in fact, Cyrus.

He was a dead man.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

I came to in the back of a van.

At least, I think it was a van. I was hooded and had obviously been drugged, so I was a little woozy and discombobulated. Luckily, I’d had enough time to press the button on my bracelet before I passed out.

A lot of good that would do me all the way in Montana, but at least it would tell my dad where I was, and he could direct Huck and the authorities.

I hoped so at any rate.

My hands were bound behind me way too tight for me to work loose, but that didn’t stop me from trying. I felt around to see if there was anything sharp, but didn’t want to draw any attention, so I had to be careful.

God, I felt nauseated. I had to figure out how *not* to puke into this hood.

I closed my eyes and took deep breaths, through my mouth, because I did not want to continue to smell whatever was in the back of this van as I tried to think of something

pleasant. Something like Huck and our efforts the night before to have sex in silence. It wasn't easy, but we'd managed, and ended up in fits of laughter at the end because the whole thing had been both hot and silly.

I bit back tears.

Okay, maybe thinking about Huck wasn't the right move.

I was jarred forward as the van came to a stop, so I made myself go limp when I heard a door slam. Another door clicked and then air rushed over me, and I swallowed. I forced myself to take slow, even breaths and then rough hands grabbed my ankles.

"Still out, huh? Good," the male voice said. "The Wiltons think they can fuck with me? They're gonna regret ever trying."

*Who the hell is this guy?*

I tried not to cry out as my body was dragged roughly across the metal floor of the van. I was prepared to be dumped onto the ground but was relieved when the man threw me over his shoulder instead. This did not help my nausea, but it did give gravity the chance to work, and my hood slid off. I took several deep breaths, at the same time trying not to move enough for this asshole to notice.

I glanced around and saw nothing. Nothing but field, basically. I couldn't see any other homes within shouting distance, or anywhere I could hide. Other than the house to my left and what looked like a shop or old outbuilding next to it, there was nothing else here.

I was screwed.

And now I had to pee.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

Cash pulled up about five minutes later in a rental truck, and I leaned in the window, doing my best to ignore the look of death on his face. “Where’s Razor?”

“Following Ducky’s signal. You wanna tell me how you let her out of your sight, *prospect?*” Cash snarled.

*Here we go.*

“Well, unlike you, I let your sister make decisions for herself. I don’t keep her on a leash or locked in some dungeon. She has full autonomy over her person.” I sighed. “That being said, had she fucking told me she was leaving, I would have gone with her.”

“Perhaps a bell would be good.”

“Isn’t that why she wears the bracelet?” I challenged.

“You have a point.” He glanced at his phone. “Ducky means everything to me, man. If anyone hurts her again... I just...”

“Yeah, Cash, I get it,” I said, trying to keep my rage in check. “We’re gonna find her, and whoever took her is gonna die.”

“On that we agree.”

“I’ll follow you.” I headed to my grandfather’s truck, and we hauled ass toward Daisy.



*Daisy*

**A**SSHOLE MCGILLICUDDY CARRIED me into the building next to the house and dropped me onto a mattress in the middle of the floor. I peeked just enough to take in the room and all I saw was empty space and a few windows at the top of very high walls. No easy escape and no hope of indoor plumbing.

“I didn’t give you enough ketamine to knock you out this long,” Asshole said. “You can stop faking now.”

I opened my eyes and glared up at him. He was tall and some would probably say he was handsome, in a jock sort of way, but his eyes were devoid of humanity, and he made my skin crawl.

“I have to say, I’m impressed by the fact you’re not whimpering or begging for your life.”

“Would it do me any good?” I challenged.

He smirked. “No.”

“What do you want?”

“In short? To fuck the Wiltons up like they fucked me up.”



“What does that have to do with me?” I breathed out. “I barely know them.”

He waved a finger at me with a ‘tsk, tsk, tsk.’ “Now, that’s a bald face lie and that is not a good way to start off our relationship, Daisy Mae Carver.”

I shivered. “You obviously have me at a disadvantage.”

He cocked his head. “I’m someone your boyfriend’s father decided to fuck with and it’s time for him to get what’s due.”

I frowned. “Cyrus?”

“So, you’ve heard of me.”

“Unfortunately,” I grumbled.

“Again!” he snapped, dragging me to my feet. “Not a good way to start our relationship.”

“You’re the piece of shit who had Huck taken out,” I hissed.

He slapped me.

Hard enough to draw blood and I tasted the copper on my tongue.

“You’re a mouthy bitch, aren’t you? I’m gonna teach you some respect before this day is over. I’m gonna teach you a lot of things. Most of all, I’m gonna teach you how much pain a person can take,” he threatened, guiding me to the wall of the building and handcuffing one of my hands before cutting my ties and securing the other cuff to an eyebolt in the wall. “The best part will be the pain Huck Wilton will feel when he sees what I’ve done to you.”

“If you touch a single hair on my head, Huck will tear you from limb to limb,” I taunted. My tough talk was all a ruse to give any rescuers my dad might be sending time to get to me. Inside, I was terrified of what this maniac had planned.

“Nah, I don’t think so. This place is completely private, and no one knows you’re here. Not lover boy, not your big bad biker daddy, and certainly not any of his degenerate club

members. I have you just where I want you and I have a whole night of fun planned for us.” He pointed to his right, where I noticed a camera set up in the corner. “And because I’d hate for Huck to use his imagination, I’ll be filming everything I do to you. Once I get my hands on him, I’m going to make sure this is the last thing he sees before I cut him into little pieces.”

“You’re a psychopath,” I spit out. “Huck’s never done anything to you.”

“You have no idea what you’re talking about,” Cyrus returned. “As a matter of fact, you’re ignorant on a great many things. Golden Boy Huck and his do-gooder Daddy ruined my life. Huck took my rightful place and his father made sure it happened.”

I let out a snort of derision. “You know that isn’t true.”

“We’ll see what’s truth and what’s lies soon enough.”

“What do Huck and his father have to do with all of those girls you raped?”

“As I said, there are many topics on which you are ignorant.” He scowled. “I wasn’t harming those precious things, I was enlightening them. Teaching them about what lies beyond pain. You’ll understand soon enough.”

I tried really hard not to react outwardly, but I felt my blood run cold as he smiled lasciviously at me. God, he was absolutely disgusting.

“Everyone understands the difference between pleasure and pain, but few people know that there is a pleasure that lies beyond pain,” he said. “A delicious euphoria that can only be achieved through great suffering. Soon, you’ll know that pleasure. But first, I’m going to introduce you to a kind of pain you never knew existed.”

I was no longer able to hide my fear... or control my bladder.

“Oh, you’ve wet yourself,” he cooed. “Don’t be afraid, the pain, though excruciating, will be temporary but after a while, you’ll learn to embrace what the pain has to teach you.”

Tears slid down my cheeks as I hissed, “I won’t even give you the satisfaction of screaming.”

“Oh, my dear, you’re going to do a lot more than scream.”

Just as he said that, an alarm sounded, and Cyrus glanced at his phone screen. “God damn it, what the hell is lover boy doing here.”

I chuckled. “I told you. Huck would never let you get away with this.”

“Wrong again. I’m just going to have to make sure he watches you suffer in real time.”

I shivered but refused to lose hope.

\* \* \*

*Huck*

Cash and I pulled up to the location Daisy’s GPS led us to and we found Razor’s rental parked about a hundred yards from an old outbuilding next to a rundown house. As quietly as we could, we made our way to Razor’s truck, and he climbed out to meet us.

“She in there?” I asked, pointing to the building.

“I think so,” Razor said. “I did a quick sweep around the house, and it doesn’t look like anyone’s been in there for a while.”

“Okay, then, let’s go,” I said, pulling the revolver from my waistband.

“Whoa there, John Wick,” Cash said. “That psycho’s got more than your puppy in there.”

“You think I don’t know that?” I hissed.

“That’s my sister in there.”

“And I’m gonna go get her.”

I stalked toward the building with Cash and Razor trying to keep up, urging me to get low and stay out of sight. “We need to be careful,” Cash whispered.

“This asshole already knows we’re here,” I said.

“Cash is right, we need to be careful,” Razor said. “We should split up and check the perimeter.”

“That’s a good idea, why don’t you go ahead and do that,” I said, before hiking up my leg and putting my boot through the handle.

The door swung open, splinters flying everywhere to reveal Daisy standing with her hands bound behind her back and Cyrus Milhew holding a gun to her temple using her as a shield.

“Let her go,” I growled, my gun leveled toward him.

“You’re not the one calling the shots here, Loverboy,” Cyrus said. “Take one more step, and you get to see what the inside of her skull looks like.”

“You okay, baby?” I asked Daisy, ignoring Cyrus’s threat.

“I’m alright.”

“Shut up, bitch,” Cyrus sneered, pulling her hair, and pressing the barrel of the gun deeper into the side of her head.

Seeing Daisy wince in pain at the hands of this psychopath set my brain on fire but I had to remain calm. If I lost my cool, Daisy was dead.

“Hey man,” Cash said. “Maybe we should just do what this guy says.”

