



8 BIKERS'

Heat

A REVERSE HAREM ROMANCE
NICOLE CASEY

Eight Bikers' Heir

A Reverse Harem Romance

Love by Numbers 2

Book 7

Nicole Casey



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About the Author

About this book

A biker gang wants me to have their baby? This must be some wild joke.

It all started with a flirty chat with Kai, the leader of the Iron Serpents MC. One wild night led to something I never saw coming: I was pregnant.

I thought I'd be raising my child alone, but the gang makes a shocking offer: they need an heir, and they promise to support me throughout my pregnancy. Sure, it's unconventional, but who can resist this kind of adventure?

Moving into their clubhouse, I'm surrounded by eight drop-dead gorgeous men.

Kai, the grumpy and commanding leader, stirs my desires like a tempest on a motorcycle. **Auden**, the VP, ignites a fire within me, making my knees weak. **Hayden** exudes adventure and danger, stoking my wildest temptations. **Bradley's** fiery unpredictability sparks a sensual inferno. The **Brookmyre triplets**, with their charisma, leave me longing for more. And then there is **Lincoln**, a blend of strength and vulnerability that awakens an irresistible longing.

With bodies sculpted for sin and eyes that penetrate my soul, these bikers ignite a passionate storm within me. Throughout my pregnancy, they shower me with care, and every day I fall for them a little harder.

But as my due date approaches, emotions are all over the place. The contract's ending, and I'm clueless about what comes next. Just when I think things couldn't get crazier, a rival gang catches wind of our arrangement, putting us all at risk.

Will our newfound family survive the impending danger?

Prologue: Kai

The Tap was always busiest on Friday nights, sounds from inside and outside clashing in the middle.

Old rock tunes and the clinking of glasses filled the dimly lit interior, lights flashing from the televisions playing local sports games or national UFC fights. But the outside was where all the action was at.

The fights. The exhilarating atmosphere. The biker gangs.

Tonight, my gang, the Iron Serpents, occupied the parking lot in front of the biker bar.

As I stood next to my black Harley Davidson Softail Standard, my fingers mindlessly tapped against the leather seat as my eyes swept over the seven other guys who made up the Iron Serpents. As president of the club, these guys looked up to me, but they were my family through and through.

We all relied on each other, especially when trouble arose.

The distant sound of numerous motorcycles rumbled somewhere off in town, prompting me to look over at Auden—better known to us as, “Archer” as he had chosen for his road name. All of our identities were intertwined with the club, and I believed our time spent together made us better. Tougher. We sure needed to be in this town.

“I think we have company,” I told him.

Archer scoffed as he grabbed his leather jacket off the seat of his cruiser, slipping it on and getting the attention of the other six Serpents. When he put

his back to me, I caught sight of the club's patch on the back. Two green snakes wrapped around an iron blade.

We were as strong as blades and as quick as snakes. Yet, people still tried to mess with us. Specifically, the Hornets.

Around ten guys drove up to the biker bar, parking their cruisers in a staggered line next to ours. When their engines cut off I could hear their low chuckles, which made my jaw tighten. That could only mean trouble.

Ghoul, the Hornet's President, slung his leg over the seat of his bike, his black boots hitting the gravel with a heavy thump. He pulled off his open-faced helmet and set it on his seat before walking over to me, his goons hanging back by their bikes.

"Ironheart, figured I'd find you here," he commented with a slight smirk, his icy eyes darting between me and the others.

"Why'd you come looking?" I questioned him, hearing light thuds as the other Serpents started to gravitate toward me.

For years, we had clashed with the Hornets, who wanted this entire town to be their territory. They had already scared off other smaller gangs, but we weren't going anywhere. This was home for us, and they could either learn to share the area or suffer the consequences of messing with us.

"Because he's obsessed!" Bradley, or Blaze, bit out from behind me, immediately being shot a look of warning from Claude, or Crimson, our level-headed Secretary. As much as these guys pissed us off, we tried not to engage in fights with them.

Ghoul scoffed and tilted his shaved head a little, his jaw tightening.

"Maybe. There's room for only one club here at The Tap. We've known the owner longer, so I suggest you guys hit up an Applebee's or something," Ghoul told me, prompting laughter from his members.

Lincoln, also known as Lone Wolf and my Sergeant-At-Arms, moved to my side with narrowed eyes. He was the newest member, but no one questioned his loyalty to the Serpents. He ensured security and order, and things were starting to go awry as the Hornets started to get more rowdy, egging their

president on.

“This won’t end well if we stay,” he murmured to me.

I knew that, but I also knew what it looked like if we left.

“We were here first. There are six other nights in a week,” I stated in a firm voice.

Ghoul chuckled in a cold manner as he stepped closer to me.

“We want to be here *now*,” he said.

I stood my ground, my eyes not moving a centimeter away from his.

“I couldn’t give a damn what you want,” I gritted out, leaning forward an inch.

Ghoul had come looking for a fight, because the moment those words hissed through my teeth, he swung at me, striking my cheek with his fist, and sending me stumbling sideways.

“Son of a bitch!” Bradley snapped before lunging at Ghoul, his shoulder connecting with Ghoul’s chest to knock him backward.

I regained my balance and turned to see chaos unfolding as Serpents clashed with Hornets. We were strong and fast, but we were also outnumbered. Bradley, Claude, and Chris were back-to-back, fighting against five Hornets and taking more hits than they could deliver.

Auden and Hayden, my Road Captain, were both on the ground, unable to even get back up on their feet. Lincoln managed to send one Hornet limping off, but another was already ready to face off with him.

I didn’t want to give up our position here, but I wasn’t going to let my guys get more hurt than they already were.

I parted my lips to call to them, but I was hit on my side, sending me down to the ground as a stocky, muscular Hornet hovered over me. A fist hit my cheek. My temple. My nose.

So much blood filled my nose that I couldn’t breathe for a second, my chest crushed as he pinned me down.

I managed to strike upward, hitting the Hornet on the chin and knocking him off. Pain flared through me as I got to my feet, kicking another Hornet off Auden and yanking him up off the ground.

“Serpents, on me!” I shouted, pushing and punching as much as I could to free my members until we all made it to our bikes. I hit the throttle, leading the others away from the Hornets and thinking that was the end. Until I heard more engines starting.

“They’re after us!” Hayden called out.

I accelerated, my dazed mind having to think quickly. Back road or busy road? We could go faster on back roads, but so could the Hornets. Busy roads were more dangerous, but we were all great riders. Busy road it was.

I turned to the right onto a busy, two-lane street, weaving in and out of traffic.

Horns sounded on either side of me and behind me as the Serpents followed, the sound of wind filling my ears. I glance behind me, seeing the Hornets lagging in the distance. I signaled with my right hand before turning right into a parking lot of an abandoned, shut-down clothing store and killing my engine.

The others followed suit before getting off their bikes and checking on each other.

I stayed on my bike and reached up, touching my nose tenderly as blood continued to flow down my face. Disappointment rolled over me like a cloud as I turned and watched the guys, their angry voices ringing throughout the parking lot. Things could’ve gone a lot worse.

I heard of people dying during brawls like that, and if I got punched in the wrong spot or hit too hard, that was it. Lights out. And the Serpents would be left without a president and would be more vulnerable than ever.

These guys were my brothers, who had my back during my worst moments, and I refused to risk their safety. I felt like I was already failing them by getting chased off by the Hornets. The least I could do was consider what would happen if I died.

Someone had to take over. Some of the guys were more capable of leadership than others, but they were good at what they did. I wanted someone to train to be a leader.

Someone to raise in the path I had taken.

Chapter 1

Aisling

“I ’m sorry to tell you this, but I have to evict you.”

My landlord Brianna’s voice echoed between my ears as I leaned against the doorframe of the front door of my apartment. Well, it looked like it wasn’t going to be my apartment any longer.

“Just like that?” I asked as I crossed my arms over my faded black band t-shirt. I would’ve been lying if part of me didn’t see this coming, though.

Brianna lived by herself on the bottom floor, probably waiting for her soldier husband to come back home. She busied herself with doing things around the apartment building, like arranging social events and things like that. Honestly, I believed she was just lonely.

Brianna let a slow sigh drift from her as she glanced up and down the hallway where some of the other units are on either side of me.

“I’ve mentioned to you a few times that your neighbors have made noise complaints, and you’ve been late paying rent multiple times,” she replied.

I grimaced, pushing my fingers through the dark strands of hair that fell around my face in tousled waves.

One of the best ways for me to gather the motivation to deep clean this place was solo dance parties, which required... loud music. I did feel bad about the rent, but I always paid it as soon as possible. Basic living had become a lot more expensive over the past few years.

“Right. I remember now. Sorry about that,” I said.

Brianna shifted awkwardly on her feet.

“So, I need you to pack your things,” she told me.

“I can’t get one more chance? I just put up these new curtains in the bedroom. This place is really starting to feel homey,” I asked her with a warm smile, hoping she could cut me a break. Again. My life was so go-go-go that things slipped my mind. That was all.

A guilty look crossed Brianna’s face.

“Other than the rent and complaints, you’ve been a good tenant, Aisling,” she replied. “It’s not like I want to do this, but it hurts me when the rent is late and when other tenants threaten to move out because of noise issues.”

I got that. How could I not? At the end of the day, she was a landlord so that she could afford her own place.

“Yeah, I understand,” I told her, not wanting her to feel guilty for doing her job, even if it crushed me to move out of here. I was the one in the wrong after all.

Brianna nodded, staying silent for a few seconds as her eyebrows knitted in thought. She then sighed and stepped back from my door.

“I’m sorry. I’ll let you pack, and you don’t have to rush everything out of here today. You can take a week,” she said.

“Okay, thanks,” I replied with a nod, forcing a faint smile on my face because she was still a good person in my eyes.

Brianna turned and headed down the hallway, her head hanging slightly.

I watched her walk off before shutting my front door and turning to peer at my apartment.

The one where I worked so hard to achieve the right vibe and level of comfort to come home to after working at the office as an assistant all day long.

Where I made my first successful pie in the tiny, minimalistic kitchen.

Where my best friend Madison and her daughter, Chloe, hung out on my teal

couch and watched movies with me.

Sadness started to swell in my chest, but I swallowed it down and put my hands behind my head, forcing myself to take in a breath. Honestly, I had been looking for a new start anyway.

My life had been feeling stagnant and unfulfilling lately, so maybe this was the universe's sign that I needed to shake things up.

I just had to keep my head above water.

Obviously, I didn't have a moving truck ready immediately, but Brianna was a nice person. I was sure that she would give me a few days to get my things moved out, so I focused on packing one suitcase and a toiletry bag to keep me afloat for the next few days while I stayed at Blake's place.

Blake was my boyfriend. As of now.

We were on and off constantly, which meant we had fun together and were attracted to each other, but we weren't exactly relationship compatible at all times.

He wasn't the most reliable person on the planet, even if he claimed that he would be there for me no matter what. I didn't know if that was out of laziness or a lack of care. Maybe both.

He definitely had some faults. Quite a few. One of them being that he sold... illegal substances on the side to help pay his bills, which I did my best to turn a blind eye to while we were together.

I didn't support him doing that, but he wouldn't stop for me. There was honestly only so much he would do for me.

After packing what I could, I got in my car, which was a beat-up Altima from what felt like a hundred years ago, and drove ten minutes to get to Blake's small house that he rented.

The wooden floor of the porch was creaky and probably a year or two from starting to rot, and the dark green paint on the house's vinyl siding was fading and flaking, but it was a nice, modest two-bedroom unit. At twenty-five, I wouldn't complain about that in the slightest.

I knocked a few times and waited, glancing at myself in the reflection of one of the front windows. Two beaded bracelets that Chloe had made for me from her craft supplies rested on my right wrist.

My large band shirt hung off my petite yet curvy figure, which was better accented by my black skinny jeans with rips in the knees. Ones that Blake constantly told me that I looked good in.

Where was he?

I tried the doorknob and saw that it was unlocked. I had been in and out of Blake's house constantly, and he told me on multiple occasions that I was always welcome to come by. Hopefully, he meant that because I truly didn't have anywhere else to go right now.

After slowly pushing the door open, I poked my head inside and glanced around, not seeing Blake in the kitchen or living room.

"Blake?" I said as I stepped inside and shut the door behind me.

I left my things in the foyer and headed deeper into the house where the master bedroom and bathroom were located, able to hear the shower running.

I relaxed a little and walked into the bedroom to get to the master bathroom, only to freeze at the sight of a naked woman lounging in Blake's bed.

"Who the hell are you?" the blonde around my age shouted as she bunched Blake's dark blue sheets over her bare chest.

"Who the hell are *you*?" I snapped back, my eyes flying to the bathroom door when I heard the shower abruptly shut off.

A second later, Blake burst out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist and his shaggy black hair soaking wet.

"What's going on?" he demanded as he looked between us, shock filling his face.

"That's a question for you to answer! Who's this?" I asked him, gesturing to the blonde.

Blake rubbed the back of his neck and shrugged in a casual manner.

“No one. It’s nothing, Aisling,” he said.

A cold laugh broke from me as I shook my head.

“Look, I get things have been rocky between us lately, but that doesn’t mean you can sleep with someone else!” I exploded, fire burning through me. I didn’t like being like this. Aggressive. Angry. It wasn’t me, but this was ridiculous! Why was all of this happening in one day?

Blake groaned as he shook his head at me.

“Don’t make this a big deal,” he said.

“But it is! And to think I trusted you enough to come to you for help...” I muttered before grinding my teeth. I parted my lips to shout some more, but I stopped.

It wouldn’t change a thing, and talking to him would just ruin my day even more.

“You know what? Whatever. There’s no point in us being together anyway. We obviously weren’t ever going to seriously work out because all you care about is yourself!”

“Oh, come on,” Blake scoffed.

I put my hand up to silence him before storming out of the bedroom, ignoring him calling out for me and the blonde chewing him out.

I grabbed my things and shut the front door behind me, my nostrils flaring with heavy breaths. This day sucked!

When I got in my car, I drove into town, went through a fast-food drive thru, and sat in the parking lot with a cheeseburger in one hand and my phone in the other.

At this point, I was basically stranded. I could always turn to Madison, but I didn’t want to bother her when she was busy being a mother and enjoying an amazing relationship with seven good guys.

I couldn’t even land in a relationship with one good guy!

But maybe this was for the best. There had to be a silver lining. I *always*

believed that there was a silver lining in any bad situation.

My phone suddenly dinged, a new message notification for one of my group chats popping up at the top of my screen. I opened the message from one of my friends, Sara, my eyebrows lifting in interest.

Girls' night @ Altitude tonite! Who's coming?

Well, it wasn't like I had anything else to do tonight. Having a few drinks and dancing the night away with some of my friends seemed like a good way to temporarily forget my troubles.

I could figure out what to do with my mess of a life tomorrow.

Me!

I sent my reply before looking in the backseat at my suitcase where one of my going out dresses was stashed in, a small smile crossing my lips.

Today was a terrible day, but that didn't mean it had to be a terrible night too.

* * *

Energetic dance music thumped throughout Club Altitude, inciting movement on the dance floor as bodies upon bodies filled the space.

Others lingered at the long bar with a wall of liquor bottles or hung out on the lounge booths. My friends, Sara, Jane, and Erica, seated at one of the booths with me, empty glasses littering the table in front of us.

“How about another round, ladies? We're just getting started!” Sara asked the group as she fluffed her straight blonde hair behind her back.

“I could do another, but I want to dance soon!” Jane said as she wiggled in her seat to the beat of the song.

I laughed a little, starting to feel the tension and stress in my shoulders gradually melt away as more tequila sizzled its way down my throat.

“Another round sounds good,” I said before getting to my feet and helping Sara up. “I’ll go with you.”

“Yay!” Sara chirped before hooking her arm with mine and leading me toward the busy bar. She found us a small spot that was empty and lifted her hand to flag down the bartender.

Meanwhile, I let my eyes roam, sweeping over the other people at the bar. Most of them were around my age, chatting in groups or pairs. But then I saw one guy alone.

And he was looking right at me.

My heart fluttered as I took in the sight of him at the other end of the bar.

He was *hot*.

He didn’t look like some generic guy, though, like all the other guys at the bar who were dressed in bland button-down shirts and had short, boring haircuts.

His hair was blonde and tousled, the ends reaching his jaw. He wore a black t-shirt with a silver necklace, exposing his heavily tattooed, muscular arms. He looked like a dirty dream right out of one of the romance books I often read.

He shouldn’t even exist, but he was peering at me with a small, intrigued smile on his face.

I couldn’t believe he was looking at me of all people at this bar. My heart started pounding, going even faster than the beat of the music.

Maybe it was the tequila giving me a jolt of confidence, but I wanted to go over to him and see just how interested he was in me. I needed a distraction anyway, and he was a smoking hot one.

“Thank you!” Sara told the bartender after he placed the shots on the bar.
“Come on, Aisling. Aisling?”

I snapped my eyes away from the guy and turned to Sara.

“See that guy with the blonde hair and tattoos? I think he’s interested in me,” I told her with an excited glint in my eyes. I then looked down at my black tube mini dress, hoping it looked as good on me as I thought it did earlier when I put it on. “How do I look?”

“You look hot, but are you sure you want to go up to him? What if he’s weird?” Sara asked.

“Only one way to find out,” I pointed out before downing my shot. While she grabbed two shots, I picked up the other and walked around the bar to the guy, who perked up at the sight of me and draped a leather jacket over his shoulder.

“I just wanted to tell you that I like your tattoos,” I said as I stopped a foot away from him, having to lean closer so that he could hear me over the music.

Holy shit. He smelled so good. Like leather and citrus.

“Thank you. I just wanted to tell you that I think you’re beautiful,” he told me, placing his hand on my upper arm as he leaned toward my ear.

A shiver ran through me as I smiled at him, struck by his piercing green eyes.

“I’m Aisling. This is my friend, Sara,” I introduced us.

“I’m Kai,” he told us as he nodded to Sara in a polite manner. “What brings you guys out here?”

“Girls’ night,” I quipped. “And I needed a pick me up.”

“Why’s that?” Kai asked, his eyebrows knitting together as he tilted his head.

I didn’t want to pathetically explain that I got kicked out of my apartment, so I decided to bring up my latest inconvenience today.

“I found a naked girl in my boyfriend’s bed today,” I told him.

Kai's eyes widened.

"I'm sorry to hear that. I don't know the guy, but he sounds like an idiot for picking someone over you," he said.

I smiled as warmth moved through my body, creating a magnetic effect toward him that was so hard to resist. I wanted tonight to end on a good note, and I didn't usually go out of my way to flirt with strangers, but he looked like a fantasy. Couldn't I live out *one* little fantasy before dealing with reality tomorrow?

"You act like I'm anything special," I replied as I lifted an eyebrow at him.

Kai chuckled a little and placed his leather jacket on the bar, exposing a design of a snake and swords on the back.

Sara suddenly pressed up against my back and leaned close to my ear.

"You shouldn't be talking to him. He's in a motorcycle gang. They're dangerous," she whispered.

I believed that she was being paranoid now. I saw biker groups riding together all over the city. I even heard of some raising money for breast cancer.

"You can go back to the others. I'll be fine," I assured her as I handed her the other shot.

"Aisling..." Sara tried to protest, but I turned away from her, prompting her to sigh and walk off.

"I think you are something special," Kai told me as we steadily gravitated closer to each other. His hand settled on my waist as he leaned near my ear again, his breath tickling the shell of it. "I could show you just how special."

Every inch of my skin vibrated with need, and a twisted sense of curiosity tugged on me as I came face to face with one of the hottest men I had ever laid eyes on.

He was so effortlessly charming and calm like nothing could rattle him. It was incredibly sexy, and after everything that happened today, I wanted to throw all caution to the wind.

“Show me,” I said as I put my hand on his bicep, feeling how strong and prominent the muscle was under his shirt sleeve. Honestly, I wanted to trace every swirl and line of ink with my fingers.

Kai grinned and grabbed his jacket before taking my hand, leading me through the dark club as red strobe lights flickered across the crowd who was too engrossed in the music and the drinks in their hands to pay any attention to us.

He led me to the single bathroom down a short hallway and pulled me inside, locking the door behind me.

The next moment, my back was against the door, his mouth on mine. I couldn't stop the surprised but eager moan that broke from me as I curled my arms around his neck, holding his firm body against me as he grabbed my waist. Every touch burned so good, searing through me and warming up my skin.

Kai tossed his jacket onto the bathroom counter before pushing the fitted material of my dress up around my waist, his thigh pushing between mine.

The friction made my breath hitch as my fingers dug into his shoulders, our eyes locking in the dim light. The door lightly trembled from the loud music thumping outside, but the sound of my racing heartbeat was even louder. Desire seeped into every inch of me, and I couldn't help grinding myself against the rough material of his jeans.

Kai buried his fingers in my hair, his lips finding my ear.

“You're that needy already?” he murmured, his words making heat seep between my thighs. “I'd make you beg, but you're so fucking tantalizing.”

I gasped when his hand slipped under my panties, his fingertips grazing over my clit. I fumbled with his leather belt and the front of his pants, dying to have him inside of me. I didn't care if it was desperate and needy. Telling from the ridge in his jeans, it turned him on.

Kai pushed a finger inside of me, thrusting deep a few times before adding another finger.

“Oh... you're going to feel amazing around my cock,” he said as he curled

his fingers, pressing against a spot that nearly made my knees buckle.

“Please,” I breathed out, finally able to free his cock from his black briefs. My fingers wrapped around its thick base, stroking him in time with the thrusts of his fingers.

“Careful. You sound so pretty when you beg that I might make you beg some more,” Kai told me before working my panties off my hips and down my legs.

He grabbed the back of my thighs and lifted me with ease, pinning my back against the door so that he could guide the head of his cock right where it needed to be.

The air left my lungs when he pushed himself inside of me, my eyes nearly rolling back as the pressure and stretch made my stomach twist. He was far thicker than Blake, and I couldn’t stop the moans drifting from me as he started thrusting into me.

“Kai...” I sighed out in bliss as he increased his pace, fucking me hard and deep against the door. It was quick and dirty, and I reveled in every second of it.

“That’s it. You feel so good,” Kai told me as he tilted his head to gaze at me with those piercing eyes of his. They looked darker than before as they swept over me.

As the tense feeling in my stomach tightened, I raked my fingers through his hair and crashed my lips against his, feeling the pleasure start to crest.

Maybe it was the fact that he was hitting the right angle or that I was doing something so impulsive and dirty with basically a stranger, but everything combined had me primed for an intense orgasm that had me shaking in his grip.

A groan broke from Kai as he watched me fall apart. He rocked into me a few more times before spilling inside of me with an uneven breath.

“Fuck,” he breathed out before resting his forehead on my shoulder for a few moments.

I sucked in enough air to fill my lungs again, feeling a bit lightheaded. When he carefully set me down, I grabbed his shoulders for support.

“Woah,” I murmured, my legs still trembling. “That was definitely the best bathroom sex I’ve ever had. Well, the only bathroom sex I’ve ever had.”

Kai chuckled.

“I want to keep it that way,” he replied as he glided his hands down my sides to my waist. “Take my number. Call me if I need to dethrone someone.”

My face burned a little as I put his number in my phone, my heart still racing. I couldn’t believe I did that!

“Night, princess,” Kai said, gliding his forefinger under my chin in a teasing manner before leaving the bathroom.

I watched him go until the bathroom door swung shut, a shaky breath leaving me.

Holy shit. He was so sexy and charming, and I had his number!

I then closed my eyes and shook my head, gradually coming down from the high.

Obviously, I couldn’t get involved with a guy in a biker gang, even if he was hot. This wasn’t one of my romance books where I could take a risk and fall in love with a dangerous, sexy man.

This was real life, and I now had to face it.

Chapter 2

Kai

“Thank you so much for protecting me. Is there any way I can repay you?”

I took a step back from the young brunette who tried to sidle up close to me as I stood in front of her parents’ house with Chris, another of my enforcers better also known as Cobra, and Lincoln waiting behind me on their bikes.

She had to be around twenty, and even if she was attractive, I had no interest in flirting with people I was enlisted to protect.

“Nope. Your brother already paid me,” I told her firmly.

Her jaw dropped before a pout formed on her face. She almost looked like she was going to stomp her foot like a child who didn’t get what they wanted.

I turned away from her, ignoring the stung look on her face. Her brother was in a local gang that we often ran drugs for, but we were offered money to safely transport his younger sister to their parents’ house since tensions with rivals were getting more heated.

“If you were any colder, you’d be made of ice,” Lincoln commented as I returned to my bike.

I flashed him a pointed look.

“We’re here for business,” I reminded him. If I wanted to flirt and let off steam, I did it when I wasn’t on the job.

Like I did two weeks ago when I met Aisling at Altitude.

The thought of her and her flirty smile were burned into my mind at this

point.

When I laid eyes on her, I knew that I wanted her, and it seemed like she felt the same. Our energy was electric. At least at the time.

I hadn't heard anything from her, but I had been so busy running jobs that I didn't have any time to worry about that.

I started my bike and led them both back to the clubhouse, which was a brick building in the midst of the city with our logo printed on the glass front door.

We parked our bikes in the garage in the back where they were safest before going through the back door, our boots hitting black laminate flooring as we headed into the main area.

Motorcycle posters and other brand posters hung on the walls, while golden-hued lights illuminated the open space.

There was a lounge area with a sectional couch and a table, along with a bar in the back and a pool table. We all hung out here, whether we were resting, having some fun, or holding a meeting.

But the atmosphere was far from relaxing today as I looked upon a group of grim faces.

"What? What happened?" I asked as I stopped in the middle of the room with narrowed eyes.

"Ghoul is expecting an heir," Claude said as he rose to his feet from the black, leather couch. The lights up above reflected off his straight, dark hair, shadows falling on the colorful tattoos that etched up his neck and arms. He was the most level-headed guy I knew, but I could see the angry crease in his forehead.

"You've got to be kidding me," Chris muttered as he stared at his brother with wide eyes. His gaze then hardened as he turned to me as I reeled from the information. "We can't let this happen."

I turned on him with a glare.

"It's already happened," I bit out. "We're not touching the mother. Don't even bring that up!"

“They probably recruited this woman to carry their heir. That’s been a prominent theme lately,” Cameron spoke up as he lifted his hands, looking between his two brothers before turning to me with conflicted, blue eyes. “But it is concerning to know that an heir is on the way. Ghoul will train him, and he may turn out even crueler than his father.”

As treasurer, Cameron was also not one to rush into a fight without calculating the risks. With the nickname Coyote, he was as cunning and as much of a survivalist as one, but some of my other members weren’t as willing to sit back and ponder on the situation.

“So, what are we going to do? Sit back and watch the Hornets build up their next generation of hoodlums? While we wither away? We’re not getting any younger, fellas,” Hayden pointed out. Even if he was ironically only twenty-six. The oldest of us was me at thirty-seven, so I understood his point.

We needed an heir for me to raise and take my place whenever I was too old to lead and protect my biker family, who were essentially the only family that I had left.

“We should recruit someone to have our heir,” Auden spoke up, all eyes darting to him as he leaned against the side of the pool table. He crossed his arms over his chest as his slightly grown-out, dark curly hair fell against the upper part of his forehead.

It was... an idea.

We obviously needed an heir, especially since it was a common thing among the motorcycle gangs around here.

Heirs carried on traditions, recruited new members for the next generation of the gang, and learned from the mistakes of previous leaders to improve the gang’s lifestyle.

Without them, motorcycles would disappear left and right, fading into nothing. We didn’t want that to happen to the Iron Serpents.

However, it wasn’t like I had been dating around. No one in the club had a girlfriend, so if we were going to make an heir soon, we would have to strike up a deal with a woman. If the Hornets could do it, we could do it too.

“That’s a stupid idea,” Bradley scoffed as he shook his shaved head, flexing his fingers that had tattoos covering them. He formed fists with his hands as he glared at Auden. “We shouldn’t go about making an heir that way.”

“Do you have any other ideas then?” Auden asked.

Bradley tightened his jaw as his eyes shifted to me.

“You can’t be considering that, right? It’s insane,” he bit out, frustration lacing his voice.

I looked away from everyone as thoughts went around and around in my head. It was risky and a bit crazy, but I wanted to pass the club down to someone else. Someone we all raised together as a family for the good of the group.

I was proud of what we had all built and accomplished, and someone had to come next to uphold that.

“I don’t see another option,” I replied as my eyes swept over everyone.

“If it’s the best decision for the group, I’m down,” Chris said. He was strictly loyal to the group, falling in line when needed but also striving to prove himself. I wasn’t surprised that he had my back.

There were murmurs of agreement from most of the others. Bradley scoffed and shook his head, while Cameron didn’t say anything, seeming to be deep in thought.

“Look, I’m not making a definite decision now, but I want everyone to think about it. If the Hornets have an heir on the way, we need an heir too,” I told everyone before heading to the bar to fix myself a glass of whiskey, the drone of their conflicting arguments fading into the background as I sank into my own thoughts.

And they snapped right to Aisling.

She had been lurking in the back of my mind, and as I tried to rack my brain for a woman to go to for this crazy proposal, she kept popping up in my head. We had a spark between us, and she was bold and fearless.

But I doubted that a civilian like her would ever want to get involved with

our type of scene.

She hadn't even texted me after our night in the club. At this point, I had to let her go and try to find someone else, even if that didn't sit right with me.

Chapter 3

Aisling

Steam rose from the kitchen sink as I rinsed off my dishes in Madison's sink, my eyes peering through the nearby window to admire the overcast sky.

It had been a few weeks since I'd met Kai at Altitude. I hadn't seen him or spoken a word to him since then, even though the thought of reaching out to him crossed my mind quite a few times.

Madison was adamant that I didn't contact him after I told her about our crazy night together because it was too risky.

Plus, I needed to focus on getting my life together. I had moved all of my things out of my own apartment, and Madison had been kind enough to let me stay with her, Chloe, and Nicholas at her house. With seven partners, there were a lot of houses between all of them, so I wasn't in the way. A lot of nights, I had Madison's house to myself because she stayed at one of their houses or the attic at the tattoo shop.

Of course, this was a temporary situation.

I didn't want to impede on her happy life, so I was planning on trying to get some overtime at my office job if my boss let me so that I could save up some money to move into a new apartment soon.

It felt like everything was changing all around me, but I was determined to not let that scare me.

New beginnings could be great!

Right after I finished up with the dishes, I heard the front door open and shut. While drying off my hands with a paper towel, I looked toward the kitchen just as Madison walked in with a tired groan.

“What’s wrong?” I asked her.

Madison placed her hand on her lower stomach.

“I’ve been cramping all day long,” she said with a grimace as she leaned her back against the kitchen counter. “I hate being on my period.”

I cracked a smile as I tossed the paper towel in the trash, taking a quick glance around to make sure the kitchen was clean after I used it. If I was going to bum off her for a little while, I was going to do it respectfully.

“I’m right there with you,” I laughed before falling silent as my eyebrows knitted together. “Usually, I’m about two weeks ahead of you.”

Madison fell silent for a few seconds.

“Wouldn’t you have had your period around when you moved in with me?” she asked.

It was like ice water flooded through my body, my heart pounding so heavily that my head ached.

“I missed my period,” I breathed out, my eyes widening in disbelief. I then sucked in a deep breath and tried to force a smile. “It’s probably from stress. I’ve had my period come late because of that before.”

Madison didn’t look as convinced.

“I have a few pregnancy tests in the bathroom cabinet. Why don’t you test to be sure?” she suggested.

My stomach twisted at the thought of getting a definite answer, but I couldn’t avoid it forever. I needed to know because that meant *another* curveball was thrown at me. I couldn’t wrap my mind around how insane my life had been lately!

Was this bad karma or something?

I headed to the bathroom and shut the door behind me, my chest feeling tight.

It was hard to breathe in deeply as I found the tests and used one, time seeming to drag on as slowly as possible as I waited for the result.

When I heard a light knock on the bathroom door, I opened it to see Madison standing there with a small smile on her face.

“Can I wait with you?” Madison asked.

I flashed her a grateful, nervous look and nodded, looping my arm with hers and pulling her close. I decided to count the seconds, hoping that they flew by, but each one dragged on for what felt like forever.

My forehead started to feel hot when I reached sixty seconds, and I felt Madison squeeze my arm with hers in a comforting manner. That helped the seconds flow faster until I looked at the tiny screen on the pregnancy test and saw two blue lines.

Time stopped.

I was pregnant.

“Oh, no,” I breathed out, feeling my legs start to go numb. I lowered myself to the ground, my heart hammering in my chest as I placed my hand over it. “This can’t be happening. I can’t be pregnant! Obviously, I can barely take care of myself!”

Madison crouched down in front of me and placed her hands on my shoulders, trying to catch my attention.

“Aisling, breathe. It’s okay,” she told me.

My teary eyes snapped up to hers.

“It’s not okay! I don’t even have my own place yet!” I said as tears streamed down my cheeks, all of my calmness being blown away. How could I find a silver lining in this situation? I couldn’t raise a baby by myself.

Madison gave me a little shake.

“Breathe!” she demanded.

I breathed in deeply and exhaled slowly, trying to relax as much as I could. At least enough to talk to her without sobbing.

“I didn’t expect this to happen. I haven’t even been interested in dating lately. I’ve been reading about fantasy guys in my books more than talking to actual guys lately,” I admitted with a sheepish look on my face. My life was nowhere close to being put together.

“My pregnancy was a surprise too. Things just happen, and you have to roll with it. You have to figure out what you want to do next,” Madison told me in a steady voice that helped calm the erratic nature of my thoughts.

“It has to be Kai’s. He’s the last person I was with,” I said as I reached up to wipe away my tears. My stomach twisted just at the thought of Kai. What in the world would he think? “I need to reach out to him.”

“Are you sure?” Madison asked as she put her hand up to make me pause.

“Why wouldn’t I tell him?” I replied as I narrowed my eyes in confusion.

Madison lowered her hand as an uneasy look filled her face.

