

Vex & Blue

SIN CITY MC

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SHYLA COLT

VEX & BLUE

SIN CITY MC OAKLAND CHAPTER

SHYLA COLT

INSPIRED INK

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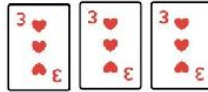
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CHAPTER
ONE



Hel It's only been two months since they lowered her into the ground, and I'm already failing her. I gaze at the enormous building looming over me like a haunted house in a horror movie. Although stunning from the outside with its industrial metal and wood design, it houses danger.

I don't want to go in, but I need to. Putting it off won't make what lies inside any less gut-churning. Fear slicks my palms, and I lick my lips as I watch a biker stalk inside like he owns the place.

I squirm in my seat and run the numbers in my head. Even with insurance, I won't be able to pay the hospital fees, take on childcare alone, and advocate for her special needs while finishing my degree.

Slumping down, I take a shaky breath. I've staked the place out every day this week. This visit, I have to pull the trigger.

The bills that arrived remain in the forefront of my mind, and my grieving mother isn't an option for permanent childcare.

Seeing her granddaughter, Morgan, now tears Mom apart. She deserves the time and space to heal, as much as any mother who loses a child can. I've never been so grateful for taking after my father with my rounder face, deep-set dark brown eyes fringed in thick lashes, and wider spread nose.

I peer in the rearview mirror at the tiny toddler with raven-colored, corkscrew curls, light brown skin, and piercing, bright blue eyes. My sole responsibility, according to my big sister's will, is my niece, the light of my life.

Her birth changed my world. Lau and I wanted to raise her together, our own girl gang. The three musketeers, we did everything together. I see traces of my high cheekbones in my niece, but so much of her appearance was gifted from her father.

Money was tight, but we pooled our resources, supporting each other as we chased our dreams. Pregnancy might've slowed Lau down, but it didn't stop her. She worked full-time and continued college part-time in accounting.

Alternating our schedules allowed me to do the same for my bachelor's in American Sign Language English Interpretation. I thought of dropping out to pick up another job, but that's a patch on a serious problem.

I aim to set us up for a good life further down the road. Silently gripping the steering wheel, I channel my anger and shove my protest on the shelf.

I'm not above bitching, bullying, or begging to give my niece the life she deserves. He showed what he thought about being a father when he ghosted Lau, but it's time to man up and pay up. I turn in my seat, and Mo waves her chubby hand at me.

"Auntie won't let you down, baby girl," I promise.

She giggles.

Knocking on the window beside me makes me jump. I twist to face the rude interloper and forget to breathe. I recognize those bright blue eyes, surrounded by a fringe of impossibly dark lashes and the slightly upturned nose.

Knowing is one thing, but seeing it in person is an assault against my senses. I gape at him as my brain short circuits. Broad shoulders fill out the worn black leather vest with the Sinner patch with Oakland around the bottom. His arms are sculptured works of art.

Suddenly the walk on the wild side with the bikers makes sense. His club's name is fitting, considering he's sexy as sin. The sunlight dances in his dark hair and hits his eyes, turning them into an impossible Caribbean blue. His round eyes narrow, and the corners of his lips turn down.

He rolls his fingers in a circular motion, and I shake my head as he knocks harder.

The vibrations travel through the car, gaining Morgan's attention. She babbles, and I curse. I roll the window down to keep from startling her.

"Can I help you?" I ask.

"I think that's my line. You have been here every day this week," he says dryly.

"This is public property."

"It's my property, and it's clear you've been watching to see who comes and goes. It's a weird approach for a spy." He cocks his head.

"A spy? Ugh. I'm not—"

"Right. Either way, I'm going to need you to step inside."

When he reaches into the car, I lean forward, grabbing the bedazzled pink stun gun. Gripping the handle, I remove it from its holster, pull the rocker, and press the flickering nodes into his forearm.

He jerks. "Son of a bitch."

I reach down and turn the keys in the ignition.

"That'd be a bad move, Electra." The deep voice holds the promise of violence. "You won't get very far, and right now, I'm amused. Any other shenanigans are going to piss me off. You don't want that." A tattooed hand reaches into the car and turns off the ignition. The black-eyed, wiry man covered in tattoos radiates menace.

I hold my hands up, and he nods.

"Smart." He smirks as the man beside me shakes out his arm and walks back and forth.

“Let’s go, Bonnie. Your escape’s thwarted.” The man, whom I’ve dubbed Diablo in my head for the angel and devil pin-up girls on his neck, unlocks the car door.

A small group of vest-wearing men form a semi-circle around him.

“Prospect.” Diablo gestures toward the backseat.

A skinny brunette with a full mustache and goatee walks to the back seat. He opens the door and reaches for Morgan.

“Don’t touch her.” I launch myself toward them, swatting his hands away.

“Shit.” He steps back. “Damn, Mama Bear, I was only trying to help.”

“Careful. Electra here is a little loca,” Diablo drawls.

Morgan’s lower lip pokes out, and her face screws up as her mood goes south.

“Hey. You’re okay.” Forcing a smile, I tickle her tummy. “I didn’t mean to scare you,” I whisper, kissing her creased brow.

Hiccupping, her lower lip quivers as she recovers and pats my cheeks.

“That’s my girl.”

“I’m not in the business of traumatizing women and children, but the way this goes down is up to you,” Diablo says.

“I’ll behave.” *For now.*

Ignoring the men hovering around, I unbuckle my seatbelt and reach over the center console to unbuckle Morgan. At eighteen months, she can help me. After sliding out of her seat, she walks to me.

“We’re going to go on a little trip, yeah?” I grab her diaper bag, lift her, and pull her to the front seat with me.

Grumpy returns, opening the driver’s door, glowering at me as I get out and place Morgan on my hip. Grumpy places a hand on the small of my back, and I flinch. Electricity crackles

between us, but I refuse to shrink. Tilting my chin, I meet his gaze.

“How’s the arm?” I ask sweetly.

Diablo coughs to cover his laugh.

“Never better.” Grumpy moves his hand to my hip and squeezes.

I ignore his warning as my anger floods to the surface.

He’s why my sister and I struggled so hard while he ran his bar and hung out with his biker buddies. The freedom he had while we went to doctor after doctor, who ran tests on Morgan, enrages me. I jerk away from his hold, and someone whistles.

“She doesn’t like you, Vex.”

I roll my eyes at Diablo’s statement.

Vex? What kind of name is that?

“The feeling is mutual,” Vex mumbles.

I take in the large space, and the lyrics, *this is a man’s world*, drift into my mind. Long, dark wood tables with benches make up the center of the large room.

On the right side, tall table tops that seat four have tall back stools in the same dark wood. To the left side, there are smaller tables and booths.

This place can host a ton of people, but each section has spaces for an intimate conversation. The main bar takes up the most space, but there’s another smaller bar in the back.

Women in black tank tops and T-shirts tied in a knot above black hot pants work behind the bar and serving tables. Some wear fishnets, and others show off bare skin.

Their hair ranges in color and style from high ponytails to flowing waves and curls. Their make-up is heavy, and none bat an eyelash as the men walk me in under obvious duress. *Is this a common sight?*

Leaving the bar behind, we walk down a long hallway past the bathrooms and doors I assume house supplies. We turn to

the right and pause in front of a door.

Vex unlocks it and reveals a large office. Inside is a black leather couch against the wall and two matching chairs angled to the left and right. An espresso-colored table rests in the middle of the seating.

A wall of security cameras rests against the wall. Another man in a leather vest sits in front of the many screens. He turns, and I nearly swallow my tongue.

“Twins?” I croak, staring at the face identical to Vex’s.

“What does it matter?” Vex grumbles.

How can I tell them now? Is it possible they’ll remember which one slept with my sister? I’m sure their bed doesn’t get cold often. Will they even recall Lau? Stomach cramping, I hold Morgan a little tighter.

“We’ll take it from here,” Vex tells Diablo.

“I’ll be at the bar making the rounds if you need me,” Diablo salutes.

Reading between the lines, I swallow. The man could make me disappear and not lose a night’s sleep over it.

Doubt tightens my chest. Why did I think this was the best way to approach things? *Because you don’t want to lose the roof over your head.*

“If you wanted our attention, you have it, Mrs. ...” The other twin arches his brow.

“Hel.”

He blinks. “What?”

“Helaine Miller.” I study his face for signs of recognition. “And you are?”

“They call me Blue. Why have you been watching us?” His face is blank, giving nothing away.

His emotionless demeanor makes him unreadable. It spooks me.

This is for Mo Mo. “We have unfinished business.”

Vex snorts. “Trust me, I’d have remembered if we ever met.”

“Not me.” I tighten my jaw as the unhealed wound on my heart bleeds again. “My sister.”

“Please tell me you’re not trying to avenge some slight.” Blue sighs.

“What? No?” *Are they seriously that conceited?* “But it sounds like you leave a trail of broken hearts.”

“Is that what your sister told you, sweetheart? Every woman we have comes willingly, and leaves satisfied.” Vex wiggles his tongue.

I fight the urge to punch the smarmy look off his face and wrinkle my nose in disgust. Thank God Morgan can’t hear them.

“You’re awfully full of yourself. It’s not attractive.” I sneer at him.

“Ntie.” Morgan balls her tiny hand into a fist with her thumb sticking up and moves it in a circle by her cheek.

I peer around, unsure of what to do with my arms full.

“Ntie,” she repeats, makes a C shape, and runs it down her tummy.

“Is she going to puke?” Vex asks.

“No.” I shake my head. “She’s hungry.”

“Why didn’t she just say that?” Blue asks.

“She did.”

“Un-gry.” The word is jumbled, and the sounds are off. Pronunciation is difficult because she’s never heard people talk before.

Vex focuses his attention on Morgan. “What’s wrong with her?”

“Not a damn thing,” I snap at Vex. “She’s deaf, but just as smart as any other eighteen-month-old. You’d know why I’m here if you looked at her.”

“Calm down.” Blue holds out his hand.

“Do not tell me to calm down,” I snap at Blue. “My sister worked herself to the bone trying to provide for her child, and you sat here at your bar, drinking and shooting the shit without a care in the world. I don’t understand how you can live with yourselves.”

“We don’t know what the hell you’re talking about,” Vex barks.

“We’ve never seen this child,” Blue adds softly, making me want to be louder.

“Why would you when you decided to ghost her?” My voice cracks, and my face heats as I blink to force back the tears when Morgan fusses. “Make this easy on all of us and help me take care of your daughter.”

“Daughter?” they ask in unison. Jaws dropped, the twins approach me, speechless.

They didn’t know. My sister never told them. A million questions raise in my head, and my stomach sours. *What have I done? Why did she keep this secret?*

Vex sneers. “You’re barking up the wrong tree. I don’t know what that chick—”

“Denison.” Blue places a hand on his shoulder and shakes his head. “Look at the baby,” Blue whispers.

They both go silent, and the tension in the room swells like a storm front. The cat’s out of the bag; the next move is theirs.



Vex

“Bullshit, Blue.” Shaking my head, I gesture at the cranky toddler flailing her limbs. “I’m not going through this a second time,” I say between gritted teeth.

I stare at the curvy, brown-skinned woman with a sleek, shoulder-length bob framing her round face and light brown,

deep-set eyes. Her full, dusky pink lips press tightly together.

Her attitude makes her seem bigger than her five-foot-eight inches. There's no fear in her gaze, only apocalyptic rage.

"Did she try to match someone with similar-colored eyes?" I clap. "Nicely done. The color matching is spot on."

"Bastard." She bares her teeth like a wild animal.

"No. I know who my father is." I gesture toward the small child on her hip. "It looks like your sister can't say the same."

"How dare you?" she hisses, taking a step forward before she stops herself.

"Do you think you're the first girl who's pulled this before?" *We learned our lesson the hard way. I won't fall in love with a child that isn't mine or take the fall for someone else's irresponsibility.* Images of the buxom brunette who wrecked our world back in England flash in my mind. The old anger sparks to life.

I peer down at her, disgusted. "Try again with another sucker."

"I don't need to when I know I have the right men."

She's playing her roll well, I'll give her that. "If she's so sure, why isn't she here representing herself, huh? She had to send her sister to do the job because she knew she was full of shit."

"She's dead."

The shrill scream echoes in the small room as the child joins her in wailing. The grief etched on her face is nauseating.

"I'm sorry, Mo Mo. Please." Bouncing the toddler on her hips, she digs into the bag on her side while my ears ring. Hel hands the toddler a biscuit, and she chomps down on it with gusto.

"Dead?" Blue's eyes widen.

This changes things. Did she come here seeking protection?

“What happened?” Did we cause this? Had we left her unprotected, and someone came in looking to get back at us and ended her life?

“Traumatic brain injury. There were complications due to an undiagnosed concussion after a hit and run.” Hel’s voice is robotic, but the grief painted on her face is ugly and raw.

Her honey-colored eyes swim with unshed tears. Hands shaking, she gives her niece another cracker.

She clears her throat. “You had no idea about Morgan, did you?”

We shake our heads, and she closes her eyes and tilts her head toward the ceiling. “Shit.”

“How did you know to come here? It sounds like your sister wasn’t keen on contacting us ever.”

“There was a photo of the two of you. Or her and one of you,” she corrects herself. “I had no idea you were twins.” She rolls her head and croaks a laugh. “Jesus, Lau, when you let loose, you go all out.”

I hold out my hand. “Let me see the photo.”

She hesitates.

“We want to get to the bottom of this too, Hel.”

Swallowing, she nods and goes to the couch, setting Morgan down. Her hands move swiftly, and she sets out more of the biscuits and a sippy cup with a mermaid.

Kissing her niece’s forehead, she removes her phone from the diaper bag and shuffles to us, looking drained. A vague memory of a face similar to Hel’s flickers to life.

“Sexy librarian,” I whisper, thinking of the brown-skinned dime piece with glasses and a shy demeanor that made her a unicorn in our lifestyle.

Her guileless manner had drawn my brother and me in like a magnet. Her fresh face, genuine response, and the sweet way she yielded acted as a balm to our souls.

She'd been the haven of peace we'd needed after months on the road, chasing down a rogue member who'd jeopardized our entire operation. He came in on our watch and skimmed money and information under our noses, so that shit was personal.

When we lost him in Mexico and had to retreat home, licking our wounds like abused dogs, we'd drowned ourselves in alcohol and pounced on her goodness.

Our selfishness had rocked the foundation of a promising young girl's life.

"The college girl who was visiting with Emily's cousin."

"We're going to need a minute to talk about this," I say cautiously.

"Hey, we're going to get it sorted out and taken care of," Blue insists.

"If it's necessary," I add.

Hel glares. "I'm drowning in hospital debt, and Mo needs more than I can give her. It's necessary."

My eye twitches as I choke down the venom I want to spew. She's going to bat for her niece. I can respect that. I walk away from the challenge. The poor kid's been through enough losing her mom and seeing us fight.

Blue follows close behind. "Hey, she's not Jenny."

"We don't know that," I counter, unwilling to lay down and show her our belly because of her sob story.

"You're taking out your anger over a different situation—"

I don't need his psychobabble right now. "Can you stop acting like that bitch didn't blow our lives up? She chased us out of our own fucking town. Maybe you've forgotten that, but I haven't."

"And you miss that life?" Blue arches a brow. "'Cause I think it was for the best—"

"That's not the point, mate, and you know it," I growl.

He sighs. “If I hold on to that anger and let it poison me, the bitch is still winning. I’d do anything to make sure that spoiled bitch has no more footholds in our life.”

