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WRONG
SIDE

OF

HEAVEN

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DEDICATION

Sincere thanks to everyone at Evernight.
For my readers—your support means the world to me.

WRONG SIDE OF HEAVEN

Elizabeth Monvey

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Chapter One

Ribar leisurely drove along the winding road. The warm evening air rolled over him, ruffling the hair caught in his ponytail. Moonlight played peak-a-boo through the trees, illuminating patches along the asphalt. Instead of taking the more direct route home, he had decided to take the scenic drive. He had just finished up on a run for the club, receiving payment for an order of drugs. Not as much as he had expected, but still enough to put a little money in the club coffers.

Lately, he'd been feeling ... directionless.

He loved his club life. Had prospected with the Burning Reapers when he'd still been a teenager. Did every shit job they'd thrown his way. A year and a day later they'd given him his patch, and he'd never been happier. The Reapers were many things. Mostly criminals who managed runs for the local drug lord. Occasionally moved guns across state lines. They owned a few titty bars to launder their cash flow.

Every night was a hedonistic party, and nothing much was taboo. Lately, however, he was very unsettled. Perhaps restless was a better word, a need to get away from it all. He tried not to think that his life within the club wasn't enough. Maybe it was the fact that his fortieth birthday was fast approaching and he was still living like he was eighteen. Maybe he needed his own space. A place he could escape the monotonous partying and fucking.

Not that he had any problem with partying and fucking. He rather liked both, although recently, not at the same time anymore. And he had no idea why.

As he came around a bend in the road, the neon glare of a bar sign looked slightly out of place in the serene wilderness setting. The name, however, captured his attention as he sped past. *Wrong Side of Heaven*. Seemed like he'd spent his entire life living the wrong side of something. He was no stranger to

fighting, to doing things not quite legally. Hell, he'd been in jail once, which was a place he never wanted to be again. He'd learned he hated the confines of a cell, which now that he thought about, had initiated his malcontent. Hence the need to ride through the night, along long distances, trying to shake off the feeling of unease. Ribar slowed his bike and came to a stop in the middle of the road. The engine purred between his thighs. There was probably another orgy going on in the clubhouse. Sluts all over the place eager to suck cock and fuck as many men as they could. The thought held no appeal, so he carefully walked his bike in a circle and then throttled the engine back the way he came.

When he arrived at the parking lot, he made sure not to park right in front. Drunk bar patrons stumbling out the door tended to piss on the tires of the cars parked directly in front. Stupid, really, but drunk men doing dumb shit was common and he'd learned that lesson a while ago. Ribar hit his kickstand and dismounted, plopping his helmet down on the seat. He wasn't concerned in the least with someone stealing it, and if they did, so be it. Wasn't like he hadn't ridden without a brain bucket before.

A few steps led up to the scarlet door. He pulled it harder than he should have and it flew back with a snap. Rock music played softly through speakers. When he stepped inside, a dozen or so pairs of eyes swung his way. Not that it bothered him. His six-foot two, solid-muscle frame usually attracted looks. Or could be his shoulder length hair pulled back in a ponytail. Although, more than likely, it was the patch on his leather cut and the 1% logo right below the emblem.

“You lost, friend?”

Ribar glanced over, his gaze locking with the bartender. Dark hair styled with gel. Light blue eyes reflecting the fairy lights strung over the large mirror lining the wall. Broad shoulders, form-fitting tee that hugged lean muscles. Fingernails painted black and kohl outlining his eyes. He looked more ready for a rock concert than about to serve a beer. Part goth, part head banger.

“I like the name of this place,” Ribar said.

“I thought it fitting. Wrong side of heaven—”

“And the righteous side of hell,” Ribar finished the song lyric. “Great song.”

“Great band.” He flashed the rock and roll hand sign. Index finger up, middle fingers down, pinky up, thumb in. “Got to see them in concert a few years ago.”

Ribar walked over and sat on a stool. “At Ball Arena in Denver?”

“Yep.” He smiled. “You, too?”

Ribar nodded. “I was so fucking stoned that night. Good times.”

The bartender laughed. “Same. Name’s Chester.”

“Ribar,” he replied.

“Your mom named you after steel reinforcing rods?”

Ribar grinned. “It’s my last name. Pronounced the same, but spelled differently.”

“Ah. What’s your thirst quencher this evening, my friend?”

“Beer,” Ribar replied. “I’m a simple man. Whatever’s on tap.”

Chester expertly poured him a drink and placed it in front of him. Ribar laid down some cash. Another man came up to the bar and Chester moved to serve him. He glanced over and saw the man pick up the two bottles and head back to his friend.

Who kissed him on the lips.

Ribar blinked and looked around. A few men played pool. A couple of others threw darts. But the majority of men sat around tables, some holding hands, some leaning close together.

“Let me guess. You didn’t know this was a gay bar.”

He looked back at Chester. “Uh. No. I was just driving by and saw the sign.”

“Not exactly your scene, eh?”

“No, not really.” Now he felt extremely uncomfortable, although he didn’t know why. Wasn’t like he was looking for dick. “So, you’re...”

Chester raised an eyebrow. “Gay? Yes.”

“Ah.” Not knowing what else to say, Ribar took a long drink of his beer. It tasted like acrid sawdust in his mouth.

“It’s not catching, you know.” Chester rolled his eyes and pushed Ribar’s money back. “Keep your cash. Have a great night, steel reinforcing rod.”

He walked away and Ribar sat there, holding his beer, not sure what to do. Clearly, he’d been dismissed. He’d seen Chester’s defenses spring into action, the earlier comradery dissolving. Chester didn’t even look at him, and although he didn’t know why, that bothered Ribar. He wasn’t a homophobe. Had no problems with gay men, or gay women. But what the hell? How had he walked into a gay bar and not known? Wasn’t there some sort of radar in his psyche that should’ve been activated?

Unable to help himself, he turned his head to look at the other patrons. A few stared at him, whispering to each other. Fear and wariness in their eyes. It struck him that *he* was the outcast. To them, he was simply a vicious biker who came to cause trouble or mock them. Lord knew what they thought, but it made him uncomfortable. His heart rate sped up. Sweat beaded his upper lip. For a moment, it felt like a panic attack was trying to steal his breath. He needed to leave. Like right fucking now. Only, his feet weren’t obeying. Men ... couples ... partners ... whatever the fuck they called themselves. They looked so happy. So completely wrapped up in one another that they were oblivious to everything else.

“Thought you’d be gone by now,” Chester said as he walked back over.

“I... I...” *Why the fuck am I stuttering?* He took a deep breath. It was one fucking drink, right? “Gotta finish my beer.”

Chester cocked his head and then pointed to Ribar’s cut. “You’re not expecting your friends, are you? Not sure this is their scene and I’d rather my bar not be torn up.”

“It’s definitely not their scene,” he muttered in agreement.

“It’s not yours either.”

Ribar shook his head. “No, but I’m also not an asshole.”

“We’ll see.”

Chester left him to stare at his beer, and he suddenly didn’t have the stomach to finish it, despite what he said. He got up and quickly left without looking back. Even though he said he wasn’t an asshole, at that moment he certainly felt like one.

Over an hour later he walked into the Reapers clubhouse. As expected, a party was in full swing. Music loud enough to make his ears bleed poured through speakers. The cloying scent of pot hung heavy in the air. On every conceivable surface were men and women fucking. Once upon a time he’d have been one of them. In his younger days, he’d never had a problem getting it up for a woman, but lately he’d lost interest in the sweet butts, in the orgies, and fucking in general. If it wasn’t for the fact he jerked off every morning in the shower he’d be afraid E.D. was creeping up on him. He suspected it was apathy. Maybe disassociation. The Reapers weren’t the same as when he’d first joined. It could be him, but ... more than likely, it was because the new president indulged in his vices more than what was best for the club.

“Where’s the prez?” he asked one of the few men who wasn’t fucking.

He pointed to a corner and Ribar looked over. The president, Zeus, sat in the corner, two naked women on his lap.

Every few seconds he rubbed his nose, and some white powder lingered on his mustache. Ribar knew the man had to be high as a fucking kite, not that he really cared. It wasn't like he hadn't indulged every now and then, but Zeus took it to a different level. Using product that didn't really belong to him. Spending the club's money to feed his indulgence. When Zeus spotted him, he stood abruptly and caused the women to tumble to the floor.

"Where the fuck have you been?" he roared loudly. So loud that the music was turned down and every gaze swung their way.

Ribar had to force himself not to roll his eyes. "Took the long way home."

"Where's my money?"

"Yours?" Ribar asked.

Zeus narrowed his eyes. "I thought you stole it. I was all set to send out patrols to find your ass."

White hot anger filled Ribar. "What did you say?"

"I said," Zeus said. His eyes were dilated, and a speck of blood rolled down his nose. He sniffed and wiped it with the back of his hand. "You fucking stole my money."

Ribar took a step away, disgusted with the man. He pulled the envelope filled with cash out of the inside pocket of his cut and threw it at his president. "I'm not a thief."

Zeus opened it and thumbed through the cash. Then he smiled. "If there's one bill not here—"

"Don't finish that sentence," Ribar said coldly. "I've devoted my life to this club, so don't *ever* accuse me of not putting it first."

"I'm the pres—"

"So fucking act like it!"

Ribar spun and stomped through the throng of people who had come to witness a potential fight. He knew he'd pay

for his anger later. Right then all he wanted was to find his bed and forget about the night.

The next morning, he discovered Zeus passed out on the pool table. All around him were empty alcohol bottles, amber pill bottles, and a half-eaten chocolate cake. Ribar might have had questions about the cake, but the rest made him shake his head.

He headed outside to one of the weight benches. Several other members were already working out. Hawkins gave him a nod.

“Need a spot?” he asked.

“Sure,” Ribar replied. He put the desired weights on the bar before positioning under it. Hawkins helped him lift up, and then Ribar cleared his mind as he focused on the burn.

“Don’t let Zeus upset you.”

“I’m not.”

“Not sure what happened to him,” Hawkins muttered.

“I do,” Ribar said in a huff. “He let the damn presidency go to his head.”

“Yeah.”

Ribar did his reps and then moved over to the dumbbells. One of the men started music up on his phone, and it took a moment for him to realize it was a Five Finger Death Punch song. Unexpectedly, Chester popped into his head. He’d never been the type of person to linger on something, but damned if he didn’t feel a little ashamed at walking out after he insisted he was cool with being in a gay bar.

“Just ignore Zeus,” Hawkins said. “He was stressed last night.”

“Yeah, well, he called me a fucking thief. If he does it again, I’m gonna make him eat his own nut sack.”

“Visual I did *not* need. You hanging around tonight?”

“What’s tonight?” Ribar asked.

“Another party, apparently.”

“Shocker. No, probably not. I haven’t been in a party mood for a while now.”

“That’s not because of Zeus, is it?”

Ribar shook his head. “I think I might be having a mid-life crisis.”

“No shit? I heard those things suck.”

Ribar chuckled. “Right up there with regret and apathy. I think I’ll take a long ride tonight. I might crash somewhere, try to avoid Zeus.”

“Hate to say that might be the wisest thing.”

“Yeah.” Ribar sighed. “Fucking hell.”

Chapter Two

Ribar stared up at the bar sign and wondered for the hundredth time why the hell he was back. He'd had a shit week and had needed to get out. Get away. The club ... how many times did he have to say it was different? Something was off, and if he was being honest, it had been changing for some time. Or maybe it was just him. He didn't like being accused of theft. As punishment for arguing with Zeus, he'd been assigned all the shit prospect jobs while the actual prospects did nothing.

Yet none of that explained why he was back. Here. Where he'd put his tail between his legs and slunk out last weekend, like some fucking moron. If he was smart, he'd ride off and never look back, because nothing but problems lay on the other side of that red door.

He was just going to say he was sorry for being a dick. Then he was gone. With one last mental debate, he dismounted and headed inside. This time, there were only a few men inside, but no bartender. What was he supposed to do now? Leave once more? Wait? Then, a moment later, Chester came from the back room, arms loaded with beer cases. When he saw Ribar, he paused for a second. Chester wore black skinny jeans and an old Lynyrd Skynyrd t-shirt. Leather cuff braided bracelets were around both wrists. His dark hair was once more styled into a short, spiky mohawk.

"Hey, steel reinforcing rod," Chester greeted. He hefted up the cases of beer, showcasing muscles rippling under the weight. "Never expected to see you again."

"Yeah, I wanted ... do you need help?"

"I'm not gonna say no."

Ribar hurried forward to grab some of the heavy cases. "Where to?"

"Down there on the counter," Chester directed.

Ribar strode behind the bar and deposited the beer where he'd been directed. He turned, ready to leave, only to bump into Chester. He reached out and steadied the bartender, who was only about an inch or so shorter than him. Their gazes clashed, and he had a sense of free falling. Almost like that faint need to puke after a spinning carnival ride. Chester stared at him with an equal mixture of interest and caution. Ribar's heart hammered in his chest, his mouth went dry, and he didn't know what the fuck was happening to him. Hoping the ground wasn't rushing up to meet him, he cleared his throat and stepped back.

"Thanks," Chester muttered, his voice low and raspy. He flattened himself against the bar so Ribar could exit. As they passed by one another, Ribar tried to ignore Chester's cologne. Leather, with cinnamon spice and a hint of citrus. He smelled fresh and masculine at the same time, like he'd just stepped out of the shower.

And why the hell am I sniffing him?

"Yeah." Ribar rubbed the back of his neck. "No problem."

Chester crossed his arms over his chest. "So, what can I do for you?"

"I, ah, wanted to apologize for running out last weekend."

He'd managed to surprise Chester. "You didn't have to come all the way back here to apologize."

Ribar shrugged. "Seemed like the right thing to do."

"Ribar, what's your first name?"

He'd never really used his given name before. He'd always been Ribar in the club, and even doubted any of them even knew his full name.

"Kemper."

Chester cocked his head. "Kemper Ribar. I like it. Way better than Chester."

“That isn’t so bad,” Kemper said. “There’re many cool Chesters.”

“Oh, yeah? Like who?”

“Chester ... something ... was a President. And, of course, the Linkin Park dude.”

Chester placed his hand over his heart. “Long live the Chaz.”

Kemper added his moment of silence for the dead front man, until the moment turned awkward. He looked toward the door. Every brain cell he had was screaming for him to get out. He had apologized and now it was done. He could go. But he didn’t really want to.

“Well, take care of yourself, Kemper. Thanks for the help.”

Chester turned away, and before he knew what he was doing, Kemper grabbed hold of his upper arm. Chester halted, looked up at him. A big question mark burned brightly in the blue orbs.

“Maybe I, ah, could get a beer before I head out?”

“Sure. Are you going to drink it this time?”

“Yeah,” Kemper said quietly. “I’ll drink it.”

Chester nodded and pointedly glanced at the grip still on his arm. Kemper let go, although he had the instinct to still hold on, which bothered him. Once free, his hand felt oddly bereft. As Chester went to get the drink, he slid onto a barstool. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw two men embrace. He didn’t want to stare, but something compelled him to watch. A tightness gripped his belly. He wasn’t homophobic. His philosophy was if it was between consenting adults, then why the fuck did he care who was in whose bed? Straight, bi, gay ... what happened behind closed doors wasn’t his business.

“Here you go.”

Kemper pulled his gaze away from the couple as Chester placed a newly opened bottle of beer in front of him. He looked at the beer, blinking away the confusing thoughts in his head.

“Thanks,” he said gruffly. He pulled out a crumpled five-dollar bill from his vest pocket and laid it on the bar top.

“Keep your money,” Chester said.

“I need to compensate you some way-”

An order was called out down the other end of the bar. Chester threw him a smile and waited on the man, and then he began to restock his bar with the cases Kemper had helped moved. As he took a sip of his cold brew, Kemper watched him work. Why, he had no idea, but he couldn't seem to tear his gaze away. Gracefully, Chester interwove through his environment, doing everything by familiarity. Dipping, weaving, turning as he filled orders, stocked supplies, and joked with customers. Streamlined muscles that bunched and rippled under his tight t-shirt.

Why the fuck am I looking at his muscles?

He was thinking of a lot of fucking questions he couldn't answer. He nursed his beer, knowing when it was finished, he had to leave. There was no reason to stay. He came and apologized and now it was time to move on. Only the thought of returning to the club filled him with dread. He'd gotten on Zeus's shit list, and it was like it gave permission for a few of the other members to treat him like dirt. Like a fucking *prospect!*

“You always glare at your drinks?”

Kemper snapped his gaze upward. Chester gave him grin.

“I, ah, was thinking about my club.”

“Something wrong with it? Or do you frown like that all the time?”

He shouldn't have said anything. He shouldn't talk about club business with a stranger. But was it really talking about the club when it had to do with his feelings? He started tracing designs in the condensation on the dark glass.

"Hey, can I run something by you?" he asked.

"Uh, sure."

Kemper sighed. Should he open his mouth? Voice his unease? Tell a virtual stranger his problems? He looked at Chester waiting patiently, his head cocked to one side as he focused on him.

Fuck it.

"I'm starting to doubt my place in the club. Everything is different from how it was twenty years ago."

One eyebrow went up in surprise. "All right. How was it twenty years ago?"

"It was ... fun. I was surrounded by men who had my back and I had theirs. A family. Trust. I was never going to be a nine to five type of guy, and the club gave me a stability I didn't even know I needed."

"And now?" Chester asked.

"Now, I don't trust any of them." That admission was hard to voice. He felt like he was losing something that was his whole identity. "I feel like I'm alone again."

Sympathy filled Chester's eyes. "Is it the club that's changed? Or you?"

"That's what I'm afraid of. Because if I don't have the club, then who am I?"

The question scared him so much he was willing to talk about it to a complete stranger.

"What is it that you like about it? I mean, is it the comradery? Being an outlaw? Freedom from the norm? Pussy?"

Kemper snorted. “That last, absolutely not.”

Chester raised an eyebrow.

“I mean, once upon a time, pussy was a good motivator. But it’s not sexy when a woman is faking, and they all fake it. Besides, fucking a woman with a dozen other men’s cum inside her isn’t as sexy as you’d think.”

“I never thought pussy was sexy to begin with.”

“Touché,” Kemper said dryly. “The old president was a cool guy, but the one now is more interested in his vices rather than what’s good for the club.”

Chester reached behind him for a rag and started wiping the bar. “Are you the only one who feels like this?”

Kemper shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe one other. Or a few.”

“Right. Well, if this president has isolated the other or others, you might have to address concerns to find a resolution. Sometimes those resolutions are fucking awful but necessary.”

“You’re talking about a mutiny?”

“Actually, a coup. Mutiny is more like a rebellion.”

“So is a coup.”

“Not if you overthrow him.”

Kemper scrunched up his nose. “Don’t want to be the leader. I just want to continue doing what I’ve always done.”

“All right. So, what’ve you always done?”

“Lately shit jobs all week,” he muttered, running a hand through his hair. “Even if I was interested, there’s not been a single person who’s approached me about him.”

“And you’re the only one he’s assigned these shit jobs?”

“Yeah.” Kemper shook his head. “He’s treating me like a God-damned prospect.”

“Then you must threaten him somehow.”

“What?”

Someone called for more drinks, causing Chester to move away. Kemper drank his beer and watched him. Watched him smile at his customers. Laughing at jokes. Throwing witty responses back. Listening to his customers.

When he'd served everyone, Chester walked back to him and placed another cold beer in front of him.

“So, going back to the whole coup discussion. You must scare this crappy president of yours. You threaten him, whether or not it's a true threat or a perceived one, he must think you have sway over the others.”

Kemper shook his head. “But I don't. I have no ranking whatsoever, except as a patched member.”

“But do you have their respect?”