“If he’s in a biker gang, doesn’t that mean he might be a dangerous person? What if something bad happens? Do you really want to be stuck to him for the next eighteen years?” Madison questioned me.

I understood where she was coming from, but at the end of the day, this was his child too. I wouldn’t ever be able to shake the guilt if I kept such a huge secret from him. Besides, she could be wrong. Maybe he was a good person who abided by the law.

“I’m telling him. I’ll go from there,” I told her before getting to my feet and taking my phone out of my pocket. I found his name in my contacts, ignoring Madison’s uneasy look. I had to do this.

The phone rang a few times before Kai’s unmistakable, deep voice sounded over the speaker.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Kai. It’s me... Aisling. From Altitude,” I said, my cheeks warming up just at the thought of that night. That incredible night... that led to this situation.

“I didn’t think you’d call,” Kai replied.

Was he waiting for me to call? My heart skipped at the thought, but I steadied myself and took a deep breath before speaking again.

“I wanted to tell you that I took a pregnancy test today, and it was positive. I’m pregnant, and it’s yours,” I blurted out the words before I could chicken out.

Kai was silent for a few seconds, and I almost thought that he hung up until he finally spoke.

“I want us to talk in person,” he told me.

“Where?” I asked.

“At my clubhouse,” Kai replied.

“Clubhouse?”

“Where my biker club meets,” Kai said. “They’ll need to know about this.”

My eyes widened in shock. What the hell did he mean by that? I was already nervous to see him again, but the thought of seeing his other biker friends nearly made me break a sweat. I didn’t want to get involved with possible criminals. Again.

“Why?” I asked.

“I’ll send you the address. Come as soon as you can,” Kai told me before hanging up. A few seconds later, I received a new message from him with an address.

I swallowed hard as my anxiety doubled. I couldn’t even make a joke about this because it was so crazy and unpredictable.

“I’m going to go meet him,” I said to Madison. “I’ll send you my location just in case.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” she asked as she took my hand to stop me from leaving the bathroom just yet.

I wasn’t sure of the answer to that question now, but I couldn’t help my curiosity. Besides, how was I going to raise this baby on my own? If he was a good guy and wanted to help, I would let him.

“I need to do this,” I told her before giving her a tight hug. “I’ll be back soon.”

Hopefully.

Chapter 4

Auden

Light gray clouds rolled across the sky as I stood outside of the clubhouse, listening to the sound of the breeze and the town around me.

I would've taken some pictures today, but overcast days were the worst ones to shoot during. Too much light blowout.

It was a slow day at the clubhouse, and Kai was nowhere to be found. The guys were inside playing a mini pool tournament and trying to relax after the whole heir talk we had the other day.

Honestly, we might have to recruit some woman to have our kid, because I couldn't think of another option.

I wasn't interested in dating and soul searching right now, so it wasn't like I was going to fall in love and have a kid that would uphold our legacy any time soon.

As Vice President, I was focused on the Iron Serpents and making sure we were strong and solid. I wasn't going to let some Hornets uproot us.

The sound of a car approaching prompted my eyes to shift upward. A busy street was nearby, but the clubhouse was on a quieter road that didn't see much traffic.

I was used to hearing motorcycles on this road more than cars, so confusion struck me when I saw an old white Altima pulling up to the front of the building.

A moment later, the driver's door opened, and a perfectly curvy, dark-haired

woman stepped out in ripped jean shorts and a gray tank top. She paused when she saw me before slowly approaching me.

My eyes swept over her, admiring her smooth legs and curvy waist. What in the world was she doing here?

“Not many beautiful women find themselves in this neighborhood,” I commented as I shot her a playful smile.

She cracked a grin and brushed her fingers through her hair, stopping a few feet away from me. She glanced around in a cautious manner.

“You’d think that charm of yours would draw them here in droves,” she quipped.

Oh, I liked her. Cheeky and sexy. I chuckled and stepped closer to her, feeling pleased when she didn’t move away.

“I’m just glad you found yourself here,” I told her, seeing her relax a little. “Can I ask why?”

She parted her lips to reply until the sound of a motorcycle approached. Kai’s bike. She turned just as he pulled up next to her car, a shaky breath leaving her.

“I need to talk to him,” she said.

I looked up as Kai killed his engine and swung himself off the seat of his bike, my forehead creasing. Why did she need to talk to him?

“Seems like you’ve been keeping pretty little secrets from us,” I said with a smirk as Kai approached.

Kai didn’t even smile, which didn’t surprise me. He could be a grump, but given his past and all that he lost, I couldn’t blame him for not being all that cheery.

“Let’s talk over here,” he told the woman before leading her around to the side of the building.

The woman tensed a little, but she nodded, her eyes lingering on mine for a second before she followed him.

I watched them go, knowing I should go inside and mind my business. But I was curious about her and how she knew Kai. What if it had something to do with the club? I had a duty to protect them, even if it was our leader stirring things up.

I quietly edged closer to the corner of the building, stopping when I could make out what they were saying.

“Are you a hundred percent sure that you’re pregnant?” Kai asked with urgency in his voice. Like his life depended on complete certainty.

“Yes! I even took an extra test just to be sure. I’m definitely pregnant,” Aisling assured him, sounding firm and nervous at the same time somehow.

It was like someone punched me in the stomach, knocking the breath right out of my lungs. Kai got her pregnant. Why else would she be here?

“Okay,” Kai replied after a few moments.

I waited for him to say something else. We needed an heir, and it looked like that had miraculously been taken care of somehow. Why wasn’t he telling her that she’d be taken care of? That we’d take care of the baby and raise him?

“Wow, okay. Thanks for letting me know how you feel,” Aisling scoffed at him before rushing past me and hurrying into her car.

I watched her speed off, the sound of my heartbeat filling my ears. What the hell? I whirled around just as Kai came around the corner to the front of the building, his eyes cast downward.

“What was that? She’s pregnant?” I asked him as I approached him, making him stop in place.

Kai shook his head in disbelief as he looked up at me.

“I didn’t believe her when she told me over the phone. I mean... I sort of did, but I had to hear it directly from her. I had to see her,” he said.

My eyebrows knitted together. In all the years we had known each other, I had never heard Kai struggle with his words like this. He was good at putting his thoughts into words, but this had shaken him.

“When did you even meet her?” I asked.

Kai dragged his fingers through his blonde hair, breathing in deeply to steady himself.

“A few weeks ago. We hooked up,” he admitted. “I wasn’t even thinking about this possibly happening. I just...”

“Yeah, I could see why you were distracted,” I replied. Not only did she look good, but she had that cheeky, bold personality that we ate up. “But isn’t this a good thing? We were talking about needing an heir, and she’s pregnant with your child!”

Kai put both of his hands behind his head, giving himself even more room for a bigger inhale. I was sure that getting the news that he was a dad was shocking, but it was necessary.

“I know, but we have to talk to the guys first,” he pointed out. “Holy shit. I can’t believe this.”

I put my hand on his shoulder, allowing him a few moments to gather himself before we both went inside and motioned for the guys to meet us in the middle.

“We have something important to tell you guys,” I said as we formed a circle where everyone could see each other. This might be one of the most important meetings we ever had.

Kai crossed his arms over his chest, his expression hardening as he collected himself.

“A few weeks ago, I... slept with a woman I met at a club. It was a one-time thing, and I hadn’t heard from her until today. She told me that she’s pregnant, and the baby is mine,” he told us.

At first, silence rang throughout the clubhouse as the guys started at Kai in shock.

“Really? There’s an heir?” Claude asked with wide eyes.

“Yeah, what the hell? We were just talking about ways to get an heir a few days ago, and you suddenly already have an heir on the way?” Hayden

questioned Kai.

“Did she say anything else? Is she keeping the baby?” Lincoln asked. I swore there was a glint of hope in his eyes. Out of everyone in the group, he was the most paternal, closely being followed by Cameron. They were family guys.

Kai put his hands up to silence the others so that he could think straight.

“We haven’t talked much. I just know that she’s pregnant, and it’s mine. That’s it,” he replied. “Auden and I believe this baby could be our heir. We could talk to Aisling and see if we could strike up a deal for us to raise the baby.”

So, that was her name. Aisling.

It suited her. A faint smile crossed my face at the thought of her, but it wasn’t like I could concentrate when a bunch of guys were spouting off their opinions.

“You think we’re getting an heir out of a deal with your fling?” Bradley asked with a sharp voice.

“Cool it, Bradley. Not everything can happen organically and perfectly. Get out of your damn fairy-tale,” Hayden told him, a frown crossing his dark-bearded face.

“Fuck you,” Bradley snapped as he took a step toward Hayden. “I don’t expect perfection. I expect a better approach. We’re skimming the bottom of the damn barrel like the Hornets.”

I sighed as I watched Claude step between them to make sure a fist fight didn’t start. We were brothers and cared for each other, but that didn’t mean we didn’t butt heads every so often. There were a bunch of big personalities in this one building.

“We’re doing what needs to be done,” I spoke up as I moved to stand next to Kai.

“Say we make this deal. What happens if she has a girl and not a boy?” Claude asked.

“Heirs have always been boys,” Chris pointed out.

“Doesn’t matter. We can raise a girl or a boy to lead,” Hayden spoke up.

Kai nodded in agreement.

“I don’t care what she has. I want to raise them to be one of us. To lead the next generation of us,” he told us with a firm look on his face, daring anyone to speak up.

“That’s great and all, but this is... asinine. Turning an accidental baby into an heir without hardly any planning,” Bradley said as he shook his head.

“What do you think we’re trying to do? We’re trying to plan,” Kai replied as he gestured to everyone. “Look, we’ll make this as simple and uncomplicated as we can. Aisling will stay with us for... a year. Okay? We’ll protect her while she’s pregnant and make sure the Hornets don’t know about her. After she has given birth, she can go back to her normal life and keep in contact with the baby while we raise it as our heir.”

I nodded in agreement, figuring that sounded like a good deal. I didn’t know what Aisling would say, but it seemed like everyone was content as they nodded their heads. Bradley didn’t shout his agreement, but he didn’t voice his disagreement either. That was good enough.

“Sounds like a plan, boss,” I told Kai.

Kai relaxed a little and nodded, a faint sigh drifting from him.

“Good. Let’s sleep on it,” he said before turning and heading out of the back door of the clubhouse, leaving the rest of us behind as silence lingered in the air.

This was a huge decision and an even bigger change for our club to go through. But the Iron Serpents’ survival and longevity was on the line as our enemy took a step ahead of us, preparing for the future and threatening to leave us in the past. We had to step up, even if we were about to venture into unknown territory.

Everything was about to change.

Chapter 5

Aisling

Kai's disappointing reaction haunted me for days, but it also encouraged me to do my best to move forward with my life.

At the end of the day, I was having a baby, whether I had his support or not. That meant I had to get *my* life together before my baby showed up in this world.

It was still weird wrapping my mind around the fact that I was growing an actual human baby, and I found myself gingerly touching my stomach, trying to feel for evidence of it, even if it was too early.

Honestly, Kai's reaction was... sobering. I really had to take inventory of my life and figure out what I was going to do next.

Being around Madison and her large family made me realize that I wanted that type of love.

The indestructible bond of family that I didn't fully understand since my parents died when I was young, leaving me to be raised in the foster care system and jumping from family to family until I was thrown out to live on my own.

I could have something that I never experienced before with my child, so I decided to keep the baby and see how my love bloomed.

It already burned bright in my chest as I was struck with a wave of motivation to start planning for my child's arrival.

"Ready?" Madison asked once I got into her car.

I smiled and nodded.

“Let’s go apartment hunting,” I told her. I was ready to find my own place and get started on decorating a nursery, which would probably also be my bedroom because a two-bedroom apartment was out of my price range. I also had medical bills to think about because my insurance wouldn’t cover every dime of them.

Madison headed away from her house, glancing over at me.

“Are you hanging in okay?” she asked.

“Besides wanting to throw up all the time? Yeah, I’m okay,” I replied with a small laugh, not wanting to drag the mood down.

I would’ve been lying if I said that I wasn’t stressed and upset over Kai and his lack of support, but I was trying to keep my head above water and not be weighed down by disappointment.

“Oh, I remember that. It sucked,” Madison said as she flashed me a sympathetic look.

I knew that I had her by my side, but I wished that I wasn’t doing this by myself. I couldn’t stop the frown that crossed my face, even trying to hide it by looking out of the side window.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Madison asked.

My eyes started burning, which made my teeth grind. Stupid, sensitive hormones.

“Sorry. I just... I wish Kai gave me a better response. He barely said anything to me.” I told her. We had this conversation before, but I couldn’t get it out of my head. Maybe a naïve part of me hoped that he would be more supportive.

Madison sighed softly.

“I know, but he might be a dangerous guy. It’s probably for the best. For you and your baby’s safety,” she pointed out.

I lowered my eyes, blinking them a few times as I nodded. I was sure that she

was right. These guys probably weren't anything like the motorcycle clubs in the books that I read where the guys were bad boys yet still redeemable. What if Kai was a flat-out terrible guy? Did I really want my baby around someone like that?

"Yeah, you're right," I murmured, disappointment seeping through me.

The rest of the drive was quiet until she parked at the office building of an apartment complex with light yellow buildings and white trim. I could already make out a small pond between the four separate apartment buildings, and it looked like there was a gym next to the office. It was nicer than my old place, so I hoped that I would be able to afford it.

"Let's go," Madison quipped before getting out of the car and following me into the office.

A cheery, young redhead stood up from her seat at the receptionist desk and lifted her hand in a friendly wave.

"Hi! How can I help you?" she asked as we walked toward her.

"Hi, I'm here for a tour. Should be under Aisling," I told her with a polite smile.

"Got you right here! Touring a one-bedroom. If I can just get your IDs, we can get going," the redhead replied. "Oh, and I'm Lily."

After Madison and I handed over our IDs, Lily led us over to the closest building and unlocked a unit on the second floor for us to tour. She talked about the new appliances, the carpet that was recently replaced, and some of the complex's amenities like the gym and a pool.

It all sounded nice, and the apartment was modern and minimalistic looking, so I had a good canvas to decorate however I wanted.

"What do you think?" Madison asked as we ventured into the small bathroom.

"I wish there was a little more bathroom storage, but I can't exactly be picky," I replied as I peered at the small tub. It definitely wasn't a garden tub, but it would do. All of it was fine for now, and I would just work hard to

afford something better in the future.

“There are plenty of apartments to tour,” Madison pointed out.

I sighed as I leaned my back against the bathroom counter, keeping my voice low so that Lily couldn't hear us from where she was waiting in the foyer.

“I need to find a place soon, though. There's a lot to get ready before the baby comes,” I told her. I didn't want to be last minute with things like I usually was. That just wouldn't cut it with a baby on the way, and I had to be more responsible.

“Just give it some thought at least,” Madison replied. “You're not even two months yet.”

I released a slow exhale and nodded.

“I just know that time is going to fly by. Isn't that how it was with your pregnancy?” I asked.

Madison shrugged a little with a sheepish smile.

“Yeah, but it might've also had something to do with everything going on during my pregnancy. My ex. All that drama,” she pointed out. “That definitely makes time fly. Hopefully, you don't have such an eventful pregnancy.”

I hoped for that too. I couldn't believe all that she went through, but I was glad that her seven partners stuck by her the entire time. I didn't have my own set of seven handsome men to have my back.

“I guess we'll see,” I replied with a wry smile before leaving the bathroom with her and shooting an eager look at Lily.

“It's really nice. I'm definitely interested, but I want to give it a little more thought,” I said.

Lily clapped her hands.

“Great! Follow me back to the office, and I'll give you some information to take home with you,” she told me before leading us out of the model apartment.

I got back into the car with a few papers to look over that had rates for upcoming apartment openings and a breakdown of other expenses.

Renting was so expensive nowadays, but it wasn't like I had the money to buy a house. I didn't have family to turn to either, so this was my only option because I refused to keep taking up space in Madison's house.

"I think I can swing this apartment," I said as Madison drove away from the apartment complex. "But I'll think about it."

Madison nodded.

"Good. You have some time. Take a breath and don't rush anything," she told me.

Before I could reply, my phone started ringing, Kai's name popping up on the screen. I immediately froze as I stared down at it, wondering if I was imagining things. I hadn't heard a peep from him since I last saw him, and I honestly didn't expect to hear from him again.

"Aisling..." Madison started to protest, but I answered the call, needing to know what he wanted to say. It had to be important if he was calling, right?

"Hello?" I answered, my heartbeat quickening as I waited to hear his familiar voice.

"Aisling," Kai greeted me with that serious tone of his. "I'd like you to come by the clubhouse today. I have... a proposal that might be of interest to you."

I lifted an eyebrow out of curiosity, wondering what in the world he was talking about. I thought he didn't even want anything to do with me, much less strike up a deal with me.

"What kind of proposal?" I questioned, feeling Madison's heavy stare on me. She was probably begging me to hang up, and maybe that was the best decision, but there was a twisted part of me that was intrigued by him. That hoped he would step up as a father because the thought of raising the baby by myself was daunting. Even if he just helped financially, that would take a lot of weight off my shoulders.

"I'd rather discuss it with you in person," Kai replied.

I gritted my teeth briefly. Of course, he was going to make me go to the clubhouse again. Would that one flirty guy with the dark curls and olive skin be there? I never got his name, but he was so effortlessly charming in a way that differed from Kai's form of dark, hypnotic charm.

"Alright, I'll be there within an hour," I told him before the call went dead.

"What's going on?" Madison asked the moment I lowered the phone from my ear.

Oh, boy. I knew that she wasn't going to like my answer.

"I have to go talk to Kai. He said he has some sort of proposal for me. I'm sure it's about the baby," I replied, glancing over at her to see a wary expression filling her face.

"Sounds suspicious," Madison told me. "What do you even know about this guy?"

I sighed as I sank back in my seat.

"Not much, but we're bound together by this baby. I want to hear him out and see what's on his mind," I replied.

Madison frowned, but she nodded.

"I know. I just hate that you have to go through this," she said. "I know what it's like to be bound to someone by a baby. My ex was a psycho who was so hard to get away from. I just hope Kai doesn't end up being like Michael."

I nodded in understanding, giving her a look of sympathy. That was a nightmare for her to endure, and I hoped that Kai was a decent man. But this situation wasn't easy in the slightest. I had a pregnancy come out of the blue, and I was tied to a potentially dangerous member of a biker gang, who was as mysterious as he was handsome.

Plus, I was having to shack up with my best friend for the time being because I didn't have a place to live. My life had been a whirlwind, and something told me that things were about to get even crazier.

Chapter 6

Aisling

When I arrived at the clubhouse, I was surprised to see yet another man that I didn't recognize standing outside of the brick building.

Another hot man.

What was up with this biker gang and its hot members?

The man was tall and well-built under his white tank top and jeans. His hair was long and dark, being pulled back from his bearded face by a ponytail.

He had a bit of a wild look to him, which was *very* alluring to me. If I was honest, I had always wanted to go out with someone like that.

However, I had to remind myself that this man could be dangerous. He could be a criminal for all I knew, so I approached him with caution and a racing heart.

"Hi," I greeted him as he tilted his head at me with a small smile on his face.

"There you are. We've been expecting you," he told me.

"We?" I questioned him, lifting an eyebrow at him.

"All of us in the Iron Serpents. Kai is the president of our biker club," he explained before stepping closer and holding his hand out to me. "And I'm Hayden."

Feeling drawn to him by a strong pull in my chest, I shook his hand.

"Aisling," I said. Something told me that the proposal somehow involved the

others for some reason. They were constantly referenced.

Hayden chuckled a little with an excited glint in his eyes.

“I know. You’ve been the center of attention since we heard the news,” he told me as his eyes slipped down to my stomach.

Because of some sort of new reflex, I placed my hand over my stomach in an almost protective manner. It was so sudden that it caught me off guard.

“Didn’t realize I was the talk of the town,” I replied, feeling a bit nervous about that. What were they saying about me?

“Auden mentioned you were gorgeous, but I’ll say his words didn’t do you justice,” Hayden told me.

So, the other guy was named Auden. And I had another hot biker flirting with me, which felt like a fever dream. What in the world was going on?

“You guys sure are charmers with all your sweet words,” I commented with a little smirk as warmth seemed to float over my skin.

Hayden leaned closer as his fingertips ghosted over my upper arm.

“Mind if I say a few more sweet words?” he asked as our eyes locked.

My breath hitched as I stared into his dark eyes that seemed so deep and intense. I wondered what all he had seen with them. I couldn’t find my voice, so all I could do was nod.

Hayden chuckled a little.

“It’s too bad it wasn’t me that you first met at Altitude,” he said. Before I could even react, he gently took my hand and led me toward the door of the clubhouse. “There are others you need to meet. Don’t worry. We don’t bite... unless you ask.”

A shiver ran through me as I followed him, tension gripping my shoulders as I walked through the door into an open space that looked like a hangout spot.

It kind of reminded me of a cozy bar, but that sense of coziness died out at the sight of Kai as he leaned against a pool table.

“Well, we might as well use our real names since we’ll be involved with each other for a while,” Hayden told me as he gestured to three bikers that stood from the couch. I only recognized one of them from the last time I came to the clubhouse. “This is Cameron, Lincoln, and Auden.”

My heart skipped at the sight of Cameron as he approached me.

He had dark brown hair that was cut short around his ears with some light stubble on his handsome face. There was also a snake tattoo that wrapped its way up his right arm that caught my eye. When he got close to me, I looked up at him with a small smile, trying to rein in my nerves.

“I’m Aisling,” I introduced myself. Something told me that he already knew who I was, though.

“Cameron,” he said as he shook my hand before placing his other hand on top of mine. “Nice to meet you.”

His hands were warm and firm on mine, and I noted his serious yet calming demeanor. He helped me relax before Lincoln took his place.

Lincoln looked to be around my age with dark, hair that was cut short and light brown skin that didn’t have a single tattoo. At least where I couldn’t see. His face was clean shaven, and he looked to be the most casual one from what I could see, wearing a graphic t-shirt and a pair of Vans.

“I wasn’t sure if you’d show up or not,” he admitted as he seemed to inspect me.

His gaze felt heavy as his eye roamed over me. Was he checking for weapons or checking me out? I couldn’t tell.

“I figured it was important,” I told him as we shook hands. I tried to ignore the smell of cedarwood and cherry that rolled off him, but it was intoxicating.

“It is,” Auden spoke up as he walked over to me, flashing me a grin. “Good to see you again, sweetheart.”

With warm cheeks, I smiled at him before heading over to Kai, still reeling a bit from all of these handsome, mysterious men. What were their stories? Who were they really?

“Why am I here, Kai?” I asked him as he pushed off the pool table to walk over to me.

Kai stopped a foot away from me, looming over me with his serious expression and tense jaw.

“We’ve talked it over, and we want you to have the baby,” he stated. Before I could tell him that I was already planning to do that, he spoke again. “As an heir to our club.”

I couldn’t stop the shocked laugh that broke from me.

“What?” I questioned him. “An heir?”

Kai nodded, his expression not wavering. He was very different from the flirty man that I met at the Altitude. Which one was the real him?

“To continue the legacy of our club, whether I get too old or die, we need an heir,” he explained. “If you agree to let us raise them as our heir, while you have contact with them, we’ll take care of you for the next year. You’ll stay with us, and we’ll provide for you and cover all of your medical bills and pregnancy check-ups.”

My head started to spin, and I found myself reaching out for the pool table for stability.

To my surprise, Cameron jumped to my side and guided me over to the pool table so that I could lean against it. I nodded to him in thanks and breathed in deeply before facing Kai once more.

“Stay with you?” I questioned him.

Kai nodded.

“You can take our spare bedroom here,” he said as he gestured to a closed door behind me. “If we’re going to look after you, it’ll help if you’re near us. This is a temporary situation. After the baby is born, you’re free to leave and go about your normal life. You can keep in contact with the baby, but we’ll raise them.”

My heart pounded heavily as I looked between all of them, who didn’t say anything or protest this crazy idea. How could all of them think that this was

a good idea?

“What if I want to be part of my child’s life more than just being in contact?” I asked. I felt detached from my baby when I first found out I was pregnant because of the shock, but I had been doing a lot of thinking lately. A lot of planning. Now, when I thought of the future, I thought of me and my child. My tiny family.

Kai’s jaw tightened.

“You can be part of your child’s life. We’ll work out something, but you can’t interfere with us raising them to be part of our club. That’s non-negotiable,” he told me in a firm voice that sent a chill down to my core.

“What do you guys even do at this club? How many of there are you?” I asked, not knowing anything about them besides their names.

“There are eight of us in total. We ride our bikes and do things around the community,” Kai replied, giving me the least descriptive details ever.

I narrowed my eyes as I crossed my arms over my chest. If he was going to hide things from me, this wouldn’t work. I wasn’t going to let dishonest people have a role in raising my child.

“What things? I want to know what I’m getting myself into before I agree,” I questioned him. When Kai didn’t say anything, I acted like I was about to leave, being cut off as he stepped in front of me.

An aggravated look filled his face as he stared down at me.

“Not everything we do is in line with the law, but we’re careful. We’re disciplined. We don’t do anything crazy besides transporting jobs and protection detail,” Kai told me.

That didn’t sound so bad on the surface, but what they were doing was still illegal. I stepped back from Kai as a worried frown crossed my face, my hand finding my stomach.

“We don’t hurt anyone,” Auden spoke up, able to see my concern. “We run product from place to place. We look after people that we work with. There’s not much more to it than that. It’s for money to fund our lifestyle.”

“Yeah, bikes are expensive,” Hayden said with a wry chuckle, being silenced by a hard look from Cameron.

“Your child will be heavily protected as they grow up,” Lincoln assured me as they all seemed to slowly gravitate toward me. “They’ll be a good person. We may do what’s considered bad things, but we look after each other. We give back to the community. We’d look after you.”

All of their voices filled and echoed throughout my head, the volume becoming overwhelming.

They wanted me to entrust them with my child, to let them raise a baby in this environment to become one of them.

It was great that they wanted to support me during my pregnancy and not have me do everything alone, but I wasn’t sure if I could trust them enough to agree to this.

This was completely crazy! It felt like I had been dropped in the middle of one of my romance books, facing an impossible situation surrounded by disastrously handsome yet possibly dangerous men. I should’ve been terrified, but something heated and twisted burned inside of me. Something that could get me in trouble.

“I need some air,” I told them before walking past them and out the door, taking a deep breath and wondering what the hell I was going to do.

Chapter 7

Cameron

I found myself immediately following Aisling out of the clubhouse, feeling an ache and a tug in my chest like some sort of magnetic effect took hold of me.

This was a lot for one person to handle, especially when she was surrounded by strangers and newly pregnant. The last thing I wanted was for her to be scared off.

When I stepped out of the front door, I saw her standing off to the side, staring ahead with wide, confused eyes.

I figured she was tired of hearing so many voices trying to convince her of what to do, so I stood next to her in silence, letting her relax. My eyes subtly shifted to her, admiring her full, slightly pouty lips and thoughtful eyes.

Before today, only Auden and Kai had actually seen her, and Kai refused to spill any details about her.

Auden was more willing, though, and he described a beautiful, bold woman with a radiant smile. She hit those marks and more, but I wanted to see her smile more.

I didn't know much about her, but I bet I could get her to smile. If she was going to stay with us, it would be my mission to make her time with us easier.

I could do breakfast in bed or give her a back massage. Hell, I could even run out at midnight to grab whatever she was craving.

There really wasn't anything else like a beautiful woman's smile. A distant ache echoed in my chest at the thought of a certain smile, but I shook the memory away as Aisling breathed in deeply.

"Do you think this is a good idea?" Aisling asked. "Just be honest with me. You guys obviously have a certain way of doing things that I don't understand."

I clasped my hands behind my back and nodded, knowing that she was overwhelmed and confused. The Iron Serpents were a tight-knit club, and my job as treasurer was to handle the finances, to make sure we had the money to live as we did. She didn't understand how strictly run this club was, but she would have to learn it.

"What are your other options? That's what my answer relies on," I told her. If she had a stable life and plenty of help, maybe this deal wouldn't work out for her.

We offered her all we could, which was total care and protection of her and the baby. Nothing would happen to them, and all expenses would be taken care of. I would make sure of that personally.

Aisling pressed her teeth into the side of her bottom lip as she lowered her eyes, looking conflicted.

"The future isn't really clear for me right now," she admitted as she fiddled with two bracelets made of white and light blue beads on her right wrist. "I'm looking for a place to live because I got booted out of my apartment. I guess my job pays fine if a few bucks above minimum wage is considered fine. I... I just have my best friend, but she has a family of her own to worry about. I don't want to be some leech, you know?"

I nodded quietly as I listened to her, hearing the stress in her voice. It was like she was trapped in a corner, facing two daunting possibilities for her future. For her baby's future. Even if this was all new to her, I suspected that she had already developed a deep bond with the child.

Honestly, that made me happy.

"Here's what I know. We're all going to do everything we can to take care of you while you're pregnant. You won't have to worry about a single thing,

and that includes the dark side of our business. You won't be involved. You'll be safe at the clubhouse and provided everything that you and the baby need," I explained as I looked over at her, our eyes meeting.

Aisling swallowed hard and let out a shaky exhale.

"I just... it's so much, you know? I feel like I'm drowning," she told me. "You ever feel like that?"

I lowered my eyes as my chest grew tight.

"Yeah, I felt like that when I lost my wife," I admitted. I didn't go around telling that to people that I just met, but I didn't want her to feel alone in her grim feelings.

Aisling's eyes widened.

"Lost her?" she asked.

I nodded as a bittersweet smile crossed my face.

"We were young when we got married. Really young. But we were in love, you know?" I replied, remembering how I used all of my savings to buy an engagement ring at nineteen years old for my high school sweetheart. Nothing else in the world mattered more than her. "But she got sick and passed away. It was so sudden that I barely had time to register it. I mean, we'd *just* got married."

Aisling placed her hand on my arm as she moved closer to me.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "But I'm sure she knew how loved she was."

Warmth burned in my chest as my smile brightened a little.

"I hope so," I told her. "We were even talking about the kids we'd have in the future. I guess that's why I want to be a dad so much. There's nothing like family. The people you love."

Aisling's face softened.

"And the guys in the club are your family?" she asked.

"I'd do anything for them, and they'd do anything for me," I said. "If you

agree, you're part of that. Pregnancy is hard, and you'll need support. We'll all be there for you. I'll be there for you."

Aisling's eyes started to glisten a little.

"You're not going to strip my baby away from me, right?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"Babies need their mothers. But we'll be there to raise them as one of us," I told her, needing her to know what to expect. "We'll teach them our values. Show them our love for bikes and riding. Help them grow into their own person."

"Do things ever get dangerous? With the business you guys do?" Aisling asked.

"Rarely ever. We have members who strictly deal with security and making sure things don't go wrong or get out of control," I replied. "I can promise you that we're very discreet and careful."

Aisling exhaled slowly, her shoulders not seeming so tense.

"This is crazy. I didn't think heirs were even a thing anymore," she muttered.

I cracked a small grin and shrugged.

"We do things very specifically around here. That's why we're so close and organized," I told her. "We keep each other in line."

"So, if you were me, you'd take this deal?" Aisling asked as she turned to face me, looking me deep in the eyes like she was making sure that I wasn't lying.

I didn't think that I could lie to that face.

"Given what you've told me about your circumstances, I would take it," I said. "But it's still your choice. No one is going to force you to agree."

Aisling dragged her fingers through her hair as she turned away from me, her breathing sounding a bit more uneven than normal.

I could tell that she was stressing again. She was being faced with probably

one of the most daunting situations she had ever come across in her life, and she had only so much time to decide on her answer. I reached out and gently brushed my fingers along a strand of her dark hair.

“Hey, it’s okay,” I told her.

Aisling’s glistening eyes shifted back over to me.

“Is it, though?” she asked.

I took her hand and pulled her toward me, giving her a warm embrace and feeling her sink into me. I could feel the tension gripping her body, the tightness in her shoulders. This was probably hell for her, but I wanted it to be one of the happiest times in her life. She was bringing a baby into this world. One who might look like her. Act like her.

“It will be,” I said as I rubbed her back. “I know things are crazy, but you’ll have a full year to relax and get prepared for the future.”

Not many people got that opportunity.

Aisling tilted her head back so that she could peer up at me.

“Thank you,” she told me, looking as sincere as could be.

There was that magnetic pull again. I wanted to keep her in my arms, to shield her from her stress. It was going to be a long road ahead of us, but if she agreed, we had the chance to get really close. I leaned down and pressed a lingering kiss on her forehead.

“I’ll be there for you every step of the way,” I assured her. No matter what, she wasn’t alone in this.

Aisling stared at me in silence like she was trying to read my eyes. She wanted to be sure that I wasn’t lying right to her face like I was sure other people had done to her. I could see the fear glisten in her eyes. The crease in her forehead as she thought long and hard about one of the biggest decisions that she would ever have to make.

“Every step of the way?” she asked in a quiet voice.

I held her gaze and nodded, seeing her jaw tense as she prepared her answer.

“I accept the deal.”

I couldn't stop the smile that spread across my face. It was great we had an heir on the way, but the thought of having her around to tend to made my chest feel full of light. It was something different. Something new and exciting.

“You won't regret it,” I told her. It was the right choice for her to make, and we kept our promises.

Aisling smiled a little, but I could still tell that she was a bit wary. I expected that to stick around for a while until we all got into the groove of things.

“I guess I should tell the others,” she replied. “I'm sure it feels like they've been waiting for an eternity.”

“When you're ready,” I said, not wanting her to rush anything. She could take a few more minutes to process things if she needed. The guys weren't going anywhere.

Aisling rested her hands on my upper arms, her eyes seeming to briefly trail over my chest and shoulders, which intrigued me. Did she like what she saw? What she felt under her fingertips?

“I'm ready,” she assured me.

With that, I stepped back and opened the front door for her, letting her go inside first as the others waited for an answer. We really had no idea what was coming next for us.