“And I’m wrong for feeling like we never got justice?” I cross my arms. The fact that Jenny got away with her bullshit still sticks in my craw. Money makes the guilty innocent. Currency acts as a cushion and a shield for the worst of humanity.

Blue shakes his head. “I didn’t say that. I can’t tell you how to heal, only that it’s time you do so. We’ll send out a DNA test, but I can tell you it’s an issue you need to get a hold of. My gut tells me Morgan’s ours, and I won’t let the past harm her.”

“Get the test, and we’ll talk.” I can’t afford to become invested without having proof, even if my gut is telling me Blue is right.

“I’ll get a prospect on it. Can you call a truce with Helaine?”

“Yeah, Hel’s a more appropriate name for that one,” I mutter.

“Why? Because she came in here strong and focused?” Blue counters. His lip twitches up, and I groan.

“God, you like her, don’t you?” I ask.

“I admire her bravery. She walked into the Sin den as if she owned it. Even Fiend didn’t make her balk. That deserves respect.” He shrugs nonchalantly, but I’m not buying it.

“Maybe it’s stupidity, not bravery,” I mutter, glancing over my shoulder at the spitfire tending to her niece.

“Either way, you need to smooth things over,” Blue insists.

“Pfft. I will not lie down and allow her to walk all over me.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to.”

“You sure?” I tilt my head. “Cause you’re extremely accommodating.”

“I know you’re still upset at me for bringing Jennifer into our lives.”

I look away. I should’ve seen through the beautiful blonde’s smoke screen and realized she was a snake long before I gave her my heart.

Exhaling, I scowl. “I don’t blame you for that.”

“Your actions say otherwise.” I hate the sorrow in his voice.

“Let’s just get this thing started.” I offer up the suggestion as an olive branch, turn, and retrace my steps to the ladies on the couch before he can open a can of worms I’m not ready to deal with.

“We want to do a test.” I study her for signs of worry or distress.

“Of course,” she agrees without looking up.

The action rubs me the wrong way. I want her eyes on me when I speak.

“Today,” I up the ante.

“What?” She looks up. Excitement dances in her dark brown orbs. “Can we do that?”

“We’re going to send someone out to grab a few tests and bring them back,” Blue explains.

“That’s—” She exhales shakily. “Good. Okay.” Nodding, she adjusts her weight on the couch.

Her response has me facing a new reality I’m not ready for, or sure how to process.

“Since you’re telling the truth, you have nothing to worry about, right?” I goad her, looking for cracks in her façade.

“I am, but there’s everything to worry about.” Her sculpted eyebrows dip, and she slumps slightly.

“You two can stay here—”

The loud, aggressive cop knocks on the office door stop me mid-sentence.

I look at Blue, who shakes his head. He's not expecting anyone, either.

A glance at our security monitors make me swear. Cops have flooded the parking lot.

"We'll have to press the pause button on the test," I say dryly.

"Shit. We're being raided," Blue mutters.

"What?" Hel asks, alarmed.

"We pissed off the local city council. They've been gunning for us ever since." I wave her concern away. "There's nothing to find. Don't worry. It's an inconvenience at best, and they know it."

"What do we do?" She pulls the baby onto her lap, holding her close. Her fierce, protective tone and determined expression turn her into a warrior ready for action.

I curse my cock for the interest and look at Blue.

"No matter what you hear or see on screen, I want you to stay where we put you."

"Where you put me?"

"Come on. There's not much time."

Joining her, I grab her bag, and Blue extends his hand. She takes it, and he helps her stand, placing a supporting hand on the baby's back. The sight of them together makes my gut clench. They look like a family. My mind wars with the heart I've buried behind walls. The imagery in front of me forces me to remember a dream we've long given up on.

Could this be our one shot at the unconventional setup we've always wanted? Ignoring the wayward thought, I step to her right side, and we lead them inside of the closet.

I push aside the spare clothing and reach a panel. Finding the hidden seam, I push and open the hydraulic seal. It pops open, revealing a small room with two small cots, a tiny fridge, a bathroom, and a sink.

“The light switch is here. Once we close the door, no one will hear you.”

“What if we’re forgotten in here?” she asks in a high-pitched, shaky tone.

“You won’t be. There’s enough here for a week.” I hold out a hand. “Not that it will come to that.”

“We have to go,” Blue insists.

“Consider it an adventure.” I wink, stepping back.

I close the door, and her worried face and Morgan’s babble burn themselves into my mind’s eyes.

“That could be ours, Edan.”

“What are you thinking, Deni?” Using my given name means it’s serious.

“I can feel in my gut that Morgan is ours, and there’s something there with her aunt.”

I shake my head. “Don’t let a pretty face and a killer body cloud your thoughts.”

“The chemistry between the two of you damn near emitted sparks. That’s unusual for you.”

I scowl. “I never have a problem getting off with a woman. And you’re mistaken animosity for something else.”

“Physically? Sure. Not emotionally. Showing anything is a different story. She gets under your skin.” I hate his sly expression.

“No, she pisses me off.” I shrug as we head out of the closet, closing the door behind us as we enter the office.

“You think that’s all it is?” he asks skeptically.

“We’ve known her for less than twenty minutes. What else could it possibly be?” I ask dryly.

“Guess we’ll see,” he says cryptically.

“Don’t do that.”

I open the door, and we step out into chaos as Detective Johnson stalks through the door, flashing his badge and a sheet of paper I know will be a warrant. Lifting my hands with the others in the room, I count the ten officers filing in behind him.

“Detective Johnson. What brings you to our establishment this time?” I yell.

“Cut the shit, Goodwin. We’ve got you now.”

“I feel like I’ve heard this before. Three strikes and you’re out, Detective. We’ll be filing for harassment after this.”

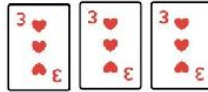
“Take it up with my lawyer. Boys, tear this place apart.”

I watch with mounting anger as they march into my business, escort out paying customers, and start flipping tables and dismantling booths. The muscles in my neck pulse.

Today is the last time I’ll stand down and watch him flex his pitiful muscle. He’s pissed because his daughter came to the bar to sample the Sinners and found she liked the taste.

Trying to shut us down won’t bring her back, and it’s time we remind the local officers how much power we have. I meet the older man’s brown eyes and grin. Payback is going to be a bitch.

CHAPTER
TWO



Hel There's nothing that suffocates the way total silence does. I can't hear what's happening beyond the room, and time flows like molasses.

Mo Mo babbles as she snacks on her food and plays with the toys I've laid out for her on the carpet. *This is why Lau didn't come to them for help.* What kind of life would my niece have?

Day one, and we're stuck hiding in a fallout shelter. My stomach bubbles as my throat dries out. What have I done? How can I get out of it?

If I tell them I made a mistake, they should be relieved. Mo Mo was a complication they hadn't expected. I lick my lips. They don't know my full name or anything discernable. If I'm fast enough, we can probably escape.

But then what? We're a few paychecks away from disaster. Limping along was only possible because I pulled her from daycare, who'd been kind enough to hold her spot for a couple of weeks to deal with the logistics of settling my sister's estate.

The clock is ticking down, and I've run out of patches to keep the holes in the dam from creating a catastrophic event.

Morgan tilts her head up and smiles. Her bright eyes dance with joy. She pauses, and they cloud over. Looking around, her brow wrinkles and her lips push together in a pout. Opening

her hand, she presses her thumb to her chin, tearing my soul to shreds as she makes the sign for mama.

“Mama’s gone.” I sign slowly.

She grunts and makes the sign once more, persistently.

“I’m sorry, baby. Mama’s gone.”

Her lower lip trembles. “Mama. Mama.” She signs rapidly.

Tears spill over and run down my cheeks. *I miss her too, little one.*

Lau was more than my big sister. She was my best friend. Irish twins, at nine months apart, we shared everything.

“I’m sorry.” I swipe the tears away from her red face as I choke on the knot in my throat.

A hiss sounds, and the door opens.

“The hell is going on in here?” Vex, the grumpy, asks.

“She misses her mother.” I clear my throat and wipe my tears away on my shoulder. “And I do, too.”

“That’s understandable. We are sorry for your loss. She was a sweet girl.”

“Ha. You expect me to believe you remember her?” I don’t need their false words of comfort.

“Sexy librarian? We one hundred percent remember her. A little taller than you.” Vex indicates the height with his hand. “Head full of curly hair, and a nice, curvy frame.”

“Soft-spoken but funny,” Blue adds, humanizing her in a way I desperately needed to hear.

I sniffle. “That’s my sister, Laudine.”

“We got the tests.” Vex holds up a bag.

“You can take it here if you’d like,” Blue adds.

“I realize how this must be for you. I didn’t think things through before I showed up out of nowhere. Maybe I made a mistake.” I clear my voice.

The twins exchange a look.

“You show up, drop this bomb, and now you’re trying to worm your way out of it?” Vex crosses his arms. “Worried about the results?”

“No.” I duck my head.

“Hey. We know this is unorthodox, but we’re here to make this as easy as possible.” Blue kneels. They might share the same face, but their attitudes and auras are completely different. “We want to get to the bottom of this and devise a plan to move forward.”

“I think it’d be best if I just go,” I whisper. I’d come in expecting to be in control of the negotiations and found myself outnumbered. They could take her from me, and I wouldn’t have a leg to stand on. Panic quickens my heartbeat.

“You’re seeing this through.” Vex’s words aren’t a suggestion.

“Why the sudden change of heart?”

I shake my head, not willing to show my weakness. I won’t draw them a map of the path of my destruction.

“This situation is much more complicated than I thought,” I share the half-truth.

“Because we’re not deadbeat dads who ignored your sister after she told us about the kid?” Vex arches an eyebrow. “Shouldn’t that be a good thing?”

“Her name is Morgan, and the jury is still out. I just spent hours locked in a room. If this is what you have to offer, I’ll pass.”

“You think we’d let you ride off into the sunset with what’s ours?” Vex growls.

“Yours? A DNA donation doesn’t make a child yours. It takes more than the act of creation to be a father.”

“Don’t forget that chance was taken from us,” Blue says.

“I had nothing to do with that,” I snap.

“No, but you want to treat us like men we aren’t,” Blue counters.

I hate his insinuation. “I want to keep my niece safe.”

“Ahh. You’re scared,” Vex rumbles.

I gape at him. *Is he taunting me?* “Any sane person would be.”

“That’s a man with a little bit of power and a grudge flexing his muscle. It won’t happen again,” Blue says in a steely voice that scares me as much as it arouses me.

“No, but something else might.” I bite my bottom lip.

“That’s life.” Vex grips my chin and pulls my face up to look at him. “We can’t stop living because we’re afraid.”

Morgan presses her small hand to his face, and I watch as the two connect gazes. His face softens, and I see a man who might be worth knowing. His lips curve up into a smile.

“Hi. How do you say hi in sign language?” Vex asks, surprising me.

“It looks like a salute,” I answer begrudgingly. The last thing I want to do right now is help him in any way.

“Ahhh.” Moving back, he casts a salute.

Morgan bounces in my arms, returning the sign before she claps.

Vex glances at me, confused.

“It’s rare that new people can sign. She’s excited to communicate,” I explain.

Vex’s face falls briefly. “That’s sad. She should be able to talk to people like everyone else.”

“I agree. That’s why I push for more sign language being used in schools.”

“You a teacher?” Vex asks.

“I will be once my degree is completed in a year.” I try not to hold his paranoia against him. Who knows what women have tried with them before. They didn’t ghost Lau and Morgan. It’s impossible to change my emotions toward them automatically, but I recognize it’s undeserved.

“Huh.” Vex smiles at Mo Mo, who offers him a bright green plastic coin to put in her toy piggy bank.

“Who will we be testing?” I ask as Blue grabs the bag and pulls out the tests.

“Both of us,” Vex says cockily, filling my head with images that make my pussy tingle.

“Oh,” I whisper.

Vex chuckles, and then his face grows stern. “I don’t want you to take this the wrong way, but how did this happen? Your sister assured us she had an implant.”

I bark a laugh. “Yeah, she did. Morgan came out clutching it in her hand when she was born. Talk about the one percent.”

“Are you serious?” Blue asks.

“I have the photo.”

Vex chuckles. “You’re a little hellion, aren’t you?” he asks, tickling her under her chin.

She’s enamored with him. Part of me is offended. It’s like the universe is conspiring against me.

“I thought you didn’t like kids,” I whisper, surprised by their easy interactions.

“Who said that?” Vex asks.

“Are you kidding me? You were a dick from the minute I told you about Morgan.”

Vex’s eyes flash to me. “I don’t like liars.”

“I’m not—”

“We’ll see about that,” he cuts me off.

I grind my teeth. The words coming out of his mouth don’t match his actions as he patiently plays with Mo Mo so his brother can prep the tests.

“You still doubt—”

“Paternity is not a thing one should assume without investigation.” There’s something hard and hostile in his

words. This is a sore spot. He's a prickly pear, and I don't want to find myself impaled on his spines.

"Got it." I clamp my mouth shut, remembering my mother's golden words. If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

Blue opens the package, fills out the paperwork, and applies the labels to the tube before he pops it open and swabs his mouth.

"Can you collect her sample?" Blue asks.

"Yeah." I nod. "Hey, Mo Mo. Open up. Ahhh." I show her my tongue, signing open mouth with one hand.

Giggling, she copies me, and I gently swab her cheek as she screws up her face at the strange sensation. Her look of betrayal makes me laugh.

"I'm sorry." I kiss her forehead, and she pulls away, irritated.

"Quite the personality," Blue says as he closes the top, sealing them both.

"Since day one, she's had a special way of getting her point across."

"Why doesn't she have hearing aids?" Vex asks.

"Those wouldn't work for her. She'd have to get a cochlear implant. It was our goal. We'd been saving up for it."

"Doesn't insurance cover that?" Blue asks.

"Not all the expenses, and we were living on a tight budget." I lift my head, refusing to feel ashamed about our limited resources. We did the best we could with what we had. I'm proud of all we've accomplished and the plans we made.

"But you were managing it, right?" Blue's voice drips with concern, and his expressive eyes are all too easy to drown in.

"Yes, because her job had a killer daycare plan. That alone can be as much as a mortgage." I grimace.

"We wouldn't know," Blue says quietly.

“Now you do.” I shrug. “How long will this take?”

“We’ll fast-track this one, but normally it’d take anywhere from forty-eight hours and up from when they receive it. We’ll know tomorrow.”

“Okay. I guess we’ll exchange numbers, and I’ll head home and wait for your call.” I begin to put Mo Mo’s things back into the travel bag.

“Yeah, no.” Vex shakes his head. “That’s not how this is going to go. You came here out of nowhere, blindsided us, and I’m not convinced you wouldn’t try to slip back into obscurity.”

I rock back on my heels, placing my hands on my hips. “You can’t hold us prisoner.”

“No, but we can host two guests in our home,” Blue adds.

I look from one brother to the other, noting the firm jaws and determined glint in their eyes. I’m already working from a deficit, being outnumbered and in their territory.

“And you think I’ll just roll over and take it because it’s what you want?” I look from Blue to Vex.

“I think you came to us,” Vex leans into my personal space, and I swallow hard as the scent of leather and amber engulf me, “and you asked us to take care of her.”

“We’re putting things into motion to make that possible. But you don’t get to decide how that happens,” Blue adds, closing me in.

“I will not be bullied.”

“We’re just setting the precedence. Neither of us is the type to be told what to do.” Vex’s voice is deep and husky. “But I think you got that picture already.”