That made him pause.

“Just remember, Kemper, that his shortcomings are *his* and not yours. As for who you are without a club, well, maybe you're just outgrowing it. Maybe you're unsettled because it's no longer giving you what you need.”

Kemper played the words over through his head. Perhaps Chester was onto something. Before he could ponder more, the door flung open and a very flamboyant drag queen walked in, swishing her red hair back like the diva she was. Kemper blinked at her. The bling on her wrists and fingers dazzling in the low lighting of the bar. She wore a white one-piece body suit that sported white faux fur around her wrists and neck.

“Hello, bitches!” she called out as she sauntered up to the bar, looking him over head to toe. “Oh, my. Who is this hunk of burning love, Chesty?”

Chester scowled. “Stop calling me that, Lulu.”

The drag queen blinked her long black lashes and waved her manicured hand in the air, the long nails painted ruby red like her hair. “You love me, and you know it. Now, who are you, you handsome piece of man meat? And where have you been all my life?”

She sidled up to a spot next to Kemper, who wasn’t sure if he should get the hell out of there or not. A gay bar was one thing. A drag queen was something entirely different. He suddenly knew how the deer in the headlights felt right before impact.

“Stop scaring Kemper,” Chester warned.

“*Oh*. Kemper. I love it.” She fluttered her eyes again. “So, Kemper, my love. Please tell me you’re looking for a sugar mama because I could seriously grow addicted to those sweet muscles.”

“Uh—”

“Stop it!” Chester snapped, and Kemper was grateful for the interruption. He pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head. “Kemper, this is Lulu Balzac.”

“*Enchanté*,” Lulu said, holding out her hand as if she wanted a kiss on the back of it.

Feeling a little weird, he took her hand in and twisted it until he shook it. “Right back at ya.”

Lulu pouted.

“Don’t let her scare you,” Chester drawled. “She’s the biggest slut on the planet.”

Lulu glared.

“Ball sack?” Kemper asked.

“I know, it’s just fabulous, isn’t it?” Lulu winked at him. “Barkeep, bring me my usual!”

Chester smiled, rolled his eyes, and turned to make a mixed drink.

“You know, darling, I never thought my dream man would be a biker,” Lulu declared. Her tongue traced over her upper lip. “I think I’ve discovered a whole different side to my kink. Wanna take me for a ride, big boy?”

“Um, I don’t have an extra helmet.”

“I’m sure your ... helmet ... is mighty big.”

Chester placed the purple mixed drink down in front of her with a sharp click. “Enough. You’re scaring the straight man.”

“Straight? Or fluid?” Lulu winked at Kemper and grabbed her drink. “Next time, darlings.”

She blew a kiss, turned, and headed toward the back of the bar where a few men greeted her with huge smiles.

“Hope she didn’t freak you out,” Chester murmured.

Kemper stared at his beer bottle, feeling a lot out of place. “I have to get going.”

“I understand.”

He looked up. Chester stared at him with a soft expression in his blue eyes.

“No, it’s not that,” he said quickly. Perhaps a bit *too* quickly.

“Really,” Chester said. “You don’t have to lie. Not to me. I get it. A gay bar is one thing, but a drag queen hitting on you is something else.”

“I don’t begrudge how someone lives their life. Look at me. I’m a biker, for Christ’s sake.”

“A distinction I’m very much aware of.”

He smiled, and Kemper had a difficult time dragging his gaze away from Chester’s lips. *What the hell?* He stood up quickly.

“Good bye, Kemper Ribar. It was nice meeting you. Again.”

He nodded and headed toward the door. The urge to glance back one more time was strong, but he forced himself not to obey the impulse. After all, it wasn't like he was going to return.

Right?

Chapter Three

Ribar returned to the club just as the night was jumping into overdrive. It seemed like every fucking night was a party, and the true nature of the Burning Reapers fell further and further away. He didn't begrudge the men their fun, but there was a time and a place for everything. Had he changed so much that he couldn't even find the energy to give a damn?

He bypassed most and headed inside, intending to shower and fall into bed. When he entered the clubhouse, a few of the other brothers waved and greeted him. They sat around a table playing poker.

"Wanna join us, Ribar?" Hawkins asked.

"Nah," he replied. "I'm beat."

"Cool," Hawkins said. "Hey, we're planning to go fishing this weekend if you're free."

Ribar looked at the other two men, Beck and Jonesy, who nodded. A shrill whistle ricocheted like a gun shot. They all turned toward the sound. Zeus stood in the doorway of the game room, hands on his hips as he glared at Ribar.

"Why are you always trying to stir up trouble?"

"Excuse me?" Ribar asked.

Zeus didn't bother to respond. "Where did you go?"

"I went for a ride."

Zeus came closer until he stood directly in front of him. "From now on, you can't go on rides unless I approve it."

"What the fuck?" Ribar snarled, suddenly ready to throw down. "You can't fucking ground me like I'm a teenager."

"Yes, I can."

Hawkins jumped up and put his arms between the two men. "Come on. No fighting. Zeus, that makes no sense."

"I'm the prez. What I say is the law."

“Then this *prez* should go snort some more blow and leave me the hell alone,” Ribar said coldly.

Zeus sneered as he stepped back. “I’m gonna have some tasks for you next weekend. Kiss your fishing trip good-bye.”

With a triumphant sneer, he turned and marched back into the game room, no doubt to party until the sun came up. Ribar wanted to march after him and beat the living shit out of him.

“He’s not worth it,” Hawkins muttered. “Don’t do anything stupid.”

“I want to shove his words down his fucking throat.”

“I know. For some reason he has a hard-on for you, and not in the pleasant way.”

“Probably because you’re the oldest member remaining,” Beck said.

Ribar shook his head. “No, there’s...”

He quickly went through the roster and realized that Beck was right. He was the oldest still standing. Some had died. Some moved on to other chapters. How the hell did he get to be the oldest?

“Regardless,” he muttered. “I’m tired of him being a dick. He can kiss my ass if he thinks I’ll play by his rules. He’ll have to kill me to keep me off my bike.”

“Try not to turn your back on him,” Hawkins warned.

Ribar patted Hawkins’ shoulder. “Thanks, man. See ya in the morning.”

The next morning, Ribar headed out to grab breakfast when Zeus called out to him. Letting out an irritated sigh, he headed over to the prez. He waited by his bike, along with two others.

“What’s going on?” he asked, glancing at each brother. Unease slithered down his spine when they wouldn’t meet his gaze.

“We’re off on a run,” Zeus said. “Guard duty while a shipment of guns is transported.”

“All right,” Ribar said. “If you wait a moment, I’ll get my bike.”

Zeus shook his head as a maniacal grin stretched from ear to ear. “No. You’re on laundry duty.”

One of the prospects ran up to them, strapping on his helmet. Ribar watched, incredulous, as the kid looked toward Zeus for the next order. The other men smirked at him.

“Wait. He’s going on the run? He’s fucking prospect!”

“And today, you’re demoted down while he’s promoted.”

Anger burned through Ribar. He didn’t say anything as Zeus chuckled, mounted his bike, and gunned it as he and the others rode away. Hawkins stepped next to him.

“The kid went?”

“Yeah,” Ribar replied.

“Damn. That’s your role.”

“I know.” Ribar turned away, marching back to the clubhouse. Hawkins fell in step beside him. “This is bullshit.”

“Yeah. I know. The club sure isn’t like it used to be when you and I prospected. I don’t know about you, but I’m considering moving to another chapter.”

That surprised Ribar. “You’d move?”

Hawkins shrugged. “Don’t want to, but nothing’s really keeping me here. Zeus isn’t the leader I thought he’d be.”

“Even I voted for him,” Ribar said, shaking his head. “If I had known he was hooked on coke, I would’ve backed someone else.”

“The only person who could really run against him would’ve been *you*,” Hawkins stressed.

“What’re you talking about?”

“You’re the first in the line of succession. You could easily challenge him and win. There’s enough of us here to back you.”

Ribar shook his head. “I’m no leader. No threat at all to him.”

“I get it, but he doesn’t. Just ... watch your back. ‘K?’”

“Yeah.” He sighed. “Gotta go wash the fucking clothes.”

He marched off to follow Zeus’s orders, seething inside as he went around collecting dirty clothes from every room. The hours he spent separating, washing, and folding only furthered his anger. When he was finally done, night had fallen. He needed to get away, needed to be anywhere but there. Getting on his bike, he drove off with no clear destination in his head.

An hour later, he found himself in the parking lot at Wrong Side of Heaven. The parking lot held far more cars and trucks than the last two times he’d been there. Which meant more men. More couples. Possibly more drag queens. *Why the hell he was here?* This wasn’t his scene *at all*, and yet, he dismounted and prepared to go inside.

He looked down at himself, and in a spur of the moment thought, he took off his cut and placed it in his saddlebag. While it was on, he was Ribar, and he didn’t want to bring that into Chester’s bar. He took a deep breath and headed inside.

Chapter Four

Chester listened half-heartedly, cleaning some glasses as Lulu and her entourage argued over which television show was better, *Heartstopper* or *Special*. Since he hadn't watched either, he had no opinion, but it was still entertaining to listen to them argue. There was nothing quite like annoyed divas arguing over something silly.

"We're talking about cerebral palsy!" one of the queens, Ophelia, scowled at Lulu. "Why the holy heck isn't that at the top of the list?"

Lulu rolled her eyes. "That can't compare to the sweet innocence of young gay love. Makes my heart all aflutter."

"I personally love it when straight men realize they aren't as linear as they once thought," another queen, Madame Summer, said with a wispy moan. "The Policeman. Harry was simply divine in the sex scenes!"

"That's a movie, bitch," Lulu said haughtily.

Madame Summer shrugged, opened her fan, and waved it furiously in front of her face. "Movie schmovie. I stand by my statement."

"Well, if we're switching to movies, I think the movie *Shelter* is my favorite," Lulu said thoughtfully. "I think I have a thing for surfers."

"You have a thing for any man with a penis," Ophelia said dryly. "Besides, we're landlocked. Have you even met a surfer? Sand everywhere."

Madame Summer scrunched her nose. "I don't like sand. Perhaps I'll just admire them from afar."

Chester smiled as he made a round of Malibu Sunsets, their signature drink. As soon as he delivered them to a table, the door opened and Kemper Ribar entered. Shocked, he blinked several times, making sure he was the real thing and not a figment of his imagination. It was entirely possible he

might have conjured the man out of thin air. Yet, no. Kemper still stood there. Still tall, dark, and handsome as sin. He refused to think about how many times he'd jacked off in the shower thinking about the man.

"There's my hunk of burning love!" Lulu almost screamed. She rushed toward the door and gave Kemper a hug, even though he looked very uncomfortable. "I missed you."

"Let him go, Lulu," Chester called out.

With a pout, she took a step back. "Phooey. You're no fun, Chesty."

"Sheath your claws, woman," he ordered. He nodded his head at Kemper. "Slither past her quickly. Wanna beer?"

Kemper hurried to the bar and sat a few seats away from the Queens. "Yeah. Thanks."

Chester walked around the bar and grabbed Kemper's favorite. "What brings you back here?"

"I, ah, found myself driving by so I thought I'd stop in."

His words came out stilted. Insincere. Chester placed the beer in front of Kemper. "Uh huh. Just went a wandering, eh?"

Kemper gave a one shoulder shrug as he took a sip of his drink. "Didn't want to stay at the club."

"This have to do with your leader?"

"Maybe." He sighed. "Yeah. Tried grounding me from my bike."

Chester raised an eyebrow in surprise. "And how old are you?"

Kemper grinned. "That's what I said. I'm thirty-nine."

"Definitely old enough to make your own decisions."

"One of the other brothers mentioned he feels threatened because I'm the oldest member still hanging around."

“Ah,” Chester said. “That makes sense. You have seniority.”

He snorted derisively. “It’s a stupid insecurity. I have absolutely zero ambition to have any rank in the club.”

“Yeah, but more than likely he can’t comprehend that someone might not want to be leader. People in power are always suspicious that others want what they have.”

Kemper opened his mouth to reply, but at that moment a shrill catcall cut through the heavy metal pumping through the speakers.

“Do stop interrupting our love, Chesty, and serve your patrons,” Lulu said as she took a seat right next to Kemper. The other two Queens sidled closer.

Madame Summer held out her hand, bent as if expecting him to kiss it.

“I’m Madame Summer Night.”

Kemper shot Chester a panicked look, but he only shrugged. He was interested to see how the big biker handled the ladies. To his surprise, Kemper took Madam Summer’s hand and gave the back a quick peck.

“Oh, my,” she said a bit breathlessly. “I like warm lips.”

She batted her eyelashes.

“Stop it,” Chester warned.

“No, *you* stop being a daddy whore,” Madame Summer countered.

Chester shook his head. “I have no idea what that even means.”

She was pushed aside by Ophelia, decked out from head to toe in yellow, with a dyed black boa around her neck. Chester knew he’d be sweeping feathers up for weeks to come.

“You’re scaring the poor boy,” she admonished. “Don’t worry about her, Hunk. She’s a horny bitch that hasn’t seen

action for the last ten years—”

“Oh, please!”

“I’m Ophelia Bang-Bang,” she went on, ignoring Madame Summer. “Those two might want to jump your boner, but not all of us are quite that rude. Nice to make your acquaintance.”

She held out her hand and after a moment, Kemper shook it.

“I’m Kemper,” he said. “But I’m not, you know, gay.”

“Well, if you came here for a beer, maybe not entirely straight.” Ophelia winked. “Wait! I have an idea. You and I could form a coalition and call it Straight Men of Drag.”

Kemper cocked his head. “You’re straight? But ... but you’re a drag queen.”

Ophelia held up her hand to cup the side of her mouth, as if sharing a secret. “That doesn’t automatically mean you’re gay. Anyone can do drag. You can be the manliest man around and still rock a chiffon dress.”

“I don’t even know what chiffon is,” Kemper admitted.

“Drag is art,” she continued. “It’s creativity. A powerful form of self-expression. When I’m not in drag I am a complete introvert, but Ophelia gives me a voice.”

“You should never be ashamed of your inner femininity,” Madame Summer boasted. She ran her hands over her hourglass figure.

“I don’t know if I have that,” Kemper admitted.

“We’re all a little of this and little of that,” Lulu said with a wink.

“Many people can’t seem to wrap their head around straight drag queens,” Ophelia said, shrugging. “I mean, actors are paid to take on a persona, and doing drag isn’t any different.”

“Okay! Break it up,” Chester said, shooing the queens away. “He’s not here to learn about drag. He’s here for a beer and that’s all.”

Lulu harumphed. “Come, ladies. Clearly, we’re stepping on Chesty’s toes.”

Madame Summer wiggled her fingers. “Tootles, Hunk. If you ever wanna join our ranks, I’d be happy to teach you.”

The innuendo was unmistakable. All three blew him a kiss as they grabbed their cocktails and moved to a table in the back.

“Sorry about them,” Chester said, a small smile on his lips. “They can be a bit overwhelming.”

Kemper shrugged. “They’re harmless. I think.”

“Now you know who to go to when you get the urge for boas and sequins.”

“Pretty sure that’ll never happen.”

Chester chuckled. He moved off to serve a few people but eventually came back to stand in front of Kemper.

“I thought you and this bar were two ships passing in the night.”

“Yeah,” Kemper replied. “I thought so, too, but I was out riding and my bike led me here.”

“And is it a stupid bike? Or a smart one?”

“It’s a straight one.”

Chester nodded. “Of that I had no doubt.”

“But this place is free of drama.”

“Do you not remember the Queens back there?” He gestured toward them with his thumb.

“Not the kind of drama I’m talking about.”

Chester studied him. Truthfully, he was thrilled to see Kemper again. The man was absolutely gorgeous in a manly

rough way. A trimmed beard. Long dark hair tied back in a ponytail, with a few strands of silver weaving through the locks. Sea-green eyes. He never thought he was into bikers, but Kemper was turning his taste around. Why did he always fall for the unobtainable ones?

“So, what sage advice can I give you this time?”

“Nah, man,” Kemper said, shaking his head. “Like I said, I was just out for a ride.”

“Then I’m honored for another visit.”

They fell into a strange silence. *Awkward*. He wondered what he needed to do to make Kemper not feel embarrassed he stopped by. “Wanna move some stock in the back?”

Kemper narrowed his eyes. “Seriously?”

“I’ll give you a free beer.”

Kemper cracked his knuckles. “Why didn’t you say so? Show me what needs to be moved.”

Chester waved him over to the door that led into the storage room. “I got a delivery today and I was too busy to tell them how to stack it all. I need all the beer cases separated into brand and stacked, rotating the older cases toward the front.”

“No problem,” he said.

He started immediately lifting the heavy cases and restacking them where he’d been directed. Chester allowed himself a quick glance up and down his backside. Each time Kemper bent, the jeans pulled tight, showing off a perfect ass. Muscles upon muscles bunched with each movement. His mouth went dry and he had to force himself to turn away.

Chester went back to serving drinks. It was a busy night. Weekends brought out a host of people to unwind. He tried hard not to fantasize about the man doing him a favor, but Kemper was a gay man’s wet dream come true. A little over an hour and a half later, he came back out from the stockroom and washed his hands behind the bar.

“Thanks,” Chester said. “I appreciate your help.”

“No big deal,” Kemper said with a shrug. He grabbed one of the bar towels and dried his hands. “It felt good to work my muscles. I mean, I work out and lift weights, but actual work is different.”

“Come help me out anytime. You know. For your muscles.”

“When’s your next shipment?”

“I get one every Saturday.”

Kemper gave a nod. He poured himself some water and drank it down. “What’s next?”

Chester cocked his head. “Next?”

“Yeah, I noticed the stockroom door doesn’t lock.”

“Oh, well, yeah. There’re a few things around this place I’ve been meaning to get to, but haven’t had the time.”

“No problem. Make me a list and I’ll fix everything up.”

Chester blinked. “All right. Sure.”

This handsome, sexy biker man wanted to flex more muscle around him? *And* fix up his bar while doing it? Yes, please!

Chapter Five

“Ribar,” the club VP, Bull, called out. Ribar turned and waited as he caught up. “I need you to bounce at the Pink Pony.”

The titty bar was owned by the club, and they all took a turn acting as bouncer. He wasn't scheduled for another couple of weeks.

“For just tonight?”

Bull glanced behind him, as if making sure they weren't overheard. “Look, Zeus is in a mood.”

Ribar snorted. “Shocker.”

“The ride didn't go as planned. The prospect accidentally discharged his weapon and we almost got our asses handed to us.”

“And this is my fault, how?”

“Don't be a smartass. I'm trying to defuse his black mood, and to do that I need you to disappear.”

“Wow. Thanks. Making me feel all warm and fuzzy right here,” Ribar said, tapping the area over his heart. “But sure, although I have someplace to be on Saturday.”

“No problem. I'll send Deadeye to relieve you for the weekend.”

Ribar gave a curt nod and headed toward his bike. He didn't want to deal with Zeus's nastiness so decided no time like the present to start bouncing. He rode out to the Pink Pony and headed inside the dark bar. It was a steady revenue of cash flowing in, and a great way to launder the money they received from drug runs. The Burning Reapers were the middleman from the supplier to the surrounding distributors who bought it from the club. It brought in a lot of money that needed washing.

He entered the building through the back, waving at the short order line cook. They didn't have a large menu, just some easy finger foods designed to keep the men there. Women hustled back and forth between the stage and dressing rooms, their state of undress not even fazing him.

“Hey, Ribar.”

He looked around and saw Michelle. He'd fooled around with her a couple of times, but staring at her now, her bare breasts didn't give him any type of thrill.

“Hey, darlin’,” he replied with an easy smile.