“Shut the fuck up,” I snapped.

“I told you,” he bit out. “That’s my sister.”

“And she’s gonna be my wife, and I need you to trust me and keep your mouth shut.”

“You should listen to dear brother-in-law to be, Huck,” Cyrus said. “If you ever want your pretty young fiancé to see

her wedding day, you'd better put that gun down and get on your knees where you belong."

I slowed my breathing, calculating my next move.

"Oh, I know that look," Cyrus cooed. "You're looking for that three inches, aren't you? You're wondering, with all this adrenaline pumping through your veins, can you find that fabled three inches that everybody loves to talk about? Can you make that game winning shot? You're thinking to yourself, can I shoot him without hitting her? Well, ladies and gentlemen," he said with an announcer's tone, "Can the great Huck the Puck find his three inches?"

"You're wrong. I only need nine millimeters, asshole," I said, squeezing the trigger, hitting him in his carotid artery, the force of the bullet throwing him back against the wall, blood spurting from his wound.

His gun hit the floor and Daisy kicked it well out of reach before running to me.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?" I demanded, keeping my eye and gun on Cyrus as he writhed on the floor.

"I'm okay," she said.

"Cash, get her out of here," I growled, and walked over to Cyrus. I knelt down and grabbed him by the throat, arterial spray gushing through my fingers. "Do you feel that? That's your life force draining from your body. Pretty terrifying, isn't it?"

Cyrus tried to respond through gurgles, but blood spewed from his mouth.

"Maybe you'll know what your victims must have felt like. You're gonna die afraid and in pain, and I'm the last face you're gonna see before you're dragged down to hell." I put my right thumb into the bullet hole in his neck, causing him to kick and scream in pain. "I didn't do this to you, you did it to yourself. But in the end, I'll be happy to take the credit." I pulled my thumb out and blood gushed from the wound as his heart pumped its final few beats.

I'd never imagined that I'd know what it was like to kill a man. Now that I did, I felt no pity or remorse. Cyrus Milhew had threatened my family and tried to destroy everything I cared about. He was dead and I was fucking glad.

Cash rushed back in.

"Jesus," Cash hissed. "You okay?"

"Daisy," I rasped. "I need to see Daisy."

"Hey, hey, hey." Cash shook me. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm good. I need to make sure Daisy's—"

"She's okay. Razor's with her and she's in the car with a blanket getting warmed up."

"I killed him," I said.

"I know," Cash said. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Alright, let's get you out of here," Cash said, guiding me outside.

Razor walked up to us and frowned.

"Look, Daisy doesn't want to go back to your parents' place."

"What the hell?" I growled.

"It's okay, it's okay," Cash said. "We'll get her back to the hotel and take care of Cyrus's body. You go grab her some clothes, toiletries, and shit like that, and burn your clothes. Hear me on this, Ruin, you burn everything you're wearing, except your cut. Got it?"

I nodded.

"You got any ideas on where to get rid of this guy?" Cash asked Razor. "Do we have any friendlies out here in Toad Fuck Holler?"

Razor scratched the back of his neck. "Yeah, yeah. You remember Pops?"

"Pops Waller?"

“Nah, Pops Dixon.”

“Yeah, retired a few years back,” Cash said.

“That’s right,” Razor confirmed. “Retired to a hog farm about thirty miles from here.”

“A hog farm?” Cash asked.

“Yeah, I guess it was a family business that went way back. I drove a U-Haul for him when he and his old lady moved out here,” Razor said. “Funny thing about those hogs is they’ll eat anything. And I mean,” he motioned toward the building with Cyrus’s corpse, “*anything*.”

“Alright, let’s get the body wrapped up and into your truck. I’ll take my sister back to the hotel.” Cash turned to me. “You take care of your shit, got it?”

I nodded. “Got it.”

I made my way to my grandfather’s truck and headed home.



*Huck*

**I** STORMED INTO the house and slammed the door.

“Hey!” Louisa hiss-pered, rushing up to me from the kitchen. “Dad’s asleep.”

I dragged my hands down my face. “Sorry.”

“Where’s Daisy?”

“She went with Cash,” I bit out, rushing upstairs to my room, hoping my sister didn’t notice my blood-soaked clothes. I stripped quickly and headed to my bathroom, taking the quickest shower ever. Once I was dressed, I threw my clothes and shoes into a plastic bag and dropped them next to my bed.

“Huck?” Mom knocked on my door and leaned against the doorframe. “Where’s Daisy?”

“She went to the hotel with her brother.” I grabbed a bag from my closet and dropped it on the bed. “I’m going to run some clothes over there for her.”

“Is she okay?” Mom asked.

“Yeah. We got there in time.”

“Are *you* okay?”



“No.”

“Hey.” Mom sighed, taking my arm, and pulling me toward her, hugging me. “You’re okay, honey.”

I hugged her back, then slowly sat on my bed. “She wouldn’t come back with me.”

“Does that surprise you?”

“Yes.” I looked up at her. “But why doesn’t it surprise you?”

She smiled, sitting beside me on the bed. “We’re strangers to her, honey. You’re not, I get that, but *we* are, and she’s just been through a trauma. She’s going to want to be close to the familiar. She’s also sweet and kind and sensitive, and understands that your father is healing, so she’s probably thinking about him and what he might need. We can assure her she’s welcome here until we’re blue in the face, because you and I both know that she is, but she won’t want to impose, and that’s part of the reason why you love her so much. Because she’s thoughtful.”

I dragged my hands through my hair. She had a point. I hated that she had a point, but she did, nonetheless.

She patted my knee and stood. “So, pack her a bag, and you should probably pack one for yourself as well so you can be close to her.”

“What about Dad?”

“We’ve got him covered, and you’re just a phone call away.”

I rose to my feet and pulled her in for another hug. “Thanks, Mama.”

“Of course, baby. We got your back. You know that.”

After giving her a gentle squeeze, I released her, then went about packing a few things for both Daisy and me, before heading downstairs and out back to our fire pit. I burned the contents of the plastic bag, then after making sure there were no remnants, I made my way to my grandfather’s truck.

The motel wasn't far from my parents' home, but I hit construction traffic on my way which forced me to a standstill for almost ten minutes. I was already annoyed when I left the house, but I was highly amped once the cars got moving again.

Pulling up to the motel, I headed to Cash's room and knocked on the door. He pulled it open and rolled his eyes. "What?"

"What do you mean, what?" I snapped. "I'm here to see Daisy."

"Well, she made it clear she doesn't want to see you."

"Cash!"

He turned and looked over his shoulder, still blocking the door. "Ducky—"

"Let him in, right now," Daisy demanded.

"You—"

"I, *what*, big brother?" she challenged. "I wanted to come back here to shower because I was covered in blood and pee, and I was too embarrassed to go back to Huck's parents' house. But that doesn't mean I don't want to see him, dumbass. Let him in."

I low key flipped him off and pushed my way inside to find Daisy wearing a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt that were two sizes too big for her petite frame, and I deduced they were her brother's. Her head was wrapped in a towel, and I was so fucking relieved to see her, I felt my nose sting with the threat of tears.

"Hey," I said, giving her a gentle smile.

She made a run for me, throwing herself into my arms and I caught her, lifting her so she could wrap her legs around my waist. She looped her arms around my neck, kissing me quickly causing the towel to fall off her head. "What took you so long?"

I chuckled. "I had to grab you a few things."

She frowned. "You're kicking me out?"

“No, baby. I just thought you wanted to stay here.”

She sighed, uncoiling herself from me and setting her feet on the ground. “No, I just needed a shower. I didn’t want to go back to your parents’ and have to explain the... well, you know. They have enough on their plate.”

“I think it’d be better if you did stay here,” Cash said.

“Well, you don’t get to decide,” Daisy fired back, picking up the towel and rewrapping her head.

“He can’t even keep you safe from a fuckin’ grocery store, Ducky.”

She advanced on Cash, jabbing a finger into his chest. “Suck a bag of dicks. If I’d told him what I was doing, he would have been all up in my fucking grill just like y’all always are. I was the one who let my guard down and that’s on me. The bracelet worked, and he’s the one who killed Cyrus, so how about you shut your pie hole for once in your life.”

“He killed Cyrus only because—”

“Oh my god, Cash, don’t turn this into one of your stupid dick measuring contests,” Daisy hissed. “I’ve seen yours, and believe me when I tell you, his is way bigger.”

I laughed. “Geez, buddy, I’ve never won State Fairs or anything, so I’d hate to think what you got in the stable.”

“Oh my god, stop,” Daisy growled, turning to me. “Can the two of you not make this day any worse? In fact, how about you not make it about yourselves at all. Never mind. I’m going to hang with Razor. You two can unzip and measure together.”

Before she could walk out the door, I grabbed her hand gently. “Cash, give us a minute, would ya?”

He frowned, but then gave me a chin lift and walked out the door, closing it behind him.

I sat on the edge of one of the beds and pulled Daisy between my legs. “Hey, I’m sorry I was an asshole.”

She wove her fingers into my hair at the nape of my neck. “I just don’t understand why you let my brother rile you up so much. Or him you, for that matter.”