“Like it or not, you’re involved with outlaws. We live by our own rules, and now you will, too.”

Blue’s words are a promise. I’m sliding down a hill with no breaks. I hate the spiral.

I refuse to back down. “I’m not turning our lives upside down.”

“That’s already happened. Better to set a new normal now,” Blue adds. He’s right, and I hate him for it. “We have to decide what that’ll look like together.”

The men exchange a look that sends a chill down my spine.

“I think it’s safe to say your days of living the way you were are currently over,” Vex says softly.

“What?” I asked, confused by his one-sixty.

“Our girl won’t want for anything. No more settling or putting off things she needs,” Blue adds.

I cringe. The words aren’t censure, but the guilt is prevalent.

“You won’t take her from me?” I whisper.

“Why the fuck would we do that? A girl needs her mama, and I can see you’re that maternal figure in her life. Besides, our jobs require ...” Vex looks at Blue.

“Flexibility,” Blue responds.

Vex grins. “Yeah. That.”

“Right. Because you’re in a gang—”

“Club. Always a club of motorcycle enthusiasts.” Vex’s words have weight.

“Okay. A club,” I whisper.

“Good girl. You learn fast.”

His husky voice awakens things inside of me I’d rather ignore.

Blue clears his throat. “Why don’t you take her to the house? I’ll oversee things here.”

“No,” I squeak.

They stare at me, and I clear my throat. “I don’t have what I need for an overnight with Mo Mo.”

“We need to know where you live anyway. Let’s go pack the little princess a bag.”

I grind my teeth together. They’ve turned into class-A clingers.

“Sounds great.” I flash him a fake smile that’s too toothy, and the bastard throws his head back and laughs.

“You’re going to be so much fun, Hel’s angel,” Vex says a little too cheerfully.

“Do not call me that,” I snap.

“No? I’ll keep working until I come up with something better.”

“Please don’t.”

“The more you protest, the more he’ll continue,” Blue cautions.

I keep my eyes trained on Vex. “Maybe he’ll find he met his match.”

“Oh, love, I’d like to see you try to match my energy.” His accent makes me want to groan.

“Funny ... you just met me and think you know something about me. You have a lot to learn.” I point my second finger at him.

“I’m going to get this on its way to the lab. Let me make sure the coast is clear.” Blue stands with the newly sealed envelope, leaving us alone.

“That goes both ways.” Vex’s voice is softer, more playful and less hostile.

What changed? He’s hot and cold and I can’t get a read on him.

“I’ve always excelled in academics.” I refuse to let him have the last word.

“Smart girls are sexy.” Vex winks.

I blink, disoriented by his abrupt shift in the conversation. He throws me off balance. If I’m not careful, he’s going to

twist me into knots. I don't have the time or mental capacity for those kinds of games.

“Thanks?”

“We don't get many girls like you around here. I'm going to enjoy that mouth.” He focuses in on my lips.

Mo Mo begins to sign, breaking the haze of lust that temporarily paralyzed me.

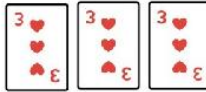
“What did she ask?” Vex asks.

“Who you are.” I study her sweet face, unsure of how to answer.

“A friend. Show me the sign.”

This man is a kaleidoscope of emotions and depth. I can't get lost in the beauty of the chaos.

CHAPTER
THREE



Blue
Surveying the destroyed expanse of the bar, I make an executive decision. I'm not needed to wade through the salvageable items and run protocol. I have other things to worry about.

"Rip." I wave over the dirty blond with arctic blue eyes. My assistant manager is used to acting in my stead at a moment's notice.

"Yeah, boss?" He walks over, sweeping refuse into a pile with his large push broom. Balancing his hands on the handle, he gives me his full attention.

"I need you to oversee the clean-up here."

"Alright." He glances over his shoulder. "We should have the place back in order in the next few hours. We might have to pull some of the stock from the warehouse. They were extra thorough in their search tactics today."

"Destructive fucks. The specialists will come in and detail after that." After every raid, we have to sweep for bugs.

We've found cameras and mics more times than I can count. They're stupid if they think we talk club business here.

The real place they're itching to get into is the Sinners' clubhouse, but we're too protected for that. Sin Den is the closest they can come to encroaching on our space.

"We'll be ready for them and reviewing the footage," Rip promises.

“Note any times of interest,” I remind him.

He nods. “I’ll leave the list on your desk.”

“Appreciate it, brother.” Leaving feels strange. It’s the protocol that I remain here overseeing things when Vex can’t, but the bomb dropped on us has me scrambling to get ahead of the blast zone.

With the business under control, I move outside and pull out my phone.

“Hello?” the deep voice rumbles on the line.

“Tech, I need you to run some names and plates through the wringer.”

“You want a full workup?” he asks groggily.

“I want to know everything from where she went to preschool to her prom date.”

“Full service. Got it. Names?” I hear a pen scratching on paper.

After I give him the name, I tell him, “Tech, I need this yesterday.”

“I got to go to work, babe. Time to go,” Tech says.

I snicker at the girl’s whine and the mattress’ creak as their bodies shift.

“I’m on this right now, brother.”

“Thank you.”

Next, I call our president, King.

“Heard you had a visitor again,” King says.

“Yeah,” I grunt. “It’s time we bury the hatchet in the grudge.”

“How do you plan to do that?” King asks immediately.

“You’re putting this on me?” I ask, exasperated. “I never dated Kelly.”

“Yeah, but it was a club party at the Sin Den, and you always said you and Vex were a package deal, so it falls to

both of you.”

I swear. “I hear you. I have something I cooked up while the good detective was trashing Sin Den. He needs to be knocked down a few pegs and reminded that we control his livelihood.”

“I like where this is headed.”

“Why don’t we feed him some false information? Let him come for us. Make it public—”

“You know I don’t like the P word.”

“Community compassion goes a long way and puts a lot of pressure on the establishment.”

King grumbles. “Keep going.”

“He busts in, expecting a shady deal, but we’re hosting a community event for battered women.” I click my tongue. “It’d be a shame to catch all that on video. Poor, innocent ladies looking to get back on their feet only to be re-traumatized by the local police force.”

President chuckles. “Who from the Sinners do you want to put on this?”

“That’s the beautiful part ... his daughter.” I grin.

“Maybe he’ll get it through his head that she doesn’t need saving.”

“One can hope. Either way, his time heading raids will come to an end. They’ll force him to retire at his age or risk ruining his legacy.”

“I think we could press the captain to present that option.” The man’s been on our payroll for years. It’s time we press him to push his power around again.

I clear my throat. “I also had something else come up.”

“You’re the bearer of good news,” King says sarcastically.

“I have a daughter.”

King coughs. “What?” he croaks.

“A case of malfunctioning birth control. We’re running tests now, but one look at this kid is all anyone would need.”

“Jesus. What’s the mom want?” he asks, immediately getting down to business.

“She’s dead.”

“Fuck. Who contacted you? Social services? You know, government officials make me itchy.”

“No, the aunt, who’s her official guardian.”

“So, you’re going to do the child support thing?”

“Nah. I want to be involved.”

“And how do you plan on making that work? You know the commitment you made still stands.”

“I do. We’re hashing it all out with the aunt this weekend.”

“And who is this mysterious aunt?”

“Helaine Miller. I got Tech working on her info now.”

“Make sure this isn’t going to be a problem. Come on down to Kid’s Haven and get her enrolled. I’ll let Emily know you’re coming. That’ll take care of the daycare, at least. Shit costs an arm and a leg nowadays. It’s why we started it up with our Old Ladies in the first place.”

“It was a smart move. We make a lot doing it, and take care of our own.”

“You know we’re upstanding, respectable types here in Oakland.”

I laugh. “Yeah. It’s a wonder one of us hasn’t run for office.”

“What else do you need from me?”

“Your blessing to bring her into the fold if she comes up clean.”

“Give me more information on what that’ll look like.”

“I want her to be property of Vex and me.”

President whistles. “Are you sure she’s not the mother?”

I scoff. “No, but I want Hel to be protected as she learns to navigate our world.”

“You do your digging and present this question again.”

“I’m on it.” My conscience protests. Potentially I could be putting a target on both of their backs. Being connected to an MC isn’t without its downside. *Do the perks outweigh the risks, or am I being selfish?*

When we joined, we were looking for a place to belong, distracting us from everything we lost. We’d thrown ourselves into this thing completely. It worked then. There was no one else to worry about. Now things have changed.

But it’s our kid. Regardless of what the DNA testing reveals, we’ll raise the kid together and treat it as our own. My brother and I habitually share everything, including our woman. It started with liking the same girls and grew to be giving one person everything we had to offer.

Knowing if something happened to one of us, our woman wouldn’t be left alone appealed to us on a primal level. Seeing our mother struggle after our father died left a lasting impression on us. We’d lost the house we grew up in and our car. For years she’d struggled to get out from beneath the debt he left behind.

This was the only way we’d start a family and feel secure. Even now, if we both fell, the club would step up. That alone makes introducing them worth it. They need a support system; we can give them a whole network outside of just the two of us. Like I always do when my moral compass feels skewed, I call my direct line into morality.

“Cousin. What do I owe the pleasure?” I smile at the familiar voice.

“Preach. I need some advice.”

“Ah. What hat am I putting on? Preacher or cousin.”

“Both.”

The mirth fades from his tone. “That sounds serious.”

“More serious than anything I’ve ever brought to you before.”

“Give me a minute.” The loud music and boisterous voices fade. “Alright. Lay it on me.”

“Found out earlier that Vex and I are parents.”

“Both? Did you synchronize pregnancies?” he asks, amused.

“No. Until the DNA test comes in, we’re not sure who the bio father is, but you know how we do relationships.”

“Aye. Does the mother?”

“She’s deceased. Her sister, Hel, our daughter’s guardian, tracked us down. We had no idea. You know we’d never bail on our kid.”

“I do. But it’ll be your job to make sure the aunt understands that. To her, you’re a stranger. There’s no telling what her mother said or didn’t say. Be sure you’re patient. This woman is dealing with grief and a new role as a parent. Alone those things are a lot; together, they could crush someone.”

It’s the wisdom I expected from him. “Do you think we’re being selfish?”

“In what way?”

“Bringing them into this life?”

Preach sighs. “Seems the universe made that decision when you two created a life. This is your bairn; I won’t tell you to stay away from her because of the club. I did that, and we see how well it turned out.” He pauses. “Safe isn’t always better. Letting what-ifs make your choices for you is a crap shoot, and we both know bad things can happen anywhere.”

“Was that Preach or Edwin talking?”

“That was Edwin the Sinner talking. Preacher says be sure you’re ready to keep them safe. Tell her the rules, and talk out how this will work realistically. There’s no half-ass when it comes to family. Decide how it’ll look. Will this woman know

nothing about the organization and have no ties to the Sinners, or will you tell her the bare minimum and trust her to keep it to herself? A child needs as much love and support as possible. You know the club is here to provide that.”

“I do.” This club saved me and my twin from a dark road. Leaving England and joining something bigger than ourselves was the best move we’d ever made.

“You have to be on the same page with Vex, too. He’s still drowning in the past. Moving forward is impossible when you can’t see through the darkness surrounding you.”

“If you saw him with Morgan—”

“Is that her name?”

“Yeah. She’s adorable with curly hair, golden skin, and big, blue eyes. She’s deaf. Hel came looking for us because she needs help providing her with everything she needs.”

“Sounds like a woman with her head on her shoulders,” Preach mumbles.

“It looks that way. But the records will shed more light. She’s going to school to be a teacher specializing in sign language. I think she switched to be able to advocate for our daughter.”

“Why do I sense there’s more to this story?”

“She’s smoking hot and already put Vex in his place. For someone so small, she’s freaking fearless.”

Preach chuckles. “Is she small, or did you forget you are giants?”

“Fair enough. I see the potential to make this work for all of us as a family.”

“You’re moving at warp speed, aren’t you?”

“I haven’t felt a spark like this between another woman and us in years. I can’t see missing out on the opportunity.”

“Sounds like you’ve already made up your mind. Best be sure Vex is on board. That boy doesn’t like being out of the loop.”

“You’re right. Thank you.”

“I want to meet this daughter of yours. Sooner rather than later.”

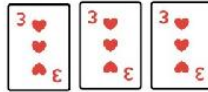
“Let me keep the mother from running, and we’ll set something up.”

He snickers. “Good luck. Something tells me you’re going to need it.”

“Appreciate you, cousin.” I hang up feeling clearer than I have in a long time. I won’t make the same mistake as before.

I’ll take the time to get to know her and check her history, but I won’t let the past destroy what could be before we even feel things out. My brother and I have been running for a long time. It’s time we focus on healing and moving forward as fully formed adults. If nothing else, our daughter deserves the best we have to offer. Giving her less would be allowing that bitch who tore us to pieces to win. It’s time we take back that power and those pieces of ourselves that remained broken.

CHAPTER
FOUR



Hel Kidnapping is illegal in all fifty states, but I know the leather-vest-wearing bikers who've pressured me into staying in their home don't give a shit about that. I watch Grumpy and Mo Mo wear each other out.

I curse my ovaries for their twinges as the large man chases her around the living room he's baby proofed. They look good together. It's clear they're family. I'm shocked and envious of how Mo Mo has taken to the sexy asshole.

I'm not used to sharing her with anyone other than my sister. Melancholy makes my eyes water. I blink away the moisture and glance around the two-story home with three and a half bathrooms, six bedrooms, a man cave, and a game room any man would kill for. It's a bachelor pad for men who have money to burn. We don't belong here, regardless of the shared DNA.

A life where the police can sweep in at a moment's notice isn't a life I can afford to get caught up in. They'd take her away quicker than I could blink.

I shudder at the thought of my sweet niece lost in an overcrowded system where she won't get the best chance at life makes me queasy. I'll find a way to get by. Money isn't worth the risk.

Shame fills me. I hadn't thought this through. I knew what Vex and Blue were when I started stalking them, but I saw only dollar signs.

Now they know Mo Mo exists, and they can track us down with our DNA and names on file. Swallowing hard, I shake off my worry. The voice in my head is screaming at me to get us out of here and worry about the rest on the way home.

I tore down the wall between us and them. I hadn't prepared for how vulnerable it would make us.

Did I truly assume things would go smoothly? The last two years have been a roller coaster ride; we've done our best to navigate and survive.

I threw myself into rearing Mo Mo so I didn't have to look at my failed relationship and the loneliness I was drowning in. Everyone thought I was sacrificing everything to help my sister, but the three of us saved each other.

Mo Mo giggles as Grumpy tickles her, and I shake my head. How is this the same man who's been busting my chops at every turn?

My niece has already wrapped him around her tiny finger. *She's already lost her mother. Are you going to take away a doting father and an uncle?*

A high-pitched whistle gains my attention.

"What does this sign mean?" Vex asks.

Mo Mo makes a C and moves it from her throat to her belly.

"She's hungry."

"Can she eat pasta?" he asks.

"Yeah, that'd be great actually."

"Don't sound so surprised. Kid's got to eat. I'll get the food going if you've rejoined us on planet

Earth so you can watch her."

"Are you doubting my ability to take care of my niece?" Crossing my arms, I sit up straight, scooting to the edge of the couch.

He shrugs, and I scowl. “Everything is easier when you have two sets of hands. I’d know.”

“I didn’t switch to one set by choice.”

His face softens, and he holds up a hand. “I didn’t say you did. But the fact is, we’re more qual—”

“Don’t you fucking say it. You know less than nothing about raising Mo Mo. What are her allergies? When’s her bedtime? What’s her favorite food?”