“Weren't you here a few weeks ago?”

“Yeah, but when the boss man tells me to jump, I ask how high.”

She sauntered up to him and trailed a fingernail over his right biceps. “Perhaps we can have a little fun later.”

He waited for the rush of desire to fill him. For his dick to stand up and take notice. It worried him a little that it lay uninterested. There wasn't one ounce of attraction he felt toward Michelle.

“Sorry. Raincheck? I've gotta get out there to bounce.”

Her brow furrowed in disbelief. “Oh. Okay. Sure.”

He smiled at her and walked past, not even bothering to say bye. He took up position by the door, to check IDs and make sure no one bothered the girls. For the rest of the week his days and nights consisted of much the same. Sleep in till noon, rise and eat, then head back to the Pink Pony to work until the doors closed at 2:00 in the morning. When Saturday finally arrived, he fist bumped with his replacement, Deadeye, and then sped away on his bike.

He didn't even go back to the clubhouse to change. Little over an hour later, he pulled into the parking lot of Wrong Side of Heaven. It was still daylight, and the only vehicle he saw was a truck parked off to the side, so he figured it belonged to Chester. A large white delivery van was almost

flush with the building. He hung his helmet on the handlebar before heading to the red door. It was locked, so he walked around the side. Rock and roll music blared, louder than the previous times he'd been there. Chester was helping the driver unload beer cases so he stepped up next to him and tapped his shoulder.

“Ah!” Chester screamed and dropped the case he held. “Holy shit, Kemper! You scared the fuck out of me.”

Kemper laughed. “Sorry!”

“It’s okay.” He walked over and turned the knob on the sound system and the volume decreased enough to have a conversation. “I might have to go check to make sure my shorts are still clean, but other than that, it’s all good.”

Smiling, Kemper rolled up his sleeves. “Want me to take over?”

“Sure.” Chester walked over to his water bottle and took a long drink. “What’re you doing here so early?”

He took off his leather jacket and placed it out of the way. “Just got off bouncer duty at the Pink Pony.”

Chester scrunched his nose. “Don’t tell me that’s a name of another gay bar.”

“Tits not dicks.”

“Ah,” Chester said. “That’s a relief. I thought I was going to have to kick some queer ass.”

Kemper started unloading the cases. It felt good to flex his muscles. He’d sat for far too long during the week.

“I thought that was a derogatory word,” he said.

“What? Queer?”

“Yeah.”

Chester shrugged. “In the mouth of an asshole, yes, but it’s not quite that cut and dry. Many gay communities have reclaimed it for a sense of pride. I mean, sexuality is so diverse

that it has a wide umbrella so why not take the stigma out of it.”

“Huh,” Kemper said. “Never thought if it that way.”

An easy silence stretched between them. Chester grabbed some beer and left to restock the bar. Between the two of them, it didn’t take long for the delivery to get done. Chester signed off on the invoice and the driver gave a wave before leaving.

“Thanks for coming by and helping out,” he said. “Come on. You get a beer as payment.”

Kemper followed him. “Just one beer?”

“Maybe two, you lush.” He grabbed two bottles and opened them. When he handed one to Kemper, he clicked the necks together. “I’m actually surprised you came back. Well, I was surprised the first time you came back. Really confused the second.”

“And now?”

“Still confused.”

Kemper took a long drink, buying himself a moment to compose his thoughts. “I don’t want to go back to my club right now.”

“This have to do with your prez?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re hiding?”

“No,” he said a bit defensively. “I’d just rather be here for a while.”

“So, you’re staying away.”

“Yeah.”

Chester cocked an eyebrow at him. Kemper sighed.

“Fine,” he grumbled. “Hiding. Anyway, you got that list of stuff you want me to fix?”

“You were serious about that?”

“Wouldn’t have said it if I wasn’t.”

Chester turned to grab a notebook by the cash register. “I started this list of shit I need to do but haven’t been able to find the time. I work every day and night so it’s hard to keep up with everything.”

Kemper held out his hand. “Now you have me.”

Chester hesitated for a moment before giving him the list. “Whatever you get done I’ll appreciate it. I can even throw you a few bucks.”

“Not here for the money,” Kemper said as he perused the list. “Let’s see here. Replace floorboard in women’s restroom. Fix tables...wait. Why do you need a women’s restroom?”

“I’ll give you four reasons,” he replied. “The important one is that this is the only gay bar within a hundred miles. At least, the only licensed one. I’m sure there is someone out there acting as their own distillery. I welcome anyone, including lesbians, needing a place to be comfortable. The other three reasons are Madame Summer, Ophelia, and Lulu.”

“Really?” Kemper asked, blinking. “Do they sit down to pee?”

“I don’t know,” Chester said with a shrug. “Not sure I want to know.”

Kemper shook his head in amusement. “All right. I’ll get to it. Tools?”

“There’s a utility closet next to the bathrooms. You’ll find everything there. I’ve got lumber out the back that I bought for the projects.”

“Thanks.” Kemper went to leave, but then he paused and slowly turned. “Hey, Chester?”

“Yeah?”

“I really need this right now, in my life. I appreciate you letting me stay active.”

Chester smiled. “Anytime, Kemper.”

Chapter Six

Why did he need this right now? Chester watched Kemper walk away toward the bathrooms and wondered what was going on in his life that he needed away from his club. He wasn't naive as to knowing how a motorcycle club worked. Operating below the law was pretty much their MO, and he was fairly sure Kemper knew how to shoot a gun. So, was it smart that he allowed Kemper to pretty much become his handyman?

Probably not.

Was he going to kick the handsome, muscular dude out?

Nope.

Chester sighed and got busy chopping up fruit for cocktails. It was stupid to develop a crush on a straight man. It was even *more* stupid when said crush had the ability to kill without blinking. Or did he? Was Kemper a big old teddy bear in disguise? Perhaps the man was secretly in the closet just waiting to let his rainbow cape unfurl.

More than likely, Chester was delusional.

If there were two things he learned from the movies, it was never cross the mafia and never insult a motorcycle club. For now, he'd take Kemper's help, until the big man worked through whatever issues were going on in his head. He had no doubt that once the biker figured out things, Chester would watch the door slam shut as he left.

Chester turned the music back up, not as loud as usual since he wanted to hear Kemper in case he called out. The bar hours were 2:00 in the afternoon to 2:00 in the morning. At lunch he ordered pizza and he went in search of Kemper. He found him hard at work in a larger hole than the initial one.

"Hey," Chester said.

Kemper sat back and wiped the sweat off his forehead.
"Hey."

“What’s all this?”

“When I pulled out the rotted boards, I realized the subfloor was nothing but sawdust. Figured you didn’t want to have the floor collapse from under Miss Lulu so I decided to replace it.”

“Wow, thanks. You seem to know your way around home repair.”

Kemper shrugged. “I’ve always enjoyed building things. Fixing things.”

“Lucky me. I got pizza for us.”

“Cool. Let me wash up.”

Chester nodded before retreating. He dished out a couple of slices onto paper plates, and slid it over to Kemper when he sat down next to him at the bar.

“So, tell me how you became a biker.”

Kemper finished chewing a bite of pizza and swallowed it before answering. “When I was a junior in high school, we had to take this test that showed what type of career we’d be best suited for. Guess what mine was.”

“Motorcycle club dude?”

“Ballet dancer.”

Chester had just taken a drink of beer and had to spit it out on a laugh. “What the fuck?”

“Yeah, that was my reaction, too!” Kemper chuckled. “Although it probably had more to do with me fucking around on the test and not taking it seriously. So anyway, here I am with these two monumental career choices. Ballet dancer or biker.”

Chester leaned on his hand, angling closer as if hanging on every word. “Which one did you pick?”

“Well, since I’m about as delicate as a bull in a China shop, I had to pass on the Swan Lake slippers to embark on

my life of debauchery and crime.”

“Debauchery?”

“You went with that first?”

“Eh,” Chester said with a shrug. “Even gay men pick debauchery first.”

Kemper grinned, and then slowly it faded. “My mom died when I was a kid and my father liked to use me as a punching bag. He was a mean drunk. Me, I’m fucking hilarious when I’m three sheets to the wind, but him not so much. When I was seventeen, I’d had enough. So, I left. Met up with the Reapers sometime after that, and the rest is history.”

“I’m sorry about your dad.”

“Yeah,” Kemper said, shrugging. “Some people shouldn’t be parents. What about you?”

“Me?” Chester shook his head. “I never had the urge to procreate.”

“No, I meant, what’s your story.”

“Ah. Well, I’m originally from Denver. Managed a club for a while. I liked it until I didn’t.”

“Why’d you leave the city?”

Chester wiped his mouth and laid down the napkin before answering. “Being a gay man today is infinitely easier than it used to be, but that being said, it’s still an uphill battle some days. You jump over one hurdle and two more pop up. My boyfriend was still in the closet, and while I’ll never force someone to come out if they’re not ready, *I* couldn’t go back into the closet. Our relationship fell apart. Which meant a future without him.”

“Shit, man. Sorry.”

“It is what it is,” he said with a shrug. “About the same time that was going on, an old family friend who owned this bar decided to retire. Asked if I wanted it and I said hell yeah.

So, I packed up, got a business loan from a bank, and never looked back.”

“But it’s just you working here, right? You don’t have anyone else?”

“Nope, just me, myself and I. Up until recently, it’s not been busy enough to warrant another employee. That might have to change soon.”

“Uh, huh. And are you enjoying it? All work and no play etcetera and so forth.”

“I like my life now. It’s fulfilling. I get to see my friends every night. What’s not to love?”

“You can be in a room full of people and still be lonely.”

“I suppose.” He raised an eyebrow. “Are you?”

Kemper was silent a moment as he finished up his last slice of pizza. When he was done, he wiped his mouth and then looked at him. “Yeah. I’ve been lonely, too.”

Chester didn’t know how to reply so they finished their beers in silence. Then Kemper rose to his feet.

“I should get back to finish the floor.”

“Thank you, Kemper. I really appreciate it.”

Kemper nodded, turned to walk away, not saying anything else. Chester watched him, his gaze slipping down to inspect his ass. Then he chastised himself for ogling, reminding himself that his biker wasn’t gay.

Although he wished he was.

Chapter Seven

By the time Kemper finished with the floor, Wrong Side of Heaven was packed with people. Men playing pool. Men dancing. Men waiting, some impatiently, for their alcohol. It was the complete opposite of his visits before. Chester ran back and forth, serving drinks, joking with customers, refilling the bowls on the counter with pretzels. Although he laughed, stress lines bracketed around his mouth.

Kemper sighed. He should just go. This wasn't his scene. It wasn't his problem. He had nothing in common with the men drinking and grinding against each other, but he couldn't leave Chester in such a predicament. Without another thought, he hurried behind the bar and began serving beer. Chester blinked at him, but after a moment, he smiled in gratitude and they got back to work.

Through the night he and Chester didn't really have time to talk. Every once in a while, he glanced over when Chester laughed, wondering what was so funny. Through the night, he found himself seeking him out and each time he did, Chester seemed to catch his eye and smile back. Fifteen minutes before closing time, Chester turned off the music blasting through the speakers and yelled last call. As patrons settled their tabs and filed out the door, Kemper grabbed a damp dishtowel and tub and headed out to wipe down and bus the tables.

"But I don't wanna go," slurred the last patron, a man three sheets to the wind.

"Come on, Frank," Chester said. He wrapped his arm around the man's waist and grabbed hold of his shoulder, helping him to the door. "I called your daughter. She's outside."

"Oh, no," Frank wailed. "She'll take away my television."

"You just need to sleep it off."

He led the man outside and returned a few minutes later, locking the door.

“He do that often?” Kemper asked.

“No,” Chester replied as he grabbed a few glasses off the tables near the door. “Luckily. From what I heard, he lost his partner, and comes here whenever the memories get too much.”

They worked quickly, stacking all the glasses next to the sink.

“I’ll get to them tomorrow,” Chester said. “One of the reasons why I don’t open until 2:00.”

“All right,” Kemper said as he tossed his rag down onto the bar.

“You didn’t have to stay and help, you know,” Chester said.

“Had nothing else planned.” He rubbed the back of his neck. “Guess I should head out. I can come back tomorrow-”

“It’s too late for you to drive. You can crash at my place.”

Kemper blinked. “Um. Nah, it’s okay.”

“You’re telling me you want to drive all the way home just to turn around and come all the way back tomorrow? When my sofa is *so* comfy.”

Kemper smiled. “How comfy is it?”

“It’s like sleeping on a cloud. In fact, on a scale of one to a thousand, it rates at nine hundred and ninety-three.”

“What happened to the other seven?”

Chester shrugged. “Nothing’s perfect.”

Kemper chuckled. “You drive a convincing argument. Lead the way.”

Although Kemper replayed his decision to follow Chester to his home, the truth of the matter was that he hadn’t wanted to go home to the clubhouse. He was too tired to party,

too uninterested to fuck, and too far over Zeus's fucking attitude problem. It was all turning into one massive hemorrhoid chaffing his ass, which was the main reason why he agreed to sleep at Chester's. A peaceful night on a sofa seemed a hundred times better than dealing with crap at home.

Chester led them through the downtown section of the nearby town. The streets were quiet. Quaint looking streetlamps flooded the area with soft lighting. Railroad tracks bisected the area. Chester turned off Main Street into a residential neighborhood. The houses were small, with postage sized lawns. He pulled onto the rock-lined driveway of one and Kemper parked his bike against the curb. He dismounted and pulled off his helmet, tucking it under his arm as he walked up the lawn to join Chester at the front door. It stuck slightly in the frame, and Chester bent his shoulder to force it open.

"Humidity always makes this door stick," Chester said. "I've been slowly but surely renovating."

The small living room boasted a purple leather couch, so large that it took up the entire space. The padding was, indeed, overly puffed out. It rested on an area rug made up of electric blue and hot pink colors in geometric shapes. A fifty-inch television was mounted on the wall. On the coffee table rested a gaming console and several game cases nearby.

"Let me guess," Kemper said. "You're a fan of Purple Rain?"

Chester grinned. "His best album."

"Agree to disagree."

"Oh, really?" he asked. "And what do you think is his best?"

"Sign O' The Times, of course."

Chester pursed his lips and tilted his head. "Okay. Can't argue with that. Kiss?"

"Destroyer."

“Black Sabbath or Judas Priest?”

“I’m more of a Mötley Crüe kinda guy.”

“You’re all right, Kemper Ribar,” Chester said with a grin. “Make yourself at home. I’ll grab some blankets and a pillow.”

He disappeared down the hall. Kemper removed his jacket and only then realized he had left his cut back at the bar. He had taken it off to work on the floor. Now, a sense of panic filled him, although not for the obvious reason. Not because he had left it behind, but because he hadn’t missed it.

“You okay?”

Kemper looked up. Chester stared at him in concern, several blankets and a pillow in his arms.

“Yeah, great. Everything’s great. Well, actually, I left my cut back at the bar.”

“Do you need to go back and get it?”

“Not really.”

“It’ll be safe there,” Chester said. He gave a nod toward the hallway. “I’m going to take a quick shower. I’ll leave a towel for you after I’m done.”

“Yeah. Cool.”

Chester turned and went back the way he’d come. Kemper sighed and ran a hand through his hair. The night had been long and demanding, but rewarding. It had been a while since he actually worked behind the bar and had enjoyed keeping busy. Stretching, a few pops cracked down his spine. He whipped off his t-shirt, waiting for Chester to get done.

“Oh.”

He spun around. Chester’s gaze widened as he looked Kemper up and down. His hair was wet. For a moment, they stared at one another. Kemper’s stomach clenched, but not in a bad way. More of a what the fuck way. His heart sped up a

little, causing him to take a small step back. He reached up to rub the back of his neck.

“I, ah, set out a pair of sweatpants with the towel on the commode,” Chester mumbled. “You know, for the shower. I mean, after you shower you can use the towel. And then, um, the sweats after that.”

He focused on Chester’s mouth, and lingered there, for some inexplicable reason.

“Thanks,” he murmured.

They stared at one another. Kemper couldn’t seem to drag his gaze away. Time stopped. Or maybe it sped up. All he knew was that the air around them electrified. He waited for Chester to say something. Or do something. He did neither, only turned and walked away. *What the hell just happened?* It was almost like having a first kiss, where all the butterflies fluttered in his gut and his palms were all sweaty. His dick had turned rock hard and he pushed it down through his jeans to chill the fuck out. He took a deep breath, wondering if he should just get out and stay away.

Then he wondered *why* he had the reaction.

Taking a deep breath, he created his makeshift bed and then pulled off his riding boots. He waited a few minutes, until he heard the click of Chester’s bedroom door before going to wash. All the while, he tried to figure out why he suddenly sported wood for another man.

Chapter Eight

He was gone.

Chester expected it, but it still stung. Last night something had happened between them. Some spark, and he wondered if his imagination had been working overtime. He could've sworn Kemper had sensed it, which was probably why he had run away. Maybe the attraction he felt was only one sided. Still, he buried his head in the sand hoping Kemper was something other than straight.

If he was, last night had freaked him the fuck out. His absence was proof enough. Chester sighed and ran a hand through his hair, afraid he had lost Kemper's friendship. He hurried through his shower and grabbed some toast as he walked out the door. He arrived at the bar in a little over ten minutes and parked around back. He let himself in and began his work day. In the mood for something a little different, he found Metallica's Black album and cranked up the speakers. It helped take his mind off Kemper.

First, he needed coffee. While it brewed, he washed the glasses and mugs, and then went about restocking the bar. Taking a break, he poured himself a mug. His gaze fell upon the notepad listing all the projects he'd written down, and once more, Kemper filled his thoughts. A memory surfaced so he went to the bathrooms and found the leather cut Kemper had left behind. He carried it to a table and sat down.

It was well worn, with various patches covering it. One read, "Drinking doesn't cause hangovers, waking up does." Another one said, "Ride it like you stole it." There was a patch of two stick figures, where the male had the female bent over with an arrow pointing to her saying, "You are here." His name was embroidered on it and Chester ran his fingertips over the stitching. Damn, he was already missing the big, handsome biker.

Breaktime over, Chester finished the rest of his coffee and carefully folded the leather cut. He had no clue how to send it to Kemper. He could drive it to him, but more than likely Kemper wouldn't appreciate a gay man driving up to the Burning Reapers compound. Putting it on the bar, he decided to worry about it later and got back to work.

Damn it!

He left his cut at the bar and Ribar knew he was going to get shit for not having it. And he was going to have to go back and see Chester again.

Last night, something had shifted between them. Some magnetism that had electrified his nerve endings. He was straight. There'd never been a time when he had looked at another man and wondered what it would be like to kiss him. At least, not until he stared at Chester and couldn't take his gaze off his lips. His dick had hardened, for fuck's sake! Sure, he had sometimes popped wood during a medical exam, but that was normal. Wasn't it? Wondering how it would feel to kiss his friend wasn't.

So, like a little bitch, he had run away, unable to process his body's reaction. Luckily he had avoided everyone at the clubhouse as he snuck into his room. His eyes had burned from lack of sleep, so he had hoped to crash, but his dreams were relentless. All featuring Chester.

He rose and showered, intending to head back to the bar and get his cut. He would simply play it cool, apologize for sneaking out. Maybe invent some crisis that he'd had to deal with. Then, he'd leave and not return. He had no business in a gay bar, anyway, since he wasn't gay.

Ribar headed downstairs. A few men were passed out around the floor, snoring heavily. A half-naked woman slept on the pool table. The stench of stale beer, cigarettes, and sex hung heavy in the air. He headed for the door, needing to ride to clear his head.

“You’re not wearing your cut.”

Ribar turned and saw Zeus sitting on a stool at the bar. He sat slumped back with a bottle of tequila in his hand.