For all of us.

Chapter 8

Aisling

My life had somehow become ten times crazier.

I inhaled deeply as I drove to the clubhouse with boxes full of my things in the backseat and in the truck of my car.

Today, I was moving into the clubhouse and kickstarting this new chapter in my increasingly strange life.

Despite me not being the best tenant, Brianna still wished me well when I returned my apartment key to her. She was probably one of the sincerest people that I knew, so I thanked her and looked toward the future where everything was about to change.

The deal I agreed to was insane and unheard of, but I couldn't deny the fact that I needed support through this pregnancy.

I needed a safe place to stay, funds for all the baby stuff and appointments, and whatever emotional support I could get from these big biker guys. They promised all of that to me if I let them have a big part in raising my baby.

As long as I got to be there for my child, I was willing to take the risk and accept the deal. If I could get closer to the others like I got to Cameron, maybe things wouldn't be so bad.

Maybe they would accept me more and let me have more say in the upbringing of the baby.

But the future was so uncertain.

The one thing that gave me comfort was the fact that I could always ditch these guys before the baby was born if I felt uncomfortable around them. I could pack up and disappear at any point for me and the baby's safety.

My survival instincts were already ringing, and there was a little voice in the back of my mind that told me that this was a terrible idea. That I should run far away, but I couldn't. I was uncontrollably drawn to these men, and they had been inhabiting my mind for days now.

Kai's grumpy, cocky attitude. Cameron's tender side. Auden's irresistible flirty side. Hayden's charm and humor...

I wanted to know more about the others, to really get to know all of them as people and not just members of this biker club. There was so much below the surface.

My fingers tightened around my steering wheel as I pulled up in front of the familiar brick building. Either they were listening for me, or they had a sixth sense, but as soon as I got out of my car, the door opened.

I looked up and froze in place, confusion ringing across my face at the sight of two guys who looked like Cameron but weren't Cameron walking toward me.

"Um... hello," I greeted them, blinking a few times and wondering if I was somehow drugged on the way here or if I was dreaming.

Both of them were only wearing what looked like black, athletic shorts without any shirts, so I supposed they were working out. Telling from their muscular chests and abs, they definitely did that often.

"Sorry we didn't see you before. We were doing a run," one of them with tattoos on his hands, arms, and chest said. "But you met our brother, Cameron."

"Okay, wait. You guys are... triplets?" I asked, my voice nearly faltering.

The other one without tattoos but with more muscle in his arms and chest smirked a little as he nodded.

"I'm Chris. This is Claude," he introduced them before nodding to my car.

“Got boxes for us to move in?”

I didn't reply at first because every romance book I ever read with twins and triplets zipped through my mind, making my face burn. This was crazy! Hot triplets. What was my life?

“Oh, yes,” I replied once I snapped myself back to reality. “There's just a few in the backseat and the trunk.”

“We got them,” Claude told me as they walked past me, his hand brushing my arm. “Go on ahead and wait for us inside.”

I flashed them a grateful look before heading into the clubhouse. There was no one else around, so I could only guess that they were off riding or *doing business*. I decided to turn a blind eye to that as much as I could since they assured me that it wouldn't affect me or the baby.

A few seconds later, Claude and Chris entered the clubhouse with boxes in their arms.

They led me into the bedroom that I would be staying in, which was decently sized with a queen-sized bed, a dresser with a television on top of it, a small walk-in closet, and a wooden desk with a chair. There weren't any decorations, but I could easily fix that.

It didn't take them long to haul all of the boxes into the room, placing them along the wall so that I could go through them one by one.

Instead of leaving, they sat down on the edge of my bed, slightly creasing the white sheets.

“We've heard quite a bit about you from Cameron,” Claude commented as he peered at me with the matching blue eyes of his brothers.

Interest sparked in me as I leaned my back against the dresser right in front of them, feeling Chris's gaze on my exposed thighs where my jean shorts didn't cover. Warmth rolled over every inch of my skin as they peered at me, and I stared at them, tension settling in the air between us and around us.

“I hope they were good things,” I said.

“They were,” Chris assured me. “You'll be well taken care of here.”

“That’s what everyone keeps telling me,” I replied as I looked between them. “I’ve barely been fawned over by one guy, much less eight.”

Claude chuckled, drawing my attention to his rising and falling chest, which was covered by a few tattoo pieces, including the logo that I saw on the back of Kai’s leather jacket. I assumed it represented the club.

“You’ll be spoiled, alright,” he assured me before leaning back on his forearms. “Nice place to stay. Good company. Soft bed.”

Chris flashed a smirk at Claude.

“Very soft bed,” he replied before looking at me. “Anything you need, just let any of us know.”

The thought of joining them on that bed rang throughout my head, but they got up and headed out of the room, leaving me there with a racing heart and plenty of dirty thoughts.

How could I handle being taken care of by all of these men that I was so attracted to?

For the rest of the day, I busied myself with unpacking and decorating the room a little with some of my favorite band posters and picture frames with photos of me and Madison or of me on vacation to try to personalize the space a little more.

I would be here for a year, so I might as well make it cozy.

Every so often, one of the guys would arrive at the clubhouse and poke their head in to greet me and check on me.

Every interaction left me with a small smile and burning face, and I had met everyone besides a guy named Bradley. They only told me that he would come around eventually, which made me wonder if he even wanted me to be here or not.

The last interaction I had before nightfall was with Cameron, who came by and brought me dinner. He even sat with me and put my mind even more at ease before leaving the clubhouse for the night.

As I prepared to get into bed, I didn’t expect to see anyone else until I heard a

light knocking noise from the bedroom door. I turned and widened my eyes at the sight of Kai standing in the doorway.

“Oh, hey,” I said, feeling my heart flutter. I was a bit nervous to be around him now since he had been acting so cold to me. I wondered if I did anything to upset him.

Kai glanced around my room.

“Are you settling in okay?” he asked.

I was surprised that he even cared enough to ask.

“Yeah, everything is fine,” I replied, fiddling with the thin strap of my white tank top. When I realized that I wasn’t wearing a bra underneath, I crossed my arms over my chest with a sheepish look on my face as I stood there in my silky sleep shorts. “I didn’t expect you to come by.”

“I’m going to check on you every day,” Kai told me as he moved closer to me, his green eyes boring into me.

“I didn’t think you cared enough to do that,” I admitted, looking up at him as he towered over me.

Kai frowned.

“Of course, I care,” he said.

I let out a little scoff.

“You’ve been cold to me ever since I told you that I was pregnant. I know you’re not happy about it, and you’re just doing this deal to make the most of what’s a bad situation to you,” I told him as my expression hardens. “So, don’t stand there and act like—”

Kai suddenly crashed his lips against mine, shutting me up in the most surprising way possible. He grabbed the back of my neck, his fingers starting to slip into my hair as I started to kiss him back automatically. He tasted like spearmint, sweet and addicting.

I should’ve pulled away and questioned him, but I had been dying to kiss him again. To feel him again. It had been on my mind every day since we met at

the club, and I just couldn't stop.

Kai guided me backward, laying me down on the bed and crawling over me. The cold metal of the few rings he had on his fingers felt good on my warm skin, making goosebumps line my arms.

He pulled off my tank top and leaned down to take one of my already hard nipples in his mouth, sucking firmly to draw a broken gasp from me.

All I could do was revel in the feeling of how good his mouth felt, my fingers tangling themselves in his blonde hair. I trailed his movements as he traced my other nipple with his talented tongue, his hands caressing and squeezing my sensitive flesh.

Steadily, Kai moved down my body, his lips trailing down my stomach to the waist of my shorts, which he quickly pulled off, along with my panties. He knelt in front of the bed, his breath teasing the inside of my thighs as he draped one of my legs over his shoulder.

My cry of pleasure rang throughout the bedroom as he swiped his tongue through my folds, glancing over my clit before returning to it. Heat overtook me, spreading throughout my whole body as he caressed me with the flat of his tongue. Soft but direct.

“Oh... fuck,” I breathed out as I arched off the bed, a tight coil filling my stomach.

Kai pushed his finger inside of me, slowly thrusting deep along with the strokes of his tongue. It was like he had done this a million times before, knowing the pressure and speed to get me closer and closer to orgasm. He added another finger and hooked them, hitting that same spot that made my toes curl.

“Kai,” I whined, able to feel how close I already was.

A faint groan sounded from him at my needy sounds, and he thrust his fingers deeper and faster, lapping at my clit at the same time. Even as my body grew tense, and my thighs threatened to tremble, he continued his motions, nudging me closer and closer. Faster and faster.

A blast of bliss hit me with everything it had, reducing me to shudders and

whimpers. My breaths were shaky and uneven as I tried to catch my breath once the crest of pleasure died down, a pink hue gracing my cheeks.

Kai crawled over me again, his lips slightly glistening as he pressed them against mine. He gripped my chin and pushed his tongue into my mouth, making me taste myself and muffling my responding moan.

I grabbed at his white t-shirt, tugging on it until he ducked his head and let me tear it off. My fingers traced the lines and grooves of muscle on his chest and shoulders, already working me up and making me want more.

“Please,” I told him as I reached for his black pants.

Kai buried his face in my neck, kissing the side and sucking on the spot between my shoulder and neck to make me writhe beneath him.

“Don’t worry. I’m going to fuck you,” he breathed out near my ear. “You really thought I was going to leave this room without making you come again?”

My mouth went dry.

I hadn’t ever heard such dirty words spoken in my ear before, and I ate every single one of them up.

When he sat up, I helped him undo his belt and pants so that he could work off the rest of his clothes. Seeing him fully bare made me try to rub my thighs together, but he pried them apart and pulled them around his waist.

Within a few seconds, he was buried inside of me, his hand planted near my head as he leaned over me. He closed his eyes for a second, a faint laugh breaking from him that sent a chill through me. A good one.

“Damn, you feel so good. I can’t get enough of you,” he said before he began to thrust into me, pushing me down into the mattress with his larger body.

I reached around him and dug my nails into his back, my head tilting back in bliss. Pressure. Friction. Heat. It all took hold of me, barely letting me take a breath as he rocked into me. Harder and deeper.

“You’re so deep,” I gasped out as he leaned down toward me.

Kai captured my lips in an intense kiss, his teeth grazing my bottom lip. He didn't slow his pace, pushing me closer and closer to the edge by the second. His free hand roamed up my body, caressing my breasts and resting on the base of my throat.

"I feel you squeezing me. I know you're close," he murmured as he adopted a light grip on my neck. Now, he was squeezing *me*, but it nearly made me finish right then and there because it turned me on so much. And he must've been able to tell. "Dirty girl."

All I could do was whimper, my nails raking down his back as I arched, chasing the pleasure that was so close ahead. My thighs hugged his hips as he pounded into me over and over, every inch of my body ringing with bliss.

The tighter his grip on my throat was, the closer I got, and it only took a few more seconds for me to fall over the edge.

His name rang out from me as I dug my nails into the back of his shoulders, using him for stability as my entire body tensed. When he finished right after me, another wave of pleasure rolled over me, taking my breath away.

Kai slowly rolled off of me after a few moments, catching his breath and twining our fingers together.

"I'm excited to be a dad. I was just shocked," he murmured as we both gazed up at the ceiling. "After I thought about it some more, I feel lucky now to have an heir on the way and someone like you to be the mother."

I turned my head to gaze at him, warmth blooming in my chest at his sweet words.

"Does an heir have to be a boy? What if I have a girl?" I asked him.

Kai shrugged.

"Some people think an heir has to be a boy, but I don't believe that. Anyone who is raised right can be the leader of the Iron Serpents," he explained. "So, whatever you have, we'll be happy. A lot of us want families, even if we don't seem the type."

Relief flooded through me as I listened to him, seeing a side of him that I

really liked. I was glad that he believed a girl could be the leader of a tough motorcycle club because I believed the same thing. Our baby would become a badass no matter what.

“I was really nervous about this deal, but I am grateful for the help you guys will give me and the baby,” I told him. It wouldn’t be cheap, and it wouldn’t be easy. So, I was grateful to not be alone in this.

“Everything will turn out fine,” Kai assured me before pressing a gentle kiss against my forehead. He rolled off the bed and got dressed, making me pout a little. “You need to sleep. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He probably wasn’t the type to sleep over. Even if he was handsome and charming, that didn’t mean anything deeper than sex would happen between us. He seemed more focused on the baby than anything else, so I tried not to get my hopes up. It was probably for the best.

“Goodnight,” I said as I sat up, my eyes trailing him as he walked toward the door.

Kai paused and turned to me, the corner of his mouth turning up ever so slightly in a hint of a smile.

“Night,” he replied before leaving me alone in the bedroom.

When I heard the clubhouse door shut and lock, I flopped back down on my back and stared up at the ceiling, wondering if I would make it through the rest of this year in one piece.

Chapter 9

Lincoln

I slowly paced outside of the clubhouse, the soft colors of dawn painting the sky up ahead.

It had been a week since Aisling moved in. A week since this crazy but necessary plan went into effect.

It was such a jarring plan that I was conflicted about it at first, but my job was to be this club's guardian. I watched over everyone, so I had to keep the future in mind.

When I met Aisling in person, that was what nailed things in place for me. That was what told me that this plan needed to happen.

Not only could she help us protect the future of our club, but we could help her too. She seemed like a good person, and we weren't the type of guys to wreak havoc on innocents. We helped where we could while also protecting ourselves. This plan let us do just that.

I wanted to talk to her and get to know her, but the past week had been so crazy.

Kai had us doing patrols of the area to make sure no Hornets came too close and somehow spotted her. She wouldn't pass as a new member of the club, so it wouldn't be hard for them to guess why she was here.

If the Hornets found out we were trying to get ourselves an heir, tensions would rise even higher.

They were a group of extreme, merciless assholes who were capable of going

low. Very low.

I didn't even want to think about what they would possibly do if they found out what we were up to.

I sighed and rested my hand on the outside wall of the clubhouse, my forefinger tracing imaginary lines as I pondered on what to say to her. My job centered around the protection of the club, and she was temporarily part of that now.

Besides, she was beautiful too. Maybe there were multiple reasons why I wanted to see her.

Right now would be a perfect time because no one else was here, but where the hell did I even start? I got on my phone and did a quick Google search, seeing what things were good for pregnant women. What made pregnancy easier.

I couldn't believe I was already doing something like this, thinking about a future with a baby. After dealing with my own dysfunctional upbringing with parents who weren't all that affectionate, I wasn't sure when I would get the chance to do better by my own family.

That reality hit me sooner than expected in an unconventional way, but I was ready to step up and be a dad.

Looking after others came naturally to me, especially people I considered family. I might've been one of the youngest in the club, but I wasn't a flake.

I wasn't scared of responsibility. That was part of the reason why I was brave enough to approach the club about joining. Not only could they make me a better man, but they could help me have the support and care that I never got from my own family.

I didn't want my kid to ever have to go looking for another source of love because they didn't get that from me.

I would be there for them no matter what.

That included the time they were still in the womb and that branched out to the woman carrying them too. I refused to put Aisling on the backburner

when she was doing all the work of raising them.

There was a drugstore around the corner from our clubhouse, so I burnt some time walking there and perusing the aisles for what I found online.

Prenatal vitamins. Ginger chews for nausea. Belly oil. There were all kinds of things.

I started throwing stuff in a basket, figuring this was technically part of my job. I had to ensure the safety of her and the baby. And maybe this was also a good icebreaker for me.

I paid for the items, bagged them up, and headed back to the clubhouse, actually going inside this time. I walked over to her room, seeing that the door was cracked open. Leaning closer, I could hear groans coming from the bathroom.

“Aisling, are you okay?” I called to her, not wanting to just barge in, but I couldn’t help the spike of concern that I felt.

“Sick,” Aisling managed to say before the sound of the sink running filled the bathroom.

Good thing I got those ginger chews. I nudged open the door and knocked on the bathroom door, which was opened a few seconds later so that I could see Aisling with a miserable look on her face.

“It’s like tequila night at Pedro’s all over again,” Aisling muttered as she tenderly held her stomach.

I extended my arm out to her, letting her take it so that I could lead her over to the bed. Something about her made my protective instincts kick in, and I started getting into action, fixing her a glass of water, handing her a ginger chew, and opening the window for fresh air.

“Thank you. It’s Lincoln, right?” Aisling asked as I moved around the room, setting up her nightstand with vitamins and lotions.

I nodded as I stood in front of her, my eyes sweeping over her to make sure she was fine.

“Is there anything else you need?” I asked.

Aisling smiled a little, the color returning to her face.

“I wouldn’t mind chatting to take my mind off wanting to throw up again,” she admitted.

The corner of my mouth turned up a little. Despite the circumstances, she could crack a joke or a smile about anything.

I had always been drawn to women like that. A sunshine smile with a carefree attitude. She definitely hit those marks.

“Before all of this, were you interested in having kids?” I asked.

Aisling shrugged with a sheepish smile.

“I mean, it crossed my mind, but I saw it as a future thing with someone I loved. But it’s crazy. I’m already so attached, and I don’t know anything about my baby. Not even the gender,” she admitted as she gently rubbed her stomach.

I felt a natural pull to rest my hand on her stomach, to see if there was the beginning of a bump.

“Maybe it’s instinct,” I said.

“I’m gonna sound like a total cheese ball, but I think it’s love,” Aisling laughed softly before gesturing to me. “You’re, like, my age. Were you interested in having kids? Before this?”

I didn’t even have to think about my answer before nodding.

“For a long time. Probably stems from how I grew up,” I said.

“How’d you grow up?” Aisling replied, keeping her beautiful eyes on me.

It was almost hard to concentrate, but her question made an unsure feeling fill me. I didn’t exactly discuss this type of stuff with others outside of the club, but I supposed she was one of us for the next year.

“My family was pretty dysfunctional. My parents fought a lot and got divorced when I was in high school. They either ignored me or chastised me for every little thing,” I explained, more words than planned spilling from me. Something about her gentle, curious gaze got me.

“I’m really sorry to hear that,” Aisling told me. “But I bet you’ll be ten times better than your parents. You’ve helped me out a lot this morning already.”

“That’s a big motivation for me. I want the family that I never had before. Of course, the guys are my family, but this will bring us even closer than we already are,” I admitted, lowering my walls just a little bit more. It wasn’t like she was going to run and tell anyone what I told her.

“I’m starting to think you guys aren’t as scary as you come off to be,” Aisling said as she tilted her head at me in a playful manner.

I crossed my arms over my chest and shrugged.

“We’re not ones to be messed with, but we protect our own. You’ll be safe with us,” I told her.

Aisling smiled a little, her teeth catching onto her bottom lip in a manner that made my chest tighten.

“I’m feeling a bit better. I wouldn’t mind some more fresh air, though,” she said.

“Want to take a ride?” I asked.

Aisling’s face flushed at first.

“Oh! Like on your bike?” she replied.

I couldn’t help the smirk that crossed my face. Now, she had me thinking about *that* kind of ride. A dangerous thought around her.

“What do you think?” I asked as I tilted my head at her.

Aisling smiled in a slightly nervous manner, but there was an excited glint in her bright eyes.

“I’ve never actually ridden on a bike before,” she admitted. “I mean, realistically, how safe is it?”

“With me, perfectly safe,” I assured her. “There’s nothing like tearing down the road without any obstacles around you like there are when you’re in a car. You’re completely free. Like you’re truly flying.”

Aisling's eyes seemed to widen with wonder.

"That sounds like just what I need right now," she said.

I grinned a little and held my hand out to her, helping her up to her feet and pausing for a moment as our eyes locked.

I could smell something sweet. Maybe it was her shampoo or the soap that was on her skin. Whatever it was, it was addicting. I continued holding her hand as I guided her outside after picking up an extra helmet for her, like losing hold of her put her in danger.

"Just hold on tight," I said as I carefully slipped the full-face helmet on her head.

Aisling nodded and waited for me to get on my black Softail Standard cruiser before taking my arm and sliding onto the seat behind me. She wrapped her arms around my torso, pressing her body against my back.

It was such a simple, expected action, but heat stirred in my body. I had to distract myself by putting my helmet on and gunning my engine, feeling the rumble of my bike beneath me.

Aisling jumped at first, squeezing me so tightly that she nearly knocked the breath out of me. She only loosened her grip when I slowly edged out of the parking lot and hit the road.

"You good?" I called out over the rumble of the engine as I drove toward a little park that I knew of in the area. She seemed like the type of person who loved a good thrill, but I wasn't going to put her in any danger. She was supposed to be relaxing.

"Yeah! This is amazing!" Aisling shouted, her words being followed by a laugh.

With my face hidden behind the helmet, I smiled, increasing my speed and taking her the long way so that she could enjoy the ride. We whipped past buildings and people walking down the sidewalk, my bike smoothly veering through traffic. I loved taking a ride, but this one felt particularly exhilarating.

When the park came into view, I slowed down and pulled into the parking lot, killing the engine and pulling my helmet off.

“How was that?” I asked, looking over my shoulder at her.

“That was so awesome!” Aisling said as she took off her helmet, showing me the shining smile on her face. “I know you weren’t, but it felt like you were going so fast.”

I helped her off the bike before following her, setting our helmets down.

“It’s a rush,” I agreed before glancing around.

The park was small with a concrete walking path that circled the grassy area. Metal benches and trees sporadically dotted the area, but what I was really here for was a food truck that always came in the mornings.

“Come on,” I told her, motioning for her to follow me to the white trailer where a middle-aged, bald man popped his head out the window.

“Morning! How can I help you two?” he asked in a raspy voice.

“Two breakfast burritos and two orange juices,” I said, paying the man before looking over at Aisling. “I always like a little something sweet in the morning.”

Aisling laughed softly and placed her hand over her heart.

“I like something sweet all the time,” she replied.

Once we had our food and bottles of juice, I led her over to one of the benches and sat down, the outside of our thighs touching.

“I have to ask you something. You don’t have to answer, but I’m just curious,” Aisling said as she peered at me.

I lifted an eyebrow at her and nodded for her to continue.

“I know you’re excited about the baby and having a family, but... are you jealous that the baby isn’t yours? Maybe jealous isn’t the right word, but you know what I mean,” Aisling asked.

I shook my head.

“Like I said before, me and the guys are family. Hell, I’m the newest addition, and I’m closer to them than my actual blood family,” I explained. I’d put my life on the line for those guys, and I knew that they would do the same for me. When no one else would take me in or have my back, they swore to do so.

“So, whether or not the baby is genetically mine or not, I still see them as *my* baby. I’ll treat them as such.”

Aisling smiled a little as she nodded in understanding. She took a sip of her orange juice as her eyes shifted ahead, watching a few birds hopping along the ground.

“I was worried about this... deal. Part of me still is, but it’s nice to know that the baby will be cared for. By multiple people,” she admitted, a more serious look adorning her face.

“We promised you safety. That goes beyond physical. If you have issues or concerns, you need to tell us,” I replied as our eyes met. It probably seemed easier to keep her worries to herself around us since we probably didn’t seem like the friendliest crew, but we’d sworn to protect her.

Aisling nodded, pressing her arm against mine for a second before we finished breakfast in comfortable silence. It wasn’t long before her eyelids started fluttering from tiredness, so I took her back to the clubhouse so that she could relax some more.

“Thank you for the ride. And for breakfast,” Aisling said as we walked into the clubhouse together, a slight pink tint glowing on her cheeks.

Honestly, I had a better time than I even expected, but she was full of surprises.

“I’m sure we can do it again soon,” I replied.

Aisling parted her lips to speak once we passed through the front door, but she froze at the sight of Bradley, who was seated at the bar.

Bradley peered back at her with a hard stare, and I could feel the wariness rolling off her.

“Come on,” I murmured as I placed my hand on Aisling’s tense back, ushering her to her room and shutting the door behind us. I shook my head, wishing that Bradley would lighten the hell up before he scared her off. I knew that he wasn’t happy about this plan, but it was time to get with the program like the others.

“Does he... hate me? We haven’t said a word to each other, and he’s like... giving me the death glare,” Aisling muttered, her eyebrows furrowing as she seemed genuinely bothered.

“He’s just... guarded. He’ll warm up to you,” I assured her. Would that actually happen? I wasn’t entirely sure, because Bradley could be a bit unpredictable. What I did know was that he wouldn’t dare hurt her or the baby.

Aisling released a slow sigh as she dragged her fingers through her hair, looking drained.

“I might’ve overdone it today. A lot of excitement,” she said with a tired smile.

I pitched a look over at the bathroom.

“Want me to run you a bath?” I offered.

A look of interest popped up on her face.

“That sounds great,” she said with an eager nod.

I headed into the bathroom and walked over to the garden tub tucked in the back left corner. After turning on the hot water and letting it steadily fill the tub, I turned to her, seeing her standing in the middle of the room with a shy look on her face.

She didn’t really seem like the overly shy type, but we both knew what came next.

“I’ll leave,” I told her, starting to head that way.

Aisling reached out and grabbed my arm, stopping me.

“It’s fine. I... could you help me wash my hair? It’s so hard to do it alone

while bathing,” she asked.

I held her gaze for a few moments, wondering if I was imagining the flirty glint in them. Did she really need help, or did she *want* help? Regardless, it was my job to provide for her.

“Get in the tub,” I told her, the tone of my voice dipping down lower.

Aisling’s breath faintly hitched before she turned away from me and peeled her shirt off, putting her bare back to me. With each layer of clothing that she removed, the fire in my lower stomach burned hotter and hotter. Her hair streamed down her back as she walked over to the tub, leaning over to shut the water off. Pitching one last look over her shoulder, she threw me a smile before sinking her body into the hot water, a pleased sigh breaking from her.

I wanted to make more noises sound from her. Every fiber of my being wanted to touch her, to please her.

With a tense jaw, I garnered what sense of control I had left and knelt behind her, cupping the back of her neck and guiding her low enough to get her hair wet.

My eyes uncontrollably strayed, admiring the slope of her perfect, bare body. The peaks of her breasts. The curves of her hips. The fullness of her thighs.

Oh... damn.

I helped her sit back up before squeezing some sort of flowery scented shampoo that one of the triplets picked up for her. My fingers coursed through her wet hair, massaging her head as I lathered the shampoo in well.

A faint moan sounded from Aisling as she leaned her head back more, her eyes fluttering shut.

My cock started to strain against my black jeans as I continued my motions, working the shampoo in until there were suds. I guided her back down to rinse the shampoo off, watching the foam dissolve in the warm water. However, I wasn’t done with her.

My hands moved down her neck to her back and shoulders, massaging gently yet firmly. She was almost purring for me, soft hums and moans drifting from

her. I could be daring, or I could play it safe.

What would she do?

I let my hands trail down her arms, her head pressing against my chest. I didn't care that my shirt was getting wet.

All I cared about was the way she arched her back, pushing her chest up like she was dying to be touched. I obliged, cupping her breasts and rolling her nipples between my fingertips.

Aisling's eyes flickered open as she peered up at me with flushed cheeks.

"Would you think I was a freak if I said I've fantasized about being pampered like this?" she asked.

I slid my hand up to the underside of her chin, keeping her eyes on mine.

"You act like that's a bad thing," I replied before getting to my feet. I leaned down and pressed a lingering kiss against her lips, tasting how sweet she was. I wanted more, though. I wanted to complete her fantasy.

Aisling gasped when I reached down and grabbed her, pulling her up on the flat edge of the tub. She held onto the sides to keep herself from falling over as I knelt between her legs, my face pressing between her thighs.

A blissful gasp rang from her as I swiped my tongue up through her folds. She buried her fingers in my hair with one hand, her back arching as my tongue flicked against her clit.

"Link..." she moaned.

I dug my fingertips into her thighs, anchoring her down as I pressed my mouth flush against her center. I let my tongue explore every inch of her, teasing her entrance and caressing her clit. She was addictingly tasty, pleasure shooting through me just from her enjoyment.

Aisling's body started to tense more and more with each brush of my tongue or caress of my lips. She threw her head back when I sucked on her clit, pleasure jolting through her.

"I can't... I won't last," she breathed out as she tugged on my hair.

I wanted her to fall apart for me. To look at me and remember how hard I made her come. With just a few more strokes of my tongue, she shuddered through an intense orgasm, her breathy moans echoing throughout the bathroom and spilling into the bedroom.

Aisling gradually relaxed, seeming to melt as she came down from the bliss and adrenaline.

“Oh, woah,” she murmured.

Now, that was definitely a lot of excitement for one day. I leaned up and captured her lips in a slow kiss, letting her taste herself and showing her just how much I enjoyed that.

And just how much I wanted to do that all over again.

Chapter 10

Aisling

As a few weeks passed by, my feelings toward the guys were getting more and more confusing.

With a thoughtful furrow in my brow, I chopped up an onion in the clubhouse's small kitchen, listening to Chris and Claude chat behind me as they prepared chicken breasts and gold potatoes to be cooked for tonight's dinner with everyone.

Gradually, I'd started becoming more involved in the group's activities. Besides the illegal ones that I ignored.

It was for the best, and stress wouldn't be good for the baby.

As I listened to their laughter, my heart thumped heavily in my chest. I liked their laughs. Their voices. Their looks.

I liked so many things about all of the guys that the line between business and pleasure was getting more and more blurred by the day.

Yes, this was a business arrangement, but the moments of intimacy and sweetness that I shared with everyone—everyone besides Bradley, at least—wasn't mentioned in the terms.

I thought that they would just check on me to make sure that I was breathing and take me to doctor's appointments, but that wasn't the case.

It felt like we were playing house right now because we were cooking for a big dinner with everyone. Like a true family dinner, which was honestly a bit jarring to me.

I was so used to eating dinner alone or with other foster kids who didn't care to talk to me. Having a family dinner wasn't something that I was familiar with, and now that I was able to experience it, I had definitely been missing out.

This level of casual bonding was something special and not just because it was new to me.

However, as much as the thought of that made my chest feel all warm and fluffy, I knew that this wasn't a permanent arrangement.

I didn't need to get attached to guys who possibly just saw me as an incubator for their heir.

But that was the thing. I didn't believe that they saw me just as that.

They smiled too much. Touched me too much. Why would they put so much effort into making me feel comfortable and safe if they just saw me as a means to an end?

Unless I was just making things up in my head to cope with the pain of having to go back to a lonely, confusing life. Or it was my immature self acting naïve. That had gotten me in trouble before and made me lose my apartment.

"Done with the onion, Aisling?" Claude asked as he came up behind me, resting his hand on my lower back like it was the most natural thing.

Warmth bloomed throughout my body as I looked over my shoulder at him, nodding with a small smile on my face.

"Whatever Chris is doing is already smelling good," I replied, hearing something sizzle in the pan. He was the best cook of us all and often retreated to the kitchen after long days to decompress, whipping up some new recipe for us to try. Well, mostly me since I felt like I was starving all the time.

"It's all in the technique," Chris told me as he flashed me a grin. He was perfectly in his element.

I laughed a little and stepped to the side so that Claude could bring Chris the onion that I'd chopped up. Onion joined the minced garlic in the pan, and the

aroma started to smell that much better.

While Chris waited for the garlic and onion to be done, he held his hand out to me, not even having to say anything for me to take his hand.

Chris pulled me to his side between him and Claude. His arm went around my shoulders, while Claude's went around my side. It was such a simple hold, but it felt so intensely intimate too.

No one outright said anything about being together or having anything outside of a business relationship.

Maybe it was the fact that we were forced to be close or that I was carrying their baby. Maybe that was why they took care of me like this. Fawned over me.

It was a dynamic that I could never begin to explain, but it was starting to really twist up my feelings.

I wanted all of them, but that was most likely unrealistic.

They wanted to raise the baby, not be with me. Besides, how could eight guys be fine sharing one woman? There had to be some jealousy mixed up in there, even if they all claimed that they didn't feel such a thing.

"Feeling okay today?" Chris asked as he used his free hand to nudge the onion and garlic around in the pan.

I nodded.

"Famished," I replied.

Claude chuckled, giving my side a gentle squeeze that electrified me.

"We'll fix that soon," he promised before stealing me away from his brother. "Help me with the potatoes. He can handle the chicken himself."

Chris smirked, but he didn't argue.

I helped cut up potatoes and tossed them in a bowl for Claude to season before putting them in the oven to roast. It wasn't long before I heard noise coming from outside of the kitchen in the main area.

Since we started doing ‘family dinners’, they put in a long dining table next to the bar so that we could all sit together instead of being spread out.

“If you want to set the table and say hey to the others, go ahead,” Claude told me, pecking my cheek before starting to clean up.

My cheek tingled as I took a moment to watch Claude and Chris, something warm and heavy stirring in my chest. I didn’t realize how badly I wanted a family life like this until I was surprisingly dropped in it. I was so used to being by myself, reading about lives that I wanted to live. Now, I was in one of those stories, but it would come to an end.

Stories always came to end. I had read like a hundred romance books, and every single one of them had an ending. But there was one important rule when it came to romance books: they had to have a happily ever after. But was I in a romance story, or a tragedy waiting to happen?

Hiding my frown, I headed into the main room where the guys were pouring in from ‘work’ as we all called it.

A smile eventually broke through as they all made their way over to me like they typically did whenever they got back from a long day. They tried to leave at least one person around the clubhouse to watch over me, which had been Claude and Chris today.

Kai reached me first, hooking his arm around me and pulling me closer to leave a brief kiss on my forehead in greeting. He had started showing a tender side to me lately, and it helped that we were all getting to know each other better.

“Feeling okay?” he asked.

I leaned to the side to look at everyone.

“I know all of you will have the same question, so I’ll go ahead and let you know now that I’m doing just fine. Just get your asses to the dining table because I’m starving,” I told them, sparking some laughter before they went over to the dining table.

Bradley was at the back of the pack, his eyes meeting mine in that usual intense gaze. It was like he was studying me, trying to pry his way into my

brain. What was he trying to find? He passed by me and took a seat next to Hayden.

“Did everything go okay?” I asked Kai.

Kai cocked an eyebrow at me.

“You really want to know?” he replied.

I smirked and shrugged.