“Those are all things you can learn in time—”

“And in the meanwhile, when her schedule is turned upside down, and she’s miserable, what then? You can’t even sign, and you have none of her history, doctor’s information, or therapy instructions. She needs more than the average toddler. And this age is a lot of work, period.”

His jaw turns to granite.

I meet his burning azure gaze, refusing to back down. “We’ve worked hard to make Mo Mo thrive, and I’ll be damned if you come in like a bull in a China shop and wreck what we’ve built.”

“And yet you aren’t doing that great if you had to hunt us down and beg us—”

I jump up. “I didn’t beg you for shit! I asked you to participate in rearing the child you helped create!”

“But only on your terms, right?” He shakes his head and curls up his lip. “You put yourself in the power position and planned to crush us beneath your high heels. Well, you picked the wrong two men to fuck with.”

“What the hell are you talking about? You’re not even making sense.”

Mo Mo’s wail ends the heated argument. I rush forward and lift her from the ground. “I’m sorry, sweetie. Did we scare you?” Swaying to the left and right, I drop kisses onto her head as I wipe away her tears. “Were we making scary faces? Everything’s okay now, sweet girl.” I hate the way this bastard makes me lose my cool.

Grumbling like the troll he is, Vex walks out of the living room and to the kitchen.

“Let’s go for a little walk, huh? We’ll get some sunshine and let Mr. Grumpy cook your food.” Keeping my gaze on the blue-eyed giant, I walk to the front door. He turns on the water to fill a pot, and I grab my purse off the counter before I rush outside. This might be the one chance I get to escape.

After unlocking the door, I rush outside as Mo Mo’s wails become a snuffle. Digging into my purse, I pull out the emergency container of Cheerios. “I know it’s not gourmet, but it’ll do ’til we’re far away from here.”

Walking swiftly to the car, I use the keypad to unlock the vehicle as I press the alarm button and pray he doesn’t hear me. I open the door, quickly latch her into her seat, and ease the door shut.

Finally, I take a deep breath. “God, please help me get the hell out of here.” I turn the engine over and throw the car into reverse.

Hauling ass down the driveway as fast as I dare with my niece in the car, I keep my eye on the end of the driveway. I’m halfway down the lengthy monstrosity when a dark sedan pulls in at top speed.

I slam on the brakes and steer my car to the side, praying it’ll blow by me. When it pulls to a stop, and a man in a dark suit steps out, I curse. If it weren’t for bad luck lately, I wouldn’t have any.

He walks over to my window and taps, holding up a badge. I roll down the window.

“Can I help you, Officer?”

“Detective Johnson, and I think I should be asking you that. You were coming down the driveway pretty damn fast to have a minor in the car.”

“Just wanted to get on the road to keep the baby’s schedule.”

“Right,” he says dryly, extending the r. “License and registration, ma’am.”

“May I ask what this is about?”

“Are you refusing to show your identification?” His voice hardens, and his eyes narrow. He reaches down to touch his side, and my heart pounds in my chest.

“I ... N-No, sir.” I try to steady my shaking hand as I reach toward the glove compartment.

“Nice and easy.” His lip twitches up, and I can tell the sick bastard enjoys every second of my discomfort.

I pull the latch up, and the door opens. I grip the black rectangle that holds everything he needs.

After unzipping it, I pull out the registration and move to open my purse.

“I said no sudden movements. Get out of the car.”

“Wh-What?”

“Now.” He pulls his weapon.

My throat damn near closes, and I lift my hands.

“Unbuckle your seatbelt.”

I lower my shaking hand.

“Slowly,” he barks.

My vision blurs as I push the red button, and the buckle unlatches. The belt slides up my chest, and I watch the detective, waiting for further instructions.

He opens the door and grabs my arm, pulling me out of the vehicle. He shuts the driver’s door and slams me up against it.

“Did you think pulling a weapon was a good idea?”

“N-No. I don’t have a weapon.”

“Is that right? So if I search this car, it’ll be clean?”

My mind flashes to the pink taser beneath the seat. “Yes. I mean n-no. I have a perfectly legal—”

He presses my face into the glass. “I’ll be the judge of that, Mrs. ...”

“He-Helaine Miller.”

“The fuck do you think you’re doing?” I’ve never been so excited to hear Grumpy’s voice. I hadn’t heard him approach.

“Making things personal. The way you are.” He twists my arm behind my back, and I cry out at the sharp pain that shoots up my arm.

“I’m going to break your arm, Johnson.”

“Is that a threat, Vex?” He clucks his tongue. “Not smart.”

“You have no reason to be on our property.”

“It’s not nice when people come and piss in your yard and terrorize your family, is it?”

“Your daughter chose to start a new life away from you. There’s no crime in that.”

“You’re keeping her from talking to me.” His voice raises an octave, and his hands shake.

I make eye contact with Vex, silently begging him for help.

Gritting my teeth, I struggle against the wave of tears threatening to spill free. An engine revs and tires squeal on the blacktop.

Smoke blows in, clogging my nose and tickling my throat. I cough as the liquid falls from my eyes, as they begin to burn.

Blinking, I’m suddenly free and yanked to the side. I rub my eyes and turn to the left to watch Blue smash Johnson against his car.

“You’re suspended. And stupid and reckless showing up here without police backing.”

Johnson laughs bitterly. “You’re not the only one with friends in the department. See, I went home sick before they issued that suspension. I’m here to show you I can fight dirty, too.”

Yanking him away from his car, Blue shoves him to the ground.

“You come back on my property again, and this will end with one of us six feet under.”

The eerie smile that lines the detective’s thin lips sends a chill up my spine. “Statistically, most accidents occur close to the home, not in it.”

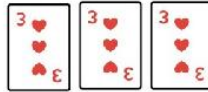
The implied threat is unmistakable.

A quick kick to his stomach doubles him over.

“You want a war? We’ll give you one.” Blue spits, and I cringe. “You’ve got less than sixty seconds to get into your car and off my property before you find yourself leaving in a body bag.”

Pushing himself up, the detective limps to his car without another word. Blue stalks forward while Johnson backs around his car and out the driveway. I just landed myself in deep shit.

CHAPTER
FIVE



Vex

“The hell were you thinking?” I yell at the woman clinging to my shirt to stay upright on her wobbly legs.

“I-I don’t—”

“You could’ve been hurt,” I speak through clenched teeth. “Shit. Were you?” I pull her body to mine to help with the shock probably threatening to set in. I smooth my hands over her back and down her arms, studying her reaction. She trembles, and my temper flares bright.

“I thought you were smart, college girl.” I fist her hair, and she whimpers. A flash of heat flows through my body. Was that shock or desire that flashed in Hel’s dark brown eyes?

“Ease up on her, Vex. I’m sure she had her reasons,” Blue insists.

I ignore him, refusing to meet his calming gaze. I don’t want to go easy on Hel. This isn’t her world. The sooner she learns that the safer she and Mo Mo will be.

“What good reason is there for putting a target on your back? Johnson isn’t going to let up. You wanted to get away so damn bad, and now you have no choice but to stay.”

“No.” She shakes her head.

“Yes.” I lean down until I can feel the warm breath expelled from between her plump lips. “He’s going to track you down and wait for a chance to get you alone. What would’ve happened to you today if we hadn’t come along?”

“I-I didn’t do anything.”

“Your crime is being associated with us—”

“That’s why I had to leave,” she says desperately. “She ... I can’t have Mo Mo taken away from me.”

“You think we wouldn’t protect the two of you?” Blue cups her face and turns her head to look at him. “I know this is a lot to process, but we’ll guide you through it if you let us.”

“If you don’t believe anything else, know that family is everything for me and Blue.”

She looks at me and back to Blue. “Morgan is my life. I can’t—” Her voice cracks. “I can’t let anything happen to her.”

“We’re here to make your life easier. We want to be a part of her life, not take her from you,” Blue insists.

“But you said you were more equipped.”

Blue flashes me a look that screams what the fuck.

“We have more resources, yeah. I didn’t mean we were kicking you to the curb and doing a crash course in fatherhood.” I glance over her shoulder at the trees lining the property to keep from tearing into her. I growl, putting a tight hold on my temper.

“How could I know that?” she barks.

“Well, if you sat and talked to us instead of bailing, you might have found out,” I say caustically.

She pushes away from me as the fire inside of her roars back to life.

“There she is.”

“Who?”

I prefer her snarkiness to fear.

“The spicy, pink-weapon-wielding warrior, who stomped into our life in her black chucks and faced down the scariest motherfucker we know without batting an eyelash.”

“You?” She wrinkles her nose, and Blue barks out a laugh.

“I don’t think she’s impressed, Vex.”

“I think she is.” I tug her hair.

Her lids lower before she steps away. I release her, chuckling. I’m a man who likes a challenge, and this spitfire has captured all my attention.

“You ready to head back in and hash things out like responsible adults? I have some burned-ass pasta waiting.”

She winces.

“How did you burn pasta?” Blue asks with a laugh.

“Hel decided to make her grand escape after I started prepping dinner.”

“Why?” Blue asks.

She glances away. “I freaked. I’m not okay with what happened back at the bar.”

“And you think we are?” Blue lifts a brow.

“No, but your setup told its own story. You’re used to this —”

“We prepare for the worst, so when it happens, we’re ready,” I correct her.

“And that includes raids?”

“Do we have to explain how crooked the government is and why we need to go to extreme lengths? There are no good guys and bad guys. It’s people with money and power using them as they see fit. That’s truly the American way.”

Pursing her lips, she gives a curt nod.

“Like it or not, that’s the game. We didn’t make the rules.” Blue shrugs as he moves to the car’s back door and extracts Mo Mo.

“I like how you talk so cavalierly about breaking the law.” She runs a hand over her face.

“Who said anything about illegal activities, Sweet Tart.”

“Really with the Sweet Tart?” she snaps.

“Sour and sweet. Fits you perfectly.” She rolls her eyes, but I see her smirk. “Glad you agree.”

“I said nothing.”

“Your face told me everything I needed to know.”

“I wouldn’t count on that.”

She’s a tempting snack I need to curb my craving for. There’s much more to think about in this situation than my dick.

“You keep issuing those challenges, and I will eventually take you up on one.”

Her eyes widen, and for a second, I see that flicker of desire I’d caught before. I lick my lips, and she focuses in on the action.

“You two coming?”

“O-Of course.” Clearing her throat, she turns, and I grab her wrist gently.

Pausing, she peers over her shoulder. “You ever run from me again, be ready to be chased, captured, and taught a lesson. This was your first get-out-of-jail-free card, Sweet Tart.”

Her lips part, and her chest rises and falls faster. Whether or not she admits it, she likes being told what to do.

“So, I’m a prisoner?”

I shrug. “If you choose to see it that way. Our first objective is to keep you two safe. Whether or not you like how we choose to do that is irrelevant.”

“Tyrant.”

“Some of the best leaders are.” She tugs her arm away, and I tighten my grip. “You may have Blue fooled, but I think deep down you want someone to step in and help you shoulder the heavy load you’re carrying. We can do that, but only if you let us.”

“I don’t even know you—”

“But you know we’re bound together for at least the next sixteen years. Why not make it enjoyable?” I tighten my hold slightly. “Think about it.” Releasing her, I shove my hands into the pockets of my jeans and crowd the space behind her. “Let’s head in. I don’t like being out here after what just went down. We’ll call in reinforcements.”

“Reinforcements?”

“Let me introduce you to a thing called prospects. They’re wonderful worker bees trying to earn their place in the hive and do whatever they’re told.”

“You have freaking house elves?”

Throwing my head back, I laugh. “I might like you yet, Sweet Tart.”

“We’ll see.” She throws my words back to me and quickens her pace.

I admire the sway of her hips and the apple-shaped ass I want to sink my teeth into.

Hell of a time to find myself new prey.

Inside, I open the windows and turn on the fan above the stove, order food, and call in prospects before I call the president.

“What did you do now?” King asks.

I chuckle. “Why do you always assume it’s on me?”

“History tends to repeat itself.”

“Detective Johnson appeared at the house and put his hands on what was ours.”

“Your daughter?” King asks, pissed.

“No, he’s still breathing. Her aunt.”

“Fuck.”

“Said he was going to play dirty and had friends in the department, too.”

King exhales. “All this over a woman?”

“We both know it’s about control. He feels we’ve taken away his power, professionally and personally.”

“Why don’t you use that brain of yours more often, Vex?”

“I use it when it’s necessary.”

“Right. What do you want me to do?”

“Keep an eye on him. I’m going to call in some prospects to watch the boundaries and escort our ladies. He’s going to try to get to us through them.”

“The weakest link is always the easiest target. I’ll make some calls and keep you two posted.”

“We appreciate it, Pres.”

“If anything else happens, I want to know immediately.”

“Always.”

“Good. Man, I’ll get to work on this. I expect to see the women you’re bending over backward to protect soon.”

“Heard.”

We hang up, and I put my cell into my pocket and return to the kitchen. The sight of Blue and Hel in the kitchen with Mo Mo on her hip does funny things to the organ in my chest. It makes the house feel like a home. Swallowing, I push the unfamiliar feeling away and clear my throat.

“I updated King on things and called over Fetch and Torque.” Blue nods his head as he continues to make a fresh batch of pasta.

“What did he say?” Blue asks.

“He’s making a few calls and keeping an eye on things.” I keep my tone casual as the two move around each other. Their comfort level irritates me. Why is she so at ease with him

Blue grunts.

“Was he upset?” Hel asks. Leaning against the granite counter a few feet down from the large country style white sink, she keeps Morgan calm, by rubbing her back in circular motions.

“No. But he expects to meet you.” I nod toward her.

Her face twists in horror.

“Soon, but not right now. I think this incident bumped up the time frame,” I admit.

“Who, Morgan or me?”

“Both of you.”

Her eyes widen. “Why?”

“Because we’re a family. Unorthodox and rough around the edges, maybe, but we take care of each other.”

“There’s an order to things.” Blue glances over at me, and I see the nervousness in his eyes. “Steps to follow before we can welcome in new family officially.”

“What? Do I have to be jumped in? Have my finger pricked so I can co-mingle our bloodlines?” Despite her bravado, I see the fear in the depths of her eyes as she holds Mo Mo tighter.

“Nothing like that, Sweet Tart. Consider it a meet-the-parents moment if one of the parents happened to belong to the FBI. So if you have secrets, now would be the time to reveal them.”

“What do you mean by secrets?”

“Skeletons that dance in closets waiting to pop out and change how people view you.”

Biting her lower lip, she shakes her head.

I frown. “That doesn’t look convincing, Sweet Tart.”

“There were vandalism charges that got dropped,” she mumbles, lowering her gaze.

“What’s a nice girl like you doing with a record?” I study her face carefully.

“I don’t have a record.” She sniffs.

“An almost record, then.”

“I’m not the type of girl who takes being cheated on lying down.”

I couldn’t help the grin that spread across my face. “You hear that, Blue? Sweet Tart has a dark side. Maybe we won’t have to corrupt her after all. Just bring out what’s already there.”

“Stop.”

“I can’t help but wonder what kind of an idiot would cheat on a woman like you,” Blue says smoothly.

“A self-important prick with more money than brains. I thought my ex had more character than he did. I won’t make that mistake twice.” She smiles devilishly. “Then again, neither will he. Not all women are willing to turn the other cheek and lay back and take whatever he’s going to give.”

“So, you’d rather be the one running the show?”

She tilts her head. “I never said that.”