“Yeah,” he said, not bothering to deny it.

“So, where the fuck are you going without it?” Zeus asked, his words slurring a little. Confirming he was still drunk from the night before.

“Out.”

“You’re always out.” Zeus took another drink from his bottle. “Always there. Always stealing attention.”

Ribar frowned. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

Zeus stood, weaving a little on his feet. He stumbled closer with his index finger pointed at him. “I know what you’re trying to do.”

“I’ve no idea what you’re talking about.” He didn’t want to get into a fight with his prez.

“Trying to take everything,” Zeus mumbled. “Trying to overthrow my presidency.”

Ribar rolled his eyes. “I don’t want it. You’ve nothing to fear from me.”

“Bullshit!” Zeus snapped, swaying a little precariously. He was about one strong puff of wind away from falling on his face. “You piss me off. You’re always getting the men to smile at you. To laugh with you. You’re trying to take away everything because you’ve got seniority!”

He marched up to Ribar and poked him in the chest.

“Stop touching me, or I’m gonna break your finger,” he warned.

“Fucking liar.” Zeus poked him again. “Where’s your cut? Think you’re too good to wear it? Think you’d be a better president? Fuck you, you piece of shit!”

Ribar's temper snapped. He grabbed Zeus' finger and twisted until he heard the break. Zeus yelled in pain and tried to move back, but he lost his footing and crashed backward into a table. It spilt in half and Zeus fell onto the floor, moaning.

"You son-of-a-bitch!" he yelled.

Tired of the drama, Ribar left him where he lay. He banged the door open and stormed out. Things had changed in the club, and he fucking hated it. He never thought he'd hate any aspect of his life, but Zeus was a malignancy growing bigger. Soon, it would consume them all. A club was only as powerful as the man at the helm, and right now, it was sinking quickly.

Ribar got on his bike and roared away.

With no idea where to head, he just rode. What would happen if he became a nomad? Or shifted to a sister club? Perhaps he should give up his cut and try to live a civilian life. Were there others out there tired of asshole leaders? He couldn't be the only one. He loved the lifestyle, but hated the politics.

As he drove onward, Chester once again popped into his head. He'd never cared who people fucked. A man wants another man? Fine. He believed whatever chemical reaction happened between a man and a woman wasn't limited to heterosexuality, but he'd never before questioned his own. So, could a person suddenly switch teams? Was that even possible?

He pushed Chester out of his head and concentrated on the road. He had no destination in mind and figured he'd stop if he got tired or hungry, or needed to take a piss. Maybe he'd never return. Several hours later, as darkness fell, he found a small motel off the beaten path and pulled to a stop. A few minutes later, he walked to his room, key in hand. He opened the door and flipped on the light, taking his first glance inside. It looked like the seventies had thrown up in the worst way possible. Lime green shag carpet. A velour sofa with the

armrests worn down. Curtains that hinted they had once been lemon yellow. A ceiling stained with years and years of cigarette smoke. He hoped like fuck he didn't catch any diseases. Tossing his helmet on the bed, he sat down with a sigh. Would anyone miss him? If he never returned, would anyone even notice?

Would Chester think about him?

He lay back and stared up, making shapes out of the water stains on the popcorn ceiling. He had this sinking feeling he was well and truly fucked.

Chapter Nine

Chester pulled up to the bar and immediately saw Kemper sitting on the seat, waiting for him. A punch hit his gut. He had missed him, and that only spelled trouble. Kemper waved a hand, and Chester pulled up next to him.

“Haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Yeah,” Kemper said, running a hand over the back of his neck. “I needed to think.”

“Ah,” Chester said. “Well, I can run in and get your cut if you’d like to wait—”

“Actually, can I come in?”

They stared at one another for a moment, and then Chester nodded. He continued around back to his usual parking spot. Kemper followed him into the bar and sat on a stool as Chester went around turning things on. Twisted Sister suddenly blared through the speakers.

“Good choice,” Kemper said.

It wasn’t so loud that they couldn’t hear one another, but the guitar and drums were like a mega-dose of caffeine straight to the brain.

“Need coffee?” he asked and Kemper nodded. As he went about starting the brew, he glanced over. Kemper watched him with a solemn expression. “You okay?”

“I’m sorry,” he said.

That took him aback. “For what?”

“You know why. For leaving without saying a word.”

Chester shrugged. “No big deal—”

“Yeah, it was.” Kemper sighed and slumped a little. “You know it was.”

The resentment inside Chester eased. Truth be told, he had been pissed that Kemper had, once again, ran away. But

he had to remind himself that straight men feeling a spark of attraction to another man had to be shocking as hell.

“What I know is I’m your friend, not your keeper.”

Kemper nodded. “Except, I think you might be my only friend.”

Chester raised an eyebrow. “You have a club full of your friends.”

“I have a club I’m not quite sure I want to be a part of anymore,” he admitted, so softly Chester was almost sure he heard wrong. “I thought I’d just ride away and never come back.”

“So, why did you?”

Kemper shrugged. Chester stared at him for a moment, then turned to pour two cups of coffee. He slid one across the bar before taking a sip of his own. They didn’t talk, not until Chester reached behind him and grabbed the list of shit that needed to get fixed.

“Here,” he said. He crossed one line off. “Bathroom is fixed so that’s off the list.”

Kemper glanced at the piece of paper and read over it again. Just like that, the past few days disappeared.

“Storeroom door, fixing the broken tables stored up on the second floor,” he said. “Gonna be a slave driver?”

“Cracking that whip,” Chester said as he mimed the action.

Kemper smiled and pointed at something on the paper. “What do you mean by stage?”

“Exactly that. My goal for this place is to be a safe space for self-expression. Whether that means being a drag queen, or a teenager looking for answers. Knowing that there’s someone out there for them, somewhere they could go for answers or support, is important to me. I know I could’ve used it growing up.”

Kemper frowned. "You had it rough?"

"Yeah. Kids, even family members, can be cruel."

"I'm sorry to hear that." Kemper rose to his feet. "I'll make sure you get that stage."

"Thank you," Chester replied softly, then he cleared his throat. "Shipment comes in on Saturday. Are you gonna be around to help?"

Kemper nodded. "Hey, Chester?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks."

He didn't have to elaborate. Chester knew exactly what he meant without having it said. They each went their own way to work. Kemper went to the utility closet to grab tools. Chester washed all the glasses, wiped down tables and restocked the bar. When lunch time rolled around, he ordered a variety of Chinese food and called for Kemper to join him. Deciding to have a bit of fun, he played Purple Rain through the speakers and laughed at Kemper's expression.

"Oh no, you did not," Kemper growled. A twinkle lit up his eyes.

"I know it's your favorite."

Kemper coughed and pounded his chest. "You made me throw up in my mouth. Seriously, I have vomit burn in my throat."

Chester tossed a noodle his way. "You will listen, and you will love it!"

"Never, you heathen!"

Chuckling, they finished up lunch and went to throw away their containers. Chester turned around and bumped into Kemper. The biker placed a hand on his shoulder to steady him and they ended up close. So close that Chester felt the warmth of his body. Practically chest to chest. For a long moment, they stared at one another. Chester's heart accelerated

as desire flared to life. His belly tightened and his dick took notice. He willed his stupid libido to calm the fuck down, but everything conspired against him. Kemper's breath fanning across his cheek. The beautiful depths of his sea-green eyes searching his own. His muscular body touching him.

He took a step back because the last thing he wanted to do was make Kemper uncomfortable. Without saying anything to make it even more awkward, he turned and walked away. Willing his breathing to calm down. Mentally cursing himself for falling for an unobtainable man.

Kemper watched Chester back away, turn, and walk quickly toward his office. What the hell was happening to him? This was the second time that his body betrayed him by sprouting wood around Chester. Why was he suddenly getting excited by a man?

There's no way he was switching teams. For almost forty fucking years he'd always known who he was and what he liked, and pussy was the stuff of dreams.

Or at least it used to be.

Maybe his apathy towards sex was because he *was* changing. Could a person change their sexuality half-way through their life? Or was it more of a sexual awakening? He thought about kissing a man and it left him ... uninterested. There was absolutely no desire to experiment. Yet when he thought about kissing Chester, something different happened. His palms turned sweaty. His dick perked the fuck up. Butterflies swarmed in his belly.

Seriously. What the hell?

Chester came back out after a few minutes so Kemper went to finish the window before the bar opened. He debated whether or not to leave and go back to the club, but he had no desire to face Zeus since he broke the asshole's finger. At least, not yet.

When the bar opened at 2:00, he didn't even ask Chester if he needed help. As the hours went by, he bussed tables and delivered drinks. Several times his ass got a pat, and every time he turned around innocent looks greeted him. He sent a silent *sorry* to every woman who had gone through this very thing. Half-way through the night, Lulu, Ophelia, and Madame Summer came in dressed to the nines. Lulu wore hot pink sequins with a black boa and black high heels. Ophelia was decked out in blue while Madame Summer dazzled in gold.

"Chesty!" Lulu called out. "And Kempie Cakes! You're back!"

Kemper blinked. "Kempie Cakes?"

"I know, to die for, isn't it?" She patted his jaw. "You are now officially part of our family, Kempie Cakes. Nickname and all."

Ophelia blew him a kiss as she toddled by on her heels. Madame Summer held out her hand and it took a moment to understand what she wanted. She glanced down pointedly at her hand, and that's when it hit him. He gently took hold of her fingers and kissed the knuckles. With a pleased smile, she winked and followed the other two to a table.

"Congrats," Chester said dryly. "You've been adopted."

He tested his thoughts about that, if it freaked him out that three drag queens brought him into their fold, and he realized it was quite the opposite. It made losing his other family not hurt as much.

"Right on," he replied.

Through the rest of the night Kemper kept testing himself to see if he was getting squirmy about being around gay men. Although he got a lot of winks, innuendos and the occasional caress on the butt, nothing made him feel uncomfortable. It didn't bother him to see men kissing or feeling each other up.

Tending bar there was the exact same as tending bar in a heterosexual joint. He laughed with patrons, joked around, and

by the end of the night he came to the realization that he felt more accepted here than at his own club.

There he had to act a certain way. Say the right things. Be tough and macho all the damn time. As he got older, his age gap really bugged him. It was an entire generational difference, and he had nothing in common with the new prospects.

At 2:00 in the morning, Chester shooed out the last remaining customers, which happened to be the Golden Girls, as he mentally dubbed Lulu, Ophelia, and Madame Summer. They were three sheets to the wind and Chester had called for a taxi.

“Good-bye, my darling!” Lulu called to him, wiggling her perfectly manicured fingers.

The other two drunkenly giggled.

He waved at them as he grabbed a tray and began to clean up the tables. Chester came back in after a moment and headed toward the sound system. A moment later, the music ceased, leaving a weird hum in his ears.

“You don’t have to do that,” Chester said.

Kemper shrugged. “I like staying busy.”

For the next twenty minutes they cleaned up until Chester threw down his dish towel.

“I’m done,” he announced with a yawn. “I’m tired tonight.”

Kemper finished wiping the last table and brought all the dirty glasses and trash back to the bar top.

“Okay,” he replied.

Chester grabbed his jacket and brought out Kemper’s leather cut. “Here you go.”

“Thanks,” he said, taking it. The leather was cool to the touch.

They left out the back door and Kemper glanced up at the moon.

“Are you going back to the club?” Chester asked.

He probably should. He needed to make things right with Zeus. But the thought of getting on his bike and riding back into his old life left him feeling hollow.

“Can I spend the night?”

Chester raised an eyebrow. “Are you going to disappear in the morning?”

Kemper shook his head. “No.”

Slowly, Chester nodded. “Okay. Follow me.”

Chapter Ten

Chester led Kemper back to his house. He parked his bike on the street and followed him inside his home. Without a word, he flipped on the light and then went down the short hallway to grab blankets and a pillow. As he turned around to head back into the living room, he smacked into Kemper and dropped everything. Kemper grabbed his arms to keep him from falling down.

They stood chest to chest, practically nose to nose. Near enough for him to feel Kemper's warm breath fan across his face. To see the ocean swirling through his aquamarine eyes. His cock came roaring to life, like it had been waiting for a drop of water after a drought, and he desperately hoped Kemper didn't look down to see his arousal. If anything would make the man run again, it was knowing his friend lusted after him. He went to take a step back, but Kemper didn't let him go. In fact, he tightened his hold.

"Kemper?"

"I think I'm a coward," he murmured.

"What? Why would you say that?"

"Because I'm, ah, fuck. Because I'm not afraid of much. I've seen a lot and done a lot of shit for the club. I'm not exactly a good man—"

"You're not a bad man."

"—but I've never encountered anyone like you, and it kinda terrifies me."

"Why? Because you're afraid my gay is rubbing off on you?"

Kemper's eyes widened and he gasped. "It can do that? I can spontaneously combust into gaydom?"

"Oh, my god," he muttered, but couldn't contain his amusement. "You could wax and tuck all you want and you'd

never be a flamer.”

“Damn it,” Kemper said. “Might have cleared up my confusion.”

Chester’s heart sped up, and he cautioned against Kemper’s joke. He’d already had a boyfriend who couldn’t admit that he was gay, and he couldn’t go back to that. No matter how much he found Kemper attractive. “Confusion?”

“I keep thinking why I came back here,” he whispered. “Why, when I was so close to just riding away, it was *your* face that stopped me from leaving.”

That shocked the hell out of Chester.

“Me?”

Kemper nodded. “Can I ask you a really stupid question?”

All the revelations were making Chester’s head spin. “Uh, sure. There aren’t any stupid questions, you know.”

“Can a straight man suddenly, um, bat for the other side? Like, you know, how everyone will eventually get cataracts.”

Chester blinked. “I stand corrected.”

Kemper snorted. “Dick.”

“Well, that’s the question, right? Dick. Are you questioning your sexuality?”

“I like pussy,” he said bluntly. “There’s no doubt about that.”

“And now you’re thinking about a cock and balls that aren’t your own? Perhaps you could be bisexual, and just never realized it. Never had a chance to discover a different way.”

Kemper stepped back, bent to grab the bedding, and turned to go back into the living room.

“Kemper?” Chester asked as he followed.

Kemper dumped the blankets and pillow on the couch. He looked steadily at Chester. "I have no desire to kiss another man."

"Then I'm not sure what you're trying to say."

"I, ah, seem to be interested in kissing only one person," he said softly.

Chester forced his pulse to calm the fuck down. "Who?"

"Who do you think? Fuck." He ran a hand through his long locks. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't put this on your shoulders. Forget I said anything. I don't know what the hell I'm talking about."

"Sounds like you kinda do. Please don't be afraid to talk to me."

Conflict lay heavy on his face. His brow furrowed. His lips turned down at the corners. "When I think about kissing some random man I have absolutely no interest. My dick is as limp as a deflated balloon."

"Wow, that's a mental picture I didn't need. There's a *but* isn't there?"

"Yeah," Kemper replied. "*But* it's completely different when I think about kissing you."

All the air whooshed out of Chester's lungs. Blood headed south, making it uncomfortably tight in his jeans. For a few moments they stared at one another. Kemper had a shuttered look on his face. His eyes were wary. Chester figured he was freaking out, trying hard to hide how unnerved he was. It reminded him about the time before he came out to his family, how scared he was that he might not be accepted. His father had been very religious and his mother very submissive. At the time, he figured his parents would either kick him out of their lives, or try to rehabilitate him. While he was right about his dad, much to his surprise, his mother hugged him and whispered she loved him. And then his very passive mom packed up and left his father, choosing her son over her husband.

So, Chester knew exactly how Kemper must be feeling. That frightening moment of acknowledging that what was supposed to be *normal*, wasn't his truth at all.

“Let me ask you this. What makes you the most nervous if you are gay or bisexual?”

The question made Kemper freeze.

“Is it sex with a man?”

Kemper slowly shook his head. “No. Well, kinda. It's mostly the fact that I thought I knew myself, only to realize I know very little. What else is out there to learn? Is this just the tip of the iceberg? It's making me question *everything*, including my devotion to the club.”

“Kemper, that's all of us. We're human. We're constantly changing. Evolving. If you say you know everything, then there's no potential for growth. And discovering different aspects of who you are can be scary, but it can also be exciting.”

Chester decided to take the initiative and stepped close. They stared at one another, and if there had been any type of hesitation in Kemper's eyes, if he backed away or if he saw disgust on his face, or a thousand other ways to say no, then Chester would've backed off. But none of that happened, so he took a deep breath and cupped Kemper's face with his hands. They were equal in height, so slowly, so very fucking slow, he pressed his lips to Kemper's. At first, nothing happened. They simply had their mouths on each other, and it was nice. But just as he was about to pull away, Kemper raised his hands and sank them in his hair. He angled his face and licked over the seam of Chester's lips. Like touching a live wire, electricity danced across all his nerve endings, zapping him to life.

The kiss was hard. Lacking any romance or finesse. Maybe it was the type of kiss that Kemper was used to giving with the club pussy he'd been around for twenty years, but Chester wanted something more. He wanted to make sure Kemper felt desire and not just lust, so he took control,

deepening the already arousing caress. Kemper adapted instantly as the kiss morphed into something completely different. Raw turned into soft, and little by little, the world faded around them. Kemper tugged him closer, molded his body against his. Every bulging muscle, every hard plane, Chester memorized it all. Including a very hard cock pressing against his own. Unable to keep silent, he uttered a low moan, which seemed to zap Kemper back to reality. He pulled back and they stared at one another.

Chester licked his lips, wishing he could go back to kissing him, but Kemper pulled away.

“Oh, shit,” Kemper muttered as he took a step back.

Chester raised his hands. “I’m not going to press you for anything—”

“I fucking liked it,” Kemper said, his voice thick, almost guttural. “My dick’s so hard I could hammer nails. Jesus Christ, Chester, what the hell is this?”

The confusion and horror broke Chester’s heart. He thought he had been breaking through Kemper’s defenses, but apparently not. He knew what he had to say, what to do, to assuage the distress billowing from him.

“It’s nothing if you want it to be nothing,” he said softly. “I’m your friend. I’d never force you into anything you don’t want, or make you feel uncomfortable. You can just forget about this.”

“Yeah.” Kemper ran a hand over his face. “Maybe that’s for the best. We’ll just forget all about this.”

Chester pushed his disappointment aside. This wasn’t about him. “All right. I’m going to take a shower. I’ll lay a towel out for you to use after me. Good night, Kemper.”

Kemper gave some type of grunt in acknowledgement.

Chester turned to head into the bathroom. He hesitated on the threshold and looked back. “I’ll understand if you want to leave.”

Kemper nodded, but didn't respond. Didn't even look at him. When Chester closed the bathroom door, he thumped his head against it.

"Fuck," he whispered.

Everything screamed at him to run and not look back, but even that felt like a coward's way out. Kemper ran a hand through his hair and looked down the hallway. Chester was taking a shower, and he had no idea how to face him once he came out of the bathroom. Or even what to say.

His entire world had just turned upside down.

His mind raced all over the place, thinking and discarding every single lie he could tell himself. That he was drunk, despite the fact he'd only had one beer the entire day. That he had a fever, even if he wasn't sick. That he was mistaken. That he had mentally pictured kissing a chick. That he was tripping on some gnarly drug. That he was under the influence of aliens.

Yet the simple truth was far harder to believe. That the kiss was the best of his entire life. Just the scorching memory made his dick surge back to life, and he had no fucking clue what to do about it. He sure as hell couldn't ignore it, which left him with only enough wiggle room to maneuver in a tight circle. The kiss meant something. Not just for the fact he enjoyed it, but also because of the familiarity and ease he'd always felt around Chester. Time and time again, he always came back, even putting his own club second.