I sighed. “There’s something about that guy I don’t like about myself.”

“You’re nothing like Cash.”

I smiled. “I love that you think that, baby, but I have a feeling he and I are more alike than either of us want to admit. Maybe in some of the good ways as well as the bad, but alike nonetheless.”

“Well, my brother doesn’t say things like ‘nonetheless.’”

“Not big on the use of conjunctive adjectives?”

“Now you’re just showing off.”

I chuckled. “I’ll be sure to grammar shame him next time I need to take him down a peg.”

She tugged on my hair. “*Or*, you could *not* do that.”

“Or I could not do that,” I said, but nodded, indicating I was totally going to do that. I slid my hands around her waist and pulled her closer. “You doing okay? Did you talk to Teagan yet?”

“I am now. And yes, she’d been blowing up Cash’s phone apparently until she heard my voice and got ‘proof of life.’ She’s good now. How’s your dad?”

“I can’t believe you’re still worried about my dad after everything you’ve gone through today.”

“Well, he’s way more banged up than me and I’ve got you to put me back together if I have nightmares.”

“I love you.”

She smiled, leaning down to kiss me gently. “I love you too.”

“Are we getting a room and staying here tonight?”

“What about your dad?”

“Mom said they have it covered.” I stroked her back. “It’s more important that you feel safe and comfortable.”

She bit her lip, wincing, then trying to cover her reaction and I knew she didn’t want me to know she was in pain.

“Fuck,” I hissed, jumping up to grab a wet washcloth.

“I’m okay.”

“You’re bleeding, baby,” I countered, setting the flannel gently against her lip. “Press.”

She took the towel and pressed it against her mouth, blinking back tears. “I wanna thtay here.”

I slid my hand around her waist and kissed her temple. “I’ll get us a room.”

Before she could say anything further, Cash and Razor walked in... with Booker, Hatch, and Flea right behind him.

“Daddy?” Daisy pulled, out of my arms and rushed to him.

“Hey, baby girl.” Booker pulled the washcloth away from her face to survey the damage.

“I’m okay. What are y’all doing here?” she asked.

“We need to talk,” Flea said, closing the door behind them. “Glad you’re okay, sweetheart.”

“First things first, glad to fuck you’re all okay,” Hatch said. “Now, Huck, I need you to take off your cut and hand it over to me.”

“Uncle Hatch, please don’t—”

“Stay outta this, Ducky.”

I took off my cut and handed it to Hatch.

“Good. I’m gonna need you to take off this prospect patch and replace it with this,” he said, handing me back the cut along with a Dogs of Fire Club Members patch.

“Wha-what?” I stuttered out.

“I don’t want you to get the wrong idea. This patch isn’t a shortcut to your full membership. For that, you still have to bleed but tonight, you drew blood to protect a family member. If that doesn’t prove that you’re worthy of membership, I don’t know what does,” Hatch said. “But most of all, I’m giving you that patch to protect you, Daisy, and the club.”

“I don’t understand.”

“As a prospect, you’re not owed the protection of the club but as a member, what you did tonight, will never leave the lips of any of the brothers. We may not be one-percenters, but that doesn’t mean we don’t know how to get blood off our hands. What you did for Daisy and for society by wiping that psycho off the face of this earth, was just. Razor and Cash saw to it that no one will ever find Cyrus’s remains or the gun you used to shoot him. Cash made double sure there’s no surveillance evidence of you there either.”

I swore. “That gun was an antique. It was the crown jewel of my father’s collection. It’s irreplaceable.”

“Actually,” Flea said. “There were seven hundred made, and I already have a line on three suitable replacements. I’m also bidding on a nice pair of French dueling pistols. They’ve got really cool engravings.”

“Okay, Flea, take it down a notch, brother,” Hatch said. “As you can see, I’ve got the right man on the job to replace your old man’s piece.”

“He’ll notice the difference,” I said.

“Just tell him he must have gotten hit harder than he thought.”

“Uncle Hatch!” Daisy admonished.

Hatch shrugged. “Don’t worry about it, Booker’ll fix the registration papers electronically to match the replacement’s serial number, no one’ll be the wiser.”

“Where do we go from here?” I asked.

“You finish your trip as planned, until your old man gets back on his feet, then we go home and act as though nothing

ever happened. Flea and I'll make sure everything copasetic here, and head home tomorrow. Booker can decide what he wants to do with Archer, but Cash and Razor are gonna stay." Hatch crossed his arms. "I mean it when I said we're men of our oath, an oath you'll take in front of all your club brothers once you return home to Portland."

"Is Portland home?" Daisy asked me.

"Is that where you're gonna be?"

She nodded with a grin.

"Then that's where home is."

"Glad to hear it." Hatch smiled. "Flea and I are gonna take off. We'll see you in a few weeks."

They walked out, followed by Razor, leaving us with Booker and Cash.

"So the bracelet worked, huh?" Daisy asked Booker.

"Baby girl, the second you hit that button on your bracelet, Melody was filing a flight plan to get us here. You're just lucky your mother didn't come with me."

"How does that make me lucky? She's the only one who can control you," she complained.

I chuckled. "I'm gonna book us a room real quick. Do you want to stay here, or come with me?"

Daisy pointed to her bruised face. "I'll stay here."

"Okay, I'll be right back," I promised and headed down to the front desk.

\* \* \*

*Daisy*

Huck left the room, and my dad wrapped his arms around me. "Fuckin' scared the shit out of us, Ducky."

"Not my intention," I grumbled.

“I’m not blamin’, you sweetheart.”

“Sorry.” I sighed. “I know. I’m just a little keyed up.”

He gave me a squeeze. “Understandable.”

A knock at the door made me jump and Cash frowned as he pulled open the door. Archer walked in and I rolled my eyes. “Great. The gang’s all here.”

“Jesus, your face,” Archer hissed.

Cash reached over and smacked the back of his head.

“Ow, fuck, Cash, what the hell was that for?”

“Maybe not start by pointing out the fact our sister’s face is beat to shit?” Cash snarled.

“Well, look at it.” Archer waved his hand toward me.

“Yeah, but you don’t need to *say* anything.”

I fisted my hands at my side and let out a quiet squeak. “How about neither of you discuss the state of my face at all!”

“Enough!” Dad bellowed as he pulled his phone out of his jeans pocket. “Jesus, you three. Boys, leave your sister alone.”

I scowled at my brothers as Dad took a phone call.

“Hey, baby. Yeah, she’s good. Swear to Christ, beautiful, she’s perfect. Sure.” Dad handed the phone to me. “It’s your mom.”

“Hi, Mama.”

She let out a long, deep sigh. “Baby girl. Are you okay?”

“I’m good. The bracelet worked. Huck, Cash, and Razor found me really quickly, and the guy will never hurt anyone again.”

I heard her sob over the phone. “If anything happened...”

“I’m okay, Mama. I promise.” I could feel tears streaming down my face as I spoke. “Is Kim with you?”

“Yes. I’m staying with her and Uncle Knight until Daddy gets home.”



“That’s good. Kim will keep you distracted.”

“She’s plying me with tequila as we speak.”

I smiled. “Good. I really am okay, Mama.”

“Okay, baby. I just need to get my arms around you.”

“I know, me too.”

“I love you.”

“Love you too.”

“Go ahead and give Daddy the phone back.”

I handed the phone back to my dad and he walked out of the room. Archer took this chance to hug me. “Sorry I freaked out about your face, Ducky.”

I hugged him back. “Thanks, Arch.”

“You sure you’re okay?” he asked once he released me.

I nodded. “I’m good.”

Dad and Huck walked in a few seconds later and to say I was glad to see Huck was the understatement of the fucking century. I loved my brothers, I really did, but I wanted out of that room, STAT.

I made my way to him and wrapped my arms around his waist. “All good?”

“Yeah. You ready?”

“Yes. Beyond ready.”

He smiled. “Okay, let’s head out.”

“Okay, Crood Family, time for me to go.” I gave them a finger wave and said in a sing-song voice, “Byeeee.”

Dad chuckled, pulling me in for a hug and kissing the top of my head. “I reserve the right to check on you later.”

“Text first,” I demanded, grabbing Huck’s hand, and pulling him out of the room. “Which way?”

Huck chuckled, guiding the opposite way I had been heading. “This way.”

Once at the room, he unlocked the door and stepped back so I could step inside, then he closed us in, and I crumbled.

“I got you.” Huck scooped me up and carried me to the bed, stretching out beside me and pulling me into his arms.

I slid an arm around his waist, burying my face in his chest and sobbed, letting the stress and fear of the day completely release from my body. “He was going to film everything and make you watch it before he cut you into pieces,” I sobbed out.

“It was never going to happen.”

“I know that *now*.” I looked up at him. “But he was crazy, and he’d already hurt you and your dad, so in the moment, I thought he might actually make it happen.”

“Yeah, baby, he was certifiable.” He stroked my hip. “But he’s dead and no one’ll ever get close enough to even breathe on you again, so you’ve got nothing to worry about.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you I was leaving.”