Mo Mo makes the sign I recognize for hungry as Blue dishes her up half a bowl of pasta buttered with a small pinch of parmesan cheese into a plastic bowl.

“How’s this?” I ask.

“It’s perfect.”

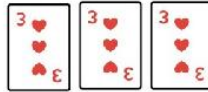
Mo Mo claps.

“She agrees,” I say with a smile.

The kid is irresistible. Her presence soothes the anger living under my skin, filling a space I thought I’d carry with me forever. A part of me, she’s a safe person to love on. Babies don’t yet know about malice and manipulation. I’ll make sure my girl is nothing like those who play with men’s hearts, turning them into puppies who follow behind them mindlessly, willing to do whatever she demands.

She smiles at me, and I feel the bond forming between us deepen. DNA be damned, she’ll be as much my daughter as she is Blue’s. We need to explain that to Sweet Tart.

CHAPTER
SIX



Blue
“She’s out,” Hel whispers as she steps away from the door. “I’m ready for you to tell me exactly what I stumbled into.” Lifting her chin, she squares her shoulders as she rejoins us in the living room.

“Where do we start?” Vex trails his hungry gaze over her frame, and I elbow him in the side. She’s already rattled. Putting her even more on edge won’t make her more receptive.

“After this afternoon, I think we should start with a drink.”

Exhaling, she relaxes, and her shoulders lower. “I’m down with that.”

I stand. “Beer okay?”

“What kind?”

“Lager.”

“Perfect.” She nods.

“Sit. I’ll get it.”

Cautiously, she lowers herself onto the edge of the cushion farthest from Vex. He flashes her a wolfish grin and closes the space, scooting to his right. He likes the chase. Every sidestep only makes him want her more. He’s used to women falling in his lap. So, her rejection is amusing as hell.

Opening the fridge, I pull out three bottles of beer, pop the tops, and return to find Hel glowering at my smirking brother.

“What did I miss?”

“Just trying to help our guest relax,” Vex answers smoothly.

She huffs. “I don’t think the word guest means what you think it does.”

“Someone we want to make comfortable and provide with hospitality.” Vex stretches his arm behind her on the couch as he widens his legs, man sprawling.

“You say hospitality, but I hear dick.”

Vex shrugs a shoulder. “The guest is always right.”

She shakes her head, but there’s no real anger on her face as she accepts the beer I hold out.

“We keep our women and children separate from the immediate danger. What happened earlier today was a one-off. Detective Johnson’s gone rogue. He’s a man abusing his power over some lame personal vendetta,” I explain.

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

She takes a long draw off her beer, and I watch her long neck as she swallows. I get her need for information, but I can’t change the rules for her.

“Civilians are kept informed on a need-to-know basis. That means you need to do what we tell you to do because it’s important.” I’m walking a careful line, honoring my commitment to the club while opening up my life to a new person who’s unfamiliar with our life.

“Just like that, huh?” She snaps her fingers and wrinkles her button nose. Lips pressed into a line, she shakes her head. “You say jump, and I say how, high?” She scoffs. “That’ll never happen.”

“How do you propose we keep you safe then? We belong to Sin City, M.C., not you. That means club business stays with club members.” Vex’s eyes harden with his words.

“I never said I was. I don’t aspire to join criminal enterprises.” Her words are sharp daggers set to maim.

“Quick to judge, aren’t you?” Vex trails his fingers down her shoulder.

She shrugs off his caress. “Lay down with dogs, and you’re bound to catch fleas.”

His eyes flash. “You calling us dogs now?”

“Before you answer that, remember we’re in this together. Morgan is our main priority. We’re still strangers, and everyone’s emotions are running high from earlier. Turning on each other never ends well.” Leaning forward, I rest an elbow on my thigh as I peer up at her.

I watch the irritation slowly leave her face as my words hit.

“You plan on letting Sweet Tart run her mouth?” Vex asks, amused.

I ignore his shit stirring.

“For all she knows, we are criminals.” I sit up and turn my body on the couch to face her. “We don’t harm people who don’t deserve it.”

She opens her mouth, and I hold up a hand. “And that’s all you need to know.”

After draining the rest of my beer, I set it on the white stone coaster on top of the heavy walnut cocktail table. If we don’t figure this out, things are going to go badly for all of us.

“I know you’ve been the one handling everything, but that’s over. You won’t be doing this alone anymore.” I rest my hand on her knee.

“Are you threatening to take her?” She glances from me to Vex warily.

“No. Jesus. No one will take Morgan from you.” This isn’t going the way I need it to.

“Can you put that promise in writing?” Her voice is small but firm.

“You calling us liars?” Vex counters.

Her eyebrows furrow. “I’ve known you less than twenty-four hours, and I’m already trapped here. It’s not giving me reassurance that things are going to run smoothly from here on out.”

“You’re only here until we make things right,” Vex says.

“Which we will. Nothing important will change in the meantime. You’ll be escorted to your classes, Mo Mo’s appointments, and whatever else you need,” I add.

“Why would you do that?”

“Because Morgan’s ours, and you fall under the same category by default.”

“I belong to myself.”

“And how’s that working for you, Sweet Tart?”

Her jaw ticks at his nickname.

“Look. You’ve gone from a team to a solo player. Let us help. There’s no reason to drown when a lifeboat is coming up beside you.”

“At what cost?” she whispers, looking like we’re asking her to make a deal with the devil.

“You take care of our daughter. What’s ours is yours,” Vex adds.

“No one—”

“We don’t live like most people. I’m sure you figured that out by now.” There’s no easing her into a new reality when we’re under attack.

“How do I know you won’t change your mind and try to go for full custody?” Her lower lip trembles.

“Because we want what’s best for her ... that’s you. But you have to be okay to do that.”

She places a hand over mine on her knee and holds on tight. The sorrow in her eyes makes my heart ache in sympathy. I can’t imagine living without Vex; he’s like my right arm.

“Take the time to grieve properly,” I encourage her.

Her eyes shimmer. Looking away, she swipes at her face.

“Where’s the rest of your family during all this, Sweet Tart?” Vex’s voice is softer and more concerned. He’s warming up to her.

“They’re around, but in no condition to contribute financially.”

“Perk of being a Sinner; there’s always enough to go around.” I smile at her, and she gives me a small nod.

“Yeah, I can see that.” She swallows, exhaling deeply. “This is ... all new.”

“We get that. It’s why you need to follow our instructions,” I say gently.

“I’ll never be a yes woman, but I can try to meet you in the middle.”

Vex meets my gaze, and I incline my head, letting him take over the conversation. I’m a chisel and he’s a hammer. Right now, we need the heavy tools to get through to her.

“Sounds like you’ve never been taken care of properly.”

“I take care of myself just fine,” she says weakly.

“And now you don’t have to.” I scoot closer until our bodies brush each other.

“Trust is earned, not blindly given,” she retorts.

“It also goes both ways. If you remain closed off, we won’t get far,” Vex says, playing devil’s advocate.

“Why don’t we start by getting to know each other?”

She lets her weight rest against me and smiles. “That I can do.”

“I like it best when you’re sweet and agreeable,” Vex says.

She rolls her eyes.

“Drink up, Sweet Tart. It’s easier to relax with a little lubrication.”

“Filthy, one-track mind.”

“It comes in handy.” I slide my hand up her thigh and squeeze.

She shivers, allowing the contact. The chemistry between us is electric. I tip the bottom of her bottle up as she drinks it and wink. Her pupils dilate, and my heart beats a little faster.

She swallows. “With your groupies?”

“You mean the Angels, our lovely sin supporters,” I correct her, laughing when she snickers and mouths the words. “And no. The only woman we’re concerned with is you.”

“Oh.”

Her breathy response goes straight to my dick. I shift my weight to relieve the pressure against my jeans as I grow hard.

“Time for another round.” Vex grabs our empty beer bottles and moves to the kitchen.

“He’s more than innuendos and swagger you know?”

She turns her head to face me with a thoughtful expression. “I know Laudine. It’d take more than pretty eyes, tight bodies, and slick words to rope my sister into a threesome.”

What would it take to convince you to give us a try?

She licks her lips as if she heard my thoughts. I run my hand up and down her inner thigh, watching as she parts her legs slightly.

“It started with knowing the origins of her name. Mum read us *King Arthur*, among other classics.”

“A woman after my own heart. My mom’s an English teacher, so that I can relate.”

For a moment, with her guard down, the sight is breathtaking. I want more of the woman she works so hard to hide from the world.

“What’s expected of me in this world you belong to?” She bites her bottom lip.

I untuck her lip from her teeth with my opposite hand.
“Don’t do that.”

“Why not?”

I grin. “If you really want to find out, do it again.”

She clears her throat. “The club rules?”

You can run, but you can’t hide from this forever.

“Respect all the brothers, keep anything you happen to overhear to yourself, and know that the club is first.”

She frowns. “I thought you wanted to participate in Mo Mo’s life. You can’t be half in and half out.”

“And we won’t be. You’ll remain her main caregiver. I don’t know how all the moving parts will work. We already have a demanding prior commitment—”

“But that doesn’t mean we’ll be deadbeats,” Vex interjects, handing her a bottle.

She nods her thanks. “No one can be in two places at once.”

“No, but you’ve already met two of our house elves.” I nod toward the front door.

She snickers. “Cute.”

Vex places his arm behind her again on the couch. “Don’t forget there are two of us.”

“And only one can be the father,” she mumbles.

I glance over at Vex, who shakes his head. She’s not ready to hear our truth yet.

“We’re closer than the average siblings, Sweet Tart,” Vex says as he toys with her hair, causing her body to visibly relax.

“What did Lau tell you about us?” I ask, continuing my thigh massage.

“Nothing. She said your life didn’t have a place for a child, insinuating you rejected her when she told you she was pregnant.”

Vex frowns. “You never wanted more details?”

“I felt like it wasn’t my business. Lau was closed-lipped, which wasn’t like her, so I let it go. My job was to be supportive, not make her feel even more isolated. You know when to push your sibling and when not to.”

“How did you find us then?” I ask.

“She had a picture printed out and hidden in Mo Mo’s paperwork. I found it after ... she died.” Her voice warbles. “I saw your vests and did research from there.”

“Kutte.” I inch my massage higher.

“What?” she asks breathlessly.

“It’s called a kutte,” I explain.

She nods. “Noted. I watched you. I drove away the first few times. I knew it was a risk coming to you, but the thought of not being able to give Mo Mo everything she deserves was more frightening.”

“And now?” I ask.

“You’re not what I imagined.” Licking her lips, she clutches her bottle like a lifeline.

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing, Sweet Tart?” Vex presses his thigh against hers.

“I’m still undecided,” she admits sheepishly.

“What do you want to see happen?” We both know I’m talking about more than Morgan’s future.

“I don’t know,” she whimpers. “I’m not sure how we merge our two worlds in any way that makes sense.”

“Makes sense to who? As long as it works for us, that’s all that matters. We let go of the American dream life a long time ago. You should join us.”

“Really?” She snorts, closing her thigh to still my hand. “How easy that must be when you’re from across the pond.”

“England, to be exact, by way of Ireland.”

“Isn’t that a conflict of interests?” She tilts her head to the side, and we laugh.

“Our families seem to think so. Dad fell for Mom when he was on a job and never came back home,” I explain.

“I’m not sure Grandma ever forgave her.” Vex shakes his head.

She laughs.

“You should do that more often,” I suggest.

“I haven’t had much reason to recently.” Clearing her throat, she sets her drink onto a coaster on the table, and I reluctantly remove my hand. “I don’t know how this is going to work out, but I’m willing to try—for Morgan.”

“Why not for yourself?” Vex asks, taking his turn at seduction.

“What do you mean?”

“This can’t be easy on you.” I move closer to her, and Vex follows suit. She licks her lips, and I admire her plump, dusky-pink pucker.

“We’re here to support you, too.” Vex’s voice has dropped slightly, and she shifts on the cushion, pressing her thighs together. She’s feeling the same attraction we do.

“I’m fine.”

“Do you really believe that, Sweet Tart?” Vex tucks a strand of hair behind her ear, and I return my hand to her thigh.

“I just need help with Morgan,” she whispers.

“Even when we’re here offering our support?” I squeeze her thigh gently, and she shudders.

“My brother and I like to share, Sweet Tart. And you’ve caught both our eyes.”

“I-I’m flattered, but—”

“Don’t decide anything yet. We’re getting to know each other, aren’t we?” I ask, caressing my way up to her inner

thigh. I can feel her heat through her shorts. I caress the seam of her jean shorts, and she moans.

The door opens, and she jumps up.

“I should head to bed. Mo Mo will be up early, and I need to be ready.” She grabs her bottle. “Thanks for the beer. I’ll throw this out.” She hurries off, and I look at Vex.

“She’s into us.”

“Doesn’t mean she’ll be willing to buck societal norms.”

“I think she will.”

He grins. “Sweet dreams, Sweet Tart,” he calls as she waves and hurries to her room.

“You got news for us, Torque?” I ask, irritated by the interruption.

“Came in to hit the head. It’s quiet out there so far. The few cars that have passed were going the usual speed limit. No one slowed down or even looked at the driveway, as far as I can tell. We’ve got the surveillance system ordered and ready to be put in tomorrow.”

“Good work, Spec. You might get that patch after all.”

He nods and continues to the bathroom down the hall.

“If we do this, we can’t fuck it up. Not with Morgan involved.” I grip his arm. “Make sure you’re serious. She’s not one of our Sin supporters.”

“You think I don’t know that?”

“The last time you considered a serious relationship, we were still in England.”

“Don’t even compare that bitch to Hel.”

“You’re actually into her, aren’t you?” I ask, amused.

“Not at first, but she impressed me. Her loyalty to her sister and Morgan. The way she handled Johnson. And I always wondered in the back of my head what happened to our little scholar.”

Her sister had paved the way to this moment, cracking his thick exterior and showing him not everyone was a raging bitch who gets off on toying with a man's emotions.

“Lau could have extorted us, they both could, but they choose not to, and that counts for a lot. Seeing Morgan made me realize how much time I wasted being angry at a whore who hasn't given us a second thought. I'm ready to be free of all that.”

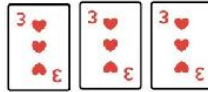
“Good. Let's make sure she can't refuse us.”

Vex grins. “Been a long time since we did this.”

“One last time with the right girl?”

He nods. We've got an enemy to stop, a woman to woo, and a daughter to claim.

CHAPTER
SEVEN



Hel I'm starting to wonder if the previous night was a fever dream. Too much alcohol on an empty stomach on top of shredded nerves must've led me to a strange lucid dream.

I can still feel Blue's hand on my thigh and the heat from Vex's body slipping into me as he pressed to my side. Shivering, I shake my head to clear it as the two men who refuse to leave my mind walk toward me with a sealed manilla envelope.

I take a deep breath. *Someone's going to get their heart broken today.* Both men made it clear they're excited to enter into parenthood.

Down for her nap, Mo Mo is blissfully unaware of the life-changing event about to happen.

"Before we open this, we need to talk," Vex says.

The serious tone makes me nervous. I've come to expect humor, prickish behavior, and infuriatingly laid-back vibes in the face of tense situations.

"Why?"

The brothers exchange a look that has me crossing my arms. "I don't like being the only one left out of the loop."

"Regardless of what this test says, we both plan on helping you raise Morgan." The use of her first name drives home how serious this is.

“Yeah, I expected that,” I say, unsure why the mood in the room is so heavy.

“No.” Vex shakes his head. “We both plan to step into the role of father in her life.”