The sound of the shower shutting off made his heart pound, and he wasn't sure if it was excitement or dread that made his stomach clench. He heard the bathroom door open, the padding of feet, and then Chester's door softly closed. Kemper let out the breath he'd been holding, and his mind went directly to picturing the other man naked. The towel dropping from his waist. Flushed skin. Parted lips. *Christ!* He palmed his dick through his jeans in an effort to get the fucker

under control. It was one thing to enjoy a kiss, but something entirely different to get aroused.

He was going through an identity crisis and he didn't like it one bit.

Kemper stood and padded into the bathroom to wash up. Steam made the air balmy. Folded on the closed commode were sweats and a t-shirt. The items were one more reminder that he was out of his element. Kemper wasn't scared of much, but in the moment, Chester frightened the hell out of him.

Washing quickly, he dried off then pulled on the clothes and wiped the mirror with his towel. He stared at himself. What really was going on? Did he consider himself bisexual, or simply questioning? If that was the case, how could he go his entire life and not know he harbored these tendencies? He was going to have to make sure this ... whatever it was ... wasn't just a one off. Maybe it was just a weird glitch. All he had to do was prove his brain had been hijacked and his bisexual curiosity had been satisfied. He took a deep breath and straightened up. If he was going to do it, he had to do it now. More than likely, this was all some type of misunderstanding. Taking a deep breath, he left the bathroom, stepped up to Chester's bedroom door, and knocked before he chickened out.

A heartbeat later, it opened. Chester had on a pair of long shorts. That was it. His muscles were nicely defined. His nipples hardened little nubs. A smattering of dark hair snaked down from his belly button to disappear under the elastic waistband. It only took a split second for Kemper to realize he had it all wrong. The attraction he felt wasn't superficial. It wasn't some type of fluke. The man before him was beautiful. Proud. The simmering desire he saw in Chester's eyes had to mirror his own. Without another word, he stepped up to Chester, getting into his personal space.

“Kemper?”

He hesitated for only a brief moment more before sinking his fingers in Chester's hair once more to angle his

head so he could fit his mouth over his.

Chapter Eleven

Their lips melded together like they were made for one another. Chester's heart pounded heavily in his chest and his hands were a little unsteady as he blindly grabbed hold of Kemper's shirt. He had no idea what was going on, but damned if he was going to break the kiss to ask. Their tongues met, danced, twining together. It was so damn hot he almost self-combusted.

He finally had to come up for air, panting heavily. Kemper leaned his forehead against his, breathing through desire. Filthy licentious thoughts played through his head, and he wanted so badly to go back to kissing him, but kissing Kemper might be a colossal mistake. He didn't want to damage their friendship.

"What the fuck is happening?" Kemper asked, his voice guttural and confused.

He had to be honest. "I don't know. Why'd you come back for another kiss?"

It took him a minute to reply. "I don't know," he replied softly, mimicking the answer. "I'm, ah, really confused."

"I'm not surprised. What do you want, Kemper?"

He was silent for so long, he figured Kemper wasn't going to answer. Disappointment filled him, although he knew he had no reason to feel that. He tried taking a step back, but Kemper only tightened his grip.

"Don't," he whispered.

"Don't what?"

"Don't pull away."

Chester sighed. They were getting nowhere fast. "Kemp
—"

"I don't know what I want. All I know is that I don't want to lose your friendship."

The words were said so quietly, Chester's heart cracked at their woefulness. "I was just thinking that, so I promise that won't happen."

Kemper took a deep breath and finally stepped back. "I shouldn't have done that. It's not fair to you. It's just, um, perhaps it's best if we just remain only friends. Sometimes if the lines are blurred it's too hard to come back from. I'm sorry."

"For kissing me?"

He saw the answer in Kemper's eyes before he even answered the question.

"Yes."

Even though he knew it was coming, it still stung. He had thought when he opened the door and saw Kemper standing there that maybe, miraculously, he'd decided to accept that he really was bisexual. Pushing down the disappointment, he gave a small smile. "All right. No worries. At least you came to a decision. Good night, Kemper."

"Yeah. G'night."

Chapter Twelve

Ribar carefully drove along the winding road, his mind more on what happened at Chester's house than steering. He had to leave to go back to the clubhouse, mainly for some clothes but also because Hawkins had texted him it might be best if he came back to talk with Zeus. Supposedly, the prez had talked about revoking his patch.

Ribar tried to push down his anger at the threat. He had worked damn hard to gain his place in the Reapers, and the asshole thought he could just take it away? He may not know his place among the club, but he knew that if he left it would be his own damn decision and not some coked out twerp that was ten years his junior.

When he pulled up to the clubhouse it was late afternoon and several men were working out in the yard. Push-ups. Pull-ups. Weight training. Some of them waved at him to come over so he parked and headed there.

"Where've you been?" asked Beck. He put down the fifty-pound dumbbells and wiped his hand on a rag. "You're not letting Zeus keep you away, are you?"

"No," he replied. "Been dealing with shit, though."

"If you need any help, brother, let me know."

"Appreciate it."

"Wanna get in some reps?" Jonesey called out.

"Not right now. Just came to settle things with Zeus."

Beck snorted. "The fucker was all up in arms because you broke his finger. It was actually quite funny."

Ribar shook his head. "I shouldn't have done it."

"Probably not," Jonesey said. "Still fucking funny, though."

Giving the men a smirk, he turned and headed into the clubhouse. One of the prospects was sweeping the floor while another was wiping down the bar. Two naked women were sprawled on the couch, sound asleep. He took the opportunity to gage his reaction to seeing breasts, even though he'd seen hundreds before. Only a lukewarm interest rose up.

Pushing down that thought, he happened to kick something and when he looked down, he spotted Zeus passed out on the floor. Completely naked and spread eagle, which showed everything. The sight disgusted him. White powder and syringes littered the coffee table he was wedged against. Picking up a shirt from the floor, he draped it over Zeus' floppy dick, not wanting to look at the thing anymore.

"Hey, asshole, wake up," he said, nudging Zeus's foot with his own. The man didn't move so he was a little more forceful. "Hey! Wake up!"

Zeus moaned and after a moment his eyes fluttered open. It was clear to see the man was either still high or still drunk, probably both, and neither looked good on him.

"I came to say sorry for your fucking finger, but now I couldn't give a shit."

Zeus blinked and then slowly sat up. "What're you doing here?"

"I don't know, man. This place is a pigsty. You're a disgrace to the club." Ribar turned and saw they had gathered a few onlookers. "Is this the president you want? He can't control himself and he's using product that needs to be sold. What happens when the supplier wants his cash and the club can't come up with it? There's only so much in the coffers that can be spared."

A few men glanced at one another, giving Ribar the impression this had already been discussed.

"Fuck you," Zeus slurred.

"Yeah? Fuck you, too. You want to kick me out of this club? You want my patch? Come and get it, motherfucker." He

shook his head. “You were once great, Zeus. It’s why I voted for you to lead us. I don’t know where that man went, but I really hope you find him again.”

With that he stomped up the stairs to his room and grabbed a backpack to shove some clothes inside. Perhaps distance and time would lessen his anger and sorrow over what was happening to the Reapers. He’d bought a new toothbrush a while ago, leaving it at Chester’s house, so all he grabbed from the bathroom was his electric razor.

When he stepped back into the den, he saw Zeus sitting at the bar, luckily with his pants on. He was sipping a Coke, the haggard appearance telling just how messed up he really was. The difference between Chester’s world and this one had always been obvious, but right now, all Kemper yearned for was to get back to that side of heaven.

“You leave, you’re not coming back,” Zeus warned.

The threat didn’t bother him. “Really? That’s how you want this to go down?”

“That patch is Reaper property.”

“Like I said earlier, come and take it.” He gave a pointed look to the coffee table. “But then I suspect as soon as I walk out that door, you’ll snort some more blow or shoot up your veins, so you probably won’t remember this conversation in an hour.”

He opened the door.

“Ribar!” Zeus yelled.

“No,” he said, not even turning around. “My name is Kemper.”

With that he stormed out and slammed the door shut behind him. Beck, Jonesey, and Hawkins stared at him with respect in their eyes. There seemed to be two camps going on in the club, one enjoying Zeus’s debauchery, and the other distancing themselves from it. Kemper knew who his friends were, and if any one of them needed his help he would be

there. But he couldn't stay. Not because of Zeus, but because he really wanted to be with Chester. With a wave at them, he mounted his bike and rode off.

Chapter Thirteen

Chester slapped a piece of paper down on the bar top. Kemper laid down his screwdriver to look at it. He'd taken apart the broken lock from the storeroom door and was attempting to fix it. He leaned over and skimmed over the words quickly.

"Tickets?"

"Yep," Chester said. "I'm closing Heaven down next Sunday to attend."

"I can mind the bar if you want, so you don't have to close it."

"I was, ah, hoping you'd wanna come with me."

Kemper blinked then he picked up paper to read it a little better. "A rock concert?"

"Alternative rock, but yeah," Chester replied, nodding. "At Ball Arena in Denver. There are a few bands. Some I've heard of. Some I haven't. If you have plans, no—"

"Yes. I mean no. I mean no plans and yes, I'd like to."

Chester smiled, and it filled Kemper with an odd warmth. It had been a few days since the kiss and his trip back to the clubhouse. Since then, he had slept on Chester's couch every night, but there were no more kisses. No more accidental bumps in the hallway. He still didn't know what to make of his feelings. Was he still only straight? Somehow the question wasn't as cut and dry as he once thought.

"Great!" Chester said, smiling. "You hungry? I was thinking about grabbing a burger before we open."

Kemper laid down the doorknob. "Sure."

Chester clapped his hands together. "Great!"

Kemper raised an eyebrow. "That sounded like a perfectly legit answer and not at all like you're nervous about

something.”

Chester sighed and his shoulders slumped a little. “I’m trying not to make this awkward.”

“For you?”

“For *you*,” he said with emphasis. “We kissed and I know that has to be fucking with your head.”

Kemper tilted his head. “Why?”

“Because. Because...” His voice trailed off. “Fuck, this was a lot easier in my own head. I like you, Kemper.”

“I like you, too.”

“No, I mean, I *like* like you.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, so. You’ll have to forgive the occasional stumbling over my words. And please don’t feel uncomfortable around me. This is my—”

Kemper came around the bar and stepped up close, placing his hands on Chester’s hips. He leaned forward and gave the man a light kiss on the lips.

“Shut up, Chester.”

Chester blinked at him. “You, ah, kissed me.”

“So, I did. Listen, I don’t know if I’m bi or not. Maybe I’m just into you. Chestersexual. Does that make any sense?”

“Chestersexual?” He grinned. “I like it. Fuck it. Let’s go get that burger.”

“All right.”

The night was busy and a different type of awareness now existed between them. They maneuvered around each other fluidly, as if they’d been doing it for years. He snuck glances over at Chester more times than he cared to count, and

when the time had come to close, there wasn't any hesitation to follow him back to his house.

The routine was the same every night. Chester gave him the blanket and pillow and then smiled as he retreated into his bedroom. Then he'd stay up half the night thinking about him. The week went by fast and when Sunday arrived, they left early to get to Denver in a decent amount of time.

The drive was interesting as they talked about a variety of topics. Nothing was ever dull around Chester. They pulled into the hotel's parking lot and made their way inside.

"I guess I should warn you that we only have the one room. This close to the arena, everything is booked up."

Warmth bloomed in his chest even though nerves gripped his belly. He hadn't really thought about the sleeping arrangements, but now that it was mentioned, that's all he thought about. His dick certainly perked up at the thought of being in a small confine with Chester.

"But it has two double beds so we're good."

For some odd reason, that disappointed him. "I wasn't worried."

"I promise not to take advantage of you," Chester quipped, chuckling.

"I trust you."

Grabbing their overnight bags, they entered the lobby and Chester checked them in. He handed one key card to Kemper and then they headed toward the elevators. Their room was located on the third floor.

It was a basic room. TV, two beds, and a bathroom that had little toiletries near the sink. A round table with two chairs was next to a large window. Kemper went stepped close to look out, spotting a pool and hot tub.

"Which bed would you like?" Chester asked.

"It don't matter," he replied.

Chester threw his bag onto the bed near the door. “You can have the one by the window.”

“They have a hot tub.”

“I didn’t bring a bathing suit.”

“What time is the concert?”

“Let me check.” Chester pulled out the paper tickets. “6:00 this evening.”

Kemper turned and glanced at the clock. “That gives us five hours. Let’s get something to eat and find some trunks.”

“Maybe alcohol?”

“Oh, definitely alcohol.”

Chester chuckled. After slipping his key card into his wallet, he gave a nod to the door. “Throw on the do not disturb sign and let’s go.”

After grabbing a bite to eat, they bought swim trunks and spent the rest of the day in the hot tub and drinking beer. When twilight fell, they headed inside to grab some food and get dressed for the concert. Chester showered first. When Kemper finished his and stepped out, he saw Chester painting his nails a deep purple.

“Come and do my right hand,” he said, holding up the bottle. “It’s instant dry.”

Kemper blinked and sat down at the round table. Chester handed him the polish and laid out his hand.

“How do I do this?”

“Just open it, take off the excess and paint nail.”

“Um. Okay.”

Carefully, he did as instructed, amazed at how easy it was to apply the nail color. He focused on the task until he finished the pinkie, then sat back and smiled.

“That wasn’t so bad,” he said.

“Your tongue stuck out in the corner as you concentrated. It was cute.”

Again, that connection between them electrified the air. Kemper’s heart accelerated and his gaze dropped to Chester’s lips. Remembering how delicious they were. He cleared his throat and rose to his feet.

“I’m ready whenever you are,” he said, his voice husky.

Chester took a deep breath, smiled, then blew on his nails. “Thank you.”

“Anytime,” Kemper whispered. Knowing he meant every word.

Chapter Fourteen

The arena was packed, but the vibe was fun. People laughed, drank, and ate. All walks of life were represented, from teenage fans to old rockers. Chester wore a vintage t-shirt featuring The Doors. Kemper had taken his cut off and let his shoulder-length hair flow free. The lines for a beer were long so when they finally reached the counter, they each ordered two. They made their way to their seats, weaving around people, and headed down the steep steps of the arena.

As soon as they reached their destination, the lights went out as a spotlight shown on the stage below. The first band started, and the crowd went wild. Kemper smiled at Chester and drank his beer. Each band played about twenty to thirty minutes, with fifteen-minute breaks between each set. That gave people enough time to run to the restroom or grab more food and drinks.

Chester rose after two performances to relieve his bladder, but missed the beginning of the next. He leaned over to talk in Kemper's ear.

“Long piss lines.”

Kemper nodded his understanding. When the next music started, he and Chester rose to their feet to sing along and pump their fists in the air. They smiled at each other, enjoying the atmosphere all around. Here, they weren't gay or straight. They weren't a bar owner or a motorcycle club brother. They were another pair of fans in a sea of spectators.

The concert lasted a little over four hours. When it was over, they sat in their assigned seats to wait for the crowd to thin out.

“Jesus, that was fun!” Kemper said, smiling. He rested a booted foot on the back of the chair in front of him. “Thanks for bringing me.”

“I knew a lot of the songs,” Chester said. “I just hadn't realized what bands sang them.”

“Same.”

“You tired or would you like to grab a drink somewhere?”

“Know any good bars?”

“Well, we could go to the one I used to manage.”

Kemper’s eyebrows shot up. “Wouldn’t you feel odd about your old stomping ground?”

“Nah.” He smiled. “I’d like to share it with you.”

Kemper nodded. “All right. Let’s go.”

They followed the last bit of people out the door and Chester walked to the street and hailed a cab. They piled inside and he told the driver the address. The traffic was thick, and it took about twenty minutes just to get out of the throng of cars.

When they arrived at Chester’s old bar, Kemper paid the cab and they went inside. The atmosphere was dark but intimate. LED candle lights flickered on the tables. The bar was well lit and large TVs wrapped around it. Various sports played on each screen.

“What the fuck are you doing here, Chester!”

Kemper looked over and saw one of the bartenders smiling at them. Chester led him over and they sat down on two barstools.

“Came for a concert,” he replied. “Kemper, this is Jekyll.”

Kemper’s eyebrow went up. “As in Dr. Jekyll?”

“Yep! I turn into Hyde whenever I’m drunk, so I serve instead of drink. What can I get you two?”

Chester ordered them each a pint and Chester laid down a twenty-dollar bill. “Keep the change.”

Jekyll smiled his thanks and scooped up the money. He moved off to serve others.

“Nice bar,” Kemper said.

“Yeah, I liked it.” Chester took a long drink of his beer. “This was a fun place to manage.”

“Did you, ah, date Jekyll?”

Chester shook his head. “Nah. After my relationship went south, I wanted easy. Less mess that way. Had a few hook-ups, but that was all.”

“Ah. A player.”

Chester laughed. “Hardly. You’re probably more the king of hook-ups.”

He bumped his shoulder into Kemper’s.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because you’re fucking gorgeous and you know it.”

The words robbed Kemper of speech. He stared at Chester, his gaze dropping to his lips. All he thought about was kissing him again, and even the exposure to the people around them didn’t even phase him. He set his beer down, reached behind Chester’s neck, and brought him close.

“What you doing?” Chester whispered.

“I’m going to kiss you.”

“But people are watching.”

“That bothers you?”

“Not for me. For you.”

Kemper took a deep breath and eased back a few inches. “I’m learning that I don’t really care what other people think about me. At least, not anymore.”

Chester studied him. “Why not?”

“When I went back to the club for my stuff, I realized I lived my life the way I was expected to live it. Be tough. Be strong. Obey orders from the prez. Watch my brother’s backs. Never question that I was supposed to only fuck pussy. I never even *thought* to question that one. If you’d have asked me six

months ago, I would've told you no fucking way would I be attracted to a man. Being with you has opened my eyes to so much, Chester. Not just as your friend, but maybe something more."

"Really? What would your club say to that?"

"If my club were to find out, they'd probably beat the shit out of me. No such thing as homoerotica in the biker world. Besides, the entire time I was there, all I thought about was returning to you."

"Fucking hell, Kemper, now I've got a hard-on and I'm wearing tight jeans."

Kemper couldn't help but laugh. He thought for sure he'd feel awkward or insecure about thinking about fucking Chester, but it didn't sound as horrible as he once thought. Maybe because he liked Chester as a friend first? He tried to remember why he was freaked out before. Fucking a man couldn't be all that different from fucking a woman in the ass. Of course, he'd never been fucked like that so he had no basis for comparison. Could he be a bottom?

"Don't," Chester whispered. "Don't get my hopes up."

"Hopes?"

"That you'd fall for me. That you'd turn out bi. That you want me as much as I want you. Those are too many hopes for me to endure if you change your mind."

Kemper looked around. "Come on, let's get back to the hotel."

Chester nodded and waved at Jekyll as they made their way out. He ordered an Uber and one showed up about five minutes later. Through the entire ride back to the hotel, Chester's leg bounced, until Kemper reached out and halted the nervous twitch.

As soon as they got inside their room, Kemper turned and backed Chester up to the door. They stared at one another for a heartbeat, then he lowered his head and fused their

mouths together, surrendering to the lust that had been growing for him. It was the type of kiss that changed lives. That changed his soul on a fundamental level. The type of kiss that toppled monarchs and leveled kingdoms. It curled his toes, sent his heart racing, his dick throbbing, as well as made the rest of the world disappear. He wanted more. He *needed* more.

Clarity hit him between the eyes and melted away any hesitation he'd been feeling.

Chester pulled back to gulp in air. "Wait, Kemper. I need to make sure you're okay with this."

"I'm very okay with this."

"I don't want to lose your friendship."