“You *did* tell me.”

“I should have waited for you to meet us.”

“Stop,” he rasped. “None of this is your fault.”

“But it *is*,” I argued. “I made the rookie mistake of thinking no one could touch me here in Montana. I got cocky.”

Huck chuckled, rolling me so he was hovering. “Baby the last thing anyone would ever think you are is cocky. And you had no way of knowing about Cyrus. I didn’t know about him. Your dad only found out a few hours before he grabbed you, so none of this is on you. It’s on Cyrus, may he burn in hell.”

“Well, I’m never going anywhere without you in the future.”

“No, we’re not playing that game, because you are not going to let fear win.”

I wrinkled my nose. “It has already won.”

“Then we’ll get you back to a place where you’re no longer afraid.”

I tugged on his beard. “I’ll be brave when you’re with me twenty-four-seven.”

He smiled. “I’m happy to be with you twenty-four-seven *until* you feel brave enough to be alone.”

I let out a quiet huff. “It’s never going to happen.”

“Luckily, you don’t need to find out for a while.”

I stroked his face. “Thank you for rescuing me.”

“Likewise.”

I cocked my head. “What?”

“Before you, I thought my hockey career was over, I had no crew to have my back, and never thought I’d ever meet a woman half as amazing as you, let alone, sucker her into falling for me.” He gripped my chin. “Everything about my life has changed for the better since I met you. So, I’d say we rescued each other.”

“Tie game?”

“Hockey never ends in a tie.”

“I’m not talking about hockey,” I said, pulling his head down for a kiss.

Our game of tonsil hockey got heated, and I honestly wasn’t sure if it ended in a tie, but it did end with us naked, which was a win in my book.

“Can we eat junk food and watch bad movies all night or do you still have club stuff?” I asked once we came up for air.

“Hell, yeah, we can eat junk food and watch bad movies.”

“Awesome. What are the odds this establishment has room-service?”

“Slim to none,” he said. “But Razor said he’d make a run if we wanted anything. We just need to text him.”

“I adore that man,” I said, sitting up. “I should probably get a toothbrush.”

“I brought yours from home.” Huck slid off the bed and pulled a bag from the closet. “There’s also a couple changes of clothes and your face shit.”

I made my way to him, sliding my hands around his waist. “You’re the most amazing man on the planet.”

“Bringing you clothes registers that high for you, huh?”

“And saving me from a homicidal psychopath.”

He gave me a squeeze. “Right. And that.”

“Okay, enough of Cyrus. I want to get into my own clothes, brush my teeth and crawl into bed with you. Do you want to text Razor or shall I?”

“I’ll do it,” Huck said. “Tell me what you want.”

I fired off my list as I rifled through the bag and pulled out a clean T-shirt and underwear, and then headed to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

Razor arrived thirty minutes later with bags full of food, beer, ice cream and even dinner from a local fast-food restaurant, then left us alone to reconnect in the best way ever.

Junk food and three of the Sharknados.



*Daisy*

**TWO WEEKS LATER**, we were home. Huck's dad was recovering well and would be back at work in less than three weeks. Huck had talked to Ramona, his attorney, who had informed him Mack had given her a call and they'd come up with a plan if the Hurricanes didn't do right by Huck after the surgery.

His agent, Reggie Ecker, had reminded Huck that the contract had been one of the highest in the industry at just under a million for a rookie, so he was getting pushback from the 'team' about their injury clause and exactly what that meant going forward and what they would have to honor.

That's where Mack came into play. He'd decided that if the Hurricanes weren't going to pay, the other team would, considering it was their player who'd attacked Huck and there'd been no protections in place.

In the end, Huck decided to let Mack and Ramona do the fighting since he had a tough surgery ahead, and we were getting used to being back to 'normal.'

I was in the kitchen making dinner when Huck walked in with a bag of groceries. He'd been at the club all afternoon and

it was my first stretch assignment being alone. Well, alone in the condo, at least. One of the recruits was parked on the street in front of the building for protection, so I was never actually without cover.

“Hey, baby.”

I couldn't stop myself from jumping slightly and he frowned.

“Sorry, didn't mean to scare you,” he said as he locked up and hit the buttons on the alarm.

“I'm okay.” I sighed. “I know I'm safe, I just have to remind my body of that fact.”

He made his way to me, setting the bag on the island and pulling me in for a kiss. “What are you making?”

“Pork chops. Sound good?”

“Sounds great.”

I reached up and ran my finger gently over the bandage on his cheek. He leaned back with a grimace, and I sighed. We'd been back a week when Hatch decided it was time for Huck to 'bleed,' and Cash was ready and willing to jump him in.

I wanted nothing to do with it, so my girls came to hang out with me while the 'ceremony' happened. Huck came home, bruised and cut, but patched up and I had managed to hold my complete meltdown until after Teagan, Cambry, and Huxley left.

“You should see your brother,” Huck had retorted as I grabbed ice from the freezer and tossed it into a baggy.

“*Not* helping, Huckleberry.”

“Neither will that, honey,” he said, opening the cabinet that held my liquor.

“Ice will help with the swelling.”

He held up a bottle of tequila. “And this will help with the pain.”

“How’s your knee?”

“It’s fine. We went easy on each other.” He smiled, pulling me close. “I’m good, baby. This didn’t even register on the level of a fight. You should see some of my games.”

“No, I’ll pass, thank you.”

“Look at me, honey.”

I met his eyes, and he stroked my cheek. “I’m good. Seriously, Cash and I both pulled our punches.”

“You have a cut on your cheek.”

“Which will heal in no time.” He smiled. “Do you want a margarita or a straight shot?”

“Both,” I grumbled.

“That’s my girl.”

Now was now, and the cut was healing, but not fast enough in my opinion. He had a huge scab forming, but it would bleed if he scrubbed it too hard, whether while washing his face or turning over in bed, so we kept it covered as much as possible.

“I’ll change your bandage after dinner,” I said.

“Sounds good.” He grinned. “I grabbed dessert.”

“Oh yeah?” He pulled out a box of something and I leaned in to read the label. “Gummy strips?”

“Instead of fruit roll ups,” he said. “They apparently taste like gummy bears.”

I waved the tongs I was holding at him. “Oh, so those are for you, then?”

Huck shrugged, giving me a cheeky grin. “ToMAYto, ToMAHto.”

“That’s not one of the flavors, is it?” I joked.

He laughed, proceeding to put the rest of the groceries away before helping me finish up dinner.

\* \* \*

“This is kind of thick,” I said.

“Yeah, you’ve mentioned that a few times, including to your brother.”

I rolled my eyes and held up the gummy strip. “Focus or I’m going to end up hurting you.”

“Just wrap it and suck, baby, it’s all good.”

I bit the end off, partly to see if I liked the candy, but also to fuck with him a little.

“Okay, yeah, don’t do that,” he retorted.

I grinned, leaning down to wrap the gummy around his cock. I ran my tongue up the length, then wrapped my mouth around the tip and took him as deep as I could, nearly choking myself. I found the gummy was in my way more than anything, so I unwrapped it and tossed it aside, taking his dick in my mouth again.

Wrapping my hand around his girth, I moved it in the same motion with my mouth and rolled, pulled, and tugged as I blew him. Unfortunately, Huck decided he wasn’t going to let me finish and I lost purchase on his cock as he hooked his hands under my armpits and hauled me up his body.

“Hey,” I complained, but then I was on my back, and he was kissing his way down my body, which shut me up pretty quickly.

His mouth landed on my core, his tongue working my clit as he slid two fingers inside of me, and I mewled as I arched into him.

“Don’t come, Daisy,” he growled as I fisted my hands in the comforter.

“Oh my god!”

With one last swipe of his tongue through my folds, he shifted so he was kneeling between my legs, careful of his



knee, and then his cock was sliding into me, and I cried out with ecstasy.

“Jesus,” he hissed, burying himself to the hilt, then he moved.

Faster and faster, harder and harder, until I could no longer hold back my climax, screaming his name as an orgasm hit hard and fast.

I arched into him as he continued to rock into me, my walls contracting around him as his dick pulsed inside of me, and then he rolled us, so we were facing each other, kissing me gently.

“That went way too quick,” I said. “Sorry.”

“Don’t apologize, we’ve got all night.” He kissed me again. “I love you.”

I smiled, stroking his cheek. “I love you, too.”

“Marry me, Daisy.”

I chuckled.

“I’m serious. I want to make this permanent.”

I met his eyes. “Yes.”

“Yes?”

“Yes,” I confirmed.

He kissed me again, slipping out of me and pulling me close.

“You’re in the wet spot,” I pointed out.

“Don’t give a shit. My girl just agreed to marry me. I’m on top of the world.”

“And the wet spot.”

“Exactly how I always imagined this moment,” he breathed out, dramatically. “Romance up the ass.”

I laughed. “You should write for the greeting card industry.”

“If the hockey thing goes tits up, I’ll consider it.” He grinned, kissing me again. “Shower with me?”

“Hell, yes, then I’m going to eat ice cream off your dick.”

He shivered. “Uh, no, you’re not.”