I narrow my eyes. “I’m not following you.”

“She’ll be *our* daughter.”

“Why would you do that? It’s going to be confusing enough that you look alike.” I shake my head. “Do you want her to be mocked?”

Blue exhales. “We get that it’s unusual, but losing our father nearly destroyed our mother and our family along with it. We always knew if we ever chose to be parents, we were going to do it together. If one of us is taken too early, there’s still another one to make sure life continues as usual.”

“Most people have life insurance for that.”

“It helps, but once it’s gone, the mother is left alone to deal with the day-to-day, and that’s providing you don’t have bills that need to be paid off.” Vex’s voice is laden with angst and his face is twisted in a grim expression of pain. “I wouldn’t wish what we went through on our worst enemy. After losing our father, we nearly lost our mother. She was barely home, hardly eating, pulling three jobs, and trying to provide while crawling out from under the mountain of debt left behind in the wake of our father’s death. We felt abandoned, started getting into situations we shouldn’t, and nearly ruined our life while breaking her heart. In the blink of an eye, the solid ground beneath our feet can turn into a landslide that buries us.”

“What seems extreme to you has been an agreement we’ve held between us.”

“Is that why?” I gesture toward the two of them and myself.

Vex shrugs. “That might have added to it, but it’s just how we’ve always been.”

“We learned putting our heads together makes us unstoppable,” Blue says.

“It’s why we always get what we want.” Vex winks.

Cocky bastard. “What is she supposed to tell people?”

“Whatever we decide. Family should be what we make it, not what society deems is appropriate.” Blue’s words are about more than the way they want to parent Mo Mo.

“We’ll teach you how to loosen up and embrace your inner not giving a fuck,” Vex promises.

“Who says I want that?”

“Baby, everyone wants it. Few are brave enough to go for it. They hate us for the way we live, truly free, not the bullshit they think we stand for.” Vex steps closer, boxing me in between him and Blue.

“That might work for you, but I don’t live in your world,” I remind him.

“You could.” Blue rests his hot hand on my hip.

I should step away from them both, but their presence brings me a comfort I didn’t know I needed.

“This is insane.”

“Why?” Vex’s voice rumbles in his chest.

“We don’t know anything about each other.”

“Nothing time can’t fix,” Blue whispers.

“If you’re willing.” Vex pins me with his captivating blue gaze, softened for me, and I want to melt.

My treacherous body has me ready to part my legs and let them *convince* me, but my brain knows better.

“I—”

“You don’t need to answer yet, Sweet Tart.” Vex runs the backside of his knuckles down my cheek.

Blue squeezes my hip. “Let’s open the test now.”

“Right.” They’re a hurricane constantly disorienting me. They don’t move an inch as Blue hands the envelope to Vex, who breaks the seals and removes the packet.

“What does it say?” My stomach twists.

Vex’s thick brows pull down, and my stomach drops. What if we were wrong? Is this why Lau never said anything?

“It says there’s a 99.9 percent chance we’re both the father.”

“How is that possible?” I whisper.

“I’m not sure.” He flips through the pages. “They’re saying we need a specialized test that will be able to differentiate the difference between us because we’re identical.”

I hold my hand out. “This is a joke, right?”

“We shouldn’t be shocked. It’s just in the past five or ten years that they’ve developed DNA testing enough to differentiate identical twins in criminal cases,” Blue informs me as I take the pages and browse them myself.

“Nothing with you two is easy, is it?” I ask, exasperated.

“We’re the spice your *vanilla* life needed.”

Vex smiles, and I catch the tempting dimple I want to trace with the tip of my tongue. Heat washes through me, and I clear my throat and look away.

“What’s our next step?” I refocus on what’s important. I crave Blue’s steady presence. He settles the anxiety threatening to spread through me like a wildfire in a drought ridden forest.

“We redo the samples and take the required test.”

“When? I want this taken care of as soon as possible.” Before I sink any deeper into the quicksand of desire they’ve created.

“We do too—” Blue’s phone rings, and he holds up a finger. “Hey, Pres. ... You’re coming here now? ... Yeah,

we're all here. Morgan's sleeping— ... Yeah, an adult conversation would be best had now then."

This can't be good. I look at Vex, who's watching his brother's face.

"Alright. We'll see you then." He looks at us. "Pres is on his way here. He wants to meet you and discuss what we have in the works."

"Why?" I ask, alarmed.

"We told you he'd have to give you his seal of approval," Vex says.

"You said soon, not now."

"That was before Johnson showed up." Blue places a hand on my shoulder and squeezes. His soothing touch forces my shoulders down from around my ears as he kneads away the tension.

"I don't like this."

"Relax, Sweet Tart."

"Relax? The head of the Oakland Sinners is coming here to kick ass and take names, and I'm supposed to be chill?"

Vex and Blue share a look and burst into laughter.

"How is this funny?"

Blue drops a kiss on the top of my head, pressing his chest against my back. His warmth and hard body make me feel safe and secure despite the chaos surrounding us. I lean into him reflexively.

Vex steps toward me and cups my face. "We won't let anything happen to you. Take a deep breath."

Our gazes lock, and I inhale. "Good. And out. I know this is a lot, but we got your back. Okay?"

I nod. Damn him. I believe his words. It's a dangerous decision to make. The last man I yielded to damn near broke me.

Maybe these men could help mend what he tore down if I let them.



KING HAS the aura of the royalty he's named after. Wide-shouldered and lean with a heavily muscular frame, he seems to suck up most of the oxygen in the room.

His broad forehead, thick, dark brown hair, and round features hint at some Eastern European roots.

He runs a hand down his long, black beard as his eyes sweep over me. His dark brown eyes narrow, and a shrewd expression paints itself across his face. I hold my breath as I wait for him to speak. Vex and Blue had gone outside to greet him and talk without me present.

I toy with the edges of my tank top as I meet his piercing gaze, head held high.

“So, this is her?”

I bite back the response I want to fire at him. This isn't a man to mouth off to. Plus, I want his approval.

“King, this is Helaine Miller.”

“I'm about to drop some knowledge on you that's going to be tough to swallow. You're in serious danger. Johnson's had his eyes locked on your family for some time.”

“How? I've never met any of you before.”

“Your sister listed Denison on the birth certificate. Johnson discovered the paper trail. I'm not sure your sister's accident was actually an accident.”

“No.” My heart plummets. Could her death have been prevented somehow if she'd just spoken to them sooner? “We ... always assumed it was a drunk driver.”

“Are we sure about that? The assailant fled the scene, right? I bet they still haven't been found.”

“That’s not unusual. People are awful and never take responsibility for their horrific actions.”

“And yet, it brought you here.”

“I—” King’s words rotate around my mind, and I nod. He’s right.

King reaches into his pocket, and I tense.

“This was discovered underneath your car.” King holds out a tiny plastic and metal device.

“What is that?” I narrow my eyes, taking in the tiny mechanical pieces exposed by its crushed exterior.

“A tracker. The real question is, who was it giving information to?”

“That’s what we like to know.”

I look at the men standing just behind their president.

“Is there anything you haven’t told us we should know?”

“No.”

“I looked up your ex; he has a lot of money—”

I snicker. “He has neither the brains nor the desire to pull something like this off. The rich bastard is happily married to his trophy wife and busy blowing the family money at the country club.”

“If this is our mess spilling over on you, and I think it is, we’ll clean it up. But it’ll come at a cost.”

I understand he’s offering me a deal.

“What price is that?” I glance nervously toward Blue and Vex. Neither man looks concerned. Steeling myself to all but sign my name in blood, I stare at the large man towering over me.

“Your obedience and silence.”

I blink. “That’s it?”

King nods. “I think I’m going to like you. These two have been giving you a crash course on this life and our rules, but I

need you to get updated with everything. I'm sending some old ladies over."

I struggle to digest the new information. How long have I been walking around, unaware I was watched? What did Johnson plan to do with me? My stomach turns. What did he plan to do with Morgan?

"I'll do whatever it takes to keep Morgan safe."

King smiles. "I was hoping you'd say that. It's going to make what comes next so much easier."

The smile on his face is predatory, and I glance at Vex and Blue for reassurance. "What do you need me to do?"



"HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP?" Blue asks after King leaves.

"Would you believe me if I said I don't know?"

Blue caresses the back of my neck with his thumb. With Morgan down for the night and the baby monitor at hand, we can focus on our situation.

"We know it's a lot to process." Vex places a hand on the small of my back.

"What can we do to help?" Blue asks.

Feeling hollowed out, I look at him to discover their concerned expressions.

"Tell us what you need, and it's yours," Vex vows.

"I want to feel something other than grief and fear." The rusty words slip from between my lips before I can stop them.

"You want us to take over tonight?"

"Be sure. ' Cause once we start the ball rolling, there's no pretending we didn't cross the lines."

With their fiery gazes heating me from the inside, and the image of them caring for Morgan during the day fresh in my mind, I leap.

“Please.”

Vex lowers his head, and I part my lips, welcoming his questing tongue. Brown sugar, cinnamon, and spiced whiskey dance along my tastebuds. I twirl my tongue around his, savoring the rich flavors. Blue runs his hand up my side as he nuzzles my neck.

I lean back, moaning as I soak up his body heat, eager to lose myself in the swirl of sensations they’re stirring. Nipping at my neck, Blue moves his hand to the front of my body. His large hand cups my breast through the top of my sundress. His thumb rubs against my stiff nipple, and I whimper.

Vex deepens our kiss, fisting my hair, pulling the strands taut. The pain grounds me. I relish the escape as they command my full attention. Blue sucks the skin on my neck and rotates his hip, pressing his thick length against my ass.

Releasing his suction on my flesh, he traces the spot with the top of his tongue. “Gonna make sure everyone knows you’re taken.”

The possessive tone has my toes curling.

“She’s got such a sweet little mouth, brother. Have a taste.” Vex turns my head, and Blue devours me. Slow, thorough, and bone-melting, his kiss weakens my knees further. Their bodies pressing against mine are the only thing keeping me upright as we learn each other. Blue’s crisp mojito taste burns cold. Still waters run deep with him, opposing Vex’s volcanic heat.

I’m slowly going up in flames with them and loving every second. I trace my hand up Vex’s sculpted back as I grip Blue’s soft tresses.

“Love the feel of your hands on me.”

Vex’s gravelly tone turns the slick trail between my legs into a river overflowing my panties. I get the feeling this gruff man doesn’t yield control often. Slipping my hands under his soft T-shirt, I rake my fingernails down his hot flesh. He shudders, and I eat up his passionate response.

Stepping back, Vex rips off his shirt and flings it behind him. My head spins as I drink in his masculine beauty.

Blue pulls away, and I suck down oxygen.

“Like what you see?” Vex asks cockily.

“Yes.”

“Why don’t we improve the view?”

I watch, tongue-tied as the brothers strip down to black boxer briefs in front of me.

“We showed you ours. Now you show us yours,” Vex says.

My hands shake as I pull the white dress with pale blue flowers over my head to reveal the black bra and panty set.

“Such a hot little body,” Vex whispers as he moves forward and trails his fingertips down my bra strap.

“Beautiful. A curvy goddess waiting to be worshipped.” He pops my bra like a magician with a sleight of hand.

The bra drifts to the floor, and Vex latches onto my aching breast. I spear my fingers through his hair and arch my back as I chase the pleasure he’s giving.

“Love those little sounds you make, H.” Blue skims the band of my underwear with his calloused fingers. “I need to hear more.”

“Please,” I rasp.

“Please what, H?” Blue whispers hotly into my ear.

“Touch me.”

Blue slips his hand into my panties, cupping my sopping pussy. “Like this?”

“More.” Vex plucks my opposite nipple, rolls the peak between his fingers, and suckles its twin.

Blue rubs his thumb over my clit, circling slowly.

Vex bites down on my nipple, and I cry out.

“Could you come from this, pretty girl?”

Whining, I shake my head as I clench my walls. “I need more, please. I’m so empty.”

“You want to feel me inside of you?”

“Ye—” My response is strangled as he thrusts a finger inside of me. I clutch at him like my life depends on it.

“Fuck, you’re tight.” Pulling out, he glides back in, finding a quick rhythm.

Tilting my hips, I let them have their way as my eyes roll back in my head and my nerves prepare to explode. Blue adds another finger, curving them as Vex tugs my nipples with his teeth. The combination sends me flying,

Lost in the blissful afterglow, I drift on a high as I’m lifted and carried out of the living room.

Tossed onto a California King bed, I watch them hungrily.

“Panties off,” Vex commands.

Wiggling free of the soaked scrap of cloth, I watch, hungry, as they remove their shorts and spring forward, thick, hard, and slightly curved to the left. I lick my lips at the angry red mushroom tips that leak pearly droplets. Climbing onto my knees, I crawl to the edge of the bed.

“You look starved, H. Open your mouth and let us feed you.”

Vex strokes his length, and I stick out my tongue. Sucking Blue’s salty length into my mouth, I hollow my cheeks and take Vex into my hand. Opening my throat, I take Blue deep, choking on the eight inches, stroking Vex as I bob my head.

“Fuck ... your mouth is incredible, H.”

“I knew your mouth would look even better full of cock.”

I moan at Vex’s vulgarity. He’s raw and untamed. I press my thighs together, imagining him between my legs.

“Grip me tighter.” I comply, and he grunts. “That’s a good girl.”

Blue rocks his hips, increasing his speed as he fucks my mouth, tapping my throat. Eyes watering, I hum.

“Fuck,” Blue hisses, fisting my hair as he pulls free. “You’re a little too good at that.” Panting, he turns my head toward Vex.

“My turn.”

Vex traces my lips with his tip, painting my lips with his stickiness. “Let me see that tongue.”

Sticking it out, I whimper as he jerks off, teasing me with just the tip halfway in my mouth.

“You want more. Look at you, begging me with those eyes. Well, open wide.”

He thrusts home, and I gag around him, but he never lets up. I fucking love it. Loosening my throat, I take everything he has to offer as I reach for Blue, determined to show I can handle them both.

Twisting my wrist, I stroke my thumb across his slit, and Blue groans.

“Look at you. You’re getting off on this, aren’t you?” Vex growls.

I hum my agreement.

“Open those legs and let us see how much,” Blue says roughly.

Parting my thighs, I let them view my flooding pussy.

“Fuck. We need to get you ready to take more than two fingers,” Blue whispers. Grabbing my wrist, Blue stills my hand and slips free, sinking to his knees.

“You want us? You’re going to have to take three fingers in that tight, little cunt,” Blue purrs.

I nod as best I can, and he chuckles. “So eager. Let’s lay her back.”

I grunt my disappointment when Vex slips free, and he chuckles as they arrange my body to lay across the bed.

Blue parts my thighs, and I cry out as he drives into my entrance with his hot tongue. Vex thrusts into my open mouth,

and my brief disappointment is forgotten. Driving two fingers deep, he circles my walls, coaxing me into another build-up.

“Can you take another?” Blue flicks my clit, and I whimper.

“She can do it,” Vex snarls.

I nod, eager to feel more than thick fingers. Blue adds a third, and I gasp at the pinch of pain as he stretches my wall.

Blue pauses. “You okay?” he asks.

Vex pulls free.

“I’m good. God. Don’t stop.” I grab the sheets and impale myself on him.

“That’s it, fuck his hand,” Vex encourages.

Sweat trails between my breasts as I chase the orgasm hovering just out of my reach. I pulse around him, and he pulls free.

“Next time you come, it’s going to be on one of our cocks,” Blue promises me.

“I need you now.”