“Maybe one day. Not today,” I said before setting the table with Lincoln’s help. I couldn’t forget the day we’d spent together. How he cared for me. Pleased me. Just the thought made me want to rub my thighs together.

Claude and Chris brought out the food a few minutes later, and dinner began, a swell of chatter rising at the table as what felt like a hundred different conversations went on around me. Despite the chaos, it was nice having so many people at the table enjoying dinner together.

I looked over at Bradley, who didn’t say a word while the others complimented Claude, Chris, and me for dinner. He didn’t even seem all that impressed, even when he glanced over at me. What was his deal?

Cameron and Auden sat on either side of me, passing me warm or flirty looks that had my face burning and distracted me from Bradley’s sour attitude.

“Quit,” I warned Auden.

“What’s the matter, sweetheart?” Auden quipped before biting into a roasted potato.

“You’re... eyeing me,” I replied. Granted, I liked it, but it was hard to focus on anything else when he was teasing me like that.

“He doesn’t know how to behave,” Cameron told me as he lifted an eyebrow at Auden. “Bedroom eyes don’t belong at the table.”

“Yes, Dad,” Auden said with a smirk before going back to eating.

Amusement rang through me as I shook my head at them.

With each passing day, I felt more and more interwoven in their hectic lives,

but I was still kept at a distance.

They didn't tell me everything. They whispered among themselves and shut up when I came into the room. That made me nervous, but it wasn't like they were obligated to tell me anything besides what was part of the plan and the baby's future.

When everyone was halfway through dinner, Bradley suddenly stood up from the table with his plate in his hands. He hadn't added much to it when I glanced over at him earlier. Silently, he walked into the kitchen and then headed in the direction of the master bathroom that the guys used to shower after long rides.

I frowned a little, even as Auden patted my thigh to get me to loosen up. I didn't know what Bradley's deal with me was, but I was going to figure it out, and I was going to win him over.

One way or another.

Chapter 11

Bradley

Frustrated heat filled my face as I turned the shower water on hot before stripping my clothes off. I swore that I felt the others' eyes on the bathroom door, especially Aisling's.

She seemed so perplexed by me, but I did everything in my power to ignore her. To forget she was even here.

I respected Kai as our leader, so I accepted his crazy plan to have her carry our heir, but I damn sure wasn't happy about it. Did they even think about the risks that this carried for us? This group, these guys, were all I had left.

It took me *years* to get sober, to get my head on straight.

If it wasn't for the guys, I would still have my ass glued to a bar stool every night, drinking my life away because it felt like I had nothing to live for. That was the sick side of addiction. It slowly killed me while taking the edge off the pain.

I stepped under the spray of hot water, letting it hit the back of my shaved head as I lowered it.

The roar of the shower filled my ears, but it didn't block out my thoughts. They were too loud, especially at night when I was trying to get at least a lick of sleep.

Having Aisling here was dangerous for the club.

She was carrying our heir, and other clubs, specifically the Hornets, would see that as a threat. Who knew what crazy thing they would do to prevent us

from having an heir? They could firebomb our clubhouse. Ambush us on the roads.

I already caught wind that another club was speculating that we had an heir on the way because they caught sight of Aisling with some of us in the city, but it was all rumors right now.

What happened when those rumors turned into facts?

I lifted my head out of the water with closed eyes, the water beating against my broad chest. But there was another problem. A big problem.

When I looked at Aisling, especially when she walked around in lounge shorts in a tank top, I couldn't help but find her attractive.

I couldn't help but feel *turned on* by the sight of her leaning over the pool table as she lined up a shot or when she smiled as she talked to the other guys.

It drove me crazy because the last thing that I wanted was to feel anything like that toward her.

That clouded my mind and made how I felt toward her even more frustrating. Just the thought of her full lips as she frowned at me made me hard, my jaw tensing in anger at myself. Why couldn't I just feel nothing toward her?

My angry thoughts melted into a fantasy that I had no control over.

I pictured myself sitting on my motorcycle after a ride in the garage. She walked out of the clubhouse in a pair of black shorts that hugged her ass and showed off her thighs, her nipples showing through the white tank top that perfectly accented her curves.

Instead of avoiding me like usual, she grabbed my shoulders and straddled my lap. She leaned close, her lips brushing the shell of my ear as she spoke.

"I want you. Make me yours," she whispered as she pushed her ass down on my steadily hardening cock.

I placed one hand on the shower wall, letting the water come down on my head as my other hand wrapped around my erection, steadily stroking myself as the fantasy played out in my mind.

Aisling reached down and undid my jeans, freeing my cock and stroking me in time with my actual movements. Her lips fluttered up my neck and along my jaw as she begged for my reciprocation.

“Touch me, please,” she whimpered as she ran her thumb over the head of my cock, making my hips jerk in response.

I slid one hand up her body, curving over her breast before reaching the base of her throat. I grabbed her, making her gasp in pleasure as she stroked me faster.

“Take off your clothes,” I told her before releasing her.

Breathless, Aisling slid off my lap and hurriedly took off her clothes, standing bare in front of me with that perfect body of hers that I imagined so many damn times.

I took hold of her hips and pulled her back on my lap, lining myself up with her entrance before pushing herself inside. She was already wet for me, desperate for me. I tightened my grip on her waist, helping her bounce on me and taking in the sound of her beautiful moans.

Aisling ran her hands up my arms, perching them on my shoulders to give her more leverage as she dropped down on me. Her lips parted with sweet sounds, and her eyes fluttered shut in bliss.

“So close. Please,” she begged me.

I wrapped my arm around her, slamming her down on my cock over and over until she cried out, her orgasm shuddering through her.

“Fuck,” I breathed out as I came, spilling over my hand with gritted teeth.

It didn't take long for the heat and pleasure to subside, leaving me cold and angry at myself for giving into my twisted desires. I shouldn't want her, but part of me did.

Badly.

That didn't matter, though.

Eventually, after the baby was born, she would leave us.

I wouldn't have to worry about how I felt about her because she would be out of our lives besides decisions about the kid. And that was probably for the best.

When I got out of the shower and stepped into the main room with a towel around my waist, it didn't take me long to feel Aisling's eyes on me as she sat on the couch with her legs stretched out over Claude's laps as he read one of his sci-fi books.

Her gaze seemed to sweep over me, taking in my bare chest and wondering what I looked like under the white towel.

She didn't need to know. Couldn't know. I wasn't an idiot.

I knew that some of the guys had gotten caught in her alluring web, playing out my fantasies in real life.

Hopefully, they weren't stupid enough to catch feelings for her, or things would get even more complicated.

"You were in there for a while," Auden commented from the bar.

"Shut up," I muttered, not wanting to hear it from him. My eyes flickered over to Aisling, who was subtly smiling with her teeth pressed into her bottom lip.

Fuck, those lips.

I got the hell out of there, looking in one of the other bedrooms that we sometimes crashed in to find some spare clothes in the closet.

It was so difficult being anywhere near her, but I had the rest of one year to go. I didn't know how the hell I was going to make it, but I was going to be stronger than the others.

I had to be so that I could look out for them!

While they were having fun playing house, I was looking on the outside, watching the enemy and just waiting for them to uncover our plan. That was when all hell would break loose.

And I couldn't help but fear that we wouldn't be focused enough to be

prepared.

What was the point of an heir if there were no original members alive to raise them?

Chapter 12

Aisling

Obviously, being stuck at the clubhouse most of the time got boring at times.

Before I was as big as a balloon, I wouldn't mind going out and doing things. The guys were insistent that I stay safe and healthy, which meant hiding away from the world in the safety of the clubhouse most of the time, but I was starting to get stir crazy.

While the guys put on their leather riding gear in the main room, I left my bedroom and walked over to Hayden, who was the Road Captain who organized all the rides.

"So, what's on the itinerary for today?" I asked him with an innocent smile on my face.

Hayden chuckled as he pulled on his leather jacket that smelled so good, especially along with his woodsy cologne.

"Why do you want to know?" he replied, seeming genuinely curious.

"Because I'm dying of boredom," I admitted.

Hayden clicked his tongue at me as he walked closer to me, looking as good as ever with his dark facial hair and mischievous eyes. He was all rugged and strong, towering over me.

"Are you saying you want to come along with us?" he asked.

"Depends on what you're doing," I clarified.

“We’re doing a group ride. We like to check out the area. Make sure no one is trying any funny stuff,” Hayden replied before motioning for Kai to come over. “She wants to come along today.”

“Oh, really?” Kai replied as he cocked an eyebrow at me. “Sure you’re up for that?”

I flashed him a determined look.

“Yes,” I said.

Kai’s lips formed a smirk as he nodded.

“Let me get you some gear to put on. It’ll be a little big, but it’ll keep you safe,” he told me before heading off.

“What’s this I hear? Someone’s coming on a ride with us?” Cameron asked as he walked over to us with an intrigued look on his face.

Hayden nodded to me.

“Someone is getting a little bored here,” he said.

Cameron chuckled, looking even more interested.

“Well, we certainly need to fix that,” he replied, our eyes locking.

He was either being serious or being flirty. It was hard to tell with some of the guys, while some of the others were far more obvious.

“I’m just interested in seeing what you guys do. Some of the things you guys do,” I told them with an innocent shrug. What could I say? I was bored and nosy.

Kai walked back over to me, handing me a leather jacket and some gloves.

“I’ll get you a helmet, but you need to change into some jeans and some closed-toe shoes. Preferably boots,” he said.

“Yes, sir,” I murmured, not missing the way his jaw tightened. I headed to my room and did as he said. Hopefully, we didn’t crash for some reason, but if we did, at least the asphalt wouldn’t wreak havoc on my bare skin. I walked back out to everyone, who was ready and waiting on me. “Alright,

let's go.”

Kai took my hand and led me out to his bike, putting on my helmet and helping me get situated behind him.

“Don't worry. We'll feed you after we do our route,” he assured me.

I laughed and wrapped my arms around him tighter, turning my head to see Auden next to me. I nodded to him, smiling to myself when he leaned over to playfully pat my thigh.

“Ready, sweetheart?” Auden called out to me.

I gave him a thumbs-up, and the roar of multiple engines answered me. I could feel the rumble in my chest and smell the exhaust.

I didn't really care for the noise and smell before all of this, but I had become so used to it that I had an appreciation for it now. I associated it with the men I was steadily caring more and more about.

Whether I wanted to or not.

Kai set out first, leading the pack onto the road and coursing through the less busy streets around the area. He then made his way to one of the main roads, increasing speed and going deeper into the heart of the city where there was more activity. That didn't slow them down, though. They easily weaved through traffic, somehow still staying a group and not being left behind.

I was constantly impressed with their riding abilities, but I supposed that this was what they did for a living.

This was their life, and I could see the thrill in it. The wind whipping past us. The freedom of moving so smoothly. The adrenaline of picking up speed.

I turned my head to see Hayden on my left as he moved into the next lane. If I wasn't so scared of somehow flying off, I would've waved, but a nod was passed between us. Laughter bubbled in my chest as I saw Auden on my right again. I noticed that he certainly liked my attention and loved vying for it.

I definitely didn't mind.

We went around the city, going from the heart to the outskirts where the

roads were one lane and quieter. I looked behind me to see the guys in a disciplined line, my heart hammering in my chest. They took this so seriously, and I had to admit that it was admirable.

So many people didn't go after what they wanted. They let life just pass them by. No thrills. No risks. No fun.

I didn't want to be like them, and maybe I made bad decisions and was reckless at times, but I only had one life. The ride I was on with these guys maybe wasn't forever, but I was going to enjoy it while it lasted.

Unlike how I used to be before, I had to be realistic.

Kai pulled off the road into the parking lot of a sports bar. There was a section where a few other bikes were parked that they all lined up along, their engines steadily rumbling into silence. He pulled off his helmet, a gleam lighting up his eyes.

"How was that?" he asked.

"I think I'd like to go on a few more rides," I admitted as I pulled off my helmet, giving my head a shake to volumize my hair.

"That's my girl," Kai murmured as we both got off his bike. Maybe he didn't mean for me to hear them, but his words made my stomach flip.

Was I really his girl? Was I any of theirs?

We all walked into the sports bar that had framed jerseys and old sports photos plastered on the walls, along with more flatscreen televisions than I could count that displayed current and past baseball games, football games, and UFC fights.

We all sat together at two tables pushed together, a sense of thrill and satisfaction seeming to radiate from us.

Lincoln sat on my left, while Chris sat on my right. Every time I was between two of the guys, I felt protected. Like nothing and no one could get to me.

"Do you have anything you need? I was planning on swinging by the store tomorrow," Lincoln asked. "Snacks? More cheesy romance books?"

I feigned an offended look as I swatted at his muscular arm.

“They are so not cheesy!” I told him. “Don’t you want an epic love story?”

Lincoln chuckled a little and shrugged.

“I don’t need epic. I just want something real and true,” he said.

My face softened as my heart skipped. I should’ve expected an answer like that from him, who had been through such volatile relationships before. He wanted the real deal, and I shared that sentiment. I wanted passion and a rush unlike any other, and I’d be lying if I said that I didn’t feel sparks of that with the guys.

“You’re a true romantic, aren’t you? You literally have a tattoo about your favorite romance book,” Auden chuckled.

“*Love Kills*, right?” Claude asked me.

Awe struck me. I couldn’t believe they remembered all these little things about me.

“That’s the one. I’m a sucker for intense romances, especially when both characters are badass,” I said with a soft laugh before a more serious look crossed my face. “I don’t know. I think I latch onto romance stories because the thought of being loved unconditionally seems so perfect that it almost feels like it only exists in books.”

“Everything fictional stems from something that’s real,” Kai pointed out, sharing a warm smile with me that made my cheeks flush. Maybe he was right.

Thirsty from the long ride, I downed a little bit too much water too fast, and my bladder refused to let me ignore that.

“I need to use the restroom,” I told Chris, who scooted his chair back and held his hand out to help me get up. I headed to the bathroom, which was on the other side of the round bar in the back of the restaurant.

I didn’t even make it to the bathroom before I heard an unfamiliar man’s voice.

“Where you going there, sugar plum?”

I grimaced at the pet name. Unless it was one of the guys playfully or sweetly calling me something other than my actual name, I didn't like when people addressed me like that. I turned and saw a burly man in a leather vest sitting at the bar. He was stocky with a longer, brown beard, and his dark eyes moved over my figure slowly.

“Bathroom,” I simply said, starting to turn away.

“Hey, hey! I'm not done talking to you,” he barked at me.

My eyes widened in shock. Where did he get the audacity from to speak to me like that?

“I don't even know you,” I bit back.

“Call me Bones,” he said as he stood up from the barstool and started making his way closer to me. “Why don't you come have a drink with me?”

I took a step back and shook my head, my stomach twisting at the smell of beer that radiated off him.

“I'm good,” I replied.

Bones towered over me, his eyes narrowing.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Because I'm pregnant!” I snapped, figuring that would make him back off.

“Get the fuck away from her,” Kai growled, coming out of nowhere and putting himself between me and Bones with a glare on his face.

I shrunk back as the others basically surrounded me, making me back away from Bones.

“I'm okay. He's just some drunk asshole hitting on me,” I assured them, not wanting them to think I was in danger.

“He's not just some drunk asshole. He's from a rival gang called the Hornets,” Lincoln murmured as he guided me backward, his chest pressing against my back.

That didn't sound like a good thing.

"Get her out of here," Auden told the others.

In a flash, the other guys had me out of the restaurant and back by their bikes.

"Can someone explain what's going on?" I asked, not understanding all of the panic.

Claude took my hand and pulled me close, his eyes darting around like he had to make sure we were safe in the parking lot.

"We've been fighting with the Hornets for a while now. They're incredibly dangerous, and they'll do just about anything to bring us down and to get to the top. To have the most power in the area. We were trying to hide you from them because if they find out we have an heir on the way, there's no telling what they'll do," he explained.

My eyes widened as my hand rested on my stomach.

"Now, they know," I whispered, realizing the huge mistake that I just made. I didn't know. I wouldn't have ever told him if I knew that he was in a rival gang.

"We'll figure it out," Claude assured me. "We just need to keep a closer eye on you. For your safety and the baby's."

Kai and Auden stormed out of the restaurant.

"Come on. Let's go," Kai barked at everyone. "I don't want to still be here in case he calls for backup. The rest of you go home. Auden and I will take her back to the clubhouse."

I tensed up as Kai stole me away from Claude, bringing me back to his bike. Before I could even say a word, he handed me my helmet and got on his bike, holding his arm out so that I could get on behind him. I grabbed hold of him and stayed quiet during the ride back to the clubhouse, not wanting to make him even more upset than he already was.

When we got back to the clubhouse, I slowly and quietly followed Kai and Auden inside. They exchanged looks before sitting down on the couch, looking stressed and agitated. What if I just ruined everything? What if they

kicked me out?

With tears in my eyes, I swallowed hard and lowered myself down on my knees in front of them, sitting back on my legs with my hands folded in my lap.

“I’m so sorry. I had no idea he was a Hornet,” I said. At this point, I was ready to beg for them to not get rid of me.

Kai didn’t move as he stared down at me, his jaw tensing.

Auden sat up and peered down at me.

“You didn’t know. We should’ve been honest with you in the beginning,” he told me.

I lowered my eyes and shook my head.

“I shouldn’t have said anything to begin with. I was just trying to get him off my back,” I said as tears coursed down my face.

Auden leaned forward and placed his hand under my chin, tilting my head up so that our eyes locked.

“It’s okay,” he assured me as he used his free hand to wipe my tears away.

“No, it’s not. Now, they know I’m carrying your heir. What if they attack? What if they hurt you?” I asked, my throat growing tight just at the thought. I didn’t want any of them to be hurt. They took such good care of me, and maybe it was just out of duty and not out of true affection, but it still meant a lot to me.

“You don’t have to worry about us. We’re worried about you,” Auden said as his eyes hardened.

I felt a little relieved, but I was still unnerved by Kai’s silence. I moved closer to him, my hands resting on his knees as I gave him a guilty look.

“Is this... a dealbreaker?” I asked.

Kai suddenly leaned close, cupping my face to keep me in place.

“Nothing could ever be a dealbreaker,” he told me in a firm voice. As we

gazed into each other's eyes, his grip steadily softened until his thumbs stroked my hot cheeks. "You worried me back there. You can't keep worrying me."

"I'm sorry," I murmured, nearly choked up by the care in his voice. Was I imagining it?

Kai hummed under his breath as his thumb drifted over my bottom lip.

"What are we going to do about that?" he asked.

Heat grew in my lower stomach as I noticed a switch in his tone. Maybe I could make it up to them for worrying them. Maybe we could end this stressful day on a better note. I ran my hands up his thighs as I leaned up, crashing my lips against his.

Kai placed his hand on my jaw, overtaking the kiss as I pushed his leather jacket off his shoulders.

I quickly slipped off my jacket and gloves, tossing them to the side and reaching for his belt.

Kai grabbed my hands and pried them off him. He tilted his head at me, his eyes looking darker than before.

"Don't leave Auden out. We don't want to be rude, do we?" he asked.

My eyes widened in surprise before flickering over to Auden, who was watching the scene with an intrigued look on his face.

I didn't expect Kai to encourage me to show Auden any attention, but they always harped on not being jealous of each other. Maybe they weren't bluffing.

I shifted over to Auden, reaching up for his leather jacket and pulling it off his shoulders. My hands trailed down the olive-toned skin of his muscular arms, moving past the short sleeves of his white t-shirt. My fingers made their way down to his gloves, easing them off his hands.

Auden brushed his fingers through my hair, drawing my eyes up to his brown ones. He cupped my face in a surprisingly tender fashion. He was definitely the flirt out of the group. The proud bachelor.

“Aren’t you an angel?” he said, his voice dripping with seduction. He didn’t see me as an angel. That was a taunt. “I’ve been dying to see how you taste.”

My breathing faltered right before his lips pressed against mine, a surge of electricity passing through me, leaving a sizzle behind as his tongue swept into my mouth.

My fingers went to his belt, but he didn’t push me away. He let me undo his belt, my hand bumping against the hard ridge in his leather motorcycle jeans.

“Eager, aren’t you?” Auden chuckled before leaning back, giving me more room to reach into his briefs and free his erection.

My eyes shifted upward as I wrapped my fingers around the base, my tongue curving along my bottom lip. Something about being watched by both of them turned me on in a way that I hadn’t experienced before. I had always considered what it would feel like being watched doing something so dirty, and now I had a chance to experience that.

They were an eager gateway to all of the fantasies that I had ever had.

“Very,” I replied, still stroking him as I reached over with my other hand to pull at Kai’s belt, managing to undo the buckle and his pants.

Kai helped me out by pulling his cock out, inhaling sharply when my fingers wrapped around him.

I pressed my thighs together as a pulse of need echoed between them. I couldn’t help how badly I wanted to please them, to show them how grateful I was for how they treated me. Cared for me. Pleased me. Words couldn’t begin to do my thoughts justice.

But actions could.

I slid my lips over the head of Auden’s cock, moving down his length slowly before pulling back up. That immediately earned a faint groan from him as he tilted his head back. My hand continued working up and down Kai’s erection, coaxing him to lightly thrust up into my grip.

“Think she’s pretty sorry,” Kai murmured in a low voice.

“Very sorry,” Auden replied as his eyes closed.

I switched spots, leaning to the right to take Kai into my mouth. My tongue glided down the underside, sheathing him in pure warmth. I felt his hips jerk a little, but he gripped the back of the couch and forced himself to stay still. It was a bit daunting pleasing both of them at the same time, but I felt more excited and turned on than anything else.

If we were going to do this, we were going to do it big.

I grabbed Kai's hand with my free hand, bringing it to my hair.

Kai quickly got the message and buried his fingers in my hair in a firm grip. He started thrusting up into my mouth, making me take him deeper and deeper. He increased his pace, spit leaking from the corners of my mouth.

"That's it," he told me.

Tears spilled from my eyes, but I was on cloud nine. Auden's grip over my hand helped my strokes on his cock, while Kai maintained his pace. I could feel his cock hardening even more as he got closer and closer to finishing. A faint, pleased moan rumbled in my chest, sending vibrations through him that did the trick.

"Fuck," Kai groaned as he spilled into my mouth, not letting go of my hair until I took every last drop.

I only had a few seconds to recover before Auden pulled me over to him. Eagerly, I got back to work on him, moving my lips up and down his length. I stroked what I couldn't reach of his base, sucking firmly to bring him right to the edge.

"Oh, no. I'm coming on your face," Auden told me, pulling himself from my lips just in time to stroke himself.

A shaky breath left me as he spilled on my face. In a way, it felt like he was marking me, which turned me on even more. I drifted my tongue over my lips, licking up whatever glided down to my mouth. I knew how dirty I looked, but I felt so... free. Sexy.

They wanted *me*. This wasn't about raising an heir or sticking to a plan. This was about desire, and I wondered how deep it went for them.

Auden tapped under my chin in an affectionate manner.

“Naughty girl. What are we going to do with you?” he chuckled, sharing a satisfied look with Kai.

“Hopefully, more of this,” Kai replied as he lifted an eyebrow at me like he was waiting for my response.

With a pleased smile, I nodded, reveling in the adrenaline and desire that coursed through my veins.

My life was nothing like I planned for it to be, but at least it wasn't passing me by. I was going to make the most of every second, especially as danger loomed ahead.

Chapter 13

Hayden

“**R**un! Run and don’t look back!”

My father’s voice echoed in my head as I hurried away from the dimly lit parking lot just as gunshots rang out.

I ducked my head as a streetlight shattered above me, glass raining down as guns continued being fired behind me as the gang war ensued.

My eyes burned, and my heart raced as I scrambled behind an abandoned car, dark night stretching over me. I was told not to look, but I couldn’t help myself.

I had to make sure my dad was okay. I had to make sure that he wasn’t hurt. There was supposed to be a truce between my dad’s gang and their rival gang.

But they were stabbed in the back, and blood was spilled.

I looked over the hood, my heart jolting to a stop as confusion struck me. I didn’t see my dad in the middle of the firefight as bodies dropped on the lined asphalt. I saw Aisling with a look of pure fear on her face as she tried to cower down, bullets zipping right over here.

“No! Aisling!” I shouted before running toward her, needing to get her out of there before she was hurt or *worse*.

Aisling looked over at me with teary eyes, reaching for me.

“Hayden!” she cried.

Right before I could reach her, a shot rang out, and I jolted upright in bed with sweat glistening on my forehead.

“What the hell...” I breathed out as I blinked my eyes, grounding myself to reality.

It was just a dream... but it also wasn't.

I had seen that same gang war, but I had seen my dad in Aisling's position right before the other gang leader killed him right in front of me. My dad warned me not to look back, but I did.

I shouldn't have.

I should've stood by his side. Maybe taken his place so that he could still be alive today, but I couldn't change the past. I had to focus on the present and the future, which weren't as peaceful as I wanted them to be.

The stress I felt about keeping Aisling and the baby safe had been affecting my sleep more lately.

On one hand, I was ecstatic that I had a baby on the way and a developing connection with her, but I was also more terrified than ever that something bad could happen.

Something that I couldn't stop.

I checked the time and cursed. I had to get moving before I was late. After rushing through the shower, I grabbed my keys and took my bike to the clubhouse as the sun steadily rose in the sky. The details of my dream started to fade away in the back of my mind, and I tried to let go of it as much as I could before I arrived.

With quickness to my step, I hurried through the clubhouse and grabbed my jacket and two helmets, calling out to Aisling that I was here.

If Aisling and I were going to make it to her pregnancy check-up appointment in time, we needed to leave in two minutes.

I jogged out to the garage where Aisling was waiting for me, her side profile showing off the baby bump that was steadily growing with every passing week.

It had been three months since the Hornets found out that we had an heir on the way. They must've been too focused on looking after their own because we hadn't encountered them or had any issues with them. That should've been comforting, but I didn't trust them in the slightest.

I had a terrible feeling that something was brewing, and that worried me, especially since Aisling was getting closer and closer to giving birth.

At this point, her presence was natural and normal around the clubhouse. She went on rides with us, ate meals with us, and spent downtime with us around the clubhouse or at safe spots in town.

In a way, she felt like one of us.

I should've known being so close to someone like her, who was addictively bubbly and funny, would affect my feelings. She brightened my day, and I had dark days. Ones that turned into nightmares and guilty thoughts.

Survivor's guilt was a son of a bitch, but focusing on Aisling and making sure that she, the baby, and the guys were safe took my mind off that pain.

"I'm here. Ready?" I asked, seeing that she already had her gear and helmet on. She knew the drill at this point. She even had her own gear that fit her properly.

"Been ready," Aisling said.

I smirked a little to myself. She could have a little attitude every once in a while, but she was dealing with a lot. Fatigue. Morning sickness. Soreness. She was juggling a lot, so me and the guys did what we could to make her feel comfortable.

To me, I believed that things were going beyond just business and duty.

We were even more involved than initially planned, and I didn't miss the intimacy that had started creeping into our everyday lives.

The forehead kisses. The embraces. We made ourselves at home in her bed next to her when she wanted to be held.

That didn't sound like business. That sounded like more.

I took her to her doctor's office, staying by her side as she checked in and took a seat in the quiet waiting room. There were only two other women there, who picked up magazines off a wooden coffee table in the middle of the room to pass the time.

"You know, I had a cheesy thought. I figured it would lighten you up," I said, flashing her a playful grin.

Aisling rolled her eyes at me before cracking a smile.

"What's your cheesy thought?" she asked.

"Well, I love camping. I thought it'd be fun to do a camping trip with everyone. You know, when the kid is a few years old," I told her. That thought had crossed my mind quite a few times. I had been itching to at least do some hiking, but with Aisling's pregnancy symptoms getting more intense, I wanted to stay near her side more.

Aisling smiled brightly at first, but it gradually wilted.

"Oh, maybe. I don't know what all would happen after our deal is over," she explained.

A sharp pang hit me in the chest when I remembered that there was a plan in place. We were only supposed to watch over her until after the baby was born. Then, we would mostly go our separate ways and only communicate if it was related to the kid.

But hadn't things changed a lot since we made that deal?

We had actually gotten close with each other. Unless she was looking forward to some distance from us. I wouldn't stop her, but it would hurt like hell for her to pull away from us.

Before I could tell her that I wanted us to stay in close contact after the baby was born, the ultrasound tech popped her head out and called Aisling's name.

I followed Aisling to the back where she laid on a table and lifted her black band shirt over her baby bump so that the tech could prepare her for the ultrasound. I stood right next to Aisling's side, taking her hand out of habit.

A soft, pink tint filled her cheeks as she peered up at me.

“Thank you for taking me,” she told me.

Most of the others were busy today doing a run, so I gladly volunteered to take her to her appointment.

The ultrasound technician, a mid-twenties brunette, turned to us after spreading jelly over Aisling’s stomach.

“Today, we should be able to tell the gender of your baby,” she said with a warm look on her face.

A look of surprise rang across Aisling’s face.

“Today? Already?” she asked as she looked up at me. When I didn’t look surprised like her, she tilted her head. “You don’t seem surprised.”

I grinned a little and shrugged.

“I’ve been keeping up with the timeline. You’re just at eighteen weeks, so it’s the perfect time to check for the gender,” I told her.

There was even a calendar in the office that was marked with milestone moments like when each trimester began and the expected date of birth. We were keeping as close of an eye on her and the baby as we could.

Aisling looked touched.

“Do you have a preference?” she asked.

I shook my head without even thinking. I already knew my answer from the moment I found out that she was pregnant. Whatever the gender ended up being, the guys were going to flip out. At this point, we didn’t care if the heir was a boy or a girl. All we wanted was a safe, healthy baby. Together, we could raise anyone to be a good heir.

“None at all,” I assured her.

“Me either,” Aisling said as she squeezed my hand.

The tech smiled and moved the transducer over Aisling’s stomach, her eyes hovering on the monitor.

“Heart looks good. Everything is looking good,” she told us, making me

exhale in relief. Waiting for the tech to say those words was always the most stressful part. “Ready to know the gender?”

“Yes!” Aisling replied, balling her free hand up in an excited fist.

“It’s a boy!”

Aisling gasped and looked up at me with pure joy on her face.

“We’re having a boy!” she said, tears immediately filling her eyes.

My heart stopped for a second and then restarted, feeling like it was about to pound out of my chest as a look of shock crossed my face. I leaned down and kissed Aisling on the forehead, caressing the back of her head as we smiled at each other.

“This is amazing. You’re amazing,” I told her, hardly able to string words together because I was so damn happy.

Happy tears streamed down her face as she gripped my hand tightly, pressing her face into my arm.

“Thank you,” I told the technician once she handed us a picture of the baby and prepared to leave the room. I held Aisling for a few moments, letting her recover and catch her breath before I showed her the outline of the baby.

“That’s our baby.”

Aisling sniffled as she traced the baby’s cheek with her forefinger.

“I never thought... I always heard of moms feeling this way about their babies. Like the world was perfect and bright. But I never understood them. I never thought I’d feel that way until now,” she admitted. “It’s like the sun has moved out from behind the clouds.”

I couldn’t help myself. I leaned down and captured her lips in a soft kiss, our breaths ceasing for a moment. When we broke apart, I brushed her hair back from her face.

“We should figure out a way to surprise the guys with the news,” I suggested, knowing that they would be over the moon.

Aisling nodded in agreement as she reached up to place her hand on my

cheek.

“Take me home,” she said.

I turned my head and kissed her palm before helping her up. With the photo in her hand, I led her back out to my bike and helped her on behind me before taking us back to the courthouse for some much-needed rest. Even one little outing could tire her out, so I didn’t keep her out for long.

Plus, I was wary about Hornets possibly seeing us. I would fight like hell to protect her and the baby, but I was also realistic. I couldn’t fight off a group of Hornets by myself. It was best for us to stay in the clubhouse as much as possible unless there was a group of us with her.

“Oh, ouch,” Aisling muttered as she got off the bike and started tenderly walking toward the back door of the clubhouse.

“Your feet hurt again?” I asked as I walked up behind her.

Aisling nodded with a groan.

“I’m so tired of aching. Feels like I’m an eighty-year-old woman,” she grumbled as she hobbled a little.

Not on my watch. I scooped her up bridal style and carried her to the couch, gently setting her down on the right side. After taking off my jacket, gloves, and boots, I sat on the left side and gently worked off her black tennis shoes with extra support in them. They only did so much to alleviate the pain, though.

“Lie back,” I told her.

“You spoil me too much,” Aisling said as she rested her head on the arm of the couch, watching me with an amused glint in her eyes.

I smirked and started gently massaging her feet, working my thumbs into her heel and the middle of her arch. I could already feel her starting to relax, and I could definitely hear how good it felt as a soft moan broke from her.

“I don’t hear you ever complaining,” I commented.

“Hell no,” Aisling laughed before letting her eyes flutter shut. “Not when it

feels too good.”

I could make her feel very good. I glanced down when I felt her free foot press into my thigh. Almost teasingly. I focused on massaging her right foot until her left foot got quite close to the front of my dark jeans. I switched feet, grabbing her left foot before it could press against my slowly hardening cock. She had to be doing this on purpose.

Aisling subtly licked her lips as she did the same thing with her right foot, this time pressing the side of her foot against the head of my cock. She smiled to herself and rolled her neck back, exposing the slope of her throat that I wanted to wrap my fingers around.

My hands started working their way up her legs, massaging her calves and her thighs. I turned over and crawled up her body, hooking my fingers in the waist of her black leggings and panties to tug them off her.

Aisling pulled her band shirt and bra off, leaning back on her elbows as she gazed down at me with pure desire in her eyes.

I kissed the inside of her thighs before brushing my tongue over her clit, working through her folds. Her thighs tried to tighten around my head, but I pushed them apart, situating myself between her legs. She tasted addicting, encouraging me to drift my tongue over her from top to bottom. I teased her entrance with the tip of my tongue and caressed her clit with the flat of it, not holding back in the slightest.