"That won't happen," he replied, repeating the words Chester had once said to him. "I won't let it. I want you, Chester. I'm done fighting it."

Those seemed to be the magic words. He surged against Kemper to kiss him back. Pressing against him, breathing in his own personal scent mixed faintly with cigarette smoke and stale beer. They should shower, but he was afraid that if they stopped, the bubble they were in would pop, and he *had* to kiss Chester. Had to dominate and cherish all at the same time.

How could one kiss feel so right? So good? And why the hell hadn't he done this before?

The question of being straight or gay or bi was now a moot point. Chester fit flawlessly against him, as if they had been poured together from one mold, all the jagged pieces aligning perfectly. It answered the question of why he always came back—because Chester felt like home. Kemper was no longer scared of the emotions that had been building inside him.

One of them groaned, and Kemper didn't know if it was him or Chester. It traveled through his body, sending him freefalling as heat lit up every nerve ending. He cupped the back of Chester's head and angled his own to deepen the kiss.

Tangling their tongues together. Absorbing every breath. Need and craving consumed him.

As much as he wanted to speed things up, Chester kept things nice and slow. Teasing. Tasting. Letting the build-up scorch them both. He shifted closer, if that was even possible, and Chester's hard cock pressed against his own. His hands slid into Kemper's long hair, gripping the strands tight as their mouths continued to devour each other.

When they came up for air, there was a moment when they looked at one another. Chester's pupils were blown. Lust turning them from blue to midnight. Kemper's cock was harder than it had ever been before, aching to be touched. He took a step back to grab his t-shirt from the back and pull it over his head. It dropped somewhere on the floor. Chester panted as he watched. Next were the jeans, but before he could yank them down, Chester fell to his knees in front of him. Damn if that wasn't the sexiest sight he'd ever seen. Unlike club pussy who was clearly faking their own pleasure, Kemper saw the raw truth burning in Chester's hungry gaze.

He gave a small nod of encouragement, or maybe it was permission. Regardless, Chester first slipped off the shoes, then hooked his thumbs in the waistband to carefully ease them over the massive bulge behind the zipper. He helped Kemper step out of them, then slid his hands up his calves. The touch sent a shiver of desire zipping along his spine. It seemed to take forever for Chester to finally pull down the boxer briefs, and his leaking cock burst forward. A bead of precum formed at the slit. Chester leaned forward and licked it up, causing Kemper to moan and thrust his pelvis out. Chester used the flat top of his tongue to capture more before slipping his mouth around the head, tracing each curve with his tongue. Easing his mouth over and down, taking him all the way to the back of his throat.

Little by little, he increased the tempo, speeding up, moving a hand to Kemper's sack, rolling the balls through the thin skin. Kemper gave a heavy gasp, his hips starting to twitch as he fucked Chester's mouth. It drove him out of his

fucking mind and all he wanted to do was finish, but at the same time, he never wanted this to end. With a groan he eased back and broke free of Chester's talented mouth.

"I don't want to come yet," he rasped.

"What else can I do to you?"

"You can get up and get naked. That's always a good start."

Chester rose and started his striptease, slowly removing each article of clothing slowly. Kemper had to grit his teeth in an effort to hold back rushing him. Finally, however, he grew too impatient and pushed his underwear down over his ass. Chester finished with a smirk.

"You're a little cock tease, aren't you?"

"I'm *your* cock tease."

"Yeah, you are," Kemper said.

They both groaned as Chester's hand wrapped around Kemper's dick to test a few strokes. Once more he fell to his knees to play, or more accurately, to drive him out of his fucking mind.

"Like this?" Chester asked a bit breathlessly.

"Grip a little tighter," he instructed in a hoarse voice.

He complied, his hand holding tight as he rubbed up and down. More fluid leaked from the hole and Chester used it as lubrication. Every once in a while, he'd lean forward to lick the bead of precum, using his tongue to slide up and down the shaft. His hips began to follow the rhythm and it almost made him blow his wad. Again, he pulled back.

"You're a naughty boy for trying to make me come."

"Isn't that the whole purpose of sex?" Chester asked.

"And we'll eventually get there, but right now I want you to get on that bed."

As Chester eased on one of the beds, Kemper followed him. Stalking him on hands and knees until he looked down at him, hip to hip. For the first time in his life, his cock rubbed another, and he didn't hate it. Just the opposite, actually. Their lips came together again, the kiss segueing into another and another. Chester's legs widened, allowing Kemper to settle between them. He rolled his hips upward, a guttural groan tearing from his mouth.

"God, you feel so good," Chester moaned.

He reached between them, taking Kemper's dick in his hand to stroke upward, gripping his cock with the perfect pressure, rubbing a thumb across the top of the head through the precum leaking like a sieve. Kemper surged against him, fucking into Chester's hand. The pleasure so mind-blowing his eyes rolled back.

"I never knew it could be like this," Kemper said breathlessly.

He reached down to take hold of Chester's cock and for the first time in his life, he held a dick that wasn't his own.

"I'm not sure what to do," he admitted.

"Just do what you like done to you."

That seemed easy enough. Together they moved, humping into each other's hand as they jerked each other off. Starting slow, Kemper rested his forehead against Chester's, his breath hitching in his throat. He watched as their cocks worked in tandem as the angle had them dragging along each other. The friction made him just about lose his mind.

"Why does that look so fucking hot?" he murmured. "And why does it feel even better?"

"Because we know how to hold dicks."

"Yeah, that makes sense."

His grip moved faster, harder, and Kemper was done trying to hold back. His thrusts grew more erratic as Chester began to lose control. He tightened his grip, pumping fast. He

gave himself over to the orgasm ripping through him, flinging him out into the universe as ropes of cum bathed Chester's abs. A heartbeat later, Chester joined him in sublime bliss.

He rolled off and onto his back, staring up at the ceiling. Sweat dotted his forehead, his heart thundered in his ears.

"That was..." He trailed off, either unable to find the right words or voice what he was feeling. Finally, he whispered, "Amazing."

"Yeah, it was."

It hit Kemper like a ton of bricks. Chester had just ruined him for pussy.

Chapter Fifteen

Chester drove them home, his thumbs tapping restlessly on the steering wheel. Kemper watched him with amusement, knowing something was building inside. They'd only been on the road for ten minutes before his nervous energy burst out.

"Are you okay?"

Kemper cocked his head. "Yes."

"Do you feel weird?"

"No."

"Are you freaking out?"

"No," Kemper replied. "But I think you are."

"Of course, I am. I'm surprised you're not."

"Why? Because we had sex?"

"Because I'm a man."

"Yeah, I already figured that part out."

"And you're a biker."

"I'm not sure if those things are mutually exclusive. I know there are female bikers out there."

"Not what I meant."

Kemper decided to take pity on him. "Chester, I'm fine. I had my eyes wide open last night."

"And we're good?"

He sighed. "Pull over."

"What?"

"You heard me. Pull onto the shoulder."

Chester flipped on his turn signal and did as instructed. Once the truck was parked, Kemper unclicked his seatbelt to scoot closer and cup Chester's face.

“Listen to me,” he stressed. “I’m more than fine with you being a man. Yes, at first, I was freaked out, but once I made peace with what was happening to me, I realized I didn’t care what gender you are. Do you know why? Because it’s *you*. I don’t want any other man—or woman, for that matter—just you.”

Then he leaned over and kissed him. It only took a moment for Chester to respond, moving his mouth against his. Tongue slipping out to lick the seam. When Kemper opened for him, breaths mingled as it deepened. If Kemper thought Chester had been a good kisser before last night, their attraction to one another flew into the stratosphere. All consuming, obliterating the entire fucking world around them. Making him want more and more and more. Finally, they pulled away, panting heavily, and leaning their foreheads against one another.

“God damn, we’re in the truck, on the side of the road, and all I want to do is fuck you until we both pass out,” Kemper growled.

“The anticipation is going to drive us crazy,” Chester muttered. “Or at least me. My dick isn’t going to relax at *all*, thank you very much.”

Kemper grinned as he slid back to his side, then grimaced as he adjusted his own hard cock. “Yeah. Same.”

Chester threw him a smirk as he started the truck back up and continued their ride home.

“Do you need to run home and take a shower before we open?”

Chester mentally replayed the words back in his head and realized how intimate they sounded. Like they were living together. They had one night together and here he was, practically insinuating they had a deeper relationship. Like they were boyfriends.

He tried hard to ignore the little voice in his head that told him that Kemper was many things, but a boyfriend wasn't one of them. They might have had an intense sexual experience, but Chester knew he shouldn't read anything deeper into it. More than likely, Kemper had been caught up in the moment. Even though he denied it, the word experimentation whispered through his mind. One night of blissful fucking didn't automatically translate into anything permanent, as much as he wished it would.

Chester didn't want to dwell on the fact that he was beginning to have real feelings for the man. He wasn't stupid, knew that last night was probably a one off. Kemper might not be freaking out. He may have even accepted that he was attracted to Chester based on a purely basic sexual need. Which was far different than calling him *boyfriend*, and he had to remember that. Kemper had the ability to shatter his heart if he let him, so it was in his own best interest to never forget that this would come to an end. Kemper might be hiding out from his club right now, but the man was a biker in his soul. He would return to that life someday.

Kemper pulled out his phone to look at the time. "Nah, it's already close to 1:30. My stink will hold off till closing time."

"What a charming visual."

Kemper grinned. "I'm a charming guy."

Chester snorted and half laughed. They arrived at the bar a few minutes after 2:00 and hurried to open it up. Only two patrons came in, allowing time to restock the bar, clean the remaining glasses, and cut up some fruit for any cocktails that might be ordered.

By late evening, the bar was full, soft rock music pumped through the speakers, and Lulu, Ophelia, and Madame Summer Night were in a heated debate over what the stage should be.

“If there was a catwalk, we can host fashion night,” Lulu argued. “Do you know how many young designers are trying to get their work recognized?”

“This is a *bar*,” Madame Summer Night stressed. “Ain’t no one getting recognized in here, darling.”

“It is a stepping stone!” Lulu huffed and flicked back her hair. “Of course, this is no House of Gucci—”

“Thank God!” Ophelia shuddered. “I can’t deal with murder for hire plots in my backyard.”

“It was a good movie,” Madame Summer Night murmured.

“Eh,” Lulu shrugged. “It was a little confusing. Anyway, what I was saying, is that this should be a talent stage and nothing else.”

“What if someone’s talent is sewing?”

“Then their clothing will be showcased, but not as a runway catwalk.”

“How did they come up with catwalk as the name for a fashion runway?” Ophelia asked.

Madame Summer Night shrugged. “Not sure. Google it.”

“Ladies!” Lulu snapped. “Focus.”

“Oh! It was named after the graceful way a cat walks,” Ophelia said as she stared at her phone.

“That’s it?” Madame Summer rolled her eyes. “Stupidest naming I’ve ever heard.”

“You know who has the stupidest naming origin?” Ophelia asked. “Tanks. They got their name because Britain wanted to keep their new weapon secret so they dubbed them water tanks. I saw it on a history program.”

“Another stupid word is mastication.”

“Oh, but I like doing that.”

“No, that’s mastur—”

Lulu whistled shrilly. “Nope! Ending it right there.”

Chester listened to them as he worked serving the bar. Kemper was bussing tables and delivering drinks. The three queens had a drawing pad in front of them, attempting to help him come up with a stage design. So far, they’d not been a big help.

“I want to keep it simple,” Chester threw out, although he didn’t know if they had actually heard him.

“It should be against that wall,” Lulu said, pointing to the back wall of the bar that wasn’t really being utilized all that much.

“It’s kinda dark back there,” Ophelia observed.

“How will we see anyone?” Madame Summer asked.

“There’s this little invention called lights,” Lulu replied dryly.

“Ohhh! Spotlights.”

“We can make it in the Batman symbol,” Ophelia said excitedly.

“Yes, but only on superhero night,” Madame Summer said.

“I love Spandex!”

“We all do, darling.”

Lulu shook her head. “I have no idea why I’m even bothering trying to talk to you both. Here. This is the stage.”

She quickly drew something out. The other two queens studied it.

“Looks kinda plain,” Ophelia said, a bit dejectedly.

“We could add fairy lights at the top,” Madame Summer said, pointing to the top of the stage. “And we can paint it pink.”

“No pink,” Chester called out.

“Purple?”

“Kemper isn’t a fan of purple,” he answered.

The three ladies swung their gazes over to the biker placing used glasses in the bin he carried.

“I’d like to scale his mountain,” Madam Summer said with a sigh.

“I’m not gay, but even I can appreciate that hunk of man,” Ophelia murmured.

Lulu licked her lips.

“Enough ogling, more doodling,” Chester told them.

They continued to talk about the stage, until closing time rolled around. Chester hustled out the three queens and locked up behind them. When he walked back to the bar, he found Kemper staring down at the drawing.

“A simple stage is easy to build,” he said. “I’m not painting it pink.”

Chester grinned. “I told them you’d veto purple as well. Is this something you can build?”

“Of course,” Kemper said, stifling a yawn. “Man, I’m a little wiped out. It’s been a long day.”

“Yep, come on, we’ll worry about all this tomorrow.”

He shut off the music, bagged the cash and stuck it in his safe before walking out with Kemper and locking up. Once they got home, they took quick showers and once more, Kemper wore only a pair of sweats, his chiseled abs on display, making Chester’s mouth water. His libido wanted to lick him all over, but weariness was taking over his brain.

Still, he hesitated.

“Do you ... maybe ... wanna sleep in my bed?”

Kemper cocked his head. “Where would you sleep?”

“Oh. Um...”

“Just kidding,” Kemper said, grinning. “Yeah. That’ll be fine.”

He gestured for Chester to lead the way, but as soon as he turned around, Kemper moved behind him. He wrapped his arms around his waist and buried his head into the area between Chester’s head and shoulder.

“Take me there,” Kemper murmured.

Chester turned on the light when they entered the bedroom. There was no mistaking it was sparse. A queen-sized bed with a nightstand. A chest of drawers. A TV mounted on the wall. The sliding closet door stood open, showing clothes haphazardly hung on the bar.

“It’s not much—”

“I don’t care,” Kemper said as he spun Chester around and kissed him.

At first, he was too surprised to do anything, but then his brain finally kicked in. Chester gripped Kemper’s hips, melding their lips together. Starting out the kiss slowly, letting the magic build. Already his heart pounded heavily in his chest and his hands were a little unsteady as desire plowed into him. Their tongues met, danced, twining together. Chester really wanted to take things slow and learn his lover, what he liked, and what drove him crazy. Kemper was so damn sexy, however, that he was quickly succumbing to his base desires.

“You want this?” he asked, needing to reassure himself that Kemper was on board with this. That the previous night hadn’t been some sort of fluke.

Kemper slid his fingers through Chester’s hair, gripping tight. The sting made him gasp, yet heightened the flare of lust singing through his veins.

“What did you have in mind?” Kemper asked, his voice husky.

“I can show you lots of things to blow your mind,” Chester whispered.

Kemper pulled on his hair, bringing him close. “I like the word blow.”

Chester grinned and tapped Kemper’s hand. The fingers released him, allowing Chester to sink to his knees. He looked up at Kemper, whose hooded gaze stared at him with raw lust. He reached up and slowly pulled the sweatpants down. Kemper’s cock got stuck in the waistband for a moment, until it burst free with a little bob.

Their gazes met and locked. Chester leaned forward and licked his dick from stem to tip.

Kemper hissed, his stomach muscles clenching. Feeling powerful, Chester kissed the head, lapped up the precum. The salty flavor burst across his tongue. Deep. Savory. Addictive. He proceeded to slide his lips down, to devour his dick completely, taking most of the monster cock into his mouth, going deeper with every stroke. He bobbed his head up and down, caressing the shaft with every pass of his lip-covered teeth. Applying the perfect amount of pressure to make Kemper’s eyes roll back in his head.

“Fuck, Chester,” he muttered.

“Yes?”

Kemper looked down at him. “You’re amazing at that.”

“Lots of practice,” he said with a smirk.

Once more, Kemper gripped Chester’s hair and pulled his head back so he looked up.

“I don’t want to hear about you practicing.”

“Oh?”

“Your mouth belongs to me now,” he growled.

“It does?” Chester glanced at Kemper’s cock. “Does that mean *this* belongs to me?”

He licked the shaft once more, like it was a lollipop. Kemper's eyes glittered like a rare emerald.

"I suppose since you licked it, it's yours," he replied softly.

Something hot flared through Chester, squeezing his heart. A million butterflies swarmed through his belly. He'd never been so turned on in his life, and he hadn't even touched his dick once. In fact, he probably could come from simply giving Kemper pleasure. Was this love? This desire to please someone else. To give instead of to receive. He'd always been about being a generous lover, but this was something different. The need to blow Kemper's mind reverberated under the surface. The need to make him happy driving his own happiness on.

"I want you to fuck me, Kemper."

Kemper's gaze sharpened. His nostrils flared as he pulled Chester's arm, urging him to rise. Then he kissed him, and kissed him like he had never been kissed before. Chester's mind was in a spin, his knees turned to jelly, and his heart thumped in his chest. It was only a lack of oxygen that forced him to break the kiss to breathe.

"Prep yourself," Kemper ordered in a guttural voice. "I want to wreck you."

Chester shivered in anticipation. He took a step back and removed his clothing before opening the cabinet on his nightstand. He pulled out a butt plug and some lube, then dropped a condom on the bed. While Kemper watched, he slathered on a generous amount of lube and then proceeded to work the plug into his hole.

Once he was done, Kemper stepped out of his sweats. He tugged Chester back into his arms to devour his mouth, kissing until they both strained for air. Then he pushed Chester backward, who landed with a bounce on the bed. Sliding one knee between his thighs, Kemper braced his elbows on either side to trail kisses over his collar bone. Marking him several

times as he bit the tender skin on his neck, then soothing over it with his tongue. Hands roamed, tracing over muscles. Chester thrust his pelvis up, grinding their cocks together. The friction so delicious he had to tamp down his orgasm. The last thing he wanted to do was blow his wad too soon. He wanted to be impaled on Kemper's dick before he let go. He rolled his hips upward, the friction of their bodies unbelievably hot. He gripped Kemper's ass, digging his fingers into the taut flesh so hard he probably would leave bruises.

"Your body is amazing," Chester said. "A work of art."

He reached between them, taking hold of his cock and pumping him. Kemper shifted on top, moving over to lie face to face, offering him room to ghost over his balls and lightly touch the plug.

"Yes. Don't stop."

"You want me to fuck you, Chester?"

"Oh, yes!"

He swallowed thickly as Kemper carefully removed the plug. Then he grabbed the condom and tore into it before adding a copious amount of lube before drizzling it inside his crack. Chester's hips thrust shallowly, and he wanted to be filled more than anything.

"Put your legs over my shoulders," Kemper ordered.

Chester obeyed and then he felt the head of Kemper's cock run up and down over his hole. Then he slowly pushed forward. The prep helped, but it still burned as he was stretched out. Once Kemper was fully seated, they stilled. Panting. Eyes locked on each other. Then, he moved, dragging his cock in a slow, tortuous pace until he was almost all the way out. Then he pushed back in. Over and over, Kemper took his time.

"Harder," Chester said.

Kemper's eyes flashed with pure lust, and his lips curved into a grin. He snapped his hips forward, the large cock

head rubbing over his prostate.

“Fuck! *There!*”

He thrust again, sending Chester spiraling closer to his orgasm. As Kemper pounded in and out, pleasure so fucking intense that there was no way he was going to last. His balls drew up tight as his vision blurred around the edges.

“Kemper, I’m close. So fucking close.”