Joining me on the bed, he lines up and eases the tip in. I flex around him and inhale as he remolds me, burying himself inch by inch. Vex reaches down and circles my bundle of nerves, sending me over the edge as Blue bottoms out.

“Fuck, that’s it.”

Blue thrusts through my aftershocks, never letting me come down from my high. I lift my hips to meet his strokes as our skin meets, and my core throbs. I tighten my walls and release, giving as good as I’m getting. He swears, and I smirk.

Two can play that game.

His large frame shakes, and he pulls free, stroking twice as he spills himself over my breasts. I lean into the spray as he paints me.

Running my finger through the puddle, I suck it into my mouth.

“You’re fucking perfect.” He nips my bottom lip, collapsing on the bed beside me.

“Don’t rest yet, Sweet Tart. Get onto all fours.”

Rolling over, I present my ass. Vex slaps it, and I lean into the sting.

“I knew you’d like it rough.” Grabbing my hair, he tugs and strokes his cock between my slippery lips. “You want it fast and dirty, don’t you, baby?”

“I want you to split me open.”

“Is that right?” He drives in, pushing my upper back down. His balls slap against my ass as he pounds into me. His fingers dig into my sides, and I meet him stroke for stroke.

“Is this what you wanted?”

“Yes,” I scream as he slams into me harder. My walls quiver, and he growls.

“You ready to come on my cock?”

“Yes,” I sob as my body trembles and my core tingles.

“I want you to do it now.”

Jerking, I explode as he bends down and sinks his teeth into my flesh. I shudder as the world goes white. A warm cloth runs over my back, and they flip me over.

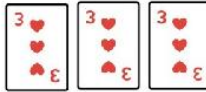
“We need to clean up our messy girl,” Blue whispers as he wipes down my breasts.

“How you feeling, Sweet Tart?” Vex asks, brushing his lips over mine.

“So good,” I say sleepily.

Bundled under the sheets, I drift off with two warm bodies curled around me.

CHAPTER
EIGHT



V ex

I curse my clumsy fingers as I watch the woman gracefully move her fingers on the screen. Sign language is like learning a new instrument. You have to teach your fingers to do new things. I never realized how large my hands were until now.

I want to be able to communicate with my daughter. The concept is still weird but welcome. The new test named me the official procreator. I glance at the clock and frown. Sweet Tart's running late from class. *Did her final go that bad?*

My gut goes off. Trusting the feeling, I exit the SUV and cross the campus. She'd banned me from my usual spot in the hall outside of the classroom today, saying it would make her too nervous. I should have ignored her.

Rounding the corner, I see red. Johnson has her backed up against the wall. She steps to the left, and he does the same.

"I'm not interested in whatever you have to say," she seethes.

"If you knew what I did, you would—"

"She asked you to leave, Johnson."

The man spins. "Imagine meeting you on public property."

His shit-eating grin has my hand aching to slam into it.

"Back off."

“With pleasure.” He steps away. “Might want to get to Kid’s Haven daycare, though.”

My stomach drops and I scowl. “What did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything, but a concerned citizen might have.”

“Son of a bitch.” I lunge toward him, and her phone rings, shattering the silence.

“Hello?”

I lean closer to hear the person on the phone. “Ms. Miller, this is Anne from Kid’s Haven. We need you to come to the center as soon as possible.”

“Is Morgan okay?”

“She’s fine. But we have some paperwork we need you to fill out.”

“Paperwork?” Hel asks. I hear someone murmur in the background.

Anne just used a codeword. The fucker called in a bogus report. Beaming, Johnson walks away whistling.

“I’m leaving school now.”

“Perfect. We’ll see you soon.”

She disconnects.

“I’ll have our lawyer meet us there.”

“You know what’s happening?” Hel asks, confused.

“Johnson called C.P.S.”

“How could you possibly know that?” she asks, lost.

“Anne used the code word. Paperwork means law of some sort is there.”

She wrinkles her nose. “That doesn’t make sense. Why would they show up at her school?”

“Because you haven’t been home for them to catch.”

“Oh. God.” She places a hand on her stomach and sways slightly on her feet. “They’re going to try to take her away. It’s

my worst fear come to life.”

“No. They won’t.” I pull her to me. “This is baseless harassment. Johnson’s made his move, and it’s time we make ours.”

After pulling my phone out of my kutte, I call our lawyer.

“Brett, our stick of dynamite finally blew. How soon can you get to Kid’s Haven?”

“Twenty minutes. What am I walking into?” Brett asks.

“It’s not confirmed, but I think it’s a false C.P.S. allegation. I just walked in on Johnson harassing Hel.”

“I’m worried about his carelessness more than anything,” Brett admits.

“You think he’s planning something?”

“If he’s willing to incriminate himself, he’s already accepted the ruin of his career. His main focus is on hurting the club. You need to watch your back.”

The most dangerous attacker is one who has nothing to lose.

“I hear you. See you soon.”

We start for the car, and I call King.

“Yeah.”

“Johnson made a move. Showed up at Hel’s school and basically admitted to calling C.P.S.”

“You call our lawyer?”

“He’s meeting us there.”

“Hold tight. We got his number. We’re setting things up on our end.”

I know better than to tell King to work faster.

“I’ll keep you posted.” I open the passenger door, and she climbs inside. I hate the panic and fear coloring her brown eyes darker, closer to black.

We've been building a life together. One I don't want to end when the danger is over. A week has shown Blue and I exactly what we're missing. It's impossible to make her feel secure when Johnson keeps tossing banana peels under our tires and making us spin out.

A black sedan swerves over the yellow line. Swearing, I stomp on the brake, slowing down. I veer into the opposite lane. The car follows me, and I take a sharp right, jumping the curb and slamming onto the street.

Hel's screams echo in my ear. The car sideswipes us again, making contact. The car whirls, and I do a donut as I struggle to get the car back under my control as the other car peels out. I grip the steering wheel hard, slamming a lid on my temper.

I lean across the console and cup her face. "Are you okay?"

"I ... y-yeah." Hel nods.

"Good. I need you to forget about everything that just happened. We don't know if this is someone he bought. You have to be on your A-game. Because the odds are they're coming for you. You've been staying with us to facilitate family bonding, got it?"

"Yeah."

I lean over and kiss her. "Don't let that asshole win."

Her expression hardens. "Never."

"There's my sour Sweet Tart."

Her lips twitch up into a smile.

"Showtime." One of the daycare workers reaches us, and the madness begins.

Twenty minutes later, I stare down at the social worker, whose face paled when she saw my kutte and the lawyer. The shifty eyes and shaky voices told me everything I needed to know. Johnson thought he'd blindsided her by having one of his friends come in and shake her down. *Not on my watch.*

Red-eyed, Hel clutches Morgan to her chest as we leave.

“We’ll be in touch, Ms. Miller. Be sure you keep us aware of your living situation.”

“Of course,” Hel says softly.

“She’ll keep her counsel aware as this progresses as well.” Brett is worth every penny. Blue opens the door.

“I got everything settled with the car and a new car seat installed. We’re good to go,” Blue says.

Nodding my thanks, I keep a hand on the base of her spine. Today solidified that she’s exactly where she belongs. Cameras be damned, if Johnson had touched her, I would’ve killed him. Helaine is ours. It’s time she knew it.

“I don’t know what I would’ve done without you two,” she whispers as we move to the car.

“You’ll never find out.” I kiss her temple.

“You can’t say that to me if you don’t mean it.”

“I’m promising you that,” I reply.

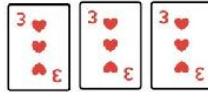
“Because we know it’s true, H,” Blue adds.

“I can’t do this right now.” Her voice cracks.

“Okay. Let’s get our girls home. We’ll pick this up later.” Blue ushers her to the car. He has a notion for when to pull back when I’d push forward.

Doubts or not, she’s ours.

CHAPTER
NINE



Blue I've anticipated and dreaded this day. My eyes follow Hel as she moves around the restaurant with Kelly. With Morgan being watched by a trusted Old Lady and a couple of Prospects for good measure, it's time to set our plan into action.

"Your little language student is fitting in well," King observes.

"She's easy to get along with."

"Are you still serious about property patching her?"

I arch an eyebrow. "Do you really have to ask that?"

King chuckles. "No. The boys at the station let our meeting her slip. We've had enough time to make money for charity and get good press. Let's go bury this bastard."

I peer around at the Bikers Against Domestic Abuse charity posters and merchandise we've arranged around the room. The old ladies and BADA reps spent all morning prepping for today. Reporters are currently interviewing a BADA member about her former experiences and why our event is so important.

"Shouldn't be long now. Kelly posted her social media accounts."

I snicker. "Bet he loves seeing her with Sinners."

"We'll see how much shortly."

They walk the lot together, holding up car wash signs in bikini tops and tiny shorts. We're donating a portion of every item we sell. There are clear boxes already stuffed with donations. Our local members are out in full force, sans their kuttes.

Events like this are for the community. We treat them like family days with friendly Oakland Sin City swag. Our emblem is tastefully printed in different designs on T-shirts of all colors and sizes.

King nods at the reporter on our payroll as two dark sedans pull into the parking lot. Car doors swing open, and men in black and gray suits step out, standing out in the summer heat. Johnson leads the four-person crew.

One of our members records everything on a handheld outside to pair with the film rolling from the surveillance system.

Johnson stops mid-stride when he spots his daughter.

"Kelly, what the hell are you wearing? Go put some clothes on."

"Do you want to purchase a car wash, Dad?" she asks with a grin. "It's for a good cause."

"I'm not going to help you fund these punks." He walks over and grabs her wrist, making her drop the sponge. "Show some damn respect," he hisses.

"I'm giving back to the community. Isn't that the kind of thing you wanted me to do more of?"

Gritting his teeth, he scowls. "They've brainwashed you."

"I don't think the lady is interested in talking to you further," King drawls.

Johnson points a finger at him. "You've got other things to worry about."

"Like what? We welcome everyone to our event today." King spreads his arms out.

Johnson stalks over to the table where we're selling raffle tickets.

"You have a warrant?" I ask.

"Don't need one to check a complaint that came in."

"Oh? You want to tell me what the accusation was about?" I ask casually. The calmer we are, the more irritated he becomes.

"Something that needs to be looked into." Johnson knocks the T-shirts onto the ground.

"Do you know what you're destroying right now, Johnson?" King asks jovially.

"I'm searching." He shakes out a few more shirts, leaving them in a pile. "Huh. This area looks clean of paraphernalia. I'd better check inside next."

I eye the men following him, who've begun to look nervous. I like to know what enemies might be coming for me someday.

"Funny. This seems like a lot of officers to bring to a simple complaint," I say, trailing behind them.

Johnson shoves the door open. It slams against the wall. Women scream and jump, shocked as they turn to face the doorway we're entering.

Johnson's head is on swivel as he takes in the charity posters and clusters of men and women at the tables, ordering from the menu we put together expressly for today. Every photo taken is another nail in the coffin he's carving out for himself.

"Detective. Do you want to purchase one of our sampler platters? Thirty percent of every order today goes to charity," Vex calls from behind the bar.

Johnson sneers in response.

"I guess that's a no," Vex yells cheerfully.

"We heard drugs were being sold here tonight," Johnson announces. "Does anyone want to speak up?"

Kelly rushes in, walking over to him quickly. “Daddy, don’t do this. I know you’re upset.”

“This has nothing to do with you.”

She grabs his arms. “I know you’re upset that I didn’t want to go to college or follow the path you wanted for me, but this isn’t the way to change my mind.”

“You’re a lost cause, Kelly. I get that now. This is about me doing my job.”

“We both know that’s not true,” she replies.

He shakes her hand off.

“Detective, maybe we should just leave. It looks like we got some false intel,” one officer suggests.

“You backing out on me?” Johnson snaps.

“These people are here to fundraise.”

“Let’s test that theory.” Johnson walks over to one of the older old ladies. “Ma’am, I’m going to need you to empty your purse.”

“Is that an order, Officer? Because I’m not volunteering it.”

He steps closer. “Ma’am, are you obstructing justice?”

“No, I’m exercising my rights.”

“What’s your name, ma’am? I want to see your identification,” Johnson demands.

“What’s your name and badge number?” she counters.

His face turns red, and his chest puffs out. Johnson slams his fist onto the table.

Brittany is unflappable. She’s doing her old man, Wrecker, proud right now.

“It sounds like you have something to hide.” Johnson’s voice booms through the restaurant.

“No. I know my rights, sir. Is this an official search?” She smiles, and he takes a step toward her.

“It’s time to go,” one of the officers says, stepping in between Johnson and the table.

Squirming like worms on the hook, the other two men nod their agreement.

Murmurs grow louder as the crowd turns. Tomorrow this will be splashed onto websites and social media. There won’t be any coming back from this.

“I’m not done here,” Johnson says.

“Yes, we are.” Two men grab his arms, forcefully leading him away.

“It’s sad when a job and life situation gets to a good man, isn’t it?” I ask King loudly.

“It’s a damned shame,” King agrees.

“Someone should really get him some help,” another customer replies.

“Sorry about that, ladies and gentlemen. Let us buy you a round for the interruption,” Vex calls.

“When an overworked cop loses it in front of a large audience, it doesn’t bode well for his mental state.” King shakes his head as the patrons applaud.

You don’t come for our family and walk away. He showed us he wouldn’t stop independently, forcing us to step in and handle it. It’s the last bad decision he’ll ever make.

Hel walks in and makes a beeline for us. “They all just left. Why is everyone celebrating? Johnson’s going to retaliate for whatever just—”

I wrap my hand around the back of her neck and squeeze lightly.

“Relax. He’s not going to be a problem any longer.”

“How can you—”

I place my lips on her, silencing her. Her lips give under mine, and I massage her scalp as I kiss her until she relaxes

against me, pressing her hands to my chest. Wolf whistles go up around us, and she ducks her head.

“I guess you should get that property patch made soon, huh?” King asks casually, giving us his blessing.

“Should I?” I speak softly into her ear.

Hel looks up at me with wide brown eyes.

“You okay, Sweet Tart?” Vex steps up beside us.

“King gave the okay for a property patch.”

“Is that right? Why don’t we step into the office?” he asks.

“Sounds good to me.” I wrap my arm around her shoulders, and he wraps another around her waist.

“We good for now, King?” I ask.

“Yeah, go sort your things out with your woman.”

The walk to our office has never taken this long. We step inside, sealing out the rest of the world, and I walk us to the desk. Leaning against it, I bring her to stand between my legs. Vex mirrors my position, crossing his arms.

“You hesitated out there. Why?” I ask.

“I ... This is all so fast—”

I caress her cheek with my thumb. “Doesn’t make it any less real.”

“How do you know it’s not circumstances? What if the feelings we have fade? It would make things worse for Morgan.”

“I think you know, regardless of how this goes, we’re going to take care of her.” Vex cups her face. “You’re scared, and we get that. It’s not easy being vulnerable. I never thought I’d let myself fall in love again. Not after our last girl lied about the baby she carried.”

“Oh my God. Is that why you were such a dick at first?” Hel whispers.

Vex nods. “Bitch waited ’til the kid came out a completely different shade to tell us she was cheating. Then she cried to

her rich father about how seeing us around town was too hard, and he made damn sure it was near impossible to make a living there.”

“Jesus. You must’ve thought I was pulling one over on you,” she whispers.

“The thought crossed my mind. But then you opened that sassy mouth and stood up to me, ready to defend your cub like a true mama bear. I looked into Morgan’s eyes and I knew. This was different. Then you were forced to stay with us, and I realized maybe I could still have that old dream I gave up.”