Aisling gripped my hair, lifting her hips to chase my tongue. She released a weak moan, resting her heel on the back of my shoulder. The way her body and face contorted in pleasure fired me up even more, coaxing me to slip a finger inside of her under my tongue.

“Oh...” she gasped as her eyes fluttered shut.

I worked my finger deep, curling and thrusting before adding another finger into the mix. Increasing my pace with my fingers, I lapped at her clit, hitting her with two sources of pleasure that had her writhing under me.

“Come on, baby. Fall apart for me,” I told her. “I can feel you squeezing my fingers. You’re so close.”

“Hayden... fuck...” Aisling moaned before her body tensed. She let out a broken cry of bliss before erupting in shakes.

I dragged my tongue over her one more time, feeling her shudder from the sensitivity. I couldn't help myself. She just tasted so damn good.

“You're so sexy. You know that?” I said as I hovered over her.

Aisling smiled and cupped my erection through my jeans.

“Show me,” she told me as she undid my pants. “I want you so bad.”

She didn't have to tell me twice. As much as I wanted to hear her beg, I couldn't wait. I needed to be inside of her. After stripping my clothes off, I pulled her legs around my waist as I slowly buried my cock in her.

“Fuck, how do you feel so good?” I groaned once I was fully sheathed inside. We both took a second to adjust before I started thrusting into her, building up a deep, hard pace that had her pleased sounds echoing throughout the clubhouse. I could play those noises on a loop and never grow tired of them.

Aisling raked her nails down my back, gripping my waist with her soft thighs. She dragged her fingertips up to the back of my head, pulling me down for a heated kiss with flashes of tongue that nudged me closer to finishing. She was so effortlessly sexy, able to work me up with just a smile or a suggestive statement.

I sped up my pace, getting us closer and closer to that peak of pleasure that we were dying for. It was so damn close, and I could feel how tense she was getting. She was already primed for her second orgasm.

“So. Fucking. Good,” I gritted out as I pounded into her, pushing her into the couch cushions.

Aisling breathlessly nodded, her lips parting with faint, needy sounds. She tugged on my hair as she lifted her hips, her eyes nearly rolling back as I hit the angle that she needed. My name rang out from her lips as a second orgasm took hold, leaving her with a weak moan and light trembling.

I slammed into her one more time before spilling inside of her, my forehead pressing to hers as I caught my breath. Bliss crackled through me like

electricity, sapping whatever leftover energy I had left.

“You’re killing me. In the best way possible,” I told her.

A tired smile crossed Aisling’s face as she lazily stroked my hair.

“Good,” she murmured before a conflicted look filled her face.

“What’s wrong?” I asked her.

Aisling shrugged.

“I’ve been having such a good time with everyone. And everyone’s been so nice to me besides... Bradley. I’m so tired of the tension between us,” she admitted.

I frowned, able to tell how much it was bothering her. Unfortunately, no one could force Bradley to lighten up. He was a tough dude, but if anyone could get past his defenses, it was her. I knew that he wanted a family, and she could give him that.

“You should talk to him. Alone,” I told her. “Make him talk.”

Aisling nodded after a moment, her expression softening.

I slipped my arms under her and picked her up, carrying her to the bathroom to get cleaned up. Once we were both done, I took her to bed, pulling the covers over both of us as I laid behind her and curled my arm over her.

“Get some sleep,” I whispered near her ear.

Aisling didn’t answer, and it took me a few seconds to realize that she had already dozed off.

With a smile on my face, I pressed my forehead against the back of her head and closed my eyes, slipping into a deep sleep with my last thought being of her and how I never wanted to let her go.

Chapter 14

Aisling

After days of waiting for the best opportunity, I finally saw it. All of the guys besides Bradley were gone on a run because he suffered a hand injury from... what I could only guess was a brawl.

There was a cut on his top lip, but of course, he didn't say anything about it to me. He didn't say a word to me, but that was all changing today.

Right now.

As I sat on the couch with one of my romance books in my hands, I watched Bradley head to the office over the top of the page. He probably thought I was going to steer clear of him like usual, but that wouldn't be the case today. He was mine.

I tossed my book on the coffee table and trailed him, nervously adjusting the strap of my light gray tank top that was paired with my black fleece shorts.

My socked feet lightly padded against the wooden floor, keeping myself undetected as I watched him walk down the stairs into the small office where the guys kept their "business" files.

Bradley stood at the desk with his back to me, glancing at some paperwork until one of the floorboards creaked beneath my feet. He spun around to face me just as I lunged into the room and shut the door behind me, locking it for good measure.

"What the hell are you doing?" he asked with narrowed eyes as he stepped toward me.

I pressed my back flat against the door as I glared up at him, refusing to stand down. I had a good relationship with all of the other guys but him.

Before the baby came, I wanted to be on good terms with all of them. The naive part of me thought that there was possibly a chance that they would want me to stay with them. I had to try, right?

They made me so happy, and I hadn't felt such a close family feeling before like this. I didn't want to lose it now that I had it, and I was struggling with feelings for all of them. I wanted to see how they grew. If they were shared.

So, Bradley and I were going to get along, so help me!

"You and I are going to have a civil conversation, and you're going to tell me what the hell your problem is," I bit back as I held his gaze.

"Oh, really? You want to have a heart to heart?" Bradley scoffed at me as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"Well, come on! Spill it," I told him, frustration crackling in me.

Bradley shook his head at me.

"You're a risk. This deal that we have with you puts everyone at risk. The Hornets already want to destroy us, but having you here is like throwing blood in the water near hungry sharks," he said.

His words made my chest ache, my jaw tightening. Over and over again, the guys assured me that they were fine, and they weren't upset that I accidentally revealed that I was pregnant to one of the Hornets.

Maybe they were lying to my face, and Bradley was the only one who was being brutally honest with me.

"I never meant to make things worse for you guys. Ever," I assured him. "I was just trying to help and make sure the father was able to be in the baby's life. I never thought things would unfold like this."

Bradley released a slow exhale as he glanced away from me.

"We need an heir, but it wasn't supposed to happen like this. Out of the blue. Like a damn business plan," he muttered as he shook his head.

“What did you even expect?” I asked, feeling genuinely curious. It wasn’t like I knew the ins and outs of how this stuff worked.

Bradley shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know. It was just supposed to be different,” he said. “But I respect Kai. I respect his decision.”

“But you don’t like me. You can’t stand seeing me around here,” I told him as I stepped closer to him, my heart pounding heavily in my chest. My eyes trailed the tattoos of flames and a dragon that etched up his arms. The tension in his jaw under his clean-shaven face. He was annoyingly handsome and such a pain in my ass.

Bradley narrowed his eyes as he stood his ground.

“You don’t know anything,” he said.

I stopped right in front of him, lifting up on my toes to get closer to his face.

“Then, tell me!” I told him.

“Fine! Despite you being a risk, I can’t get you off my damn mind. As much as I want to ignore you, I can’t!” Bradley snapped. “You’re a thought I can’t get rid of!”

His words rang throughout my head as we stared at each other in tense silence.

He didn’t hate me. He wanted me and hated himself for that. I could share that sentiment because I didn’t want to be drawn to the man who refused to talk to me for months.

“I’m not going anywhere,” I said in a firm voice. “What are you going to do about that?”

Bradley looked like he was about to snap again.

“Fuck it,” he gritted out before slamming his lips against mine.

I threw my arms around his neck as my back hit the door, our lips brushing and melding together feverishly. All of the tension and hidden desires finally collided, fire surging through me.

Bradley let his hands roam all over me, caressing my sides, my stomach, and my breasts. He grabbed the straps of my tank top and tore them off my shoulders and down my arms to expose my breasts. He leaned down and took one of my nipples into his mouth, caressing my other breast with his hand.

I gripped the back of his shaved head, my eyes rolling up to the ceiling as hot tingles fluttered over my skin. I wanted him so badly that it ached.

“No teasing. Please,” I begged him, wanting to feel him. Feel it all.

Bradley tore my shorts and panties off before pulling his black t-shirt off, exposing his built chest and abs that I wanted to drag my tongue all over. He slipped his hand between my thighs, brushing two fingertips through my folds as he pressed me back against the door.

“Not good enough,” he murmured near my ear as his fingertips swirled around my clit. “But you’re certainly wet enough.”

I whimpered as I grabbed his upper arms, digging my nails into his tattooed skin.

“I can’t even beg well enough for you now? You’re so damn stubborn,” I bit out.

Bradley quieted my complaining by pushing his two fingers inside of me, curling deep to nudge that spot that nearly made my knees buckle.

“Beg. Don’t complain,” he told me.

Part of me wanted to argue, but I desired him too badly right now. I couldn’t wait. I leaned forward and kissed up his neck toward his ear as I caressed the back of his head with my hand.

“Please. I want you to fuck me so badly,” I murmured, knowing how desperate I sounded.

It seemed to be what he wanted to hear because he continued working his fingers in and out of me.

“That badly, huh?” Bradley replied as our eyes locked. He was dragging me along at this point, tormenting me in a twisted way that turned me on even more. I was at his mercy. Just how he wanted it to be.

“Right now,” I told him. “Make me scream your name.”

That was the right move. Bradley drew his hand away from me before grabbing the back of my thighs and lifting me up to press my back harder against the door. He reached below me and freed his hard cock, lining himself up with my entrance before pushing inside.

I clawed at his shoulders, holding onto him tightly as he bottomed out. A weak whimper broke from me as I adjusted to him, reveling in the pressure and stretch. With a nod, I coaxed him to start moving, thrusting up into me at a gradually quickening pace.

Bradley pinned me against the door and rocked into me over and over, not letting me slip. He kept me right where he wanted me, fucking me hard and deep.

“Don’t you hold back those moans,” he warned me.

I couldn’t even if I tried. Pleased sounds broke from me as he pounded into me, my head starting to spin from the heat and bliss. The feeling was overwhelming, threatening to take over me like a crashing wave.

“Right there,” I breathed out as he lifted my ass more, hitting the perfect spot to make the twisted sensation in my stomach tighten even more. With him slamming against that spot over and over, there was no way that I was going to last much longer.

Bradley buried his face in the crook of my neck, sucking a mark into my skin that made me cry out in bliss.

“There we go. That’s what I want to hear,” he said in a low voice that made goosebumps raise up on my arms.

I tilted my head back, letting him litter marks on my throat and the side of my neck. When his teeth pressed into my shoulder as he slammed home, his name was ripped from my throat, filling the office. My orgasm took the air right out of my lungs, fire simmering inside of me and spreading everywhere.

Bradley finished at the same time, panting against my shoulder as he removed his teeth from my skin. He rested his firm body against mine as we collected ourselves.

“Hang on,” he told me before carefully carrying me over to the office chair to sit down. He crouched in front of me, sweat glistening on his forehead as he checked me over. “Are you okay? Wasn’t too rough, right?”

I smiled a little as his fingertips brushed over my stomach.

“Nope,” I quipped, feeling much more at ease now that we were actually talking. “Feel free to be even rougher.”

Bradley cracked an amused grin.

“Dirty girl,” he replied as he rubbed his hands up and down my thighs. “I never hated you. I was just... wary. I care about these guys, and I didn’t really know anything about you.”

“I’d like us to get to know each other. I want to be close to you like I am with them,” I told him, hoping that he felt the same way. We could get along really well if we just tried.

Bradley nodded as he held my gaze.

“I think I was just irritated because I didn’t want to be attracted to you,” he admitted. “But obviously, I’m not the only one whose eye you caught.”

A blush crossed my cheeks as I lowered my eyes for a moment. I had no idea how I caught the attention of these amazing guys, but I hoped that I didn’t lose their affection. I loved the dynamic that we all had, and I knew that it was going to be even better now that me and Bradley were trying to get along with each other.

“Well, come on. Let’s order some pizza and continue our heart to heart. Without yelling,” I told him as I took his hands and rose to my feet.

“Do we still get to end our heart to heart the same way we did before?” Bradley asked as he lifted his eyebrow at me in a suggestive manner.

I smirked, feeling heat stir in the bottom of my stomach. Honestly, that didn’t sound like a bad idea at all. That was one way to break the tension, and I wished that we had done this months ago when the tension first started. Better late than never, though.

“As long as you don’t hold back,” I replied as he pulled me close, my hands

running up his strong chest.

Bradley caressed my hips, finally relaxing and letting me slip past his defenses.

“Wouldn’t dream of it.”

Chapter 15

Chris

A satisfied exhale broke from me as I pulled my full-face helmet off my head, slightly ruffling my dark brown hair in the back.

I looked over at my brothers as they climbed off their bikes after our late afternoon ride. There was nothing like taking a joyride with the sun at our backs, letting the wind hit us as we went faster and faster.

Life could be such a thrill.

“Nice route choice,” Claude told me as he tossed his arm around my shoulders, giving me a light shake.

“There’s just something about back roads,” Cameron chuckled as we all piled into a quiet clubhouse.

I grinned as I followed them. I would’ve been lying if I said any sort of praise or approval from any of the guys in the club, including my own brothers, didn’t raise my spirits.

Technically, I was the youngest triplet, so I looked up to my brothers. I looked up to the guys who had become my family as well and stepped into a paternal role for me.

Because I burned the bridge between me and my abusive dad the day I nearly beat him to death.

I brushed my fingers through my hair, smoothing down the strands as all of us headed to Aisling’s room to go check on her.

Talk about complicated family dynamics.

I always feared that my brothers would hate me for hurting our father, despite him constantly yelling at us or throwing things at us, but they didn't disown me as their brother.

Not when they saw our dad bloodied on the floor. When I was hauled off to prison for assault. When I was released and asked to be a part of the motorcycle club they were in.

They never turned their back on me, and I was glad that I got to live this crazy but exciting life with my brothers and my new family. Now, we had a whole other adventure in the form of a baby on the way and an incredible woman who was also the mother.

I didn't just see her as the heir's mother, though.

She was Aisling. The same woman who made all of us smile with her witty comments. Who took chances and tried new things. Who made my heart nearly beat out of my chest with just one look.

Speaking of which, just seeing her seated on her bed with a romance book in her lap made my chest tighten. She looked so beautiful with her hair fixed in a loose braid, and her growing baby bump was even easier to see through the ribbed, black tank top that she wore.

"Let me guess. You're reading about some rich guy drooling over his mouthy assistant," Claude said as he sat on the edge of her bed.

Aisling cracked a smile, gently swatting at his arm with her book.

"No, it's actually about a guy in a biker gang," she replied with a sly look on her face. "Sound familiar?"

Cameron laughed as he laid on his side next to her.

"Why read a book about that when you're living it?" he asked.

Aisling smirked as she marked her page and closed her book.

"I'm comparing stories," she said. "Mine is better."

The corner of my mouth curled up as I sat down to her right, leaning closer to

peek at the cover, which is some muscular guy with a helmet on and his shirt off.

“I’m guessing this story is definitely not PG,” I commented, flashing her an amused look that made her cheeks flush.

“I like spicy books,” Aisling replied.

“Spicy books?” Cameron questioned, resting his head on his hand as he peered up at her.

“You know... books with plenty of heat,” Aisling said, rolling her eyes when we still gave her a confused look. “Sex scenes!”

Claude clicked his tongue at her.

“Dirty girl,” he said.

Aisling laughed and shrugged.

“Hey, I’ve read some stuff that would even make you guys blush,” she replied.

I smirked as I crossed my arms over the front of my leather jacket.

“Like what?” I asked.

Aisling cocked an eyebrow at me, taking my words as a challenge.

“Like... scenes with twins... or triplets,” she told me before laughing in a bashful manner. “And a bunch of other stuff.”

“They really have scenes like that?” Cameron asked.

Aisling nodded with slightly red cheeks.

“Oh, yeah. I’ve come across a few. Obviously, stuff like that would never happen in real life. They put all the crazy fantasies in romance books,” she replied.

My eyes automatically trailed over to Cameron and Claude, who looked more intrigued than anything.

I had a feeling that we were all on the same page. Now, we took *her* words as

a dare.

We all were attracted to her. I didn't miss the way their eyes trailed her when she walked around in short shorts or how they took advantage of any opportunity to pull her close or touch her.

Because I did the same exact thing.

Maybe it was also from the thrill of the ride, but I found myself leaning toward her, my hand resting on her upper thigh where her black shorts didn't reach.

"Sure about that?" I asked as our eyes locked, my fingers slightly digging into her skin to show her just how serious I was.

Aisling's eyes widened.

"What?" she replied.

Cameron moved his hand along the inside of her other thigh, brushing his fingertips over her clothed center.

"What if it did happen in real life?" he said.

Claude shrugged off his jacket and crawled up the bed toward her, taking hold of her chin.

"I bet you'd like that. I don't believe you're innocent. Not for a second," he told her.

Aisling barely let out a breath before she nodded, swallowing hard before letting Claude pull her into a heated kiss.

Heat coursed through me as my hand slipped up her body, curving over her stomach and reaching one of her breasts.

I could already feel that she wasn't wearing a bra, able to feel the stiff peak of her nipple through the thin material. I twisted her nipple between my fingertips, making a gasp break from her.

"That sensitive, huh? We're going to have fun with you," I told her.

"You sweet, naughty thing. I can't believe you've been sitting in here reading

your dirty romance books when you could've been getting fucked for real," Cameron chuckled as he teasingly rubbed her center through her shorts.

Aisling tensed, moaning into Claude's mouth from the friction. She leaned into my hand as I cupped her breast, her back arching. She reached out to me, brushing her fingers through my hair before her kiss with Claude broke. Her lips met mine, and I indulged in her sweet taste.

"Get these off. I've been dying to take a look at this body," Claude said, slipping his fingers in the waist of her shorts. He and Cameron ripped them off her hips, followed by her light grey panties.

I brushed my fingers into her hair, adopting a light grip at the base of her head to tilt it back. Her wide, dark eyes met mine.

"Lie back. We're going to make your fantasies come true, baby," I told her.

Aisling nearly let out a whimper as she lay on her back, placing her hand on Cameron's thigh as he hovered over her.

Claude moved out of the way so that I could lay down on my stomach between her thighs. He knelt next to her, helping her slip her tank top off. His mouth immediately latched onto one of her nipples, sucking firmly to draw a moan from her.

"You sound so sexy," Cameron hummed before cupping the back of her neck and melding his lips with hers. He dominated the kiss, his teeth grazing over her bottom lip in a sultry bite.

My lips fluttered up her inner thigh as I pulled her legs over my shoulders, desire swirling low in my stomach. I wanted to bury myself inside of her, but this was all about her and making her dirty fantasy come true. Truly, her pleasure was ours.

I dragged my tongue through her folds, flicking the tip across her clit and feeling her body jerk in response to the sensitivity.

"So sweet," I murmured before pressing my mouth flush against her center, sucking at her folds and lapping at her clit.

"Oh... fuck..." Aisling whimpered as she fisted Cameron's and Claude's

hair. She parted her lips just as Cameron's tongue brushed against hers, her cheeks flushing with beautiful, aroused color.

"That's it, baby," Claude praised her as he rolled one of her nipples between his fingertips.

I could tell that she was eating this all up, reveling in the pleasure and the attention. She pushed her hips up toward me, chasing my tongue as I trailed it from her entrance to her clit. Over and over. I wanted to taste all of her.

Claude switched to the other nipple, taking the stiff peak between his lips and dragging his teeth across it to make her gasp. He chuckled and flicked his tongue across the top, intent on tormenting her deliciously.

"Feels so good," Aisling breathed out, turning to kiss Claude as Cameron took his place. "I won't last."

I wasn't going to edge her or tease her. I wanted her to fall apart for us, to come so hard that she couldn't breathe. As my tongue returned to her clit, I pushed two fingers into her, curling them deep to press against that spot that doubled the pressure.

And the pleasure.

"Come for us. I want to hear it," Cameron ordered her.

Claude's hand slid up to rest on the base of her neck, putting enough pressure to nearly make her eyes roll back.

Aisling's body tensed as her orgasm neared. She tugged on Claude's and Cameron's hair, arching her back and moaning our names as our mouths took her over the edge. With one more thrust of my fingers and flick of my tongue, she came undone, letting out a pleased cry that probably could've been heard outside.

The other guys missed out.

"Oh... woah," Aisling gasped as she collapsed back on the bed, trying to catch her breath. A lazy smile crossed her face as she peered at all of us. "Well, cross that one off the list."

I chuckled before playfully nipping at the inside of her thigh.

“If you have any fantasies, you have eight guys to call,” I reminded her. We would wait in line to fulfil just one.

Aisling sat up and glanced around at us as we moved to relax on her bed.

“Wait, I can do something for you guys,” she said, seeming embarrassed that it was all about her.

Cameron shook his head.

“There’s nothing hotter than watching a woman enjoy herself,” he assured her before pressing a brief but affectionate kiss against her lips. “You look so sexy when you fall apart.”

Aisling smiled and placed her hand on his cheek for a moment before letting Claude peck her on the lips. She then looked down at me, sitting up straight so that we could reach each other.

“Thank you and your talented mouth,” she said.

I smirked and captured her lips in a lingering kiss, hoping she could see how good she tasted.

“Anytime,” I told her.

When Aisling pulled away, a mischievous look crossed her face.

“So, I have a surprise for you and the others tomorrow,” she announced.

We all tilted our heads.

“What surprise?” Claude asked.

“I know the baby’s gender,” Aisling revealed, sticking her finger up before we could bombard her with questions. “You’ll find out tomorrow. It’s a special surprise, okay?”

It was going to be torturous to wait, but she had us wrapped around her finger, so if she wanted it to be a surprise, we would respect that.

“Tease,” Cameron joked as he laid his head in her lap.

“Don’t lie. You all love it,” Aisling said with a smirk as she carded her

fingers through his hair.

That was the thing. We did. We were so far in this situation with her. Deeper than we ever thought possible.

Chapter 16

Kai

“We’re having a what?”

Me and the others flashed Aisling and Hayden surprised and confused looks as they stood in front of us by the bar.

When Aisling called a “family meeting” as we now called them, we all knew that this was something important.

“A gender reveal party!” Aisling announced, making murmurs of excitement and surprise ripple throughout our small crowd.

“You know the gender?” I asked as I moved to the front of the group.

Aisling smiled and nodded as she wrapped her fingers around Hayden’s bicep.

“We’ve been dying to tell you guys, but we wanted to come up with a cool surprise to announce it,” she explained. “We were told at my last ultrasound appointment.”

I thought my heart would race, but it stopped instead, feeling like someone just punched me in the chest. Today, we were going to find out if we were having a boy or a girl. Already! I couldn’t believe we were getting so close.

“Is the party now? Please tell me it’s now,” Lincoln replied, seeming to fidget on the spot because he was so excited to know.

“No, we need everyone to clear out and then come back at five o’clock this evening. That’s when we’ll be done setting everything up,” Hayden told us.

Bradley groaned.

“That’s so long,” he said.

“Patience is a virtue,” Aisling replied, flashing him a playful look. “Let’s hope the baby is far more patient than any of you.”

The triplets chuckled next to me, shaking their heads in amusement.

“Feisty little thing, huh?” Auden said to me from my left.

I smirked as I crossed my arms over my chest, peering at Aisling with pure admiration in my eyes. She had no idea just how big of an effect she had on all of us. We had busy, exciting lives before her, but there had always been something missing. We were a family, but we weren’t... complete.

We looked after each other, but we wanted someone to spoil and protect. To please and hold. We wanted a child to love and a woman to be in love with, and... I believed we had found what we all wanted.

But did Aisling want us back the way we wanted her?

“Clear out of here,” Hayden told us, motioning for us to get out so that they could start on the surprise.

We were all dying to know the gender, so the seven of us left pretty quickly, heading out to our bikes in the garage.

“I guess we have to burn time. Anyone want to go get a bite to eat?” Cameron asked.

The others nodded, but I waved them on.

“You guys go ahead. I’m going to take a ride,” I said, slipping on my helmet and starting my bike before they could say anything to me. I just needed a little while to think.

I rode away from the clubhouse, listening to the roar of the engine and the wind whipping past me. Wanting to be out on my own, I took a quiet back road, soaring down the asphalt as my thoughts started to wander.

It was odd thinking how far I had come in my life. I went from a broken man in a different gang, reeling from the loss of my baby brother from a drug

overdose.

I was done, and I needed a change.

That was what the Iron Serpents were for me and starting this group was one of the best things that I had ever done in my life. These guys saved me in a way that they didn't even know, and I felt indebted to every single one of them.

That was why I felt the need to put in place a secure future for us.

I couldn't help but feel nervous when I thought about the future and all of its uncertainties. I didn't care what the gender ended up being. I was worried about everything else.

How would I train them? What would their name be? How would they lead the club when they became of age? What would everyone's future look like?

I had no answers, which drove me crazy. How could I lead seven other people without any answers or insight about the future? I didn't want to mess up, and I also didn't want to be a bad father. On top of it all, I didn't want to disappoint Aisling.

Throughout these past months, I had gotten closer to Aisling. Truly, all of us had.

We gravitated to her, adamant on protecting our heir. Then, it quickly became about caring for her too outside of the obligation of our agreed plan.

I could tell that the others had started developing feelings for her outside of pure desire.

I felt so damn attached to her, finding myself always thinking about her and wondering what was on her mind.

The one-year mark was approaching very quickly, and the closer it got, the more dread I felt because I didn't want it to end. I didn't want her to leave the clubhouse and go on with her life besides doing things for the kid.

I didn't want her to leave *us*.

But I couldn't force her to do anything. She seemed to be having a good time

with us, but did she want to continue that? Did she feel something deeper for us past desire? I wished that I could look inside of her head, but all I saw was her big eyes and radiant smile.

A beautiful sight but one that didn't tell me the answers to the questions that kept me up at night.

I was so deeply ingrained in my own thoughts that I was almost late getting back to the clubhouse. My heart raced as I hurried down the road, already knowing that I was probably the last to arrive. The last thing I wanted was for Aisling to think that I didn't care enough to show up on time.

As I approached the clubhouse, my eyebrows furrowed in confusion at the sight of the guys waving me down in an empty lot that was a few spots down from the clubhouse. I headed that way, parking my bike next to Auden's at the end of the line of bikes and shutting off my engine.

There were tables full of catered barbeque, along with coolers full of drinks. Pink and blue balloons were tied to the table legs and to the handles of the coolers. All of the decorations really put it in perspective that I was about to find out the gender of my baby.

My heart rate seemed to stutter from the thought, racing out of control before finally falling back into pace. Holy shit. This was happening.

Aisling and Hayden stood next to a stationary motorcycle facing the opposite way of us that seemed to have a special exhaust system.

"This is the surprise! It'll blow blue or pink smoke when the engine is started," Aisling explained as she clasped her hands together excitedly. She turned to Hayden. "Ready?"

"I've been ready," Hayden chuckled before looking at all of us as we got off our bikes and faced Hayden and Aisling. "We'll count down from five, okay?"

"Hell yeah," Auden chuckled. "Let's get this show on the road. I've been dying to fight you all over baby names."

Chuckles sounded from all of us as Aisling peered at all of us with awe in her eyes, and I swore she was on the verge of tears. However, she dabbed at the

corners of her eyes and smiled, nodding to tell us that she was ready.

“Five!”

My chest immediately tightened the moment the first number rang out, reality hitting me like a sucker punch.

Holy shit, this was actually happening. Realization kept hitting me in waves, reminding me that I was a dad to a baby on the way.

“Four!”

Lincoln put his hands behind his head, his eyes widening in anticipation.

“Three!”

The triplets shared excited looks with one another, shuffling on their feet like they couldn't stay still the closer we got.

“Two!”

Auden and Bradley playfully nudged each other, getting tense and amped up.

“One!”

Right on cue, Hayden started the engine of the stationary bike, a cloud of blue smoke rushing out of the exhaust pipe and blowing over us.

“Holy fuck! It's a boy!” Auden's shout somehow rose over the engines.

I was breathless for a few seconds, struck by the fact that we were having a baby boy. Blue smoke lingered in the air as we all rushed over to Aisling to pull her into tight embraces, happy laughter and shocked voices filling the parking lot.

“You amazing, amazing woman. You're the best thing that has ever happened to us. You hear me?” Cameron told her as he cupped her face.

Aisling smiled as happy tears rolled down her face. She nodded as she held his wrists.

Cameron kissed away her tears before Lincoln and Auden sandwiched her between them.

“Thank you... just... thank you,” Lincoln breathed into her hair. He kissed her temple, rubbing her back while Auden playfully nipped at her ear to make her laugh.

“Sweet girl. Damn it, you’ve got me all teary eyed,” Auden chuckled as he blinked his eyes a few times.

Aisling kissed him on the cheek before turning to me, her breath seeming to be stolen away. Hope glinted in her eyes as she waited for me to say something, but there weren’t really any words that could properly describe how I was feeling in that moment.

All I could do was pull her into a tight embrace, resting my head against hers as we rocked on the spot. My fingers brushed through her hair as she gripped at the back of my shirt, not wanting to let go. I could’ve held her forever.

“Cameron is right,” I finally said.

Aisling pulled back slightly to peer up at me, relief flooding across her face.

“Thank you,” she whispered.

I shook my head.

“Thank you,” I told her before pressing my lips against her forehead. What she did for us... there was no amount of gratitude that existed that could cover how we felt.

I released her to Bradley, Chris, Claude, and Hayden, who swarmed her with affection and praise. With a small smile on my face, I took a moment to just enjoy the moment and not worry about everything else going on in the world. Moments like these made all the bad parts worth it.

When the storm rolled in, I hoped that I would remember this moment and be reminded that there was always hope.

There was always something to come home to, and I planned to enjoy every single day I had left when I came home to the sight of Aisling’s bright smile.

Chapter 17

Bradley

My eyes lingered on Aisling as she soundly napped in her bed, sleeping through the late afternoon like she had been doing a lot lately.

She was eight months pregnant now, and it was taking a toll on her. She was sore, tired, and ready to hurry up and give birth.

Unfortunately, she had to wait just a little while longer and endure the whole slew of terrible pregnancy symptoms that she dealt with on a daily basis.

I couldn't imagine being in her shoes, dealing with all of the aches and nausea and discomfort. It was awful seeing her go through it all. Shit, at this point, I was rooting for the baby to hurry up and come out for her.

Plus, I was excited to meet my son. My son. I couldn't believe I got to say that.

"Whatcha thinking about?" Cameron asked.

I snapped out of my thoughts and turned to look at Cameron as he approached me.

"Her and our son that we finally get to meet soon," I replied with a small shrug. "What I always think about."

Cameron smiled a little, but it was faint for some reason. He motioned for me to follow him.

"Close the door. We're having a meeting," he said.

I frowned and narrowed my eyes, wondering why he seemed so grim.

Usually, we all chatted about Aisling and the baby in high spirits, but he could barely smile, which was odd for Cameron.

Everyone here had lost someone or gone through something tough, which led a lot of us to find the club for support and structure.

Cameron came to us after he lost his wife to illness. They were a young couple with their whole lives ahead of them, but it was all cut short. It devastated him, and I remembered barely seeing him smile.

Over the years, his grief didn't overtake his entire life. He got out more. Talked more. Smiled more. But I had to say that when Aisling came along, he started smiling a lot more. Even cracking jokes. It was good to see, but it felt like I was talking to the old Cameron now.

Something was wrong.

I quietly shut Aisling's door so that we wouldn't wake her before joining the others near the bar.

"Alright, what's going on?" I demanded.

"Waiting on him to tell us," Lincoln replied as he gestured to Cameron. "It's something bad, isn't it?"

"Spit it out, Cam," Kai said with narrowed eyes.

Cameron put his hands up to calm everyone down.

"I have an old friend who knows a guy in the Hornets. They're not close or anything like that, but he runs in the same circles as this Hornet. He told me that the woman who was bearing the Hornets' heir fled the city after finding out she was having a girl."

"And the Hornets want a boy," Auden finished, prompting Cameron to nod.

"Well, isn't that good news? We have an heir on the way, and they just lost theirs," Chris asked, cocking his head in confusion.

A grave look filled Kai's face as he shook his head.

"Listen to your last sentence. We have something that they just lost," he replied, tense silence ringing throughout the clubhouse.

“Fuck,” I said, cutting through the silence. “They might look for someone to replace the woman who just ran away.”

“Aisling,” Lincoln murmured as his eyes widened.

“Absolutely fucking not,” Auden bit out as his fingers formed fists. “They’re not coming within a mile of her.”

Kai glared at the ground for a few seconds as he shook his head.

“We have to double up her security. I want someone to keep an eye on her 24/7,” he demanded. “She’s getting close to giving birth. I don’t know if they’ll go after her while she’s still pregnant or if they’ll try to steal the baby.”

“They won’t do either,” Claude replied as he crossed his arms. “We’re not going to let them.”

Anger burned beneath my skin, filling my face and reaching down the back of my neck. The thought of those Hornets even thinking about Aisling made me want to torch them.

“We can’t let them do this,” I told them, my eyes darting between all of them. “They’ll ruin everything!”

“What’s going on?”

We all whipped around to see Aisling coming out of her room with a concerned look on her face.

“It’s nothing. Sorry we woke you,” Claude told her with a warm smile.

Aisling narrowed her eyes.

“Don’t do that. I know I said I didn’t want to be clued into everything, but I need to know everything. The baby is coming soon, and if I’m going to look after him, I need to know what may threaten him,” she stated in a firm voice.

“Aisling...” Chris started to speak.

“No! I know I’m an outsider of your world, but I’m involved in whatever situation you’re trying to hide from me. It’s not fair,” Aisling said as her eyes started to glisten. Her chest started rising and falling quicker as her eyes

rapidly darted from person to person. “After all this time, don’t I deserve to be trusted with the truth? At least for the baby’s safety?”

She did deserve to know the truth, but we had all been doing research on pregnancy and the health of the baby and the mother. Stress wasn’t good for either of them, so I was going to do whatever I could to keep her relaxed.

“I’ve got this. Figure something out,” I told the others before walking over to Aisling, taking her hand and leading her back in her room.