“Your chest?”

“That I’ll allow.”

I smiled and followed him into the bathroom.

\* \* \*

The next afternoon, Huck surprised me with a trip into Vancouver. I wasn’t entirely sure what he had in mind until we pulled off the freeway for the City Center exit and he got turned around.

“Shit. Your dad said it was right here.”

“What?”

“Hold on, let me check the address,” he said, glancing at his phone. Hard to do from the back of a bike.

“Oh my god,” I breathed out. “Are we going to Rondan’s?”

Rondan’s was the club’s go-to jeweler. Olen Rondan was a man in his fifties who had been taking care of engagements, anniversaries, birthdays, and ‘I’m sorries,’ for as long as I could remember, which meant if we were going there, I was getting an engagement ring.

He grimaced. “Yeah. I wanted it to be a surprise, but my directional incompetence appears to have blown my cover.”

I patted his chest, then pointed to the left. “Turn here.”

I continued to direct him until we pulled around the back of the store and parked.

We climbed off his bike (he’d purchased the one my dad had been restoring) and once we’d removed our helmets, he

took my hands. “I called and had him pull a few options, but if you don’t like any of them, I want you to tell me.”

“I will.”

“Promise?” he pressed.

I nodded. “I promise.”

“Okay.”

We made our way around the corner and into the beautiful store with ridiculous amounts of bling, and Olen was already waiting for us, four rings ready for my approval. An oval, a princess, a pear, and the classic round. All of them at least two-carats, and all of them stunning.

“Oh my god, Huck,” I breathed out. “Are you kidding me? How am I going to choose?”

Olen chuckled, handing me the two-carat oval cut to try first.

We stayed for almost an hour, but in the end, it was the oval that made my heart sing and since Huck had prepaid for all four rings to be sized so I could walk out with whichever one I chose, I didn’t have to wait to wear it home.

“Club?” Huck asked once we were back at the bike.

“Surprise engagement party?” I deduced.

He laughed. “Not much of a surprise now.”

I clapped my hands. “Let’s go.”

We climbed back on the bike and headed into Beaverton.

As we walked into the club and heard, “Surprise!” yelled by our family and friends, I couldn’t help myself from wrapping myself tight around Huck.

This man, this beautiful man, who’d rescued me from a pair of pants that were trying to strangle me to death, continued to rescue me at every turn.

His name might be Ruin, but he was my salvation.



*Daisy*

*Eighteen months (ish) later...*

*“**HUCK THE PUCK** is back, folks, and he and Cherkowsky have once again led this team through an extraordinary season!”* the announcer bellowed. *“Ladies and gentleman, your Stanley Cup winners, the Carolina Hurricanes.”*

I jumped up from my place in the stands and screamed his name, my family right next to me doing the same. My mom pulled me in for a hug and we jumped up and down as we continued to celebrate.

This was it, he had done what he’d set out to do and I was so proud of him. His surgery had gone perfectly, and just as he said, he’d exceeded everyone’s expectations with his recovery. His parents had flown out and we’d gotten married in a small ceremony at the club, then we’d moved to Raleigh and into a little condo close to the arena where Huck trained.

I missed my family like crazy, but luckily, we weren’t far from the Dogs of Fire Savannah chapter, so we would ride down there every chance we got, and I found my family there on more than one occasion to surprise us.

Huck had gotten offers from other teams to play once his rookie contract was up with the Hurricanes, and of course, the Hurricanes planned to renew his contract the second this one was done. But Huck had been having a bit of a crisis of faith, if you will.

He loved hockey, but he loved me more, and although it took a little while for him to verbalize it, he loved the club as well. So, when the Portland Winterhawks put up an offer for him to coach, he started to think about where his life might go once this season was over. Long term, at least.

And long term, he'd decided he wanted to be in the Pacific Northwest. Closer to the club, closer to his parents, and closer to my family.

But he wasn't going to make a final decision until tonight. He wanted to 'win this fucker,' then he could go anywhere and do anything he wanted.

Technically, with the settlement Mack had negotiated from his knee injury, he could do that anyway, but with a Stanley Cup win under his belt, he felt he had legitimate clout.

*"Now's the time for Huck to find Daisy,"* the announcer teased, as Huck pulled off his helmet and skated toward my spot in the stands.

Dad practically lifted me over a few of the other players' families to get down to the glass partition. I slapped my palms against the glass and Huck did the same before we dropped our foreheads to it. We did this every game... our little love tap if you will because we couldn't kiss.

"I'm so proud of you," I yelled through the plexiglass.

"Thanks, baby. Love you."

"Love you too."

"I'll come find you soon."

I nodded, a giant grin on my face. "Okay."

*"Well, that's the game,"* the announcer said. *"Huck and Daisy have had their moment, so now we can all celebrate."*

The crowd went wild, and I couldn't stop myself from blushing as I rejoined my family and waited for the horde to disperse.

"Let's go meet Huck," Archer said about twenty minutes later.

"He still needs to shower and talk to the press, Arch," I pointed out. "He's going to be a while. He'll come find us."

We didn't have to wait long. Huck and Keith walked back into the arena, security guards closing the doors behind them, and I made a run for Huck.

He caught me, lifting me high, as I threw myself into his arms, and kissed him. "Oh my god, I'm so proud of you."

Huck laughed. "Thanks, baby."

My family gathered around us and congratulated both Huck and Keith before Keith joined his own family.

"I have news," Huck said.

"You made a decision?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Winterhawks?" I asked, a little more hope in my voice than I realized.

"Yeah, baby."

"What's goin' on?" Dad asked.

"We're coming home!" I squeaked.

"What?" Mom breathed out.

"The Winterhawks have offered me a coaching position," Huck said. "And I'm taking it. I'm bringing our girl home."

My mother burst into tears as she wrapped her arms around Huck. "Oh my god, thank you. I never wanted to interfere, but you have no idea how much I miss her."

Huck smiled, hugging her back. "Oh, I have some idea. Or I would if we didn't have unlimited talk and text."

Dad gave Huck's shoulder a squeeze. "Glad to hear you're comin' home."

"I hope there's still a place for me with the Dogs," he said.

"You never lost your place, brother," Dad said. "But don't come back until you get Dogs ink on you."

Huck laughed. "I'll take care of that immediately."

Huck had taken Hatch's initial advice and tattooed a motorcycle with flaming pucks for wheels over his heart. There were daisy chains woven around the handlebars and it was the coolest tattoo I'd ever seen.

"When can you pack up?" Mom asked.

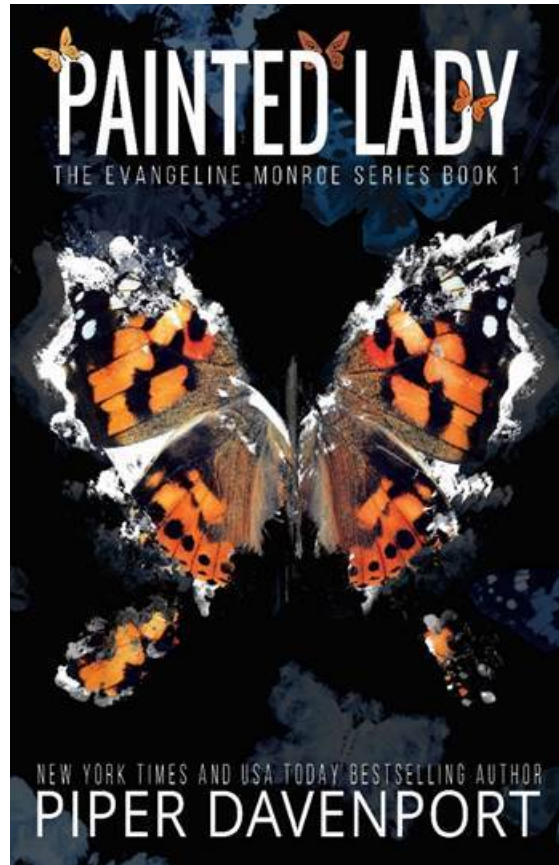
"Next week," Huck said, and Mom looked up at Dad.

"Yeah, baby, we'll get them here within the week."

She grinned, folding herself around him and he kissed her temple.

With a plan in place, we made our way out the back of the arena, away from the screaming fans and paparazzi, and toward our new life.

Nothing could have been more perfect.



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### **Evangeline**

My mother was my first pimp.

I was six.

The love of my life was my second.

I was fourteen.

After that, my life has been a game of survive and adapt, and I have. But now some sexy-ass, glorified cater-waiter has walked into my life and fucked with my perfectly crafted world and I need to find a way to walk him back out.

Permanently.

### **Shep**

The media called me a hero.



The Department called me a shining example of Savannah's fellowship of firefighters.

I just wanted to be left the fuck alone so I could cook.

After early retirement, I traded in my axe for a chef's knife, convinced I was done putting out fires.

Little did I know that a brush with a beautiful but troubled woman was about to set my world ablaze.