As Chester fell over the precipice, Kemper groaned. His hips fell out of rhythm, his cum pulsing into the condom. Sweat dripped from his forehead onto his own, his chest rising and falling rapidly as he gasped for breath. Finally, he fell on top of him, and Chester finally lowered his legs. He wound his arms around Kemper’s shaking body.

“Mission accomplished,” he sighed. “You completely wrecked me.”

Chapter Sixteen

“...And we’re going to empty this storage room over here and turn it into a dressing room,” Madame Summer Night said, gesturing wildly to the right of the stage. “Wait! Where is the next page? Lulu! Where’s the next page?”

Kemper watched her run around with a bemused look on his face. He’d finished the platform, and now waited for the next round of instructions, which seemed like it had been lost.

“Has she lost the blueprints again?” Chester asked.

“Blueprints is a broad generalization,” Kemper replied. “Rough drawing is a better description. Art doesn’t seem to be Madame Summer’s strong point, but I can’t deny she seems to know how to direct.”

“She should. She’s the theater director at the high school.”

“No shit? I think she’s missed her true calling.”

“And what might that be?”

“You know those people who direct the plans with little flags?” He gave a demonstration with his arms.

Chester grinned.

“Stage left people!” Madame Summer yelled. “Stage left!”

Chester chuckled and Kemper grinned. At that moment, his phone beeped and he pulled it from his pocket to read the message. Hawkins told him there was to be a special meeting to vote him out, and he urged Kemper to come back and defend himself. He typed a response and hit SEND.

“I’m going to have to return to the club house,” he muttered to Chester as he slipped his phone back into his pocket.

“What’s going on?”

“The prez wants my patch. He’s calling for a vote.”

Chester nodded. “You have to defend yourself.”

“Yeah,” Kemper replied. “I worked too damn hard for this patch to let some fucking cokehead take it away because he doesn’t like me.”

“Will you come back?”

Kemper cupped his face. “Yes. You’re special to me, Chester.”

“Ditto, steel reinforcing rod.”

Their lips met, the kiss wrapping around Kemper like a warm blanket. It brought him a level of peace he’d not known before. It was what he thought he had with the club, but now knew it had only been a superficial feeling. What he shared with Chester had quickly overshadowed everything else.

He arrived at the clubhouse an hour later. A few men were outside, looking like they were on guard duty. That turned out to be accurate after he parked his bike and headed toward the door.

“Sorry, Ribar,” said one man. “Zeus told us not to let you in.”

“Oh? So, I can’t defend my patch? That’s not how a trial is run.”

The two men looked at one another, and then they stepped away from the door. Kemper opened it up and marched inside, heading right to church. When he entered the chamber, Zeus surged to his feet.

“You’re not allowed to be here!”

“Excuse me? This trial is a joke.”

“You dare to shit on our justice?”

Kemper shook his head. “This isn’t justice. This so-called trial is all about your insecurity. You wanna take my

badge because you don't like me? That's a witch hunt."

"He has a right to defend himself," Hawkins said.

"Shut up!" Zeus yelled at him.

"No," Hawkins replied calmly. "You say Ribar doesn't have the right to be here, but *that* is a violation of our bylaws."

"Are you plotting against me, too?"

"Don't be ridiculous," Hawkins asserted. "You brought this trial to church, without informing Ribar of it. What did you hope to gain by this?"

Zeus looked around the table. "He's never here anymore!"

"You did threaten him on more than one occasion," another member said pointedly.

"He broke my finger!"

"You jabbed it into my face," Ribar said. "I don't want to fight with you, Zeus. I've never wanted your position, but your cocaine fueled brain is filling you with paranoia."

"I want your patch!" he yelled, then grabbed his gavel and banged it. "Give me your vest."

The entire table erupted, all senior members shouting out no. Zeus looked around once more, and then threw the gavel at Kemper, who ducked. It hit the door with a thump and fell onto the floor.

Hawkins stood up. "The accusations against Ribar are dropped. He keeps his patch."

"I'm the president!" Zeus raged. "I want Ribar out of here!"

The other members rose and shook their head. Hawkins looked at Kemper.

"Your patch is intact."

Ribar nodded. "I've been fixing a bar up. Redoing floors, windows, tables. It's been cathartic, but at no point

have I betrayed the Reapers. I've not felt welcome here in a long while, but if this club ever needs me, then call me."

He turned, leaving a yelling Zeus behind. The ramblings of a madman weren't his problem. Hawkins and the other club officers would deal with their crazed president.

Chapter Seventeen

When Kemper finally made it back to Heaven, night had fallen. The parking lot was full, muted music filling the air. For a moment, he sat on his bike and let it wash over him, knowing that Chester was inside. He'd never been a man to spout romantic shit. Never wrote poetry or bought chocolates at Valentine's Day. He also never thought he'd find a special person that he'd want something long term. Maybe he was bisexual, maybe he wasn't. Didn't really matter. There was only one person he wanted. Smiling, he got off his bike and took off his leather cut, carefully folding it to stick in his saddlebags.

Chester was at the bar and Kemper could tell he was a little frazzled. Waving at a few people who called out to him, he hurried to help. Chester threw him a grateful smile. Through the night he either bussed tables or delivered drinks. He talked and joked with patrons. Even changed the music when Ophelia asked. Some Harry Styles, which earned him a death stare from Chester, and just like that Kemper found a new way to tease the man.

"Kempie Cakes!" Lulu called out as she sauntered inside the bar. She was dressed completely differently from earlier. "You're back!"

She sauntered up to him and air kissed both his cheeks. Madame Summer rushed over, giving the half-finished stage a ta-da gesture.

"Isn't it divine?" she gushed.

"The stage is gorgeous," Lulu admitted with a smile.

"Kemper is a genius!" Madame Summer continued. "We'll be hosting talent night very soon. By the way, Chesty, we'll have to figure out the whos and the whens."

"I plan on tap dancing," Ophelia announced.

Lulu raised an eyebrow. “I didn’t know you could tap dance.”

“Well, I’ve never had a lesson, but how hard could it be?” Ophelia shrugged. “I have this hot spandex uniform that pairs very well with a top hat and cane, a la Puttin’ on the Ritz!”

Lulu rolled her eyes.

They sauntered toward the usual table in the back, making plans for the future show. Chester immediately began to make their signature cocktails and when he was finished, Kemper delivered them. The rest of the night passed quickly and a little past midnight, he heard the distinctive roar of motorcycles. He looked alarmingly at Chester whose eyes widened.

“Is that...?”

“I’ll check it out,” he said. “Stay here.”

The last thing he wanted was his biker life to interfere with this life. Kemper wiped his hands on a rag and headed for the door. Stepping outside, he recognized Zeus and three of his sycophants, Buzz, Rocky, and Gin. Kemper had never liked them.

Zeus flipped out his kickstand and dismounted, pulling off his helmet and hanging it on the handlebar. The others followed suit. Kemper’s worlds had just crashed into each other.

“What are you doing here, Zeus?”

Zeus looked around. “I had Buzz follow you. Imagine my surprise when he discovered the so-called bar you’re working on is a gay dive.”

The four men walked closer to him.

“You need to leave,” Kemper said coldly. “You’re not welcome here.”

“Oh! We’re not welcome? You’re breaking my heart.”

He chuckled, and the others followed his lead. Kemper's heart raced. Not out of fear for himself, but for Chester, as well as his other friends inside. He silently willed them to stay put in the safety of the bar. Under no circumstance could he allow any of them to be hurt. The dangerous head on this hydra monster was Zeus.

"If only the others had known you were literally a cocksucker then the meeting earlier would've gone a lot differently."

Kemper shook his head. "There's nothing in the bylaws against being gay."

Zeus's eyes widened. "You ... did you just admit you're gay?"

He could deny it. Perhaps if he did, he had a chance to end this before it escalated. Yet he couldn't lie. He'd worked through too much crap to deny his truth. He refused to allow Zeus, or anyone really, take that away from him.

"What I am, is fluid," he said. Saying the words out loud brought a sense of peace. It settled in and wrapped around him like a warm blanket. "Not that it's any of *your* business. Now get on your bikes and get the hell out of here. You're trespassing."

"It's a public parking lot."

"Not for you, it isn't. Fuck off."

Zeus took a few steps forward. Kemper tensed, bracing himself for whatever insult Zeus would throw his way. In that moment, he realized he couldn't care less what these men thought of him. As that thought settled into soul, he had only a second to realize that Gin and Rocky had moved close behind him. He tried to turn, but before he could, the swish of a bat alerted him a half second before impact. Blinding pain cracked across his back, and down he went.

If he'd stayed on his feet, he might have had a chance. On his hands and knees, however, he had no way to protect himself as more hits rained down upon him. Zeus moved

closer and kicked him, catching him across the jaw and spinning him around. Blood poured from his busted lip. Zeus grabbed the bat from Gin and brought it over his head. Kemper threw his arms up to block and protect his face. Pain exploded and he had no idea if the crack had broken his arm or not. Wasn't like he could take a moment to find out. Zeus was already bringing the bat back to launch another hit. Kemper waited until the last moment before rolling to the side and the bat thudded against the graveled ground.

Kemper spit and nothing but blood flew out of his mouth.

“You better kill me, motherfucker,” he hissed, even more blood trailing out his mouth. “Otherwise, I'm comin' for you, you son of a bitch.”

Zeus pulled out his gun and pointed it at him. “Your wish is my command.”

Suddenly a shotgun exploded through the night, causing the four men to spin around. Chester stood there, pointing his shot gun at Zeus. Fanning out on either side of him were the bar patrons. An entire room full of people ready to defend him. Emotion welled up inside his heart. He had thought he would only have a brotherhood with the Reapers. That his family could only be the other bikers. Looked like he had a new family now.

“Get the fuck away from him,” Chester called out.

Zeus opened his arms wide. “Think you're tough shit, gay boy? Can't take on the whole club. Wouldn't want to see your rainbow bar burned to the ground.”

All of his words were said with a sneer. The hatred and vitriol pouring forth was enough to have Kemper boiling mad. He knew that kind of hatred was dangerous, that it could get him or Chester killed. He took a deep breath and tried to force his anger to settle.

“Will your little boyfriends there follow you into hell?” Chester asked tauntingly. “Because I'm ready to blow your

brains out, and not in a pleasant way through your dick.”

Zeus’s smile fell. “You’ll be the first one I fucking kill.”

Kemper kicked out with his foot and nailed Zeus right between his legs. Zeus bent over with a groan and Kemper quickly grabbed his gun. Standing, he pushed the barrel against the back of Zeus’ head. He couldn’t look toward Chester, couldn’t afford to take his gaze off Zeus or any of his men, as he debated his options. If he let Zeus walk, the fucker would come back with a better plan. A more decisive way to hurt everyone. Kemper couldn’t allow his new friends to be terrorized. For a brief moment, he let his mind wander to a what-if scenario.

What if he’d never stopped at Heaven?

What if he’d kept to himself and just dealt?

What if he’d just fallen in line like a good little soldier?

What if he’d never met Chester?

The last one was impossible to think about. Even as he faced Zeus’s hatred and homophobia, Kemper realized he could never be without Chester. He had become his everything. Living without him would be impossible. Which made thinking about how to fix the situation they were in even harder to figure out.

Then the sound of even more motorcycles rumbled through the night and Kemper’s heart skidded painfully in his chest. He couldn’t let Chester and everyone else get hurt, but he had no idea what to do.

“You called for reinforcements?”

Zeus spat in his direction. “Fuck you.”

“What was your game plan?” he demanded. “You planned on killing me?”

“When we’re done with you, this whole bar is burning down,” Zeus taunted.

What the hell can I do?

How can I save us all?

A half dozen bikes pulled into the parking lot with Hawkins in the lead. The standoff suddenly morphed into something else, and Kemper took a step back, even though he kept the gun steady. Chester came to stand next to him, shotgun held tightly in his hands.

“Get out of here,” he muttered under his breath so only Chester could hear.

“You’re not facing them alone.”

“I don’t want you hurt.”

“My place is right here, next to you,” Chester said softly. “If this goes sideways then we go down together.”

“Fuck.”

Once the bike engines died, the silence settled heavily in the parking lot. Hawkins dismounted and approached the standoff cautiously.

“What’re you doing here, Zeus?” he asked casually.

“This fucking cocksucker is a traitor.”

“Yeah? How so?”

Zeus waved a hand to the spectators. “Look who he’s consorting with.”

Hawkins looked up at the sign. “This the bar you fixing up, Ribar?”

“Yeah.”

Hawkins nodded before refocusing on Zeus. “You’re not the president anymore, Zeus.”

Shock had Kemper’s mouth falling open. “What?”

“Special vote after you left,” he clarified.

“Shut the fuck up, Hawkins!” Zeus roared.

“Who’s the new prez?” Kemper asked, ignoring the ex-president.

“Well, I suggested you—”

“Abso-fucking-lutely *not*,” Kemper declared with a snort. “No offense, but seems like a shit job.”

Hawkins grinned. “That’s what I figured you say, so we’ll have to run a special election to go along with our special vote.”

“I nominate you,” Kemper said.

The grin faded away. “What?”

Kemper half turned to the other Reaper brothers. “Hawkins will make an excellent president. He’s fair. He puts this club first. And he won’t take shit from anyone.”

“You can’t fucking do that!” Zeus screamed. “I’m the president! I came to end this ass bandit and his dirty fucking queers!”

“That word has been reclaimed, asshole,” Kemper told him with a derisive snort. “It’s not the insult you think it is. Say anything you want about me, but don’t try to insult them. They became my friends when you made it uncomfortable to live in my own room. My own skin. I didn’t come looking for this, but this is what I found. *My* truth. I’m not a traitor to the Reapers, but *you* are. And everyone here knows it.”

Zeus held his arms wide open. “Let’s settle this man to man. As long as you don’t try to rape me, you ass fucker.”

This was it. The way to protect this new world he’d fallen in love with.

“Challenge accepted,” he said. “Even with a busted arm I could whip your ass.”

“Not here,” Hawkins said, stepping forward. “At the club.”

Kemper gave a stiff nod. “When?”

“Tomorrow night.”

Zeus flipped him off. “See you tomorrow, cocksucker.”

He gave a high-pitched sound, like a hyena laugh, and walked backwards to his bike. Hawkins gave him a nod and a few moments later, the parking lot was empty. Only then did Kemper wilt as the pain from the baseball bat settled into his body, released only when the adrenalin drained away. He bent over and braced a hand on his knees, cradling the injured one.

“We need to get you looked over,” Chester said. He whistled behind him. “Lulu! We need you.”

“Why do we need her?”

“She’s a doctor.”

“Okay. That’s helpful. I think I’m gonna need some drugs.”

Chapter Eighteen

Kemper supported the arm that was hit with the bat. He didn't think it was broken, but it sure did ache like a son of a bitch. Deep bruising, more than likely. It was going to suck royally fighting Zeus. The man knew he was hurt, which gave him an advantage.

Chester drove the ten minutes to Lulu's clinic. He was quiet, which could be a good sign or a bad one. Kemper hoped the former, although he suspected the later. Lulu led them inside, and she slipped off her high heels as she turned on the lights.

"This way," she said, waving them to follow. Along the way, she pulled off her wig and the hair net that flattened her original hair. For the first time, Kemper saw the man behind the drag. "Let's get that arm x-rayed."

Even Lulu's voice changed. Going deeper. It looked odd to see her as half man, half woman. Thick false lashes, concealer and lipstick jarred against the short grey threaded hair and analytical voice. Kemper had gotten used to him as a *her*.

"What's your other name?" he asked.

Lulu raised an eyebrow. "You mean, when I'm not Lulu?"

"Yeah."

"Leonard," he replied as he went about setting up the x-ray machine. "I started doing drag about ten years ago, after I met Ophelia. Of course, back then we had to drive to Denver to showcase our beautiful selves."

Kemper turned his surprised gaze to Chester. "Wasn't Heaven around then?"

Chester shook his head. "Heaven's horrible original name was Bob's Bar and it was a heterosexual dive. My friend

bought it when the bank foreclosed and turned it into Happy Endings—”

“Another horrible name,” Lulu/Leonard muttered.

“—and I changed it to Wrong Side of Heaven when I took over.”

“Come on, Kempy-cakes. This way.”

He led Kemper into the x-ray room, where he helped position him in front of a large white board with a red plus sign on it.

“Don’t move.”

Lulu/Leonard moved behind the lead shield and a second later a beep sounded. He came back out and repositioned Kemper.

“When Chester offered drag night, Ophelia, Madame Summer, and I were able to get our truth on almost every night.”

That word snagged Kemper’s attention. “I used that earlier. The word truth.”

“We use the word truth for honesty.” Another x-ray, one more position. “To be our most authentic self. Back then, I didn’t know how to marry the need to be Lulu with my professional status. I wasn’t sure if people would accept me as a doctor if I was also trans.”

“Transvestite?”

“We don’t use that word anymore, Kempy-cakes,” Lulu/Leonard said and patted his cheek. “Unfortunately, though, that’s what a lot of people call us, not realizing it’s now a derogatory term. Trans can also mean not identifying with strict male-female gender roles. I personally call myself genderqueer. I don’t identify as strictly male or female, but as both. Sometimes I’m Lulu. Sometimes I’m Leonard.”

“I think I have a lot to learn,” Kemper said frowning.

“Turn around. I want to get a photo of your back, just in case.”

Kemper followed the order until he heard the beep noise go off. Then Lulu/Leonard came back over and patted his shoulder.

“It doesn’t matter if you have a label or not. You can be bisexual, or you could just be into Chester. You can be queer or demisexual. Words may help, but they don’t exclusively define us. Don’t get caught up in definitions or titles. Chester is *your* truth, and that’s all that matters.”

“He’s my everything.”

Lulu/Leonard smiled. “I know. I’m happy for both of you. Go on out there with him while I look over these scans.”

“Thanks ... Doc. I think while you are Leonard I’ll stick with Doc.”

“I like it,” Lulu/Leonard said with a smile.

Kemper headed toward the waiting room. Chester sat slouched in a chair, staring up at the ceiling. When he appeared, Chester sat up straight and shifted his attention.

“What’d he say?”

Kemper sat next to him. “He’s looking over the x-rays now.”

“How are you feeling?”

“Fine. It’s a dull ache, so I’m pretty sure it’s not broken.”

Chester laid his hand on Kemper’s thigh. “What happens tomorrow?”

Kemper laid his own hand on top. “I go and kick Zeus’s ass.”

“I’m going to be honest and admit I don’t like that one bit.”

“I know.”

“The thought of you hurt turns my stomach.”

“I know.”

“Are you going to come back to me?” he asked in a whisper.

Kemper lifted his hand to place his arm around Chester’s shoulders and squeeze him. “Of course, I am.”

“Is this a fight to the death?”

Kemper sighed. “I can’t talk about it. It’s club business.”

“I’m going.”

“No, it’s club business.”

Chester pulled away and narrowed his gaze. “I’m going, Kemper. Where you go, I go.”

Kemper studied the determined set of his face. It made his heart thump erratically. He’d never had someone care about him. Never had someone who loved him unconditionally. Maybe his mother, but she’d been dead so long he barely remembered her anymore.

“All right,” he said. “Together.”

“Good news!” Lulu/Leonard exclaimed. “Nothing broken. Just bruised. Some ibuprofen will fix you right up.”

“Thank goodness,” Chester murmured. “You coming tomorrow with us?”

“Now, wait a minute—” Kemper started, but Chester waved him off.

“This is going to be a bare-knuckle brawl. You need a doctor there.”

“Of course,” Lulu/Leonard said, perhaps a bit too enthusiastically. “I’ve always wanted to see a rumble in the jungle.”

Kemper rolled his eyes. Zeus was going to have a conniption. Then again, it would be worth it to see the asshole lose his shit.