“Bradley, tell me what’s going on!” Aisling demanded, trying to pull her hand away at first until I tightened my grip and gave her a pleading look.

I shut the door and kept the curtains shut, only allowing a small amount of sunlight in the room.

“Lie down with me,” I replied as I kicked off my shoes and took off my jacket, leaving myself in a t-shirt and jeans. I lay down in her bed and held my arm out, motioning for her to lie down.

Aisling huffed and carefully eased herself down on her side next to me.

“Tell me,” she said.

I faced her on my side, meeting her worried eyes.

“It’s fine. The Hornets are just causing trouble again, but it won’t have anything to do with you,” I told her. We wouldn’t let it have anything to do with her.

Aisling released an unsteady breath.

“Are you sure?” she asked as she rubbed her stomach protectively.

I nodded and placed my hand on her hip, pulling her closer to me until her stomach touched mine.

“I’m sure,” I replied. “You know that I’ll keep you safe no matter what, right?”

Aisling nodded as she ran her hand up my arm.

“I know. I just get scared for you guys too. I don’t want anything to happen

to any of you,” she sighed. “You guys mean the world to me.”

And she meant everything to us.

“We’re not going anywhere,” I promised her. She might leave in a few months, but we weren’t going anywhere. Hopefully, she didn’t either, but that was up to her.

Aisling held my gaze for a moment before leaning forward and kissing me softly. The kiss was innocent at first, but as her lips started to move against mine, she became needier. Her hand brushed over my shaved head as our kiss deepened.

“Keep me in your arms,” she said.

I nodded and turned her over onto her other side. I pressed my chest against her back, letting my hand roam up and down her arm in a comforting motion.

“I won’t let you go,” I promised her.

Aisling was quiet for a few seconds before finally speaking.

“I’m glad we’re like this now... close. I thought you wouldn’t ever want to get close to me,” she admitted.

I frowned as my hand paused on her elbow. I couldn’t exactly blame her for thinking that way when I was trying my hardest to not get close to her. To not put myself in a position to get hurt. I failed, but I was grateful for that.

“You’re one of the best things that has ever happened to me,” I told her, feeling her tense in surprise. I brushed her hair behind her ear before leaning closer. “You’re not on the outside of our world. You’ve become a huge part of it.”

Aisling slowly turned around to face me, tears glistening in her eyes.

“Really?” she asked, sounding choked up.

I smiled a little and nodded, resting my hand on her warm cheek.

“We just need you to trust us. Your safety and the baby’s safety are our top priorities. No matter what, everything is going to be okay,” I promised her, not wanting her to fear a thing. Not when she had all of us around to protect

her.

Aisling held my gaze for a few moments before smiling and nodding.

“I trust all of you,” she replied as she placed her hand over mine, her bracelets slightly sliding down her wrist. “Thank you.”

I leaned closer and captured her lips in a slow, tender kiss, taking my time to feel and taste her. She felt so soft against my lips, her sweet warmth melting in my mouth. I couldn't get enough, but I soon felt her relax in my arms.

“Tired?” I asked once I pulled away.

Aisling laughed softly and nodded.

That didn't surprise me. She was tired a lot, but I didn't mind her falling asleep in my arms where I could hold her and make sure that she was safe.

“Get some sleep. I'll be right here,” I told her.

Aisling's eyes started to flutter shut as I wrapped my arms around her.

“Promise?” she mumbled sleepily.

Nothing could pull me away from her right now. Not when I knew about the danger lurking out there.

“Promise.”

Chapter 18

Aisling

It took a little pushing, but I managed to convince the guys to take me down the road to a little café so that I could get tea with Madison.

It had been a while since we last saw each other, and I wanted to catch her up on things before the baby came. Which was going to be very soon.

“Don’t leave the café, okay? Creeps roam the streets,” Auden warned me as he walked me down the street to the café, keeping his hand on my back like he couldn’t bear to not be touching me. I certainly didn’t mind that.

I laughed a little as I gave him a gentle nudge.

“I’m just having a cup of tea with a friend. You don’t have to worry about me sneaking off,” I assured him. Where the hell would a very pregnant woman go besides home?

“I know. I just want you to be careful,” Auden replied as his eyes darted around the area.

“Is everything okay? You’ve been jumpy. Actually, all of you have been acting weird,” I said in a pointed voice as I stopped walking.

Auden grinned a little, but it seemed... forced.

“The baby is literally about to pop out of you. It could literally happen any minute! Yes, we’re jumpy,” he chuckled.

I relaxed a little, figuring that made sense. I was just ready for the baby to hurry up and come out at this point so that I could stop dealing with all of

these symptoms.

“I’ll let you know if my water breaks in the middle of teatime,” I told him.

Auden smirked and opened the door for me.

“I’ll be in the area. Call me if you need anything. Anything,” he said, reiterating his last point.

I smiled and kissed him on the cheek before heading into the cafe, immediately spotting Madison at a two-seater table in the back. I waved at her before ordering a peppermint tea for myself.

When I got my tea and walked over to her, Madison stood and hugged me, her cheek pressing against mine.

“You look beautiful! I can’t believe you’re almost due already,” she gasped.

“I’m so ready.” I laughed as we sat down across from each other. “This has been a long pregnancy.”

A slightly concerned look filled Madison’s face as she wrapped her fingers around her teacup.

“Is everything going okay with you living over there with those guys?” she asked.

I could hear the genuine concern in her voice, and all I wanted was to put her at ease and show her how happy I was with the arrangement, even if it was an unorthodox one. She didn’t exactly have the most normal relationship either.

“I promise I’m okay. I’m really happy,” I assured her with a warm smile on my face. “The guys aren’t what you think. Yes, they’re tough bikers, but they’re so caring and protective. They’ve been so attentive, and I don’t think I would’ve made it through this pregnancy without them.”

“So, they’re good to you?” Madison asked.

A soft laugh broke from me as my cheeks warmed up.

“Very good,” I murmured before sipping on my tea.

Madison raised an eyebrow at me.

“What was that about? Very good? What does that mean?” she asked as she leaned forward slightly, pushing me for an answer.

I had been dying to tell her all the gossip, including the dirty kind. She was my best friend! She signed up for the news on my crazy life like I did for hers.

“I... well... things have gotten pretty heated between me and the guys,” I admitted, my face burning even hotter from the thought.

Madison’s jaw dropped.

“You had sex with them?” she gasped.

I swatted at her, my eyes darting around the café to make sure no one overheard us.

“Yes. I don’t know. I just have this connection with them. It’s not just sex either. I enjoy being around them. Talking to them. Riding with them,” I told her with an unsure shrug. “I think... I know that I have feelings for them. Real, deep ones.”

“Oh, Aisling...” Madison murmured. “Are you sure these guys are ones you should be catching feelings for?”

I nodded.

“They’re good guys. Come on. Your boys were literally ex-cons, and you saw that they were good men. So are my guys,” I pointed out.

Madison couldn’t even argue against that point.

“Yeah, you’re right. If they seem devoted to you and the baby, I can’t say anything,” she replied before taking my hand and giving it a squeeze. “You know that I just want to look out for you.”

I shared a warm look with her and nodded, knowing that was the truth. She wouldn’t say anything if she didn’t care.

“They’ll be good dads. They all have wanted to start a family, and we all work so well together. Living with them has made me happier than ever,” I told her. “The stability and safety they make me feel is unlike anything I’ve

ever known before. You know how I grew up.”

Sympathy gleamed in her eyes.

“I know. I’m glad you found guys who make you feel safe and taken care of,” she said. “Eight guys are better than one.”

“You’d know with your seven,” I said with a laugh, squeezing her hand before we let go. I took a sip of my tea, letting the peppermint soothe my lingering nausea.

Madison shared my laugh as she relaxed in her seat.

“They’re a handful, but I love them. How deep do you think your feelings go for these guys? Is it just a crush or something more?” she asked.

I had been thinking about my growing feelings for them for a while now, trying to figure out what to make of them and what to do with them. They were so intense that they made my chest hurt at times, but it was a good ache. One that was new and warm.

What I did know was that I didn’t want to lose that feeling. I didn’t want to lose them. I was so grateful for everything they did for me, but I also loved the little moments that we spent together. Family dinners. Group rides. Pool night.

I wanted those little things too. I wanted it all, even if things were risky and tense at times with the business that they did and the people that they interacted with.

“I think I’m falling in love with them. All of them,” I admitted, feeling my throat and chest tighten once the words left my lips.

I was falling in love. Really falling in love.

“Aisling? Are you okay?”

I blinked a few times and looked up at her with glistening eyes.

“Damn hormones,” I laughed as I dabbed at my eyes.

Madison merely smiled.

“I think this isn’t just because of the hormones. You really care about these guys,” she said.

I breathed in shakily and nodded. There was no point in hiding from an obvious truth.

“We only planned for me to stay with them for a year. I don’t want this to end,” I told her, my heart aching at the thought of having to leave.

Madison gave me an encouraging look.

“You need to talk to them. And you should probably do it before the baby comes,” she pointed out. “This isn’t something to sit on. Not when it’s your future at stake.”

Again, she was right. I was nervous about bringing my feelings into the limelight in case they didn’t feel the same, but I needed to see what page everyone was on before the baby came and things changed.

I rose out of my seat and crossed over to her, throwing my arms around her in a tight embrace.

“I needed this. Thank you,” I told her.

Madison smiled against my shoulder.

“What are friends for?” she pointed out.

After we finished up our tea and Madison had to head home to her family, I wandered outside as the sun glowed brightly above me, casting warm light on the quiet street.

I was supposed to call one of the guys to pick me up, but it felt so nice with the light breeze blowing that I decided to walk myself since the clubhouse was just down the road.

My thoughts naturally moved to the guys and how happy I felt with them.

They brought a level of excitement and comfort to my life that I hadn’t ever experienced before, and I didn’t want to lose that. I didn’t want to lose *them*.

The budding family we had created together was about to grow bigger soon, and something told me that our son could bring us all even closer. Closer than

I ever imagined being to someone. That and a million other things proved to me just how special they were compared to anyone else I had ever met.

I had to see if they felt the same way about me.

With my mind busy racing through possibilities of what to say to the guys when I got back, I passed by businesses and alleyways, my eyes pointing straight ahead with a hopeful smile on my face.

I didn't realize just how bright today was until a dark hood suddenly covered my face.

I gasped as it was pulled tight around my head, my feet leaving the ground as I was dragged backward into the unknown.

Chapter 19

Kai

“**W** here is Aisling?”

My voice rang throughout the clubhouse as I walked out of Aisling’s dark, empty bedroom, flashing the triplets a confused look as they lounged on the couch.

“I thought she was having tea with her friend,” Claude replied as he sat up. “She’s supposed to call one of us to come get her when she’s done.”

“Has anyone heard from her then?” I asked as I looked over at Hayden and Lincoln as they abandoned their game of pool to approach me.

“Not me,” Hayden said before checking his watch and frowning. “She’s been gone for a minute. Then again, she could still be chitchatting with her friend.”

He had a point, but I didn’t like not hearing from her for this long. She was *very* pregnant, and we had a cruel rival gang to worry about. One who was so terrible that a pregnant woman felt so unsafe that she had to flee from them. I wanted Aisling in my sights *now*.

“Bradley!” I called out.

Ten seconds later, Bradley emerged from the office where he was doing some research on the hospital we planned to take Aisling to for delivery.

“What?” he asked as he looked between us, seeming suspicious of the fact that we were all huddled together.

“Have you heard from Aisling since Auden dropped her off at the café

earlier?” I questioned him.

Bradley shook his head without pause.

“Nope. Why? Is everything good?” he replied, urgency starting to flood into his voice.

Something cold and dark had me by the back of my neck in a vice grip.

Dread. Something felt odd.

I grabbed my phone out of my black pants and selected Auden’s number from my contact, pressing the phone to my ear as it started ringing.

Auden picked up after a few rings.

“Hello?” he answered.

“Where are you? Are you still patrolling around the café that she’s at?” I asked him, my heart racing furiously as I waited for the answer I wanted. The one I needed.

I had to make sure that Aisling was okay.

“Yeah, I had to stop by the pharmacy to pick up some more vitamins for her, but I’m about to pass the café now,” Auden said, not sounding as on edge as all of us were. Maybe we were overreacting, and Aisling was having too good of a time to cut the day short just yet.

“Is she there?” I asked. Each second that passed felt even more terrible than the last one, and I was about to go down there myself to see her with my own eyes. That was the only way to put myself at ease for now.

“Shit, she’s not. I told her not to leave without telling one of us!” Auden said, the volume of his voice shooting up. His rapid breaths sounded next as he hurried down the sidewalk. “I don’t see her. Have you guys tried to call her?”

“Someone call her!” I barked out.

“I got it,” Lincoln said as he fumbled with his phone, pressing it to his ear and listening. He then frowned and shook his head. “Voicemail.”

“Fuck,” I bit out. “She wouldn’t go anywhere else but here. Something

must've happened.”

“I’ll check around the area before I come back,” Auden told me before hanging up.

I tightened my grip around my phone, doing my best not to throw it and break it in case Aisling tried to call me.

“All I can think about is the worst,” I murmured in a low, tense voice as the others gravitated toward me.

“The Hornets found her and took her,” Chris gritted out with narrowed eyes, speaking my fears.

A ripple of tension seemed to go around the room as we all looked between each other. Fists tightened. Eyes narrowed. Jaws clenched. We were ready to go to war over her and our child.

“They must’ve been watching us, and we didn’t even know it,” Bradley gritted out. “We should’ve noticed!”

“We’ve been so focused on the fact that the baby is coming soon,” Claude sighed as he shook his head in a defeated, agitated manner. “Too busy watching her on the inside than patrolling the outside.”

“Well? What the hell are we waiting for? We need to go to the Hornets’ clubhouse and take them down once and for all!” Bradley said, his head whipping around.

Hayden nodded in agreement.

“She can’t stay with them long. Who knows what they’re going to do to her?” he pointed out.

“Stop,” I told him in a firm voice, not wanting to hear it. My thoughts were bad enough without him adding a bunch of twisted scenarios. I looked over at the front door as Auden stormed inside, shaking his head.

“I can’t find her. I think the Hornets took her,” Auden said before holding up one of Aisling’s beaded bracelets. “I found this on the ground. She wouldn’t have left it.”

I reached out and took the bracelet, staring down at it in my palm as my heart ached. She'd never leave this behind. One of my worst nightmares had come true. How could we let this happen to her?

"I don't understand why we're still standing here," Bradley said. "We need to take the fight to them!"

Claude put his hand up to try to calm Bradley down.

"We can't storm over there without a plan. They'll crush us and probably punish her in response," he replied.

Cameron moved to his brother's side and nodded.

"He's right. We have to be careful about this for her sake and the baby's sake. We have to remember that she's bound to deliver any day now," he told us with a firm look on his face.

I wanted to demolish the Hornets, to strip away every bit of power they had. Maybe we didn't have as many numbers as them, but we had more strength and more drive than they ever could. People cast wary glances at us for a reason. Because we were known to stand our ground and fight for what we wanted, even if that ended with some blood spilled.

The Hornets deserved to be punished for what they just did, but I also recognized that the stakes were different this time. It wasn't just us involved in this situation, and I refused to put Aisling and our son in even more danger than they already were.

"Quiet!" I shouted, cutting off all the arguing going on around me. My gaze swept over tense, angry faces that reflected my own thoughts and worries. "I'm just as pissed off and worried as all of you are. Aisling... she... damn it."

Where did I even begin? She made me feel things that I didn't know I could even feel. Being without her felt like a damn blade to my heart, and I was going to bleed out without her. She was the most amazing woman I had ever met, and I would go to any lengths to get her back safely.

"Look, Aisling means a lot to all of us. Hell, I've even fallen in love with her, despite me trying not to," I admitted, pressure settling on my chest at the

thought.

Bradley's jaw tensed before he sighed and shook his head.

"I'm pretty sure I tried the hardest. I tried to make it seem like I didn't even want her here, but... that didn't work," he replied. "I was a goner from the start."

Gradually, the others nodded.

"I'm terrified of losing her. This all just brings me back to when I lost Hailey... how devastated I was to not be able to hold her in my arms again. I can't lose Aisling too," Cameron murmured as he lowered his eyes and shook his head. "I thought I'd never fall in love again until I met her."

Chris gripped Cameron's shoulder, letting him know that he was there for support.

"I think her coming into our lives was meant to be. I mean, you met her for a reason, Kai," Claude pointed out. "So that we could all find each other. Have the family we've all wanted."

Chris and Lincoln nodded in agreement.

The original tension in the room died down only slightly. I could feel the warmth and emotion from everyone as they all let their walls crumble, showing the most vulnerable sides of them. We had always known that we wanted a happy family life. Now that we finally had it within arm's reach, the woman we loved had been stolen away from us.

We had to remedy that. Quickly. I didn't know what the Hornets had in store for her, but I knew that they cared more about the baby she was carrying than her. If she gave birth while in their captivity, they would take the baby, but what would they do with her afterward?

Even just the thought made me sick to my stomach.

Auden turned to me with no traces of playfulness in his expression like usual.

"We're on the same boat as you. Now, what are we going to do to get our girl back?" he asked.

That was the million-dollar question. I didn't know exactly how we were going to break Aisling free, but I knew that it started with a plan and a lot of pent-up anger.

One out of two wasn't a bad place to begin.

Chapter 20

Aisling

A lightheaded feeling struck me the moment the hood was ripped off my head, my vision blurring for a second before finally focusing on what looked like a cluttered, dimly lit basement. Panic thumped through my body like a heartbeat, thundering in my head as I grounded myself to reality.

No, to this nightmare that I was somehow trapped in.

“No, no... please,” I cried to myself as I tugged on the ropes that bound my wrists to the arms of the wooden chair that I had been put in.

My head jerked up at the sound of a door opening, my eyes lifting as a man walked down a small flight of stairs in front of me. Ice blue eyes. Dark buzz cut. Tall, muscular body. He was daunting and huge as he loomed over me, shooting me a glare that told me to shut up.

“Quit your crying,” he gritted out.

“Why am I here? Who are you?” I asked, trying to keep my voice as level as possible. Telling from his leather jacket and the threat radiating from him, I had to guess that he was part of the Hornets.

“Name’s Ghoul. I’m the President of the Hornets, and the new father of the baby you’re carrying,” he said as he gestured to my stomach with a smirk on his face.

In an instant, anger burned through my fear as I glared up at him, pulling harder on the ropes and wishing that I could break free to slap him for saying something like that to me.

“Fuck. Off,” I spat, able to channel the anger I knew that the guys would feel flowing through me.

Ghoul clicked his tongue at me.

“I see they’ve rubbed off on you,” he commented.

“I naturally have a visceral reaction to assholes,” I sneered at him, unwilling to show him that I was afraid. He would only use that to his advantage.

Ghoul laughed.

“That’s adorable, but I hope you know that the motorcycle club world isn’t for you, sweetheart,” he told me in a patronizing manner that made me clench my jaw so hard that my teeth ached. “All you are is a pawn in their game. Their weak effort to outdo me and my club.”

I told myself not to listen to his harsh words, knowing that he was trying to break my spirit. He was trying to get back at the guys, and I refused to just roll over and let him bully me. I had to stand up for myself and for my son, who couldn’t fight for himself yet.

“You’re not taking my son and keeping me captive here,” I bit out, fighting the chill that tried to race up my spine when his icy eyes met mine. “If you think you’re coming out of this a winner, you’re not as smart as you give yourself credit for. Trust me!”

Ghoul tilted his head back with a cold laugh.

“Do you really think I’m keeping you after you give birth? You’ll be useless to me once you pop that baby out,” he told me, gesturing at me in a dismissive manner like he wanted to toss me aside like a piece of trash.

My stomach dropped, making me even more nauseous than I already was.

“What are you going to do to me?” I asked in a quiet voice, feeling afraid to hear the answer.

Ghoul smirked as he crossed his arms.

“I can’t have you sprinting back to the Serpents, mouthing off about what I’m doing. It’ll be easy to bury you.”

He was going to kill me. I couldn't breathe, my lungs refusing to work as I faced my fate. He was right about me not being any use to him once the baby was born. Why did I think that he was going to spare me?

"Don't," I said, unable to utter another word as my throat tightened. My eyes burned with terrified tears.

If he killed me, how could I protect my son? How could I make sure that he was taken care of and raised to be a good, strong person instead of a vile criminal like the Hornets wanted him to be? The moment he would be stripped from my arms was when a part of me would die, and I didn't know how to stop that from happening when I was at Ghoul's mercy.

It wasn't fair.

Ghoul chuckled and shook his head at me like he thought I was foolish.

"You gave me everything I ever wanted, honey. The chance to destroy my rival and to gain an heir all in one go," he told me as he leaned close to me. "I can't thank you enough."

Another wave of rage rushed through me as I glared at the man who wanted to destroy everything I loved and everything I wanted for my life and my son's life. We wouldn't ever know peace if Ghoul continued to rule the Hornets, but I couldn't even get out of this chair.

"You can shove your gratitude up your ass! If you think you're going to take my son away and raise him as your own, you're stupider than I thought. I hope the guys find you and bury *you!*" I spat at him, trying to kick my feet at him.

With a furious look on his face, Ghoul suddenly struck his hand out, slapping me across the face so hard that the sound echoed throughout the room.

My skin flared up red and stung from the impact, tears jumping to my eyes as I grimaced in pain. I should've known that he wasn't above hitting me. He was planning to kill me after all.

"That'll teach you to yell at me, bitch," Ghoul hissed, giving his hand a light shake as he stepped away from me. "You'll stay down here until that baby wants to come out. If you keep mouthing off, I'll make things ten times

worse for you. Don't try me."

"That might take days. A week!" I told him. He couldn't possibly keep me tied to this chair for that long.

Ghoul shrugged, not looking the least bit concerned about me or even the baby's health. He was putting us both at risk, and no one might end up with a baby if he kept treating me like this.

"Don't care. Get comfortable," he said with an amused smirk.

With shock running through my body, I watched him head up a small flight of stairs and leave the basement. The wooden floor above me creaked as he walked over my head, dust floating through the air. I coughed a few times, tears finally spilling down my cheeks.

I couldn't believe someone could be *that* cruel. I breathed in shakily, attempting to calm myself, but the panic rolled over me in waves. One after another.

I couldn't get out of here by myself. I wasn't an idiot. When it was time to give birth, I would do everything in my power to try to protect my son, but the future looked bleak. It felt like everything was slipping out of my grip, being ripped away by cruel men who only cared about power.

My head lowered as I sniffled and weakly pulled at my restraints again, wishing the ropes would somehow snap. How would I get out of here without getting caught, though? This was probably the Hornets' clubhouse, so there were probably multiple bikers walking around.

I didn't know what would happen if they caught me trying to escape. If I got a slap for yelling, I didn't want to imagine the punishment for making a break for it.

A shaky breath left me as pure fear gripped my heart. All I could hope for was for the guys to find me and help me, but I also didn't want them to get hurt trying to save me. I refused to let this baby be raised by anyone but them and me.

But it was becoming clearer and clearer that I might not have a choice in the matter. If I was in this alone, this might be it. I wouldn't be able to watch my

son grow up. I wouldn't be able to see if the guys loved me back. I wouldn't be able to live the life I dreamed of.

Everything would be over before it truly began.

Chapter 21

Bradley

We rode to the Hornets' clubhouse in the late afternoon, the sun slowly starting its descent behind us. I didn't want to wait until sundown because it was harder to attack at night.

Sure, it was harder for the Hornets to defend themselves in the dark, but we were stepping on their turf. They had an advantage over us, so we needed to level out the playing field as much as we could.

Putting a quarter mile between all of us, we filed down the road, making sure not to get too close to the Hornets' clubhouse, constructed from the remnants of an old bar. There was only one story from what we knew, so the Hornets didn't have that much space to hide from us.

We parked a road away from the clubhouse and headed closer on foot, slipping down an alleyway that was across the street. The smell of stale beer and wet asphalt lingered in the air as we kept our backs close to the brick wall, not wanting to be spotted from the front window of the clubhouse.

"Slow down, Bradley," Kai told me, trailing me as I led the group.

"She's right in there," I replied, shooting him a sharp look. I didn't want to slow down and let these evil bastards continue to torment her. I doubted they were serving her dinner and giving her a foot massage.

"I know, but we can't blow our cover before we even get across the street," Kai said, reflecting my stern expression. "Do you even remember the plan, or are you just operating off pure rage?"

Part of me was. I couldn't remember ever feeling so angry before, my skin

burning just from the thought of Ghoul or any of the others being around her. I couldn't stand it.

Standing here felt like I was betraying her, subjecting her to more minutes with those bastards who only saw her as an incubator for their heir. It disgusted me, and I was itching to not only save her, but to take the Hornets down too.

"We split up. One group goes through the front door. One group finds the back door. We attack at the same time. Lincoln and Claude search for her, while everyone else keeps the Hornets at bay," I reeled off the plan that we all agreed to earlier.

"You're leading the front charge, while I lead the back," Kai reminded me. "Don't make any stupid moves."

It was hard to think straight when I looked at the clubhouse, seeing the Hornets' logo on the front door and how I wanted to shatter the glass with my fist. No matter what happened today, we had to put an end to the Hornets, whether that was running them out of town or scaring them so badly that they didn't want to be within ten miles of us. They couldn't keep doing things like this.

"Hush. Someone is coming out," Auden whispered from behind Kai, pointing ahead as the front door swung open.

I gritted my teeth as I saw Ghoul stroll out of the clubhouse, lighting a cigarette and blowing a faint cloud of smoke into the air. He looked so damn smug that it made me want to punch that look right off his face.

Ghoul took his phone out and pressed it to his ear. He was a natural loudmouth, so his voice floated across the street enough for me to make out the words he was saying.

"She's a feisty one, alright. And she's about to pop. Instead of messing around with that flaky bitch, we should've been looking for an heir to steal," he laughed.

I ground my teeth, hating every single word that was coming out of his mouth. He would regret every single one of them when I got my hands on him.

“Such a shame. This one is a pretty one. Who knows how long it’ll be until she delivers? Maybe I’ll have some fun with her in the meantime,” Ghoul said with a smirk.

Every string holding my resolve together snapped. There wasn’t a thought in my head after he said those words. My body moved on its own, driven by sheer fury.

“Bradley, no!” Kai bit out, reaching out to try to grab the sleeve of my black t-shirt.

I slipped away from his grip and ran across the street, not even bothering to look and see if cars were coming. When I was close enough, I lunged at Ghoul, who dropped his phone and cigarette as I crashed into him.

A curse rang from Ghoul as we hit the ground. He kicked at me, striking my shoulder with his boot and knocking me off.

“Hornets! We’ve got company!” Ghoul shouted.

I looked up just as Hornets started pouring out of the clubhouse, my heart thundering in my chest as I realized that I was terribly outnumbered. I quickly pushed myself to my feet, preparing myself to fight as many as possible so that I could get inside and get Aisling.

“Come on!” I shouted.

It wasn’t long before Kai and Auden joined my side, followed by the other Serpents. Our cover had been blown, and our element of surprise was gone. It was us out in the open, which was never a good battle environment. There was nowhere to find cover.

Ghoul cackled as he faced off with us, flanked by his other members.

“Did you really think you could break into our clubhouse and attack us? Seriously?” he asked with a ridiculing tone. “You’re not getting anywhere near her. That baby is mine.”

“No, he’s not!” I spat, feeling Kai grab my arm as I tried to lunge forward. He wasn’t laying a finger on my son. I didn’t care what I had to do to stop him.

Ghoul looked over at Kai and smirked.

“Control your attack dog before I put all of you down,” he said.

I looked at Kai, silently pleading him to let me go, to let me rescue the woman we loved. We couldn't just give up, not when she was just inside.

Kai narrowed his eyes and pulled me back, making us all take a few steps back to retreat from the stand-off before things spiraled even more out of control.

“This isn't over,” he warned Ghoul.

Ghoul cocked an eyebrow at Kai.

“Oh, really? Let's see if you guys make it back in one piece,” he said before nodding his head toward us.

In an instant, the other Hornets ran at us, itching for us to take the bait and fight right here and now. They knew that our chance of success was strikingly low, and they wanted a quick victory.

We only had a second to decide what to do, and Kai chose for us.

“Run!” he shouted, grabbing my shirt sleeve to drag me along, knowing that I would throw myself into a fight first.

With a curse, I spun around and followed the others, hearing heavy footsteps behind us as the Hornets chased us back across the street. Realistically, I knew that we would have to catch them off-guard to beat their bigger numbers, but I hated having to flee. Having to give up.

All I could think about was Aisling and how scared she probably was, wondering if we were going to save her. I wasn't going to give up on her. Never.

But our initial plan had failed.

The Hornets stopped chasing us at the end of the alleyway. They laughed and shouted at us to taunt us as we hurried to our bikes parked on the next street over.

When I reached my bike, I had to do everything in my power not to kick it

over out of anger.

“We can’t just give up!” I shouted as the others reached their bikes.

“We won’t. We’ll just have to try again, and we’ll stick to the plan this time!” Kai told me in a sharp voice. “I get that you’re pissed off, but no more crazy stunts are going to be pulled. Her life and our son’s life are on the line, and we’re not fucking this up, understand?”

Usually, I would argue and defend myself, but I knew that I was in the wrong. I messed up, and I could’ve ruined everything. I gave him a curt nod as my teeth clenched.

“Good,” Kai murmured, fixing me with a hard look before starting his bike and tearing down the street back to our clubhouse.

“It’s okay. We’ll try again. We’re not giving up on her,” Claude said, giving my arm a nudge before following Kai.

I slammed my helmet on and started my bike, fury firing through me. The thought of running my bike right through their front door crossed my mind, but I followed the others, not wanting to do anything that might put Aisling in harm’s way even more.

I already messed things up by letting my anger get the best of me and jumping the gun. Why did I do that? Why couldn’t I control myself?

Probably because I was scared to death for Aisling. The Hornets were ruthless, and they had the opportunity to ruin us forever. Take away our son and hurt the woman we loved. It would shatter us, and I didn’t see us coming back from that.

Ever.

Somehow, we had to stop this because time was running out. The baby would be here before we knew it, which meant Aisling was on a strict time limit. Our future hung in the balance, and we had to keep it from crashing and burning.

Chapter 22

Lincoln

The plan had to change. Our failure earlier wasn't just because Bradley let his anger get the best of him. We were facing more Hornets than there were Serpents, which meant we had to break the Hornets up. We had to be even smarter.

I sat on my bike outside of the clubhouse, peering up at the bright moon as it glowed in the night sky. Round two was about to begin, and everyone had to play their parts correctly for it to work. We couldn't mess up. Not again.

"I fucked up earlier. Bad," Bradley said from my left as he shook his head at himself. "I swear I won't mess up again. I don't care if my life is on the line. I'm getting them both out of there."

"Everyone's life is on the line the moment we get into their territory," Kai replied as he adjusted his gloves. "Your anger can be a weapon if you wield it right."

Bradley narrowed his eyes as he looked ahead.

"I'm going to bring them Hell crashing down on them," he gritted out.

A satisfied look crossed Kai's face as he nodded.

"We'll all do it together," he said. "Let's get ready to go!"

"Ready?" Auden asked from my right.

I looked over at him and nodded as some of the others moved their bikes on the outer edges of the line. I had a big part in coordinating this plan, and I

took into account the safety of the guys and Aisling. That was my priority.

“Ready,” I replied before glancing down the line at the triplets. “You guys ready to go?”

They all nodded. Chris checked his watch.

“The Hornets run a patrol around this time. We’ll intercept them while they’re away from the clubhouse,” Chris told me.

I nodded.

“The rest of us will go to the clubhouse and deal with whoever was left behind to watch Aisling. They won’t expect us to double back and attack so soon, so we have an advantage. This might be our last chance of having one,” I said. “Bradley, are you sure you’re good to go?”

Bradley had a stony look on his face, but he nodded.

“Been ready,” he told me.

I wasn’t worried about him falling out of line again. We all knew what we had to do now, and we weren’t going to deviate from the plan.

“Let’s go,” I replied, starting my bike and riding away from our clubhouse.

The triplets separated from the group, heading off to distract the Hornets sent out on patrol of their area.

Instead of coming from the front like we did last time, we decided to park toward the back of the clubhouse and approach on foot from there.

Kai took the lead and led us across the street to the back of the Hornets’ clubhouse, keeping to the shadows to hide us from plain sight better. The darkness of night certainly helped.

Kai made us pause once we reached the back of the building. He crept closer to the back door and listened for a few seconds.

“I hear a few talking,” he whispered to me.

I relayed the message down the line so that everyone could be updated about what we were facing. We wouldn’t know exactly how many Hornets we had

to face until we got inside, but that was a risk that we would have to take.

“We’ll have to hit them hard and fast,” I told Kai. “While some Hornets are gone. Our odds are better now.”

Kai nodded in agreement.

“Tell the others to get ready. We’re going in,” he said in a determined voice.

I nodded and passed the message down, watching everyone tense up and get ready to move quickly. I patted Kai on the shoulder, letting him know that we were ready to go. Hell, more than ready. I wanted Aisling back in our arms as soon as possible.

Kai breathed in deeply before yanking the door open and storming inside of the clubhouse, which was only lit up by a flatscreen television playing a UFC fight. How ironic.

“What the fuck!” a Hornet shouted as three of them sprung off the couch.

Kai ran at the first one that reached him, driving his shoulder against the Hornet’s chest to knock him onto his back.

“Bradley, look for her!” he yelled.

I watched Bradley dart past me to start looking for wherever they’d hid Aisling, leaving me to have his back. When a Hornet came running our way, I struck at him, hitting him in the face to stun him. I heard Bradley opening and slamming doors shut as he checked every room behind me.

“I can’t find her!” he shouted, sounding frustrated.

“Keep looking!” Auden yelled back before groaning as he took a punch to the stomach.

Kai slammed the Hornet he was fighting against a nearby door, knocking him out cold. He ran over to Auden to help assist, leaving me and Hayden to subdue the other two Hornets.