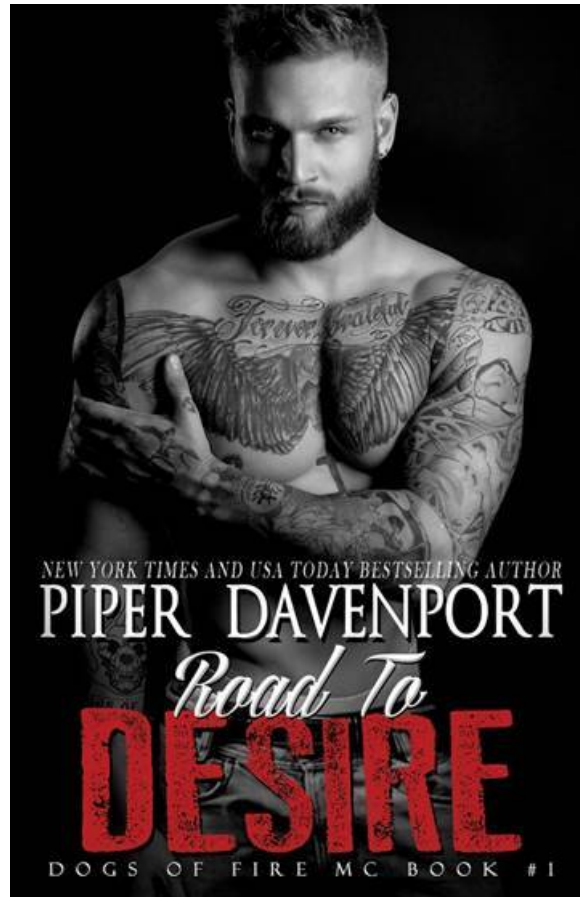
### **Arlo**

After twelve years of devotion to the NYPD, I was out on my ass and blacklisted for doing the 'right thing.'

Exiled to Shitville, USA, and sentenced to serve the remainder of my life as a small town sheriff, busting petty teenage criminals and meth heads. However, when a pair of unsolved cases continues to haunt me, I'm drawn to what could be the biggest case of my career, but it could also cost me my soul.

\* \* \*

*Painted Lady can be pre-ordered [HERE!](#)*



2019 Piper Davenport – 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

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Danielle Harris is the daughter of an overprotective police chief and has led a sheltered life. As a kindergarten teacher, she's as far removed from the world of Harleys and bikers as you could get, but when she's rescued by the sexy and dangerous Austin Carver, her life is changed forever.

Although Austin 'Booker' Carver is enamored by the innocent Dani, he tries to keep the police chief's daughter at arm's length. But when a threat is made from an unexpected source, he finds himself falling hard and fast for the only woman who can tame his wild heart.

Will Booker be able to find the source of the threat before it's too late?

Will Dani finally give her heart to a man who's everything she's been warned about?

## CHAPTER ONE

*Danielle*

I STARED DOWN at my dashboard console and willed the check engine light to stop the infernal red glow. How I got where I was, I had no freaking clue, which meant I had no freaking clue how to find the freeway entrance to get home. “You are an idiot, Dani,” I whispered out loud.

As if on a mission from the devil, my nineteen ninety-nine Honda shuddered, then back-fired, slowing to a crawl as I inched forward down a non-descript side street. Why Portland didn’t have better signage was beyond me.

I jumped as my cell phone pealed in the silence of the car. Without looking at the screen, because really, I was trying not to end up dead in some obscure place I’d never been before, I flipped it open. “Hello,” I whispered.

“Why are we whispering?” Kim, my best friend of more than ten years, whispered back.

I cleared my throat and took a deep breath. “I’m kind of lost and my stupid car won’t go over nineteen miles an hour.”

“So, no different than any other day,” she quipped. “How did the date go?”

“Sucked.”

“How bad?” she asked.

“Getting my eyeballs plucked out by crows, while my fingernails were ripped off one-by-one would have been much more enjoyable kind of bad,” I ground out

“Ew, sorry honey,” Kim commiserated. “Did you stay and have dinner with him?”

“No. I endured one drink and an appetizer and then faked a phone call. Seriously, Kimmie, the guy was a douche.”

“So, online dating’s not for you?”

“Dating, *period* is not for me.”

Kim chuckled. “Where are you?”

“I have no freaking clue,” I admitted. “Somewhere in Arbor Lodge I think?”

“Holy crap, girl, you don’t want to be lost there when it’s almost dark.”

“Thanks, Captain Obvious.” I leaned forward to get a better view out of the windshield. “It’s totally deserted, and I can’t find a street sign to save my life.”

“What’s around you?”

“Nothing.” I squinted trying to make out the light in front of me. The area was heavily commercial, so I wasn’t sure what business would be open past eight on a Wednesday night. “I think I see something. Crap. My contacts are killing me.”

“Pull over and take them out, silly. You have your glasses with you, right?”

“Yeah, but I don’t want to stop, Kimmie... what if I can’t get started again?”

“What if you can’t see what you’re about to hit?”

“Stop being so logical,” I ground out.

Kim sighed. “Please, Dani, be safe. Pull over, put on your glasses, and call your brother.”

“Fine. I’m pulling over. Hold please.” Guiding my car to the curb, I put it in park. “Okay. I’m gonna hang up and call Elliot.”

“Good. Call me when—”

The phone went dead.

“Crap.” I took a second to pull out my contacts and slide on my glasses, before I glanced in my side mirror and put the car in drive again. “Okay, old lady, please get me somewhere I can find a phone.” I inched out into the street again and rolled about three hundred feet before my car let out a sputter and a

hiss and the engine died. “Okay. It’s okay,” I chanted. “We’ve been here before, girl. You can do it.” I cranked the engine and although it turned over, I couldn’t get it to fully engage. I tried again, got it started, but had barely pulled further to the side of the road when it died...again. “No, no, no, no!” I cranked the engine again, but still no luck, so I put it in park.

Grabbing my purse off the floor, I rummaged around for my phone charger, finding it and plugging it into the lighter, hoping for enough juice to call my brother. I pushed every button on my phone in an effort to power it up again, but it had been losing its charge quicker and quicker over the past few weeks and it was now officially dead. “Damn it!”

I dropped my head to the steering wheel and took a minute to feel sorry for myself as I imagined the six-o’clock news headline, “*Young woman murdered after car breaks down in sketchy area of Portland. It’s surprising since she comes from law-enforcement royalty. Another statistic? It certainly looks that way.*”

I’m not entirely sure how long I sat in my dead car and imagined my murder and death before a knock at my window had me squeaking in fright. I glanced out to see an extraordinarily gorgeous man leaning down with a sexy smile on his face. Tall with darkish hair, blue eyes, and a face that could only be described as beautiful, he looked quite a bit like Charlie Hunnam with a full beard and nose ring. He wore a pair of faded jeans that looked like they were made for him, a white thermal, tight-fitting shirt that showcased his muscular chest a bit too well, causing my heart to race and my breathing to catch. A black leather jacket that cemented his sexy as hell look completed the ensemble.

I cranked my window part of the way down... he couldn’t kill me if he could only get his fingers inside, right?

“You lost, darlin’?” he asked.

His voice washed over me and I squirmed in my seat as I tried not to sigh at the slight southern twang. “Um, yeah. A little.”

“Not a great part of town for a pretty girl to get lost in.” He straightened, crossing his arms. “You got someone comin’ for you?”

I squeezed my eyes shut and shook my head. “Both my car and my phone are dead. So, that would be a big fat no.”

“Alright. Why don’t you come with me?”

“No, that’s okay.”

He smiled again. “Sweetheart, my club’s yard is right down the block. I’ll get some of my brothers to push your car into the lot where it’ll be safe, and we can fix it for you tomorrow. In the meantime, you can get out of the cold and either make a phone call or I’ll take you home.”

I bit my lip and pondered my options. The definite probability of dying of starvation and exposure before morning, or the potential of being murdered by the best looking man I’d ever seen were pretty much all I could come up with.

“No one will hurt you, if that’s what concerns you,” he promised.

“I wish that made me feel better,” I admitted. “I mean, I wonder how many women have gone off with some tall, gorgeous man because he said he wouldn’t hurt them, only to be murdered? Super murdered. We’d never know, right? ’Cause they’re dead. Like as in dead, dead, not a little dead, but a lot dead.”

His mouth quivered for a second before he burst out in laughter. “You’ve got a point, darlin’, but if you’re with me, no one’ll touch you.”

“Including you?”

He sobered, but his eyes were still sparkling with humor. “If that’s what you want.”

I rolled the window back up and grabbed my purse and keys. I had a feeling I’d regret this sudden trust I was feeling toward him, but I didn’t really have much of a choice other

than to let him help me, so I unlocked my door and climbed out of the car.

He held it for me and slammed it closed once I was on the sidewalk. I'd locked it before he closed it, not that it mattered... no one would steal a piece of crap car like mine and I kept nothing of value in it.

The wind had picked up since I left the restaurant, and I pulled my coat further around me as we walked down the street. "I'm Danielle, by the way. Um, Dani, actually."

"Booker."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Booker."

"Just Booker."

"Oh. Okay."

He smiled.