“How the hell am I supposed to walk away from that?” Hel huffs with a laugh.

“You’re not.” I kiss away the tears falling from her left eye as Vex does the same to her right.

“I know we can go all the way. I’m falling in love with you, Hel.”

“Ditto, Sweet Tart,” Vex says gruffly.

“God, I feel the same way, and it terrifies me. There’s so much hinging on this.” Hel bites her bottom lip.

“Between the three of us, there’s nothing we can’t figure out.” I rub her back.

“Do you want this with us, baby?” Vex asks.

“Yes,” she says without hesitation.

“That’s all we needed to know.” I wrap my hand around her throat. “You’re ours now, aren’t you, H?”

She nods.

“Let us show you what that means.” Moving behind her, Vex places his hand on her bare belly. “It’s been torture watching you walk around all day in this.”

He unties the strings on her bikini, and I kneel in front of her, popping the top button of her shorts and pulling them down along with her swimsuit bottoms.

I part her labia and circle her clit, flicking and suckling it gently. Her pussy begins to flow, and I ease two fingers inside.

“Tonight, you’re going to take us both, H.” He walks over to the desk, removing the lube and opening the cap, which he pours it onto his fingers.

She clenches down on me, and I chuckle. “You like that thought, don’t you?”

“God, I want you to both be inside of me.”

“And that’s what you’re going to get. But we need to get you ready and open you wide.”

Vex circles her puckered hole, and she rocks against me.

I drive into her hard and fast. “Our curvy girl likes it rough, doesn’t she?”

Throwing her head back, she rotates her hips. “Right there. Harder, please.”

“Relax and let me in, baby,” Vex coaxes her, working a finger in as I continue to fuck her.

I feel him stretching the thin wall between us as she grows slicker.

“She’s dripping, Vex.”

“Cause she loves what we’re doing to her.” He bites her ass cheek, and she jerks toward me.

I add a third finger, curling my fingers as I find the firm spot inside that makes her legs shake. Lapping up her cream, I tease her clit. Whining, she rocks with us, catching a rhythm as I thrust in and Vex pulls out. Her walls flutter as Vex eases in a second finger.

“So full.”

“You have to take one more before you can take me, sweetness,” Vex reminds her. “Be a good girl and take it.”

“I’m close.”

“Come for me, so we can loosen you up even more.”

Whimpering, she tenses around me. I suck her swollen clit into my mouth, and she screams, shaking as she gushes.

“There it is,” Vex praises her. “You’re doing so good, baby.”

Bracing herself with a hand on my shoulder, she whimpers as he adds a third finger.

“Be still. Relax for me,” Vex says, coaxing her to unclench.

Whining, she wiggles, gripping my shoulder.

Keeping my fingers inside of her, I lean back. “Are you okay?”

She nods. “It’s just a lot,” she breathes out slowly.

Her shoulders lower, and she moans, moving with Vex. I circle her clit, lightly, teasing her back into full arousal.

“You’re so ready for more, aren’t you?”

Panting, she nods her head eagerly. Easing out of her, I make quick work of my pants and sit on the edge of the desk. Gripping my base, I hold my prick out to her.

“Come and ride me, H.”

Vex lifts her and lowers her onto me. Hissing as her slick heat engulfs me, I grip her hips as she works her way down my length.

Seated to the hilt, I nip her lip. “You feel so good, baby. Tight and hot.” I lift her and lower her down.

Her fingers dig into my shoulders as she leans back and rocks with me.

“Time to claim that pretty ass,” Vex growls.

“You ready?” I ask against her lips.

She nods, leaning forward against me. Vex eases in, and I grit my teeth.

“Shit. I can feel you.” I grunt. It’s like her cunt shrinks around me. I slowly count to ten to get my bearings and keep from exploding before I’m ready.

We're all panting when Vex stops.

"Move, Vex. I'm not going to last much longer."

Vex growls as he pulls out, and I lift Hel. Mouth open, she grips her hair, riding us as she takes everything we have to give, binding our bodies and souls. The pure ecstasy painted across her face steals my breath.

"I can't. I can't hold back," she says.

"Don't."

We move faster as she tightens. Her walls lock around us, and she releases a husky cry as she trembles, bringing me over. I groan as the base of my spine tingles, and I pulse inside, coating her with my warmth.

Vex follows seconds later.

I nuzzle my face into her neck, breathing her in. This is the smell of home. Sin City gave us a family, but she's the missing puzzle piece we needed to fully belong and find long-lasting happiness. The emptiness that lingered dissipated with the arrival of the girls we never saw coming.

"As soon as my legs work again, we'll get you cleaned up and head home. Your mom has Mo Mo this weekend and I'm not going to waste that free time." I kiss Hel's shoulder.

"Spoken like a true father," Vex teases.

"I can see he's going to be the male voice of reason in this family," Hel mutters.

"Say that again," Vex demands.

She turns to look at him. "Blue will be the voice of reason?"

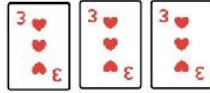
"That other part," Vex demands.

"In this family."

"Family." Vex smiles. "I like the sound of that."

A strange twist of fate has landed us the woman and family of our dreams, and we'll do whatever it takes to keep that.

EPILOGUE



*S*ix months later
Hel

Sitting in the comfy, blue chair beside Mo Mo's bedside, I barely recognize my life. Living with Vex and Blue has changed our lives for the better. No longer alone, I'm doing more than treading water, I'm swimming.

I run my fingers over Mo Mo's small hand while waiting for her to wake from her operation. Today she got her cochlear implant installed. Life for her is about to open in the most amazing way, and that's in huge part to my men and the Oakland Sinners. Money wasn't an option, and finding the best doctors went from a pipedream to a normal occurrence.

I don't pretend they're saints, Sinners is in the very title, but I've come to love my life among them. The door opens, and I smile up as Vex and Blue enter.

"She's still out?" Vex asks, holding up a fluffy, blue teddy bear.

"Yeah, but she's starting to stir in her sleep, so it shouldn't be too much longer."

"I can't wait to see her expression when she hears her first sound," Blue says.

"Me either."

Walking over, they kiss me on either cheek, and my face heats. I'll never get used to the intense attraction I have toward them.

“We brought you another present,” Blue says, holding something behind his back.

I sit up. “What?” I sit up.

He hands me a rolled-up newspaper, and I frown as I smooth it out, half expecting something to fall out.

“Read the main story.” Vex taps the picture of a submerged car.

I glance down and gasp at the heading. “Is this ...”

Blue nods. I feel no guilt for how the man met his fate, and the worry in the back of my mind goes up in flames.

“We told you he’d never bother either of you again.” Blue kneels before me.

“You did.” I bend down and capture his tempting lips, drinking down the flavor of his citrus energy drink as I pour my love and gratitude into our kiss. I flick his lips as I pull back and lean my head to accept Vex’s mouth. Gripping my neck in his hand, he tilts his head as our tongues glide together, and I moan. My breasts grow heavy, and my panties become a slick collector as my arousal blooms.

“We have a question for you,” Blue says.

Dazed, I turn to look at him as I catch my breath. I gasp at him, still on his knees, holding a one-karat cut princess diamond in a platinum band.

“We want our girls to both share our last name.”

“But ... how?” I glance from Blue to Vex. “I can’t marry you both.”

“That’s why we want you to officially change your last name and sign paperwork that makes you our beneficiary along with Morgan. Marriage is about more than a piece of paper. We don’t need that to make this official.”

“Yes.” How could I say anything else to the men who’ve shown me the true meaning of love and loyalty?

“Yeah?” Vex grins. Despite his tough exterior, he has a sensitive streak he hides deep.

“Of course. I love you.”

“Love you too, Sweet Tart.”

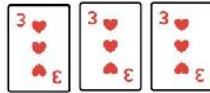
Blue takes my hand, slips the ring onto my finger, and kisses it. “Love you, H. We’ll spend the rest of our lives ensuring our girls are happy.”

“I love you too, Blue. I’ll do the same.”

What I love the most about our relationship is the partnership we’ve developed. We’re more than lovers or boyfriend and girlfriend; we’re a team. A family working together to fulfill each other’s dreams. It’s not always sunshine and rainbows, but it’s real, raw, and ours.

Morgan begins to stir, and we maneuver around her bed, ready to start a new chapter of our lives together.

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT BOOK



Preview the Next Book ...

King

Courtney Dean

When Grimm, the President of Sin City's Mother Chapter in Las Vegas asks the Oakland Chapter to protect his sister and her friend from the Bianchi Syndicate, I don't hesitate. We are brothers. It doesn't matter if the girls aren't Sinners. They are family and we take care of our own.

But when the spirited, Romance Author, that can make a priest sin on holy ground, walks into our clubhouse, I get more than I expect. She's beyond beautiful. She's also one of the most intelligent people I've ever had the pleasure of having a conversation with. And she's an absolute pain in the ass.

I'm only supposed to protect her from the enemy, but she becomes so much more. She becomes my everything.

The members of Sin City never leave until all the cards are played.

Prologue

The front door slams to our place so hard the large, frosted panes of glass rattle against the wooden door frame. Matteo's angry voice echoes through the massive house he bought us three years ago as a surprise to me. Not really a surprise that

made me happy at the time, but it's Matteo. He really isn't a person you can say no to even if you wanted to.

His heavy footfalls disappear upstairs. I let out a breath of relief he doesn't come into the kitchen. I don't feel like arguing about anything and everything, especially today. Today I just want to leave.

Lately, he's angry all the time, and I think it has to do with what I overheard—the final straw that's forcing me to do what's right. He's a sadistic bastard, and I have no business being here or being with a man like him.

I pick up my phone, send a quick text message to Amelia Grace, my best friend, to let her know Matteo's home, and there'll be a slight change in plans.

I didn't expect him home this early in the afternoon. When he left this morning before sunrise to go to the club he manages, he said he wouldn't be home until the next morning.

His workdays have been getting longer and he's been working well into the early morning hours. Sometimes he slips into bed around 4:30 in the morning but only after taking a nice long shower. I have no idea if he's cheating, and it really doesn't matter if he is. The love I had for him died a long time ago. I've wanted to end our relationship for a while now, which I planned to do today by leaving, while he was at work.

When you're involved with a *made man* in one of the country's most notorious crime families, you have to be careful about what you do, when you do it, and how you do it.

We haven't had the best relationship for the last few years and what I overheard gave me the final push to get my ass out of here. In the beginning, he sold me a dream. When we first started dating, he was one of the most caring and remarkable men I'd ever met. Or at least I thought he was. He wined and dined me. Showed me the person he wanted me to see by promising me the world. Most of the time he delivered. Surprise dates, vacations, and candlelight dinners for no reason. Anything overly romantic Matteo Messina did it for me with a smile on his face, a bouquet of my favorite flowers in one hand and diamonds in the other. At one time I thought

he was my forever. Honestly, I'd never met a more amazing man. Then one day it all ended. Like someone flicked the light switch on. Then I came to the realization those good times were nothing more than an illusion, a way to make me fall for him. A very expensive form of manipulation. Why he focused on me, I never understood. Maybe it's because he's a narcissistic bastard and he can't let go of something he wanted so bad.

It took a long time for him to show his true colors, or I just refused to see him for the person he truly is. But when it clicked... when I discovered the truth and got a real understanding of who Matteo Messina really is and not the mirage, he showed me all these years, there wasn't any way for me to stay with him.

I'm in one of those damned if I do, damned if I don't situations. Try to leave and I might die. Stay and it's still possible I might suffer the same fate. However, by leaving I'm able to help other people less fortunate than me. That's how I know I'm doing the right thing despite the danger it puts me in.

I pull Matteo's favorite liquor from the cabinet, a nice single malt whiskey, along with a glass, a butcher knife, and a spoon from the drawer. It's early but I know he won't turn it down because he's been drinking a lot more lately.

I sit them on top of the white marble counter of the kitchen island. Digging into the pocket of my jeans, I pull out two sleeping pills. I've had trouble sleeping for years, and hate taking them, but today they'll come in handy.

With shaky hands, I crush the two pills with the blade of the knife on the countertop, scrape the thin powder in my hand, then dump it in the glass. I uncap the liquor and pour it into the glass then grab a spoon from the drawer of the kitchen island, and stir the liquid, making sure the pill totally dissolves.

"Hope the hell this works," I mumble to the empty kitchen. "If it doesn't, I'm dead."

Those two little pills aren't enough to kill him but just enough to keep him knocked the fuck out at least until the next morning. When he wakes up and realizes what I've done, and that I've left him, he'll try to kill me. But I'll be long gone.

“Here goes nothing.”

I take a deep breath, grab the glass with the two sleeping pills dissolved in it, and head out of the kitchen, then upstairs to our bedroom. I hear him yelling and cursing before I even reach the door. It's gotten to the point he doesn't care if I'm in the same room when he discusses family business now, which is very different from when we first met. He thinks he has me on a tight leash and whatever I hear I can't understand, or I'll keep my mouth shut about it. I guess when he wakes up in the morning, he'll know how fucking wrong he's been about me this entire time.

I take another deep breath, push open the door and step over the threshold of our bedroom. He's sitting in one of the chairs in front of our floor-to-ceiling bedroom window, his olive-skinned tinted red in anger.

Matteo's a gorgeous man. His square jaw is visibly tense from the argument he's having over the phone, but it highlights his aquiline nose and high cheekbones. Wavy hair, dark as night, reaches his shoulders, and gleams in the sun's rays filtering through the window contrasting nicely with his bronze skin and green eyes. He's absolutely stunning.

The devil in disguise. The devil I wish I never met.

He's so engrossed in his argument he hasn't even noticed or acknowledged me. I have time to take in another deep breath and then out, letting go of the doubts of how all this could go terribly wrong. Now's the time to set my plan in motion for better or worse. There's no turning back after I do this. And if I don't do it now, I'll die alongside this despicable man. I refuse to die with him anywhere near me. I will not be another one of his victims. My duffle bag is packed, hidden deep in the back of our walk-in closet. After he falls asleep, I'll meet Amelia Grace so we can ditch town to wherever her brother's sending us.

Finally, his eyes flick up to me, as I walk towards him, putting a little more sway into my hips. His brow arches and that devilish smirk slowly forms on his face. Right now, he looks more like the man I fell in love with, and less like the devil I know him to be. I'm not fooled. At least not anymore. He's shown me his true colors a long time ago. There's nothing good about him, only evil.

I force a smile, hoping I'm able to mask my true feelings of disgust. When I reach him, I slide onto his lap. His eyes remain on me, filling with lust but questioning what I'm really doing. I haven't been as affectionate with him lately because his touch makes my skin crawl. He has good reason to question my actions right now.

I hand him the tumbler of whiskey and he grabs it without hesitation. *Thank God.* Instead of taking a sip like I thought he would, he downs it in one shot, then gives me one of the most heart-stopping kisses before turning back to his conversation.

I stay on his lap, running my fingers through his hair as nervousness and exhilaration move through me. I don't know how long it will take the pills to start working but I can see the finish line. His body relaxes as my touch lures him into a deep sense of security. Once he's asleep, I can finally breathe. And it won't be long before I'll finally be free of Matteo.

At least, I hope.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

USA Today Bestselling author Shyla Colt is a chaos wrangler, chronic crafter, and imaginary friend collector. The mom of two and a wife road trips with her weird brood when she's not taking on a new hobby or bingeing on spooky podcasts and documentaries. She writes strong women with sass, plenty of nerdy tendencies, and the intriguing intense males who love them.

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