One on one fighting or even one on two was doable for us. We had all done enough fighting in our days to be able to take a few hits and dish out double the amount. After a few punches, my knuckles faintly ached, but the

adrenaline blocked out most of the pain. They had to be close.

“That’s for taking her, you son of a bitch!” Hayden gritted out before punching the last conscious Hornet, knocking his lights out. He let the Hornet slump to the ground like the others who littered the wooden floor.

“Where the fuck is she?” Bradley bit out in frustration as he looked around the old clubhouse for her. “This place is a shithole. How could they hide her in a place like this?”

Kai suddenly lifted his finger.

“Wait. Be quiet. Listen,” he said.

I strained my ears as silence fell upon us. At first, I thought Kai was hearing things, but I started to hear a subtle voice. Aisling’s voice.

“Wait...” I murmured before lowering myself down to my knees. I pressed my ear against the wooden floor.

“Help! I’m down here!”

My eyes widened at the sound of her voice.

“She’s below us!” I shouted, wanting her to know that we heard her.

“I didn’t see a basement door. It must be hidden,” Bradley said as we all crouched down.

“Hold on, Aisling! We’re coming!” Hayden shouted to her.

“We don’t have time to look for secret doors. We need to break through the floor,” Kai replied as he grabbed a bat hanging up on a wall of sports decorations. He slammed it against the wood, making it shatter and splinter.

“Close your eyes, Aisling!”

Me and the others started pulling at the wooden boards, my muscles straining as the wood snapped.

My face grew hot from the exertion, sweat threatening to bead on my forehead as we desperately fought our way to her. With one final grunt, I dug my fingertips into the edge of the last board in the way and yanked it upward, nearly reeling back as it splintered.

“There she is!” Bradley gasped.

I tossed the board aside and peered down through the gap in the floor at a small basement full of clutter and, most importantly, Aisling.

“I’m here! I can’t move!” Aisling called out, sounding choked up.

“She’s tied up,” I said, seeing that her wrists are bound to the chair arms by ropes. I couldn’t believe those sick sons of bitches tied down a pregnant woman like that. What was wrong with them!

“We’re going to get you out. Don’t move!” Hayden told her before glancing at us. “We don’t know how hurt she is.”

“I’ll jump down and get her. I’ll have to haul her up to you guys,” Bradley told us before easing himself down through the hole we ripped open. He landed heavy on his feet with a thump, but he wasn’t even jarred from the drop. He knelt in front of Aisling, cupping her face as she cried. “Hey, it’s okay. We’re getting you out of here.”

My chest ached at seeing her so scared, bordering on broken. The Hornets tried to shatter her, but they wouldn’t ever lay eyes on her again.

Bradley untied the ropes from around Aisling’s wrists, and she threw her arms around his neck the second that she was free. He hugged her back, brushing his hand over her hair.

“I’m not going to let you go for a single second when we get back, but we have to get out of here, okay?” he told her.

Aisling sniffled and nodded. She then looked up and spotted me, giving me a relieved smile that threatened to melt me. As Bradley lifted her up on his shoulders, she reached up to me.

With Kai and Hayden grabbing hold of me so that I didn’t topple down through the hole, I grabbed Aisling’s arms and pulled her up toward me, my muscles straining slightly as I carefully brought her up.

“I’ve got you,” I promised her, feeling her arms wind around my sides. I let the guys pull me back onto the floor with Aisling on top of me.

Kai, Hayden, and Auden knelt beside me, checking on both of us.

“Everyone good?” Hayden asked.

“Not me! I’m stuck down here!” Bradley called from the basement.

Despite tears glistening in her eyes, Aisling smiled a little.

“Someone get him,” she said.

Auden kissed her on the forehead before helping Bradley out of the basement.

“Are you okay?” Kai asked her as he leaned close, inspecting her closely. He then frowned. “Why is your cheek so red? It almost looks swollen.”

Aisling swallowed hard.

“Ghoul slapped me,” she said.

Silence rang throughout the clubhouse at first as everyone processed her words. Then, all hell broke loose.

“He what?”

“I’m going to cut that motherfucker’s hand off!”

“He’s lucky he went on patrol tonight!”

Aisling grabbed Kai’s hand.

“I want to leave. I want to go home,” she said with a pleading look on her face.

Kai’s anger simmered down a little as he nodded.

“Let’s go,” he replied, helping me and Aisling to our feet. He then picked Aisling up bridal style, holding her close to his chest. “You’ll ride with me.”

“Hold on. I’m not done with these bastards,” Bradley said with narrowed eyes. He glanced around before heading out to the joined garage, soon walking back in with a container of gas. “I’m burning this place down. Drag the unconscious ones outside.”

No one argued.

The Hornets deserved even worse than that, but we were on a time limit. The other Hornets had to be coming back soon because the triplets could only distract them for so long. Hayden, Auden, and I dragged the unconscious Hornets outside and across the street, while Bradley poured gasoline all over the inside of the clubhouse.

Kai carried Aisling outside, standing next to us as Bradley finally walked out.

“She should do it,” Kai said with fire in his eyes. He looked down at Aisling. “Want to?”

Despite being tired and weak from all she had been through, Aisling’s face hardened with determination as she nodded. She walked across the street to Bradley and held her hand out once he took a lighter out of his pocket.

“Let me. After all they did to me... our son... us,” Aisling said.

It looked like Bradley fell in love with her all over again as he handed the lighter over to her. If it hadn’t been clear before that she was one of us, there was no questioning that now.

Aisling flicked on the flame, staring at it for a few seconds before tossing the lighter into the foyer. Flames immediately spread throughout the inside, growing with a roar.

Bradley took her hand and led her away from the clubhouse as it steadily started to burn, smoke starting to roll out of the open front door.

“Serves them right for messing with us,” Bradley spat.

I smirked a little as I watched more flames erupt, steadily destroying the Hornets’ safe haven. They wouldn’t recover from this. We would make sure of that.

“I hear bikes,” Hayden said, prompting us to hurry down the street that was to the left of the burning clubhouse. We only paused to see Ghoul and the other Hornets stop their bikes on the road in front of their clubhouse, looks of shock filling their faces.

Ghoul almost stumbled like his knees were about to give out. He looked over to the left and spotted us, rage breaking across his face when he saw that we

had Aisling. He knew who did this to his clubhouse.

With a smirk, Bradley flipped him off before we all hurried back to our bikes. The fighting was over. The Hornets had lost their heir, their clubhouse, and their strong reputation all in one night.

“Thank you for saving me,” Aisling told us once we made it back to our bikes. She swallowed hard before smiling. “You guys and the baby were all I could think about.”

“We didn’t forget about you for a second,” I promised her as I gently brushed a strand of her hair out of her face. “Now, let’s get you back home.”

“Where you belong,” Kai added, coaxing grins onto the others’ faces.

I couldn’t agree more.

Chapter 23

Aisling

I felt like I could finally let out a sigh of relief the moment Kai carried me into the clubhouse, weight dropping from my shoulders.

Just thinking about being back with the men I had fallen for choked me up, but I needed to figure out a way to properly speak so that I could admit my feelings for them. It was time.

Maybe part of me was scared that something bad would happen that would prevent me from telling them the truth.

For a minute there, I thought that I was doomed and wouldn't ever see them again. I thought my son would be taken away and that I would be buried six feet under without anyone knowing.

My heroes came to my rescue, though. They brought me back home, and there were no words to explain how grateful I was for them. They fought for me, making me somehow fall even deeper in love with them than I already was. They just made the impossible possible somehow.

Kai set me down on my bed, and the other seven guys filled my bedroom, surrounding me on all sides as I carefully sat up straight.

“Are you sure you're okay? Do you need to go to the hospital?” Kai asked me as he crouched in front of me.

I smiled and gently patted his cheek.

“I feel okay. I promise I'll go get checked out soon, but I just want to rest right now and be with you guys. It feels like we've been apart for days

instead of hours,” I told him as my eyes swept over everyone. I could feel them inspecting me, making sure that I wasn’t hurt. It was sweet, my cheeks warming up from the amount of care.

“We’re glad to have you back,” Lincoln told me from my right. “We weren’t going to give up until you were safe.”

My heart ached in awe.

“I... wow... every time I try to say these words I just want to bawl,” I said with a light laugh as my eyes started to burn.

I cleared my throat to try again, letting the words fly before I chickened out and lost my chance.

“I love you. All of you. I know that wasn’t planned or discussed, but I almost lost you tonight. I almost lost everything, so I’m going to be honest. I just want you guys to know that.”

When silence met my words, I almost wanted to run and hide, wondering if I just blurted out my feelings only to be rejected. What a devastating end to an already hard day.

Kai suddenly placed his hands on my thighs as he smiled up at me. That was a really nice sight.

“We should’ve been honest earlier, but we love you too,” he said before glancing around at everyone, who nodded in agreement. “We have for a while.”

“You’re part of our family,” Claude added from my right, reaching out to place his hand on my shoulder.

“Just like our son,” Bradley said.

“And we don’t want you to go after a year is up. We want you to stay for as long as you want,” Hayden told me with a hopeful glint in his eyes.

“Hopefully, that’s forever,” Cameron chuckled.

“You don’t have to decide now, but that’s where we’re at,” Kai told me.

Tears spilled down my cheeks as I nodded happily.

“I’d love to stay with you guys. It’s all I want,” I said, barely able to get the words out because my throat tightened so much.

As they all came close to hug me and leave kisses on me, my body automatically started to warm up and long for more touches. I had been so lonely and cold without them that I was dying to be as close to them as possible.

“Actually, there’s something else I want,” I told them.

“What’s that?” Auden asked.

I looked between all of them with a flushed face and darkening eyes.

“You. All of you,” I replied. When they peered at me with confused looks, I slipped my shirt off, letting my hair tumble down my shoulders and back. “Now.”

That clued them in.

“You don’t have to ask twice,” Chris assured me.

I lay on my back, sinking into the comfort of the mattress as Claude and Auden helped take my bra off, while Kai and Chris worked off my stretchy leggings and panties. I could only move so much this far into my pregnancy, but they were so patient and attentive, doing all of the work for me.

“You’re so beautiful,” Lincoln told me as he crouched on the bed to my left. His fingertips gently brushed my sore cheek, anger burning in his eyes until I leaned up and kissed him to calm him.

These wounds were temporary, but what I felt for them was something that would last forever.

It wasn’t long before I felt Bradley’s lips on my shoulder and the other side of my neck, drawing a moan from me.

I reached out for both of them, feeling their hands guide mine to their erections. While I stroked them, I felt someone settle between my thighs, followed by the swipe of a talented tongue. I gasped and broke from my kiss to look down at Hayden as he buried himself between my thighs.

“I know how sweet you taste,” Chris said as he reached over to caress one of my breasts, while Cameron rolled my other nipple between his fingertips.

“And how good you feel,” Bradley told me as he rocked into my grip.

I moaned in bliss as I was touched all over, my body humming with heat and sensitivity. They were so good at pleasing me that it didn’t take long for my first orgasm to crest.

Hayden dragged his tongue across my clit over and over, nudging me right off the edge. As I came, he held me down, licking me through my orgasm before backing away for Kai to take his place.

“Just getting started, baby,” Kai said as he worked a finger inside of me, pushing it in deep before adding another.

Desperate for another orgasm, I worked Bradley’s and Lincoln’s cocks even better, stroking them from base to tip. Between my strokes and their thrusts, they didn’t last long either, riding high off adrenaline and desire. They released onto my hands, prompting me to lick up the white lines.

“Dirty girl,” Bradley said, nearly growling the words.

I smiled in bliss before a moan broke from my lips as Kai thrust into me, burying himself to the hilt. I tilted my head, my eyes fluttering shut as he rocked into me.

The triplets surrounded me, teasing my clit and my breasts as I alternated stroking them. I turned my head and parted my lips to wrap them around Cameron’s cock, working up and down his length.

“So good. How do you always feel so good?” Cameron groaned as he buried his fingers in my hair.

Kai watched his cock disappear inside of me over and over, only pulling out to let Auden take his place so that they could alternate.

I was on cloud nine at that point, my head spinning from the pleasure.

They were somehow everywhere at once. Touching me. Thrusting into me. Pleasing me.

They started to blur together, becoming one unit intent on bringing me over the edge again and again.

“You’re already close again. Come for us, angel,” Auden told me as he took his turn, pounding into me. He pressed his thumb against my clit as Chris and Claude grasped my breasts, making me come undone with a muffled cry as Cameron thrust into my mouth.

“Good girl,” Auden chuckled, only thrusting a few more times before spilling inside of me. He released a slow exhale before backing away to catch his breath.

Kai took his place and went right into a deep, heavy pace, barely giving me a second to recover before filling me with pleasure again.

“Fuck. I won’t last,” he gritted out, his hand brushing over my stomach in a loving manner before he released with a grunt.

I could only whimper, so hot and sensitive to the touch. I hadn’t ever felt this much euphoria before, and it wasn’t over yet. I was turned onto my side so that Claude could lay behind me, his cock slipping into me.

Claude rested his hand on my stomach almost protectively, holding me against him as he thrust into me. He kissed the back of my shoulder and brushed his fingers through my hair.

“You’re so perfect. So right for us,” he breathed out. “We can’t get enough of you.”

“Never,” Chris murmured in a low voice as I continued stroking him.

Cameron managed a few more shallow thrusts into my mouth before he released, leaning his head back with a groan. When I took him all, he collapsed back on the mattress with a tired grin on his face.

“Amazing girl,” he said.

“Understatement,” Chris replied as he rocked into my grip. “More than amazing.”

“Incredible,” Claude added as he snapped his hips against me. “How about one more, beautiful? Can you come one more time?”

“She has it in her,” Bradley said from across the room as he gathered himself.

Moans spilled from me as Claude took that as a challenge, pounding into me from behind. It was too good of a show for Chris to last, and he came hard, spilling on my breasts before drawing away.

All I could do was grip the bed sheets as another wave of pleasure arched right over me before crashing down. I shuddered through my final orgasm, stars exploding in my vision.

“Oh!” I let out a gasp as Claude slammed home one more time to spill inside of me.

Claude kept me in his arms for another minute, letting me catch my breath before releasing me.

“We all need to shower,” he chuckled as he helped me sit up.

I glanced around the room, seeing winded, happy guys. My heart fluttered, and I couldn’t begin to explain how happy I was to be with them again. Officially.

“Me first,” I said.

Auden laughed and took my hand to help me up.

The minute I stood, I suddenly felt wetness coat my thighs and down my legs.

“Woah!” I said, freezing in place as I looked down at the sight.

“What’s wrong?” Bradley asked, jumping up like he was ready to go to war.

With wide eyes, I looked up at them.

“My water broke!”

Chapter 24

Claude

I wasn't the type to panic. Truly. I was the mediator of the club for a reason because I could keep a level head, but when Aisling told us that our water broke, I lost every sane thought in my head.

"What do we do? We go to the hospital now, right?" I demanded as I hurried to Aisling's side, taking her arm to help steady her.

Aisling was reeling from shock, but she managed to nod.

"Yeah, we need to go. I didn't think this would happen today. He's early!" she said as she looked between everyone.

"Is he too early?" Hayden asked as a look of worry filled his face.

"There's no time for questions. We need to get her to the hospital and to a doctor! Someone call a cab!" Kai ordered, motioning for everyone to get moving.

I helped Cameron find some clothes for Aisling, deciding on a pair of stretchy pants and a loose shirt that I was pretty sure was mine. We helped Aisling get dressed, asking if she was okay enough times for her to shoot us a pointed look. It was time to shut up and get moving.

"Alright, let's go!" I called out.

Kai took Aisling's hand and led her out to the taxi that was waiting for us.

"It's okay. I'm right here," he told her as her face started to get pale.

I followed them and helped Aisling get into the backseat while Kai ran

around to the other side to get in, reaching across to buckle her in. I rubbed her back and kissed her on the temple before shutting the door and slapping the top of the car.

“Go!”

As the taxi sped off, I hurried to my bike and followed the others as we trailed the car all the way to the hospital. My heart seemed to race faster and faster the closer we got, and realization hit me hard. Our son was about to be born.

“Holy shit,” I murmured as I parked next to Auden.

Tearing off my helmet, I rushed into the hospital with the others, catching a glimpse of Aisling as a few nurses swarmed her to take her back into labor and delivery.

“Wait here, please. We’ll send someone to update you soon,” one of the nurses told us, keeping us from following as they wheeled Aisling into the back.

I frowned in worry as I heard Aisling’s groans of pain. She must’ve been having contractions.

“I hope we didn’t do anything wrong,” I told the others, cold sweat threatening to break out on my forehead.

Bradley ran his fingers through his hair in a stressed manner.

“He wasn’t supposed to be born this early. I know babies come out when they want to, but he still had more than a week left,” he said. “Did the stress do it? The sex?”

We all stood in the waiting area, unable to relax enough to take a seat. Every time we saw a nurse, we perked up, thinking we were about to be told answers, only for the nurse to walk past us. Time felt so agonizingly slow.

Things weren’t supposed to happen like this. The baby was supposed to come on the twelfth, and we all planned to take her to the hospital with a packed bag and a rotating schedule of who was going to be in her room and by her side at a time. We had a whole plan.

But we couldn't plan life.

I still imagined a happy, exciting future for my growing family, though. I saw us going on rides together. Teaching our son how to ride. Sharing big family dinners together. Our love for Aisling growing deeper and deeper as time passed.

That was what I imagined, and I held on to that dream tighter and tighter with each tense minute that passed by.

"We should've heard something by now. What if something is wrong?" Chris asked as he paced between the rows of chairs.

"Wait, here's another nurse coming," Cameron said, motioning to an older nurse who seemed to be heading right toward us.

We all gravitated toward her.

"How's Aisling?"

"Is she okay?"

"Is the baby fine?"

The nurse put her hands up to quiet us down so that she could speak.

"The baby became breeched during labor. We had to take Aisling into emergency surgery where she currently is now," she explained.

My knees felt weak for a moment, making me grab Lincoln's shoulder for support.

Lincoln grabbed my shirt in response, seeming lightheaded too.

"Breeched. I read about that, but I can't... my brain isn't working," Kai muttered in a frustrated manner. "What does that mean again?"

"The baby's feet come out first. They're supposed to come out headfirst," the nurse said. "Natural childbirth is risky when the baby is breeched, so an emergency c-section is recommended."

"Will Aisling be okay?" Hayden asked.

“She was in some distress before being put under, but we’re carefully monitoring her. When we have an update, the doctor will talk to you,” the nurse replied before hurrying off.

At first, no one said anything. We were too stunned, not expecting this sudden turn of events. We’d just rescued Aisling from the Hornets, thinking that the worst is over. Now, we were finding out that Aisling and our son were at risk again.

This time, we couldn’t do anything, though. That was the worst part. All we could do was stand there and hope that we received good news.

“She’ll be okay. We have to be optimistic,” Cameron told me as he patted me on the back.

I looked at him, able to see how haunted his eyes were. He was just as terrified as the rest of us.

“What if she won’t be okay? What if we lose them both?” I asked, hardly able to even get the words out.

Cameron couldn’t speak. He merely retreated to one of the chairs, sinking down with his head bowed.

The others followed suit, feeling too dazed and shocked to keep standing. We sat in silence, unable to even comfort each other because the situation was so shocking and dire. How did this happen? How did everything feel okay one moment and then turn into disaster the next?

Minutes turned into hours. At three hours, a middle-aged doctor strode into the waiting area, glancing around.

“Who’s here for Aisling?” he asked.

All eight of us sprung up to our feet, nearly bumping into each other as we hurried over to the doctor, whose expression was completely unreadable.

“Are they okay?” Kai asked him, looking as tired and stressed as the rest of us.

“Please, follow me,” the doctor said before turning and walking back down the hallway he came from.

I shared a horrified look with Auden, feeling my stomach sink. That fantasy of our incredible future together started to lose its vibrant color, fading darker and darker as shocked silence surrounded us. I couldn't even move at first, not wanting to see my nightmare come to life.

I didn't want to see her pale and cold. Still. Gone.

"Come on. We have to see her," Chris told me with a worried look on his face. We had to do this. No matter what awaited us.

With a nod, I followed the others as we trailed the doctor, walking right toward the terrifying unknown.

Chapter 25

Kai

With every step I took down the hallway, it felt like I was about to fall to pieces more and more.

The doctor's response wasn't promising, but I didn't ask him questions. I wanted to see what happened to Aisling with my own eyes.

I didn't think that we would ever end up here. Our story wasn't traditional in the slightest, but I believed that was what made it so special. We went from a hook-up to a business arrangement to so much more.

Lovers. Parents. Family.

Lust bloomed into love, and she broke down my protective walls with every smile and sweet kiss.

I knew she was special from the moment we met at that club, and when she showed up with the news that she was pregnant with my baby, I knew that everything was going to change.

I just had no idea that things would lead to this point where I was in love and terrified that I'd just lost her and possibly my son.

My throat tightened as the doctor stepped into one of the hospital rooms, moving to the side so that we could approach. I stepped past the curtain and released a sharp exhale when I saw Aisling in bed, looking exhausted and a bit pale, with a baby boy swaddled in her arms.

"Aisling..." I murmured, feeling able to properly breathe again as I moved to her side.

The others piled in, surrounding her bed with looks of awe and relief as we checked her over.

“Are you okay?” Bradley asked from the other side, reaching out to gently brush her damp hair back from her face.

Aisling smiled and nodded.

“Feels like I just ran a marathon and then got hit by a truck at the finish line, but I made it,” she laughed weakly before looking down at the small baby in her arms. “Isn’t he perfect?”

“He is,” Chris said as he caressed her feet through the hospital sheets. “And you are too. You did amazing.”

“We were worried about you,” Claude told her as he squeezed her knee. “They couldn’t tell us much.”

Aisling looked around at us as she listened.

“I was scared too, especially when they said he was breeched,” she said. “I told them to do whatever they could to deliver him safely. All I cared about was making sure he was okay.”

She was as brave as ever. I admired her endlessly, and she looked so beautiful and strong right now with our son in her arms. Damn it, I loved this woman so much.

“Can I hold him?” I asked her, not wanting to take him away from her too soon. She went through so much to get him here.

Aisling flashed me a playfully pointed look.

“He’s your son. All of yours,” she reminded me before gently handing him to me.

My eyes widened as I realized just how small he was. He barely weighed a thing. I held him against my chest, automatically rocking a little as I gazed down at his peaceful face and button nose. He got Aisling’s nose. Thank goodness.

“He’s... perfect,” I murmured, unable to take my eyes off him. He was the

reason for so many great things that happened during the last nine months. Now, we got to look forward to so many more years of good memories.

Aisling reached out and rubbed my arm.

“Now, you can’t be grumpy,” she warned me, shooting me a playful smile. “I mean, come on. Who can be grumpy in front of that little face?”

I chuckled and shook my head.

“No one,” I replied, happiness radiating throughout my chest like warm waves. I didn’t want to let him go, but I handed him to Auden so that everyone could have a turn to hold our son.

“What’s his name? We didn’t ever decide on one,” Lincoln asked once it was his turn. He glanced between everyone with a sheepish smile on his face, gently rocking our son.

“I actually had an idea. Well, I don’t know if it’s any good since I was still reeling from the high of a very strong anaesthetic, but maybe it’s fitting,” Aisling spoke up, coaxing chuckles from us. “What about Adder? He’ll be the future leader of the Iron Serpents.”

I could only stare at her in awe. That was perfect.

“Have any of us told you that you’re amazing?” I asked her.

Aisling feigned a thoughtful look.

“I don’t think so,” she said before laughing. “Do you guys like that?”

“It’s perfect,” Claude told her once Lincoln handed Adder over to him.

Aisling reached out and took my hand as I came closer to her side.

“Then, his name is Adder, heir to the Iron Serpents,” she murmured.

I leaned down and pressed a lingering kiss against her lips, needing her to know how happy I was right now. It felt like every missing piece of my life finally fell into place. I was complete.

“Stay with us forever,” I told her.

Aisling nodded.

“Forever,” she promised before glancing at Adder as the triplets cooed at him and gently touched his tiny hands. “He’s so loved. So safe with you guys.”

“With you too,” I replied as our eyes met. “You’re one of the strongest people that I know. Adder is safe and healthy because of you.”

“I’m alive because of you guys,” Aisling reminded me.

“That just shows that we’re all better together,” I said, sharing a warm look with her. We were happier with her in our lives, and I was determined to put a smile on her face every single day for the rest of her life.

After a few minutes of visiting, the doctor walked over.

“How are we feeling?” he asked Aisling.

“Good. Mostly tired,” Aisling replied, squeezing my hand as I remained by her side.

“When can they go home?” Auden asked the doctor.

“Tomorrow. We want to keep her overnight to keep an eye on her,” the doctor said. “But you should be fine to go home with your baby tomorrow.”

Aisling let out a sigh of relief.

“Good. I want to be back in my PJ’s. This hospital gown isn’t it,” she replied.

The doctor chuckled a little before leaving to talk to the nurse.

Chris smirked at Aisling.

“Not happy with your accommodations, princess?” he teased her.

“I heard the Jell-O is good,” Aisling replied with a light laugh. “I guess I’ll test that later.”

“If you need anything, let us know. We’ll go get it,” Lincoln told her.

“All I want is my family with me,” Aisling told us before Bradley placed Adder back in her arms. She smiled down at our son, lightly stroking his little nose. She swallowed hard with teary eyes. “This is all I want. You guys and

him.”

My world was right here in this room.

Without my family, I was nothing, and I would do anything in my power to protect them.

Our biggest threat was taken down tonight, and the future of our club was secure. Hopefully, peace was ahead, and we didn't have any more dangerous surprises lurking around the corner.

I was ready to just be happy with my family.

“We're not going anywhere,” Hayden assured her as he rubbed her shoulder. “Nothing will change that.”

Aisling gave everyone a grateful smile and nodded, blinking away her happy tears to the best of her ability.

“I just love you guys so much that I'm afraid to lose you. You're the best thing that has ever happened to me,” she said before looking down at Adder. “We have the perfect son because of you guys.”

Adder was going to be incredible. He would be strong, smart, brave, and caring. A mixture of the best of everyone.

I couldn't wait to watch him grow into his own person, bringing his own strengths to the Iron Serpents. I wouldn't mind him becoming an older brother down the road either.

“You should rest now. We'll watch Adder,” I told her as I stroked her hair, knowing that she was exhausted. I could tell from how her eyelids kept fluttering from being so heavy.

“Thank you,” Aisling said before handing Adder over to Chris. She then sank into the pillows, gazing up at me with a tired smile. “I love you. All of you.”

“We love you too,” I told her, leaning down to kiss her forehead just as her eyes fluttered shut.

I pulled back, and we all quietly got situated, taking turns holding Adder and heading out into the hallway if we wanted to talk.

She deserved rest, and we weren't going to stop taking care of her just because the baby was born. We were going to look after her for as long as she was with us.

And the plan was forever.

Chapter 26

Aisling

It didn't take me long to figure out that having eight guys to help take care of Adder was the best thing ever.

Rubbing my eyes sleepily, I wandered out of the bathroom after taking a much-needed shower, passing by my room to see Hayden standing over Adder's crib.

Hearing a tough biker making cooing noises made me smile, and I crept past my room to keep from disturbing them.

I still didn't get as much sleep as I used to because Adder was a loud crier, but it was great knowing that I didn't have to get up every time. We all worked on a rotation basis, helping the other out, whether we were feeding, burping, changing, bathing, or putting Adder to sleep. We were a team through and through, and that was the only reason why I was surviving the early stages of parenthood.

It was a lot of work! Even with nine people.

But I was happier than ever. I swore I was glowing as I walked into the main part of the clubhouse, catching Kai laying on the couch with a book in his hands. The cover was facing me as I approached, and I realized that it was a parenting book.

"Macho Biker Man is reading a parenting book?" I teased him as I straddled his lap.

Kai smirked as he put his book to the side, peering up at me with a grin on his face.

“I’ll admit that I don’t know everything,” he said.

I ran my hands up his strong chest and cupped his face.

“I think it’s sweet you’re reading about parenthood. It’s quite an adventure, huh?” I asked him.

Kai laughed as he caressed my thighs.

“That’s an understatement. The scariest, most exciting adventure ever,” he replied.

“Well, I’m glad all of you guys are in it with me. Speaking of the others, they better get back from the store soon. Madison and Chloe will be here in an hour,” I said, my heart skipping with excitement.

This would be the first time that I got to see my best friend and my niece since I gave birth, and I was so excited for Madison to meet the men that I had fallen in love with.

“They’ll be here any minute now. What are you having Chris cook for dinner?” Kai asked, gazing up at me in a manner that made my stomach flip. It was like he had love shining in his eyes. Like he didn’t want to ever take his eyes off me.

I had never felt so loved before in my life.

The guys were so attentive and sweet, checking on me and taking over for me so that I could rest. It had taken me a little while to recover from everything, but I didn’t have to worry about a single thing because they took care of everything for me. No matter what, I could rely on them.

“He swore up and down that he could make a mean lasagna, so I’m holding him to that,” I said with a soft laugh. Chris could pull off anything.

“Best lasagna ever,” Kai assured me before wrapping his arms around me and surging upward to kiss me.

I smiled into the kiss, cupping his face and reveling in every brush of our lips. I was so glad that I never had to leave, that they would be mine and I would be theirs forever. This place truly felt like home to me, and they truly felt like

a family to me.

Everything that I used to lack in my life... I finally had.

A minute into making out, the front door of the clubhouse swung open, and the other six guys poured inside with bags of groceries in their hands.

“Woah, get a room, you two,” Auden laughed.

I pulled away from Kai, playfully rolling my eyes at Auden before climbing off the couch. I wandered over to the others, giving them brief embraces and pecks before they headed to the kitchen. Chris was last, and I made sure to give him an extra tight hug.

“Thank you for cooking dinner for everyone,” I told him.

Chris chuckled as he rubbed my lower back.

“I hope our guests like my food,” he said.

I flashed him a pointed look.

“Everyone loves your food,” I reminded him.

“We’ll see,” Chris replied, shooting me a wink before following the others into the kitchen so that he could get started on arranging the layers for the lasagna.

While dinner was prepared, and some of the other guys focused on tidying up the place, I focused on getting me and Adder ready for company.

I slipped on the cutest onesie that had a motorcycle in the middle, along with the words “Daddy’s Future Riding Buddy,” which made me smile. Adder had eight daddies, and he was loved by every single one of them.

I cradled Adder against my chest as I listened to his dad’s laugh from the main area as they set the table.

“You’re the most loved baby in the world,” I told him as I smiled down at his adorable face. He had the chubbiest cheeks and the biggest eyes. His hair was blonde like Kai’s, but he had my eyes. I couldn’t wait to see what traits he picked up from the others.

He was truly a product of love and adventure. The start of his life was so hectic, and he was almost stolen away from his own family. Thankfully, the Hornets weren't a problem any longer. Last I heard, they disbanded after having their clubhouse destroyed and having no heir, which was a relief.

We could finally live our lives in peace, and I was determined to make the most of every second.

When I heard a knock from the front door, I hurried out of my room just as Kai let Madison and Chloe inside.

"You're here!" I gasped.

Madison smiled at Kai in a grateful manner before leading Chloe over to me.

"Aw, he's precious! Chloe, this is Adder," she told Chloe, who had gotten so big. Her hair was longer, and she had grown a few inches already.

Chloe smiled at Adder, gently touching his little hand.

"He's so cute!" she said. "Can I hold him?"

"Absolutely. Come sit over here," I told her, motioning for her to take a seat on the couch. I showed her how to position her arms before placing Adder in them, watching her for a moment with a look of awe on my face before turning to Madison. "Thank you for coming."

"Of course! Thanks for inviting us to dinner," Madison replied as she gave me a tight hug. "You look great!"

I shot her a pointed look in a playful manner.

"You don't have to lie," I teased her.

Madison smirked and bumped her hip against mine.

"Well, come on. Introduce me to all your lovers," she laughed.

I shared her laughter as I looped my arm with hers, taking her over to the guys as they waited by the dining table with almost nervous smiles on their faces. They were so insistent on making sure my best friend liked them, which I thought was so sweet.

“Guys, this is Madison. She’s been my best friend since forever,” I told them before stepping to the side so that they could all individually introduce themselves to Madison and shake her hand.

Kai was last.

“It’s nice to finally meet you. Aisling has told us a lot about you,” he said as he shot a smile at me. “As well as your own lovers.”

An amused look filled Madison’s face.

“What can I say? I guess just one isn’t enough,” she replied before giving my arm to squeeze. “Aisling has always had a lot of love to give. I’m glad she found you guys.”

I gravitated to the guys, slipping between Claude and Bradley as they put their arms around me.

“I’m glad too. I never thought I’d have a family this big, but I’m happier than I’ve ever been before,” I admitted, being struck with a jolt of emotion.

Bradley kissed me on the head.

“Our family can be as big as you want it to be,” he said.

I lifted an eyebrow at him as my cheeks warmed up. Now, that was something to definitely think about in the future.

“Food is ready if you guys are,” Chris announced.

“Absolutely! It smells amazing,” Madison said with an eager nod.

After taking Adder from Chloe and putting him in his seat between me and Cameron, I got settled at the dining table as Chris and Claude brought out a huge pan of lasagna, a bowl of garden salad, and a basket of garlic bread. Wine and grape juice was served all around.

As expected, Chris did an incredible job, and the flavors were so savory and meaty. I quickly cleared off a whole plate and two pieces of garlic bread, along with a small salad on the side.

The guys talked about an event that they were attending next month, which was a ride for breast cancer awareness, while Madison talked about a tattoo

expedition that her guys were doing soon that she would be attending for fun.

Everyone had so much going on in their lives. Even Chloe had a lot going on because she was going to start soccer soon.

I took a moment and just smiled to myself as I listened to everyone talk about how happy they were and how optimistic they were about the future.

This was the life that I had always wanted.