Chapter Nineteen

Chester drove them back to Heaven's parking lot so Kemper could retrieve his bike, then they headed back to his house. The upcoming fight robbed him of words. It scared him in a way nothing had before, not even when his world had been crumbling between losing his boyfriend and his job. Starting over wasn't as scary as thinking about Kemper getting hurt.

When they arrived back at the house, anger coursed through him. How dare Kemper think he could just go off to a life and death fight and not realize how much he would break apart if the outcome didn't go in Kemper's favor.

"What's wrong?" Kemper asked, closing the door behind him.

Chester balled his fists up. "I don't want you to fight tomorrow."

"I have to."

"You don't."

Kemper shook his head. "Where is this coming from? I told you that you and the doc can attend."

"Yeah, great. So I can watch you get the shit knocked out of you? Maybe even fucking die?"

"You don't think I can win?" Kemper demanded.

"No, I know you can, but he's gonna play dirty and you've got a sore arm and back."

"And he has a broken finger."

Kemper walked over to him and took hold of his fists, squeezing a little until they unfurled. He twined their fingers together and pulled him until they touched chest to chest.

"I'm mad at you," Chester whispered.

"I know."

His head dipped, sealing their mouths together, and the world melted away. Only he and Kemper existed. Bodies pressed together. Hearts thundering. Lips warm and soft, parting slightly so Kemper could slip his tongue inside. Warmth filled the cold dread pulsing through his psyche, helping him temporarily forget about the upcoming fight.

Kemper's scent filled his nostrils. A hint of spice from his soap, freshness from the outside air as he rode his motorcycle. Masculine and potent, Chester breathed him in, the heady scent causing his libido to quickly consume him. He grabbed hold of Kemper's shirt and pulled him to the bedroom. The door was kicked shut, and in the dark each quickly undressed, moving toward the bed as each piece of clothing fell. Kemper followed him down, grinding. Kissing. Touching.

"Turn over," Chester murmured.

Kemper hesitated.

"Don't worry." He smiled. "You'll enjoy this."

Slowly, he obeyed, adjusting himself as he pressed into the mattress. Chester moved over him and despite Kemper's rigid muscles, took hold of his ass cheeks and spread them apart. Then he licked up his crack, being sure to tongue his asshole.

"Oh, fuck!" Kemper cried out.

"You have a really great ass, you know?" Chester pressed a finger at the opening. "Relax for me."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going to blow your mind, before blowing your dick. So, relax. Please."

Kemper took a deep breath, and as he exhaled he relaxed his body as much as possible. Chester fingered his hole, slowly penetrating. He tried to be gentle, with a slow in and out push. Letting Kemper get used to the sensation. After a moment, the sphincter relaxed, which allowed for his digit to

slip deeper. He searched for Kemper's prostate, because even though a gazillion nerve endings circled his hole, Chester wanted to make this unforgettable.

His touched a spongy surface and Kemper's body jumped.

"Holy shit! What was that?"

"This?" Chester asked to clarify, brushing over the spot again.

"Yes," Kemper breathed. "Oh, fuck. Again. Do it again."

Chester obeyed, pegging his prostate over and over. Kemper panted. He humped the bed. Reaching under him, Chester grabbed hold of his cock and began to jerk it. Ragged mewls filled the room. Kemper was so sexy like this.

"Fuck ... fuck... I'm going to come," Kemper said, his hips moving in time with Chester's thrusts.

"Do it," he urged. "Come all over the bed."

With a keening cry, Kemper's body stiffened. His ass clamped down on his finger. It was perhaps one of the sexiest things he'd ever seen. After a moment, Chester pulled his finger out and let Kemper rest while he went to wash his hands.

When he came back, Kemper sat on the edge of the bed.

"That was amazing," he said.

Chester grinned.

Kemper crooked his finger in a *come here* motion. Chester moved forward until he was next to the bed. Kemper stared at him for a long moment before he settled his hands on his hips and pulled him closer. Staring up at him, he leaned forward and took Chester's hard cock in his mouth.

He ran his hands up and down Chester's thighs, then over his balls to encircle the base of his shaft. Chester moaned softly, unable to believe that Kemper was giving him pleasure. He had thought Kemper would only be into being a top, but

was happy to be wrong. Kemper licked down his cock, giving his balls a good tongue bath before going back to suck on the head.

Chester wanted this to last. He wanted to stay right there forever, just him and Kemper, but the tingle in the base of his spine warned him it was going to be over sooner rather than later.

“I’m going to come,” he moaned. “Let go, Kemper.”

Kemper ignored him, only sucked harder. Unable to stem the flow, Chester gave in to his orgasm, shuddering as his cum filled Kemper’s mouth. He watched as Kemper tried to swallow, but most of it came tricking out of his mouth. Chester loved him for trying.

When they were done and spent, they collapsed onto the bed, face to face.

“You didn’t have to do that,” he murmured.

Kemper ran a finger over his cheek. “I wanted to.”

“I suppose since you licked it, it’s yours now,” he said, reiterating the words Kemper had once said to him.

“I ... I love you, Chester.”

He smiled as his world settled into place. “And I love you. Which is why you better win tomorrow because if you don’t, I’m going to kick your ass.”

Kemper arrived at the clubhouse with Chester on the back of his bike. Lulu, dressed in doctor mode, followed in a car. Brothers stood around, waiting. He parked and took hold of Chester’s hand and led him to the fighting area behind the clubhouse. All along the way men watched and judged, but he couldn’t care less. He’d found his future, and he was far stronger with Chester than he’d ever been without. If his brothers refused to accept them together, then perhaps the club was no longer what he needed.

Men shifted, allowing them to walk toward where Zeus waited. A white circle had been spraypainted in the grass, giving the parameters of the fighting arena. Hawkins stood off to one side, arms folded, and he gave a nod of acknowledgement to him.

“You’re holding his hand?” Zeus called out. “Disgusting.”

“The only disgusting thing I see here is your attitude,” Doc said as he stepped up to stand next to Chester. “Possibly even your wardrobe.”

“Why are you even here?” Zeus asked. “This is club property-”

“I’m a doctor. Of course, I won’t be doctoring *you*. I may have to abide by the Hippocratic Oath of do no harm, but that doesn’t mean I can’t tell you to fuck off.”

Hawkins whistled. “All right. No weapons allowed. The fight will continue until one of you taps out or one of you is knocked unconscious. Prepare and step into the ring.”

Kemper pulled his shirt over his head and handed it to Chester. His hair was already tied back in a ponytail.

“Beat the shit out of him,” Chester ordered softly.

“Your wish is my command,” Kemper replied with a wink.

He and Zeus walked to the small clearing. Two adversaries watching each other intently, trying to find a weakness. They each circled, studied, and measured. They faced each other and then started with an easy sparring. Jab retreat. Jab retreat. The strategy was to keep moving. Make Zeus so frustrated that his anger caused him to act irrationally. They were evenly matched in strength and size, so Kemper knew he had to fight smarter. He kept his movements precise, perfectly positioned, the footwork sure and strong. He kept his eyes trained on Zeus and seemed to anticipate each thrust or jab with his own unique movement of his own. As muscular as

he was, it was not a hindrance. In fact he glided around the choppy circle as if on a cloud.

Somewhere along the way, the ritual changed and the dance became harder. More concentrated. Muscles tensed as Kemper thrust and ducked, jabbed and swiped. He targeted vital areas. Zeus kept trying to land a punch, and as his fist came flying by once more, Kemper grabbed the hand and yanked him forward. The momentum working against him, throwing Zeus off his stance. He lurched forward, but his other fist came flying and landed on Kemper's cheek. Pain exploded and he had to take a step back to regroup.

But Zeus followed and they met in a clash of fists.

After that, the fight took on a different life. Whenever Zeus struck, Kemper made sure to come back harder. Losing wasn't an option. Knowing Chester watched gave him the focus he needed. As Zeus tried to throw another punch, he grabbed the arm and yanked. Stumbling, Zeus swung with his elbow and plowed into his back, directly into the bruise from the bat. Kemper stumbled, gasping, struggling to ignore the pain.

Bracing on one leg, he lashed out in a sidekick that caught Zeus in the stomach. He expelled a lung full of breath and buckled slightly, leaving himself open to let Kemper swing around with another kick that knocked him back.

Zeus struggled to his feet. Kemper advanced and hit him again, directly in the jaw. As Zeus sprawled back, Kemper sat on top of him, punching again and again, until Zeus's head lagged to the side.

Kemper waited one more moment, fist pulled back and waiting to see if Zeus had any more in him. When the man didn't move, Kemper rose and raised his arm in the air, declaring his victory. A cheer went up and Kemper marched over to Chester, lifting him up in a hug.

Hawkins walked over and clapped him on the back.

"Are you sure you don't want the president patch?"

Kemper shook his head. “It’s all yours. Just don’t sniff the blow.”

“What about him?” Chester asked, nodding toward Zeus’s supine body.

“He’s a club matter now,” Hawkins replied.

Doc came rushing up, hands clapping. “Oh, that was exciting! It was like ringside seats watching WWE, only real. Hmm. I guess I should make sure he’s still alive. That’s why I’m here, after all.”

“I see him breathing,” Chester said, pointing.

Doc clapped his hands together. “Well, then, my job is done. Tell him to take two aspirins and *don’t* call me in the morning. Come on, Kemper, let’s go bandage you up. Tootles, biker men! Thanks for the show!”

Epilogue

Two Weeks Later

Kemper stared at the text message that had come through only a moment earlier. The one line from Hawkins eased the burden off his shoulders.

The head is dead.

That was it, and although it was in code, he understood the meaning loud and clear. Zeus was dead. Biker justice had been dealt. Not for the shit he'd done to him, not for the threats against Chester. No, the fucker had been judged on his embezzlement of club funds, using club product, and for not putting the club first.

Come outside.

Frowning, Kemper made sure Chester was busy and then headed from the bar. As soon as he stepped outside, he saw Hawkins leaning against a truck.

"I didn't want to scare anyone so I drove the truck," he answered to the unasked question.

"I got your messages."

Hawkins nodded. "I was voted in as prez."

"Congrats. Don't do cocaine and you'll be great."

"I'm not sure if that was an insult or encouragement."

Kemper half-smiled and shrugged.

"So," Hawkins continued. "You're welcome to come back."

The day after the fight, he had cleared out the rest of his possessions from his bedroom at the clubhouse. He still had his cut. Was still a member of the Burning Reapers, although the path before him had diverged. On one side was Chester and this life he'd found. The other was the old, comfortable way he'd known.

There really wasn't any other choice.

Kemper walked over to his bike and took out his cut. He stared down at his patch and ran his fingertips over the emblem. Then he walked back toward Hawkins and held it out.

“Ribar—”

“I know there is a gauntlet to walk. I'll take the beating because I can't walk away from Chester. I ... I love him.”

Hawkins folded his arms across his chest. “So, you think I'm an asshole?”

“What? No.”

“Then put your cut away. Pull it out if or when you ever need us because you'll always be a Reaper. You'll always be my brother.”

Emotion welled up inside Kemper. This was more than he'd ever dreamed could be possible, being accepted by his club *and* keeping Chester. He gripped his cut tight and brought it to his chest.

“Thank you. You can call anytime for my help. I'll come immediately.”

“I know,” Hawkins said, smiling. “I want you to believe me when I say I don't care about your sexuality.”

Kemper nodded, unable to form words over the lump in his throat. Hawkins walked over to him and patted his shoulder.

“Make sure you invite me to the wedding.”

“What?” Kemper's eyes widened. “No, that's ... fuck. We can get married?”

Hawkins laughed. Shaking his head in amusement, he headed towards his truck. Kemper watched as he started up the engine and waved good-bye. Then he looked back down at the cut he still held. He was still a Reaper, and his heart was happy he didn't have to choose. The best of both worlds.

He turned around to walk back to the bar and saw Chester waiting in the doorway. Worry and fear clouded his beautiful eyes. Kemper could spend all day in the cerulean depths.

“Everything okay?” he asked.

Kemper grabbed his shoulders and pulled him in for a tight hug. He kissed Chester’s temple.

“It’s perfect, baby. Fucking perfect.”

The End

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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

RAIN & PROMISES

Romance on the Go ®

Elizabeth Monvey

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A kiss roused him awake.

Ryan fought against the dream that wanted to hold him and blinked. Yawning and stretching, he noticed Adam next to him, smiling. Even after five years the man still made his heartbeat fast, with his blond surfer boy good looks.

“What?” he asked, very aware he probably had morning breath. He certainly had morning wood.

“Do you remember what day this is?”

Ryan knew, but he liked to tease Adam. “Hmm ... not my birthday. Not *your* birthday. Or is it? Your birthday?”

Adam pouted. “No. You don’t know my birthday?”

“Of course, I do,” Ryan said. “It’s today, isn’t it?”

Adam playfully slapped his chest. “Our five-year anniversary. How could you forget that?”

Ryan cupped his face. “I didn’t. Your birthday is October twenty-sixth and this day, five years ago, we met over coffee. I would never forget that day.”

Adam placed a few small kisses at the corner of his mouth. Once more, that deep-rooted feeling that he was where he belonged struck him. That sense of rightness. It had been like that from the very beginning, as if he’d met his other half, as corny as it sounded.

And it had started with spilt coffee.

Adam, who was an illustrator, usually worked like a madman against a deadline, and when he got to the point that procrastination was no longer a viable option, he loaded up on extra-large cups of coffee to keep him up at night. So as Ryan walked into the coffee shop, Adam walked out, and both cups of hot beverage spilled down Adam’s chest. After apologizing profusely, Ryan had insisted on making sure Adam wasn’t burned, so they’d exchanged numbers. One phone call led to two. Two calls led to a date. After that one night, they’d become inseparable.

Ryan put his arms around his boyfriend and brought him in to snuggle against his chest. “Anything you want to do for this momentous moment?”

“Don’t make fun. We should have a party.”

“I would *never* make fun of our anniversary.” Ryan kissed the top of Adam’s head. “Sounds good if you plan it.”

Adam patted his chest. “No worries, babe. I’ve got it covered.”

Ryan closed his eyes and lived in the moment. Once he rose to start his day it would be nothing but rush, rush, rush. His job as an emergency medical technician never stopped. The next two weeks he worked days, but then he had to flip and work nights. Fifty- to sixty-hour work weeks that left a

toll on him. He knew he'd soon reach a point where he needed a break, but he wasn't sure how to back away from a calling.

He also didn't know what the next step in his career was, and so because of his indecision, he did nothing.

A yawn hit him, and he longed to close his eyes and sleep more, but he knew he needed to get going and start the day.

Just one more minute.

"Come on," Adam said, slapping his ass. "I'll make coffee."

Reluctantly, he rose and stretched before ambling into the bathroom. He glanced at himself in the mirror, seeing little lines fanning from his eyes. He wasn't old, but he felt it, and was half surprised there wasn't grey in his chocolate-brown locks. He used the toilet before turning on the shower and stepping under the hot spray. It helped wake him up, and by the time he walked into the kitchen with his uniform on and his hair toweled dry, the coffee was made and a full breakfast was ready—pancakes, eggs, and bacon.

"Thanks for making breakfast," he said. "I could've gotten cereal."

Adam shrugged. "You get a new partner today. I wanted to make sure you had a hot meal because I know training can be a bitch."

"Fingers crossed it's not a rookie," Ryan said as he took a bite of bacon.

"If he or she turns out to be cool, don't be afraid to invite them to our party."

Ryan hesitated. "Maybe we should keep it small. You know. Intimate."

"So our closest friends?"

Ryan raised a brow. "You have more friends than I do."

“You have no friends,” Adam said dryly. “I can’t help it if the comic book world is surprisingly very big. So what are you comfortable with? Twenty people? Including our parents?”

“Let’s just invite *your* parents.”

Adam stared at him for a long moment. “Ryan—”

“Nope,” Ryan interrupted. “My parents never supported who I am, so we’ll just stick with yours. We can barbecue.”

Adam sighed. “All right. For presents we can ask for donations to the animal shelter.”

Ryan nodded. “I like that.”

Noticing the time, he hurried and ate, drinking the last of his coffee as he rose. With one last kiss to Adam, he left to get to work on time. He and Adam lived in Culver City, a little far from where his office was located, but controlled rent was difficult to find. The two-bedroom apartment suited their needs, with Adam often working from home. They’d incorporated their love of fantasy and sci-fi with art and collectibles from movies and comics, and Ryan considered himself lucky to have found someone just as nerdy as he was.

Driving down the side streets, he pulled into the parking garage half an hour later.

“Morning, Ryan!”

People called out greetings as he entered and made his way to his locker, where he stashed his personal stuff and put on his badge and equipment before making his way to the briefing room. His boss acknowledged him with a nod before giving a pointed stare next to a black man sitting in the front. Ryan figured this was his new partner and made a beeline to sit next to him.

“Hello,” he greeted, smiling. He held out his hand. “I’m Ryan Leeds.”

“Desmond Smith,” the man said, shaking his hand. “Nice to meet you.”

“I believe we’re going to be working together.”

“Excellent,” Desmond said. “I’ll try not to get in your way as you show me the ropes.”

“Nah,” Ryan said, waving his words off. “You’ll do great.”

They settled as the boss began giving them their assigned areas. Ryan and Desmond got westside, so they sauntered off to their ambulance.

“Wanna drive?” Ryan asked.

“Sure.”

Learning a new partner had always been a headache for Ryan, but as they answered a few calls through the morning, he felt more and more at ease. Desmond had a cool head in situations and made the first day very comfortable.

“So your new partner is cool?” Adam asked as he drained the spaghetti.

“Yeah,” Ryan replied as he set the table. “His name is Desmond. Nice guy. Knows his shit and that’s more than I could hope for.”

“Wanna invite him to the party?”

“We’ll see,” Ryan said. “By the way, when is the party?”

Adam gave a dramatic sigh. “Why am I not surprised you never listen to me?”

“Pretty sure you haven’t told me.”

“Didn’t I?” Adam dumped the noodles into a dish and brought it over to the table. “Oh. Well, in two weeks. I have your favorite cake ordered.”

“Mm, cake.”

Adam grinned. He went back into the kitchen for the sauce before sitting down at the table. Ryan filled his bowl with the spaghetti, and they ate for a few minutes in silence.

“I had a thought about the summer,” Adam said after he’d finished his food. “I had a few ideas for vacation this year.”

Ryan used bread to mop up some of the sauce, popping the morsels into his mouth. He chewed and swallowed before answering.

“Okay. Whatcha got?”

“How about a dude ranch?”

Ryan raised an eyebrow. “How about no?”

“Aw, you don’t want to see sweaty cowboys riding their horses?”

“Pretty sure we’d have to ride them, too, and I don’t know about you, but I have absolutely no experience with that kind of beast.”

“Wait, are you scared?”

“Oh yeah,” Ryan said with a nod. “Not much scares me, but being out of control while six feet off the ground is one of them.”

Adam chuckled. “Very well. Dude ranch checked off. How about a romantic cabin in the woods?”

“Haven’t we seen enough horror films with that theme? Pretty sure it never ends well.”

Adam rolled his eyes. “Good lord. Okay. My final and best proposal. Morro Bay. It’s on the ocean. It’s artistic. It’s near Hearst Castle. I think it would be loads of fun and a great road trip.”

Ryan thought it over. “Yeah. I can get behind that. Now that would be fun.”

Adam grinned. “I’ll do all the planning.”

“You always do and that’s why I love you. You keep me in order.”

“The only reason?”

Ryan leaned closer and Adam met him halfway. “Well, you happen to be an amazing person. You’ve got that going for you.”

Their lips met, lingering together for a long moment.

“Right back atcha,” Adam murmured.

End of sample chapter

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