"You mentioned your club's yard." I frowned. "What kind of yard?"

"This location's our wreck 'n' tow yard. Got other businesses in other locations," he said vaguely. "Anything with an engine, we can tow, fix or build."

I nodded. "And you said 'club.' I'm assuming it's not a sewing club, right?"

Booker smiled. "Motorcycle club."

I stopped. It took him a minute to realize I was no longer beside him, which gave me a partial view of the back of his jacket. Dogs of something. Dogs of Wonder? No, that wouldn't be right... a badass motorcycle guy wouldn't have Dogs of Wonder on the back of his jacket.

*Well, crap!*

He walked back toward me. "You okay?"

"Motorcycle club?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Like Hell's Angels?"

Booker smirked. “In theory.”

“Crap.” I glanced up at him. “I really should go.”

“Go where, darlin’? There’s nothing around here for over a mile in any direction.”

“Clarify something for me. Are you a club because you have really nice bikes and like to hang out and drink beer on occasion, or are you like outlaws or something?”

“Since that’s club business, it’s none of yours.”

“Right.” I couldn’t seem to stop swallowing convulsively. “Just point me in the direction of the closest place I can make a phone call and I’ll get out of your hair.”

“About twenty-five yards in front of you.”

“You don’t understand,” I whispered. “I can’t go in there.”

“Why the hell not?”

“Because my dad’s the freakin’ chief of police,” I snapped, before realizing I’d just spouted off something that could get me killed or kidnapped in a heartbeat, depending on whose hands that information was in.

“You’re shittin’ me.”

I shook my head. “I wish I was.”

“Well, fuck me.”

“No thank you,” I quipped. Retorts were my specialty, especially when I was nervous.

He cocked his head. “You wouldn’t be disappointed, babe.”

I pressed my lips into a thin line, willing my mouth to stay shut.

Booker chuckled. “The shop’s clean, sweetheart. Totally legit, although, probably better I take you home than you have your daddy pick you up.”

“It would be my brother, actually... or Kimmie. Kim’s my best friend. Not that you care who my best friend is.” I



took a deep breath, rambling was not a good option right now.

He smiled again. God, he had a nice smile. Of course, it was the panty-dropping kind, but for now, I wouldn't react... my undies must stay firmly in place. "There's only six of us here right now, so we'll get your car into the lot, get your info, and I'll take you home."

I swallowed. "I should call my brother."

"Then we'll get your car into the lot and you can call your brother."

I nodded and let him lead me through a large parking lot surrounded by eight-foot high fencing complete with barbed-wire on top. I followed him into the warmth of a sparse but clean waiting area. It looked like the waiting room in my local oil change place, which for whatever reason surprised me. I'm not sure what I was expecting. Maybe centerfolds from Playboy circa 1984 plastered on the walls?

"Phone's on the counter," Booker said. "Dial nine for an outside line."

I nodded and picked up the phone, dialing as he opened a door and yelled, "Mack! Need you in the front."

"Hello?" Kim answered, sounding confused.

"Kimmie, hey it's me," I whispered.

"Ohmigod, Dani!" I could hear the sounds of the restaurant she worked at in the background. "I was worried sick. I take it your cell phone died again?"

"Yeah." I glanced to my right and could see Booker talking with someone across the room out of earshot. "It's officially dead, dead."

"Where are you calling me from?" she asked.

"Um, some wrecking place I managed to break down in front of."

"Of course you did," Kimmie said with a chuckle. "Did you call Ell?"

"Um, I can't."

“How come?”

“The shop is owned by a motorcycle club,” I whispered, and glanced at the door again to make sure Booker wasn’t listening.

“So?” she whispered back.

“Hello, I’ve seen that Sam Crow show... they’re not entirely above board.”

Kim burst out laughing, the tell-tale snort indicating she was unable to control her mirth.

“Kimmie,” I snapped.

“Ohmigod, Dani, you are precious. Truly,” she said, and laughed again.

“Oh, shut up,” I ground out. “You know if I call Elliot, he’ll get all—”

“Dani? Keys, babe,” Booker demanded.

I jumped a little because I hadn’t seen him walk back over to me. “Um, hold on a sec,” I said to Kim, and rummaged in my purse. Winding the car key from the rest of my keys, I handed it to him, and he nodded then left me again. “Okay, I’m back.”

“Who was that?” Kim asked.

“One of the men who works here.”

“Um, he knew your name and he called you babe,” she pointed out. “I’m thinking you’re being purposely obtuse.”

“His name’s Booker,” I said.

“He sounds delicious.”

“Meh,” I lied.

“Call Elliot, Dani. Or I can come get you when I get off in an hour.”

“No,” I said with a sigh. “I’ll call Ell.”

“Good. Borrow his phone and call me when you get home, okay? I’ve gotta grab my orders.”

“I will.” I was midway through dialing my brother when Booker returned, so I hung up and forced a smile.

“You call your brother or friend or whoever?” he asked.

“Kim. Yes. She’s still at work. I was just about to call my brother.”

“Why don’t you do that and then you can give me some information while we wait for him.”

I nodded and picked up the phone again. I got his voicemail. “Hey Ell, it’s me. I broke down in Portland and was wondering if you could come get me. I’m at...” I glanced up at Booker for assistance, and he handed me a card. I rattled off the address and phone number of Big Ernie’s Wreck ’n’ Tow, and then hung up again. “Voicemail.”

“Picked up on that, babe,” he said.

My cheeks heated. “Right.”

Booker stepped behind the counter and handed me a piece of paper with Big Ernie’s logo on it. “Write down your address and phone number and I’ll call you when we know what’s wrong with your car.”

“Are you planning to wreck it?”

He smiled and shook his head. “We’ll tow it over to the auto repair shop and fix it there.”

“One of the other businesses, I presume?”

“Yeah.”

I nodded. “I won’t be able to answer, but you can leave a message and I’ll call you with a good number.”

He nodded and I scribbled down my information. I couldn’t imagine what the repairs on my car would be, but as a kindergarten teacher, I could pretty much guarantee they’d be out of my budget. I jumped again when the phone rang... I was seriously wound up with nerves that only a bottle of merlot was going to come close to calming.

“Big Ernie’s,” Booker said, and then smiled at me. “Yeah, she’s here.”

He handed me the phone. “Hello?” I said.

“How the hell did you end up at a scrap yard in Arbor Lodge?” Elliot demanded.

I watched distractedly as Booker and three other men walked outside and toward where I left my car.

“No clue,” I admitted. “I was in the Pearl and thought I was going toward Vancouver, but I guess not.”

“For someone so smart, your sense of direction is pathetic.”

“Yes, I’m well aware,” I grumbled.

“Where’s your phone?” he asked.

“Dead.” I sighed. “Like as in dead, dead.”

“I’m buying you a new one.”

“You don’t need to do that,” I argued... for the umpteenth time.

“I know, sis, but your stubbornness is starting to mess with my schedule,” he said.

I smiled. I loved my brother, even when he was annoying. “Starting to?”

He chuckled. “I’m in the middle of something; can you hang out for a while?”

“No, it’s fine. I’ll grab a cab.”

“Which will cost you the same as a phone,” he said.

“Point taken big brother.” I wrinkled my nose. “I greatly thank you for your astute observation.”

“Grab a cab to the station and I’ll drive you home from there.”

“No, it’s fine. I’ll head home.”

“Dani,” he said with a sigh.

“Elliot,” I mimicked, and smiled. “Seriously. It’s all good. I promised I’d call you and I called you. I might work with five-year-olds, but I’m not one, so don’t worry.”

“Oh, you’re funny. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine. Swing by later if you want. I’m just going home. I have to be at work early tomorrow, so it’ll be an early night for me.”

“How about I grab you a burner and then I’ll order you a decent phone later.”

“Thanks, Ell. I’ll pay you back,” I said.

“We can argue about that later. I have to go.”

“Okay, ’bye.” I hung up and slipped behind the desk in search of a phonebook.

## CHAPTER TWO

*Danielle*

“**Y**OU NEED SOMETHIN’ darlin’?”

I jumped (again) and turned to find myself practically chin to navel with the very large man Booker had been speaking to earlier. I looked up and grimaced. He was blond with deep blue eyes and he looked intense.

“Hi. I’m Dani.”

“Hi, Dani,” he said, and smiled.

“Hi,” I repeated, stepping back for space, but only managing to run into the lip of the desk. I refused to wince in his presence, but I did bite the inside of my cheek hard enough to draw blood.

“You said that.”

“Um, yeah. I did. Great observation skills.” *Ohmigod, he is not a five-year-old. Get it together, Dani.* “Um, sorry if I wasn’t supposed to be back here, I was looking for a phonebook.”

“You’re looking for a phonebook,” he said, and stepped closer to me.

“Yes. A phonebook. Do you have one? I need to call a cab. Can you back up a bit, please?” I mean, really. Where the hell was I going to go? He’d just boxed me into a corner. I took a deep breath.

“You need to call a cab,” he said, his voice low and raspy.

I let out a frustrated sigh. “Yes, I need to call a cab.”

“What about an Uber or a Lyft?”

“My phone’s dead,” I explained. “But even if it wasn’t, it’s too old for the app, and my brother can’t pick me up. He’s

still at the station.” Why did I feel the need to offer so much information?

“Station? Like a train station?”

“No.”

Mack frowned. “As in police station?”

*Crap!*

I bit my lip. “Will you please let me by? You’re making me nervous and all I want to do is call someone to pick me up and take me home.”

“I’ll take you home,” Booker said as he walked back inside, a scowl on his face directed at “big biker man” in front of me. “And get the hell away from her, Mack. You can see she’s freaked.”

“Did she tell you her brother’s a cop?” Mack demanded.

“Detective, actually,” I corrected and then dropped my head. I needed to shut the hell up.

“Move the hell away from her,” Booker repeated. I took a minute to look at him and his expression was a little scary. He gave his friend a look like he would kill him if he didn’t do as he said. Instead of making me nervous, it made me feel protected. Another clear indication there was something inherently wrong with me.

Mack grinned, raising his hands in surrender as he stepped away from me. I skittered around the desk and back out in the open, keeping my purse in front of me... for what I’m not sure. I just felt a little protected somehow.

“Come on. I’ll take you home,” Booker said.

“No, it’s okay. If you can just call me a cab, it’ll be fine.”

Booker shook his head. “We’re closed, darlin’, and it’ll take a while for a taxi, so let me just take you home.”

I swallowed.

“What?” he asked.

I glanced at Mack and then back at Booker. “Um... aren’t bikes really dangerous?”

Booker seemed to share another secret look with Mack before they both burst out laughing.

I pulled my purse closer. “Well, if you’re going to stand there and laugh at me, then I definitely want to call a cab.”

Apparently, I’m freaking hilarious when I’m scared out of my ever-blessed mind, because Mack laughed harder.

“I’ve got my truck,” Booker said, once he’d sobered.

“With or without a shovel and a tarp in the back?”

Booker frowned. “What?”

“Nothing. Never mind.” I figured if he was going to murder me there wasn’t a whole hell of a lot I could do about it at this point. “Yes, a ride home would be much appreciated.”

Booker nodded and waved his hand toward the roll-up door.

“Nice to meet you,” I said to Mack, and headed outside.

“You too, babe,” Mack said to my back.

Booker led me to his Ford F-150, and I turned to face him. “Can I borrow your phone please?”

“What?”

“Your phone. May I borrow it for a second?”

He reached into his pocket and handed it to me. “Knock yourself out.”

I stepped in front of the truck and took a photo of it, along with the license plate, texting the photos to Kim so she’d know who was driving me home and when I was leaving. At least if he did murder me, they’d be able to track down my killer.

“Thanks,” I said, and handed the phone back to him.

He smiled his sexy smile again and pulled open my door. I wasn’t expecting his gallantry as he waited for me to climb inside, but I covered my surprise. I didn’t realize badass biker men did that kind of thing.



Booker climbed in beside me and started the engine while I buckled up. He didn't say anything as he guided the truck away from Arbor Lodge and I took a moment to take in his ride. It was new with all the bells and whistles, so to speak. Leather seats, wood inlay, and a kick-ass stereo system... at least it looked like a kick-ass stereo system. It was currently off.

About ten minutes passed and I had about all the silence I could handle. "Your real name's not Booker, is it?" He glanced at me and shook his head before focusing on the road again. "Are you going to tell me your real name?"

"Austin Carver."

"Oh," I said, unable to hide my surprise.

He smiled. "Not what you were expecting?"

"Not really, no. Don't get me wrong, it's a nice name. Sweet sounding, but I guess I expected you to be Maverick or something like that."

"Maverick?"

"What's wrong with Maverick?"

"Only a pussy would ever go by Maverick."

"What if that's the name his parents gave him?" I challenged.

"Then, if he weren't a pussy, he'd change it."

I bit back a smile. "I won't tell Maverick's mom you said that."

"You know a Maverick?" he asked.

I nodded. "He's one of my kids. I teach kindergarten."

"Fuck me. Of course you do," he grumbled, and pulled onto the freeway.

I gathered my purse close to me again. For some reason, the fact he didn't seem to like my choice of employment bothered me. It shouldn't. He didn't know me, and he was

probably a criminal for Pete's sake, but I was the one who felt embarrassed.

"What's your group's name?" I soldiered on, my inability to stay silent when I was nervous working against me.

"My group?" He raised an eyebrow.

"Your club. Whatever."

He studied the road again. "Dogs of Fire."

"Why did you pick that?" I asked.

"I didn't."

"Why did your group... I mean, club, pick that?"

Booker shrugged. "Don't know."

"You don't know why they picked it?" I studied his profile and saw his jaw lock. "Sorry, not my business."

He neither agreed nor disagreed.

"Do you need my address?" I was unbelievably desperate for conversation, apparently.

"I have it."

"Right," I mumbled. Of course he did. I'd written it down for him. I studied him again. God, he was beautiful. I licked my lips and focused back on the road. "So, do you work at Big Ernie's?"

"Sometimes."

"So, it's not your regular job?"

"No."

"You're obviously not a mechanic," I mused.

"Why do you say that?"

"You're too clean," I blurted out. "I mean, your hands aren't caked with black oil and stuff. Sorry. Never mind. It's none of my business."

He chuckled.

"What's so funny?" I demanded.

“You don’t like silence, do you?”

“I like silence... just not when I’m nervous. Crap. Never mind. Ignore me.”

“Babe, I’ve been trying to ignore you since the second I saw your piece of shit car crawling down my street,” he said.

I gasped, my irritation rising to dance with my nerves. “Well, you didn’t need to come and rescue me. I didn’t ask you to.” He chuckled again and I blinked back tears, feeling both angry and insecure at the same time. “I’m sorry if my talking bugged you. I was just trying to be friendly,” I continued, because, seriously, I was obviously a glutton for punishment. “It’s what nice people do when other people help them. They ask them about their life and find common ground in an effort to make conversation.”

“Is that what they do?” he asked.

“Typically, yes,” I whispered, and turned toward the window.

I managed to keep my thoughts to myself as we drove into Hazel Dell and down the private driveway into my apartment complex. Not the greatest part of town, but also not the worst. It was what I could afford and it worked for me now.

“This is me,” I said, pointing to the stairway that led to my second-floor unit.

He nodded. “I’ll walk you up.”

“You don’t need to do that.”

“I know,” he said, and climbed out of the truck.

Gathering my purse, I pulled my jacket closer around me and pushed open the door. Booker stood on the other side and, again, waited for me before closing the door and walking me upstairs. I unlocked my apartment door and pushed it open, flipping the light on before stepping inside.

“Thank you for everything,” I said.

“I’ll call you tomorrow or Friday about your car.”

Crap, right. I was going to have to pay for my stupid car to be fixed. “Yes. Um, I forgot to ask. Do you take credit cards?”

He frowned, but then nodded his head. “Yeah, babe, we take credit cards.”

I relaxed. “Okay, good. Thank you. Well, it was nice to meet you, Austin. Thanks again for everything.”

He gave me a chin lift in response and turned and sauntered down the stairs. I know for a fact he sauntered, because I leaned out my front door and watched him leave. His long, muscular legs and perfect butt made me sigh, and I realized he probably heard me, so I ducked back inside and closed and locked my door, leaning against it to catch my breath.

\* \* \*

*Booker*

I was fucked. Royally fucked. The second I saw the pretty little blonde trying to force her car down the street, I’d known I’d help her. Couldn’t really stop myself. She was gorgeous. Petite, curvy, big tits, nice ass, and she smelled incredible, but it was the glasses that sent me over the edge. I could envision her in thigh-highs, pearls, and those glasses while she straddled and rode me.

When I’d coaxed her out of her car and she’d started talking, her obvious sense of humor showing even though she was terrified, I’d watched in fascination as every emotion she was feeling showed on her face in real time. I couldn’t remember ever meeting a woman more beautiful... and fucking innocent. Kindergarten teacher and daughter of the chief of police. Shit.

I dialed Mack’s number and then started my truck.

“Yo.”

“You got the car over to Hatch’s?” I asked.

Hatch Wallace was our Sergeant at Arms and owned his own shop close by. We took all of our more difficult jobs to him because he was a genius with engines.

“Yeah,” Mack said. “It’s fucked up. Might need to rebuild the engine.”

“Shit.” I headed onto the freeway. “I’ll be there in twenty.”

I hung up and stared out at the road in front of me trying to figure out how the hell I was gonna get out of this, and whether or not I really wanted to.

\* \* \*

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\*Dalton's book Bound by Sight can be read after Stealing the Biker's Heart, but I recommend reading Bound by Blood first.

\*\*\*Primal Howl ties in with Keeping the Biker's Oath



*New York Times & USA Today Bestselling Author* Piper Davenport writes from a place of passion and intrigue, combining elements of romance and suspense with strong modern-day heroes and heroines. She currently resides in the Pacific Northwest with her author husband, Jack Davenport, and an obnoxious YorkiePoo named Pepper who may or may not be an international spy.

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