I didn't even know that when I was younger because I didn't know what having a family even felt like. I didn't know that it would be this warm and bright and comforting.

This was true paradise, and it was finally mine.

"Chris, dinner was amazing," Madison said once we all finished up.

"Ha! I win!" Chloe cried out in excitement when she won another round of rock, paper, scissors against Bradley.

"I think we have a rock, paper, scissors champion here," Bradley said, giving Chloe a high-five before everyone got up from the table.

"My pleasure. Be sure to send that pie recipe to Aisling. I'll definitely give it a try," Chris told Madison as we all started to gravitate toward the front door.

"I'll take Adder to his crib," Lincoln told me, pecking me on the cheek before telling Chloe and Madison goodbye.

"Tell everyone bye," Madison told Chloe, who gave everyone high-fives. Madison smiled and waved bye to everyone before I walked her out to her car. Once Chloe was inside, she turned to me and gave me a hug. "I'm really happy for you, Aisling."

"Thank you. They're great, aren't they?" I asked as I squeezed her back.

Madison nodded.

"They're perfect for you," she said before pulling back and smiling at me. "They spoil the hell out of you. I bet you're eating up all that attention."

I laughed, my head tilting back.

“You know it. I’m just... so grateful for them. Life is so fun with them, but the little, sweet moments are my favorite. How they do things without me having to ask. How they comfort me even when I don’t say that I’m stressed or tired,” I told her, shaking my head in disbelief.

“They’re in love with you, and you’re in love with them,” Madison pointed out. “You know, you’ve changed a lot since meeting them. And in a good way.”

A bright smile crossed my face.

“Really?” I asked.

Madison nodded.

“You’ve grown a lot. You’re such a devoted mom, and you’re so aware of everything around you. I think you’re more responsible than me now,” she said with a soft laugh. “You’re just... happier.”

“I guess that’s the magic of love,” I replied as I gave her a grateful look. That was really nice to hear because I did believe that I had changed a lot for the better. The world seemed so much brighter and promising now that I had gotten my life together and figured out what I truly wanted.

“It’s the most powerful thing ever. I’m glad you’re under its spell like I am,” Madison said.

That was a spell that I never wanted to break.

“We have to do this again, but you have to bring everyone!” I told her, wanting both of our families to get together.

“Soon!” Madison promised, hugging me one more time before getting into her car.

I waved goodbye before heading inside, seeing the guys spread throughout the main floor. I smiled to myself. This was home. This was everything.

“Angel,” Auden said, holding his arm out as he laid on the couch.

I happily bounded over to him, laying on his chest as he held me close. I fell into his warmth, taking in his citrusy cologne. My eyes swept around as the

guys smiled in my direction, and I knew that we were going to have a long, happy life together.

This was only just the beginning.

Epilogue: Aisling

A few months later

I stumbled forward as Lincoln walked behind me with his hands over my eyes.

“Don’t walk me into a wall!” I laughed as he guided me.

“I wouldn’t dare,” Lincoln chuckled. “Just keep moving forward. We’re almost there.”

I took five steps before he pulled me to a stop. I had no idea what was up. All he told me was that he had a surprise for me upstairs and that I couldn’t look until I was right there.

“Is it a puppy?” I asked, lifting my eyebrows.

Lincoln laughed.

“Nope. We have our hands plenty full with Adder,” he reminded me.

He definitely wasn’t wrong. Adder was the best handful ever, and he kept the nine of us on our toes all the time. He started sleeping longer at least, but he was a bundle of energy when he was awake. He loved grabbing and tossing his toys, and he especially loved peekaboo.

Even learning little things like that about him made me love him that much more.

“Does Kai still have Adder?” I asked.

“Adder has already seen the surprise,” Lincoln chuckled.

I listened closely and could hear light shuffling and the distinct sound of my son babbling. We weren't alone.

“I'm dying to know this surprise!” I said, nearly bouncing on the spot.

“Alright, ready?” Lincoln asked.

“Ready,” I told him, my heart racing with excitement.

Lincoln pulled his hands away, and light flooded back into my vision, forming into definite shapes.

My hand flew up to my open mouth as I stared at a beautiful light blue and green themed nursery where the old office was.

“I thought you closed off the office because there was a hole in the ceiling that needed to be patched,” I said as I looked between all the guys, who grinned at me in a pleased manner. “You tricked me! In the best way possible.”

The crib had white bars and a mobile of cotton motorcycles above it. The rug was circular and green, while the walls were blue. Adder had his own dresser with his clothes neatly folded inside of the drawers. His toys were in a basket that had his name plastered on the front. What really got me was the framed picture of the nine of us mounted on the wall above his crib.

That did it for me.

Happy tears streamed down my face as I took in the beautiful sight once more. They got every detail right from the colors to the furniture. They'd planned all of this on their own.

“It's been a year since our deal. Still want to stay?” Kai asked with a chuckle as he held our son in his arms.

With teary eyes, I laughed and nodded.

“Without a doubt in my mind,” I replied before lifting up on my toes to peck him on the lips. I went around the room and threw my arms around the guys' necks, squeezing them so tightly out of gratitude that I swore I knocked the

breath out of them. “This is the best surprise ever!”

“Adder likes it too,” Hayden chuckled, motioning to Adder, who was entranced by the bike mobile. “He’s definitely going to be a biker just like his dads.”

“There was something that we wanted to ask about,” Cameron spoke up, glancing at the others before looking at me. “He’s never been around a bike before. I think it’d be cool to have him watch us ride.”

“With ear protection, of course. Don’t want to hurt his little ears,” Claude added.

Of course, they were going to think of everything. I nodded eagerly.

“I think he’d love it. Let’s do it!” I said.

While Kai, Cameron, Lincoln, and Chris got Adder ready to go out, Auden, Bradley, Claude, Hayden, and I went to the store to pick up a pair of little over ear headphones for Adder so that he could watch his dads ride their bikes.

“You guys check aisle ten. I’ll check aisle fourteen!” I told them before hurrying that way, excitement rushing through me at the thought of Adder experiencing the thrill of motorcycles for the first time. I was so excited that I didn’t notice I was about to run into someone until we almost clashed. “Oh, sorry! Brianna?”

Brianna’s eyes widened.

“Aisling! Wow, you look great!” she said.

Something about being a mom made me glow. I didn’t know what it was, but I loved it. I supposed it had something to do with me being truly happy now.

“Thank you! Are you... going on a trip?” I asked, noticing that she had a new suitcase and some other travel items in her shopping cart.

Brianna’s eyes followed mine to her cart.

“Oh, yeah! I’m taking a trip with my husband soon,” she explained before smiling in a sheepish manner. “I’m sorry about... what happened in the past.”

I waved my hand dismissively, not wanting her to worry about that in the slightest.

“It was for the best,” I assured her as I gave her arm a squeeze. “Have a fun trip!”

Brianna smiled and waved goodbye as I turned and headed down aisle fourteen to find an arrangement of headphones.

I grabbed a black pair and met the guys at the checkout, making sure to pick up some of their favorite candy bars so that we could snack after they rode around the empty lot close to the clubhouse. By the time we reached there, Adder was already set up in his stroller by Cameron and Lincoln, facing the lot where the guys would be riding.

“Here you are, pumpkin,” I told Adder as I carefully slipped the headphones on his ears.

Adder wiggled around a little and grabbed at the headphones, not knowing what they were. However, he was soon distracted by the sight of Kai riding across the lot in front of him. His eyes widened, prompting a laugh from me and the others.

“Go on! Get your bikes so that he can see!” I told the guys, ushering them away.

I remained next to Adder, stroking his head and checking on him as more of the guys rode in front of him. I laughed as the guys criss-crossed across the lot, slapping each other’s hands and doing tricks for their son.

I blew kisses at them, my cheeks burning as they winked at me through the opening in their visors. They still made me blush and smile like I was a shy teenager. Something told me that wouldn’t change any time soon.

“Look at Daddy!” I shouted, pointing at whoever passed by closest to Adder.

Adder started laughing and kicking his feet, enjoying the show even more than I thought he would. He watched everyone, his eyes darting everywhere as he drank in the dull roar and flashy excitement. It was like it was the best day of his life. He was meant for this.

I smiled and kissed the top of his soft head, my heart feeling like it was about to explode from happiness. My life was a confusing mess before I met these guys. Everything was spiraling out of control, but I finally found my place in this world. I found where I belonged, and I wasn't planning on going anywhere.

“One day, that's going to be you,” I told Adder. He didn't understand me now, but he would in the future.

Because this was his future. Love and excitement and motorcycles. What could be any better than that?

THE END

Coming Soon: Nine Soldiers' Obsession

Get ready for a one-of-a-kind military romance, an unconventional love story packed with thrilling surprises.

When David Grady and his unit head on a mission in the turbulent land of Vlasica, Brianna seizes the chance to be close to her soldier husband. Their relationship has been strained by his frequent absences, leaving her wanting more. Amidst danger and uncertainty, Brianna finds an unexpected sense of comfort in the company of the nine captivating soldiers.

As the unit faces danger and uncertainty, Brianna finds herself emotionally torn between her connection with the soldiers and the man she loves. Their unconventional attraction leads to a sensual exploration that challenges societal norms and ignites hidden desires.

But what happens when the heart refuses to follow the rules society has set?

Free Preview: Nine Soldiers' Obsession

Prologue: David

Sweat brimmed my forehead as I pressed my back against the cement wall of the staircase, dust fluttering in the air as I looked down at the door that separated me and my unit of eight other brave soldiers from a helpless, kidnapped diplomat and who knew how many enemies. But this was part of the job.

This was part of being a soldier.

I held my hand out, silently ordering the other eight men press their backs flat against the wall in a disciplined line. We trained for moments like these so that there wouldn't be any mistakes. When we made mistakes, people died, and Paul Harper wasn't dying today.

Paul was a United States diplomat who got caught in the crossfire of a local conflict in the Middle East. He was captured and held hostage, dropping another rescue mission in our lap to complete with precision and expertise. This was what we did.

And we were damn good at it.

As their unit leader and captain, it was my job to take all of their skills and direct them to our unit's advantage, and we were all highly trained in different ways. I turned my head to look at my unit's mission coordinator, Erick Atkins. His brothers, Elijah and Emmett, who bore most of the same features as the last piece of their triplet trio, lingered further down the line.

"I think I hear three or four different voices in there, Rick," I reported, the smell of stale air and heat filling my nose. My military fatigues stuck to my

body, making my chest feel that much tighter as danger loomed ahead. There was always a possibility that me or one of my brothers wouldn't make it out of a mission alive.

Erick gave me a curt nod, his lips resting in a straight line as they usually did. If he was ever captured and interrogated, they wouldn't even be able to make him grimace. He was strong in his resolve, and he probably barely flinched when he got that scar above his left eyebrow.

"We hit hard and fast. No hesitation," he said before turning to Aziel next to him, who was our close protection specialist. Aziel made sure to provide protection to high-value targets, so he had to step up once we reached Paul. "Your brothers will cover you."

Aziel turned to Amir and Andre, who all made up another triplet bunch in our unit, and nudged Amir.

"Don't let me die in there," he said, still looking composed despite the light sheen of sweat that covered his deep brown skin.

Amir, who was precisely nicknamed Sniper, smirked at his brother and held up his scoped rifle. Typically, he was hiding on a rooftop or specifically placed out of sight so that he could do recon or long-range assault, but he could be just as lethal in close range too, especially with Andre, who was our firearms expert.

"You worry about the hostage. Me and Andre have your back," he replied.

Andre nodded in agreement, determination glinting in his hazel eyes that differed from his brothers' darker brown eyes. He had softer features and a gentler demeanor than his brothers, but when he had a weapon in his hands, he was one of the most dangerous guys in the room.

Bowen, our tech and communications expert, leaned forward to look at me, a strand of his reddish-brown hair falling against his forehead.

"We're ready back here. Mo and I will take up the rear to make sure no one sneaks up on us," he said, referring to Mohammed, our reconnaissance specialist, who was also a second-generation Pakistani immigrant.

I nodded, preparing to go for the door, but I felt my phone vibrate in my back

pocket. I quickly checked the screen to make sure it wasn't my superior, but the name "Brianna" appeared instead. A guilty ache struck me in the chest as I ended the call before the vibrating gave us away.

A man never wanted to hang up on his wife. She was my world after fourteen years of marriage, but there were times when I had to put work before her. I hated that, especially the thought of making her feel neglected, but what could I do?

My brothers needed me to lead them, and there was a man on the brink of death in the next room. Once again, I had to make that tough decision and hope that it didn't break us even more than we already were. But that was a problem to discuss when I made it home.

Right now, it was go time.

I placed my hand over the doorknob, quietly testing it to make sure that it wasn't locked. Thanks to Mo's recon and Bowen's handy tech toys, we managed to sneak into the three-story, abandoned building without being seen. Our presence was about to be well-known.

Erick put his hand on my shoulder, motioning to me that everyone else was ready to go.

After a three-count, I threw the door open and stormed inside with my M4 Carbine lifted. Four men in tan uniforms and black face coverings surrounded a beat-up but alive Paul Harper, who was tied to a chair in the middle of a dusty, dimly lit basement. As soon as one of the militants raised his rifle at me, I shot at him, side-stepping to let the others pour into the room.

Three bullets pierced the first militant, nailing his right shoulder, left chest, and the middle of his throat. He stumbled back, grasping at his throat before collapsing.

Paul's eyes widened, crying out into a piece of white cloth that gagged him. Blood and cuts littered his shaved face and head, and his business clothes were torn and blood-stained. After being struck and cut so many times, there was finally a gleam of hope in his eyes.

Aziel kept low as he ran toward Paul, holding his rifle close as Amir and Andre shot over him at one of the militants who stood closest to Paul.

“Get down!” Emmett shouted from behind me.

I ducked just as a bullet zipped over my head, hitting the wall behind me. My jaw clenched as bullets rang throughout the basement, sand being kicked up from the concrete floor. It was suffocating in that room, but my breathing wasn't on my mind.

Stopping the militants' breathing was, though.

Elijah and Emmett both fired at the militant who almost ended my long career, sending him crumbling to the ground next to the two other bodies.

I whipped around to see Mo bury a bullet in the last militant's knee, sending him down to the ground with a grunt before Bowen finished him off.

“Check the staircase. We have to move in case there are others in the area,” I told them, motioning with my gloved hand for everyone to move. We couldn't celebrate just yet.

“I'll make sure a bird is waiting for us,” Bowen said before taking out his handheld tactical radio to call in a Blackhawk to pick us all up nearby.

Aziel, Amir, and Andre quickly untied and ungagged Paul, who released a sigh of pure relief.

“Are you injured? Can you walk?” Aziel asked him as he cut off the last rope binding Paul to the wooden chair.

Paul nodded as they grabbed him from under his arms and pulled him up to his feet. He stumbled at first, but once he put his arms over Aziel's and Andre's shoulders, he found his balance.

“I can walk. Just get me the hell out of here,” he said.

I couldn't blame his urgency. This was dangerous territory for all of us.

“Update on the bird!” I called out to Bowen.

“En route. Let's go,” Bowen replied.

I turned and led my unit out of the basement, carefully checking around every corner as we ascended to the first floor. The building used to be a busy office, but it was gutted and full of sand and dust that blew in from outside. Militants

used it for storage and hostages, and it would definitely be reported to my superior.

“There it is!” Elijah said as we peered out of the gap where the front doors used to be.

A Blackhawk slowly descended toward the ground about a quarter of a mile out in a clear area of land away from the other buildings nearby.

“Andre and Amir, watch our flanks. On me!” I shouted before we all gathered together and made a run for the Blackhawk, keeping low and being watchful as we crossed the deserted area all the way to the helicopter waiting for us.

The moment Paul climbed aboard, the tension in my shoulders melted away as I got into the helicopter and took a seat between Elijah and Mo.

“Get us out of here,” I sighed as the helicopter started to ascend.

Mo knocked his shoulder against mine.

“Another for the books, captain!” Mo told me with a grin on his lightly stubbled face. “We can finally go home!”

Home. It had been a while since I was back on American soil. Since I had my beautiful wife in my arms.

“What are you doing first? I’m sleeping for twelve hours straight and catching up on every movie I missed,” Elijah asked from the other side of me. It was time for that smart brain of his to take a break after all the intelligence work he did for us.

“I’m going to have dinner with my wife,” I replied as I leaned back in my seat with a small smile on my face. I had a lot to catch up on when I got back home.

“Tell her we said hey,” Mo said before leaning his head back and closing his eyes as the gust of the helicopter wings surrounded us.

They hadn’t ever met Brianna before, but they had seen pictures of her. Hell, I even heard a few of them comment on how beautiful she was, which I couldn’t blame them for. They were right. She was stunning, and I was the

only one in my unit who was in a relationship. Again, I couldn't blame them for that either.

We were all busy and devoted to our work, but there was someone waiting for me at home. Someone who needed me and wanted me, while I was always halfway across the world and thinking of her.

I just hoped that she would always be there for me to come home to.

Chapter 1

Brianna

Every day felt the same. A constant stream of work, household duties, and missing my husband, who was always thousands of miles away. Honestly, he was away from home more than he was here, and that wore me down more and more with each passing day.

I sighed as I dropped down onto my bed, my feet aching from being on them all day long cleaning the apartment. Between being a freelance translator and a landlord of a few units, I kept myself busy while David was gone on his missions with his unit, but that didn't stop the loneliness that constantly nagged me.

Nothing could because I missed my husband. I understood that he loved his job, but I wasn't sure anymore if he loved our marriage more. I blinked my eyes a few times as they stung at the thought, not wanting to sink so deep into such a dark thought. David loved me. I just wished he showed it more.

The days were lonely, but the nights... oh, the nights were the worst. Our queen bed felt so much bigger when I was tucked under the sheets all alone, wishing that his arms were wrapped around me. His lips against mine or anywhere else.

My teeth subtly pressed into my bottom lip as I let my eyes flutter shut, trying to remember the last time we even had sex. It was probably the last night before he was sent off on this mission that he was finally about to finish up. No sex for weeks to months was torturous, but I wouldn't ever cheat on him.

I considered buying a toy, but even the thought of that made my face heat up

in embarrassment. In reality, I knew that getting a toy and taking care of my sexual urges was totally fine and normal, but I grew up in a fairly conservative household. I was raised on the premise of intimacy being contained to sex with your married partner and so on so forth.

Some habits and mindsets were harder to break out of than others, so I bottled up my desires and focused my energy on doing translation projects, maintaining the units I rented out, and looking after the household as I had also been taught growing up. It was hard to stick to such traditional roles when my husband was always gone, though.

With a deflated sigh, I opened my eyes and sat up, my gaze sweeping over my nightstand and settling on a framed picture of David and me when we were dating in our twenties. His now salt and pepper hair was light brown, and his blue eyes shined as we leaned against each other with smiles on our faces. We fell in love so quickly and naturally, and it felt like those warm, fuzzy honeymoon days would last forever.

They didn't, but we were still happy as we got into our thirties and started figuring out our lives more. Now, as I hit thirty-six and he reached forty-one, we weren't as carefree and starry-eyed. We changed as people usually did, and that wouldn't be a problem if we changed together more than apart.

Truly, could we sustain a marriage when he was gone so much? Would the distance eventually break our marriage of fourteen years apart?

The younger version of me would scream and cry at the thought of that, but I had grown up a lot since then. I was the one who went through days of being all alone, hoping that my husband came back from his missions and still wanted to be with me. Given that I was a curvier woman, I always worried that I wouldn't be attractive to him anymore, even if he hadn't given me any notion of that.

My fingertip traced the top edge of the picture frame, my heart aching as I reflected back on our younger days when our problems were so small. It was tough seeing younger women in their honeymoon or dating days, like one of my old tenants, Aisling, who ended up dating multiple men!

With my figure, I felt lucky enough to catch the eyes of my husband. I doubted I would pique any other guys' interest on top of that. Not that I cared

to anyway, but I was sure that Aisling never felt lonely or neglected with all of those men so in love with her.

I felt terrible just thinking about that. I appreciated my husband so much, especially after all we had been through together, but a strong marriage required communication and affection. We didn't get to experience or share much of that since we weren't even on the same continent, and I just didn't see David retiring any time soon.

Not when he loved his job and respected the men in his unit so much. That would be like breaking up a family for him, but what about our family that we hadn't even gotten a chance to start yet?

My conflicting thoughts went up in smoke at the sound of my phone ringing, my heart lurching as I quickly swiped it off the bed. With large, hopeful eyes, I brought the screen into view, hoping to see my husband's name on the screen, but it was Ryder, my brother, instead. My shoulders sank a little.

I love Ryder, but I was dying to talk to David. I wanted to know about his day and hear about how brave he was. I wanted to make sure that he was okay and safe because I worried about him every single day. Despite how down I felt, I was also so incredibly proud of him and the work he did to help other people.

With a light tap of my forefinger, I answered the video call and held up my phone so that my face was centered on the screen. I plastered a smile on my face as Ryder and Delilah popped up with joyful looks on their faces.

"Hey, guys!" I greeted them, swallowing down my emotions.

"Hey, how are you doing? It's been a while!" Ryder asked as Delilah lifted her hand in a friendly wave.

"I'm doing good. David is coming home soon," I told them with a genuinely excited smile. Just the thought made my heart flutter and my stomach twist with yearning. The house would be filled with noise again! His deep voice. His favorite old rock music. Our laughter.

"That's great! I know you miss him," Delilah said with a sympathetic look.

More and more with each passing day.

“But how are you guys doing? Delilah, are you doing okay?” I asked. She had to be quite a ways into her pregnancy at this point, and I couldn’t be happier that Delilah, Ryder, and the other guys were going to be parents.

It was crazy for me to find out that my brother and his bandmates were in a relationship with one woman, but Delilah was such a gift and a wonderful addition to the family. I hadn’t ever seen Ryder so happy before, and Delilah was swarmed with so much love that she deserved. She would need every bit of support when the baby arrived.

“I’m so tired and hungry all the time,” Delilah laughed as she shared an amused smile with Ryder. “Thank goodness I always have someone around to get me all of my weird cravings. I was dying for a salted caramel milkshake last night.”

“By the way, that’s really hard to find around here,” Ryder said with a chuckle. He then pecked Delilah on the cheek. “But I would’ve gone over to the next town for it.”

I watched them exchange a loving look with each other, and nothing could stop the tidal wave of loneliness that crashed down on me at that moment. It was so strong that it sucked the air right out of my lungs, making my throat tighten like a crushed can. My sadness and longing were quickly followed by a strike of guilt because I should’ve just been focused on being happy for my brother and his growing family.

But I couldn’t completely ignore the fact that I was jealous and wished that David was as attentive as Ryder. Maybe that wasn’t fair since David was working, but that didn’t change the fact that he was always gone.

“I’m having a baby shower in a few months, and I’d love for you to be there!” Delilah told me, snapping me out of my downward spiral.

“Of course,” I said as I smiled at her. I was over the moon for them, and maybe things between me and David would be better by then. Maybe he would even be home then so that he could visit as well, but I had learned at this point not to get my hopes up.

David’s work was unpredictable, and he couldn’t say no when his superior gave him orders. Even if he wanted to stay with me, he couldn’t. I was so

happy that he was coming back home soon, but it was only a matter of time before he was sent away for another few months.

I just didn't know how many more missions our marriage could sustain before falling apart.

Chapter 2

David

Home sweet home.

As I walked down the boarding bridge off the plane, an odd feeling stirred in my stomach. I was so used to being in the thick of combat or surrounded by my unit in a foreign country that it felt weird being back home. Not in a bad way. I had just been gone *that* long.

With my duffel bag hanging on my shoulder, I ventured to the entrance and exit area of the airport, passing by reuniting families and long distance lovers and friends. My heart jolted at the sight of my beautiful wife as she lifted her hand to catch my attention.

We had been together forever, but she looked more and more beautiful every single time I came back home to her. She wore a light blue maxi dress with long sleeves and white ankle boots, bringing out her perfect curves and complimenting the wavy strands of her light brown hair. She looked perfect.

But she also looked... sad.

"I missed you," I told her once I reached her, setting my duffel bag down so that I could wrap my arms around her.

Brianna leaned against my chest, but she felt stiff. She didn't bury her face into my shirt or grip it in handfuls like she used to when I returned home.

"I missed you too," she said, giving me a light squeeze before we broke apart. She looked up at me, seeming deflated. "I think this was the longest you've been gone."

It was three months. It was a long time, but it was a complex mission with multiple parts. Wasn't she just glad that I was home?

"I can't control how long I'm sent off for. Trust me, I don't want to be gone so long," I assured her.

Brianna sighed softly as she nodded.

"It's just hard being away from you for so long," she said.

Maybe I was just used to the time and distance away more. I came from a long line of military officers, so I was used to family members, including my own father, being gone for weeks to months at a time. I knew that their work was important, and I hoped that Brianna still remembered that about my own work too.

I didn't stay away from home because I wanted to. I stayed away to perform my assigned duties to serve my country as I had signed up to do so many years ago after I graduated high school. I enjoyed my work and my company, but that didn't mean I didn't love her too.

It was just hard showing her that. It was hard to make her look past the time and distance.

"I'm here now. Let me take you out to dinner, okay? Just you and me," I suggested with a hopeful look on my face. I didn't want to argue right when I got home.

Brianna held my gaze for a few seconds, her soft eyes looking conflicted. She then smiled and nodded before wrapping her hands around my arm and huddling close to my side.

"That sounds nice. Thank you," she said.

I could hear an apology in her words, but I didn't want her to feel bad for being upset. I wouldn't ever make her feel bad for missing me. It just showed me that she loved me and wanted our marriage to flourish like I wanted as well.

I planned to be married to her for the rest of my life. When we started dating, it wasn't some casual arrangement. I was in it for the end goal of being with

the love of my life forever, and that hadn't changed for me. Even if many other things had changed over the course of fourteen years.

"Come on. Let's go home," I told her before leading her out of the busy airport.

When we got home, the first thing I did was take a shower, standing under the warm spray with closed eyes. It was nice taking a shower in my own bathroom, and it would be great sleeping in the bed that I shared with my wife. She probably didn't believe it at times, but I was glad to be home.

By the time I got out, she was standing in front of the bathroom mirror with her curling iron, carefully wrapping her hair around it. I wrapped a towel around my waist and leaned close to kiss her on the cheek, feeling it shift beneath my lips as she smiled. She had no idea how much I missed that smile.

"I'll be ready in thirty minutes," Brianna said.

I nodded and wandered into the bedroom to get ready, my eyes sweeping over our light gray sheets, two wooden nightstands on either side, and our old dresser with a flatscreen mounted on top. All of the picture frames and little decorative assets were the same, and I wondered if she kept everything the same for a reason.

My clothes in our walk-in closet were recently washed and hung up like she prepared the entire house for my arrival. Those little things warmed me, and she deserved more than a nice dinner to thank her for holding down the fort here. I just wished I could think of a bigger, better gesture.

Once we got dressed, we went to one of the nicer Italian restaurants in town, choosing a small table outside under the stars and string lights. The night was warm but not unbearably so. It was much better than the scalding heat out in the desert with sand blowing in my eyes and my skin being constantly sunburned where my uniform didn't cover.

At least I came back with a tan.

"I know you can't give me details, but how did your mission go?" Brianna asked once the waiter brought each of us a glass of red wine.

“It went well. A bit dangerous at times, but we got the job done,” I said with a satisfied nod. We were an effective unit, which was why we were one of the first ones called to handle high-risk situations.

Brianna threaded her fingers together and rested her chin on top of them, peering across the table with an intrigued look on her face.

“You always do. They should reward you guys with a break,” she told me with a hopeful smile.

It would be nice to have some time off before being shipped off yet again. I was getting older, so moving around so much for extended periods of time was definitely weighing on my body more and more. Plus, the thought of being able to lounge on the couch with her and just watch a movie sounded great right about now.

“That’d be nice, but you know how it is,” I replied with a faint chuckle. There was always something happening.

Brianna’s smile wilted, and I knew that I said the wrong thing. Why did I do that?

“Trust me, I don’t want to be the naggy, clingy wife, but... spending all of this time apart isn’t good for our marriage,” she explained, her voice sounding stressed and strained.

I sighed, my shoulders sagging under my white button-down shirt. She was right, but my job gave us good pay and benefits that would be hard to find elsewhere. If I waited a little bit longer, I could retire with a better retirement package so that both of us could enjoy the rest of our lives without the fear of going broke and struggling.

“I know, but if we can deal with this for a few more years...”

“Years? David, I don’t know if I can handle a few more years of this. I’m lucky to have you around for even a few months a year!” Brianna told me as she shook her head, her eyes blinking rapidly to keep her tears at bay.

“I know it’s not ideal, but we have to think about our future, Bri,” I said as I sat up more, trying to get through to her. I dealt with the loneliness too, and it sucked, but I looked ahead to how great our lives could be after I retired. That

kept me going.

“If you stay, we might not have a future!” Brianna blurted out.

Tense silence lingered between us as we stared at each other, processing her words. I refused to let our marriage fail, but we were facing a huge problem that I didn’t know how to solve. I didn’t even have the chance to respond because my phone rang, making me sigh as I pulled it out of my pocket.

Damn it.

“It’s Major Beckett. I have to answer,” I told her, seeing her bottom lip briefly tremble. Whenever he called, it usually wasn’t news that we wanted to hear. I hit the answer button and pressed my phone against my ear, drawing my eyes away from my wife, who was on the verge of tears. “Sir?”

“Captain, I have an urgent mission for you and your unit.”

White noise mingled with Major Beckett’s voice as he reeled off the mission, but I also couldn’t stop thinking about the fact that this call might lead to the end of my marriage. When I hung up, I looked up at Brianna.

“I’m being deployed in two days,” I said, knowing those were the last words she wanted to hear.

“You just got back! How is this fair, David? I say goodbye to you more than I love you at this point because you’re always leaving!” Brianna cried, her shaky hand covering her mouth as she tried to pull herself together.

Pain gripped my chest, and all I wanted to do was hold her in my arms. She would’ve pushed me away, though.

“I can’t deny orders, Bri. Maybe this mission won’t last as long,” I told her, not knowing what to say to make her feel better.

“You always say that! But you’ll be gone for months, and I’ll be alone for months. I barely feel married anymore,” Brianna said as a few tears streaked down her cheeks.

Those words hurt more than any bullet I had ever taken. I released a sharp exhale and rubbed my temples, attempting to clear the noise out of my head. It was hard to think straight!

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I didn’t expect this to happen.”

Brianna sniffled and hastily wiped her tears away.

“Where are they sending you now?” she asked.

“Some place called Vlasica. I think it’s somewhere in Eastern Europe. They’re in the midst of a civil war, and we’re being sent to help the rebels overthrow their dictator,” I explained, at least wanting her to know that I was leaving to do some good.

To my surprise, an intrigued look breaks across her face.

“Really? Vlasica?” Brianna asked. “They mainly speak Vlasic. English is rare in most parts.”

“That’ll just make our job that much more complicated,” I sighed. She still had a spark in her eye, though. “What?”

“I know Vlasic,” Brianna told me. “It’s one of the Slavic languages that I know.”

It soon dawned on me what she was insinuating.

“I can’t take you to Vlasica with me. They’re in a civil war! There’s violence and destruction all over,” I said with a firm shake of my head. I refused to risk my wife’s safety.

Brianna crossed her arms over her chest in a defiant manner. The way she usually did when I knew not to argue with her.

“David, our marriage has been suffering for a while now. All I want to do is be with my husband more, and this is a great opportunity for both of us. We’ll be together, and I can help! I can be your translator,” Brianna argued. Her face then softened. “I know I’ll be safe with you.”

Damn it, she was right. I would keep her safe, and the guys would help me without question. Having a translator would help us a lot too, especially when talking to the rebels about battle strategy.

“Are you sure? There’s no turning back once I get clearance from my superior,” I asked her.

Brianna smiled and nodded.

“I’m sure. This is what I want,” she assured me.

The thought of her coming into battle with me scared the hell out of me, but we would finally get to be together. She wouldn’t feel neglected, and we could fix our marriage. Because if I didn’t let her come along, I feared that would be the end for us.

“Pack your bags. We’re going to Vlasica.”

Chapter 3

Brianna

I was officially a military translator! Temporarily.

Still, David's superior cleared me to join David and his unit on this mission, and I was beyond the moon that we wouldn't be apart again for another few months. We were finally on the way to the airport now to meet up with his unit.

But I also knew the possible consequences of my decision.

David's work was dangerous, and he dealt with threatening individuals and risky situations that I might find myself in now too. However, my biggest fear was losing the love of my life, whether that was because he went down in battle or our marriage failed. I didn't want to lose David in any way, and I didn't see myself surviving another few years of us hardly seeing each other.

Desperate times certainly called for desperate measures. Besides, I could use the work since I recently finished up a freelance project, and I loved anything that had to do with languages. I already knew Spanish and Italian by the time I graduated high school. More followed, including Vlasic. I never thought I'd actually get the chance to use it!

"Alright, here we are," David said as our Uber approached the drop-off area of the airport.

I reached out and took his hand, drawing his blue eyes to mine. There were more defined lines in his face now, but I loved every single part of him. I enjoyed growing older with him, and I still saw the bright-eyed, adoring man that I met in my twenties.

“It’ll be okay,” I promised him. I put him under a lot of pressure by making this decision, but I could tell that he knew that we needed to do this.

The side of David’s mouth turned up a little as he nodded. He leaned forward and pressed a lingering kiss against my forehead before the car rolled to a stop by the sidewalk. We thanked the driver and got our luggage out of the trunk before heading into the baggage area of the airport.

Usually, I took over when we took trips, planning everything out and taking the lead at the airport or at the hotel, but I let him lead the way this time. It was his rodeo, and I was the one who needed to adapt.

“The guys will be waiting at our gate,” David told me as he guided me through the busy airport, veering through groups of people and making his way with confident steps.

I trailed him, holding his hand and feeling my stomach twist at the thought of meeting the guys in his unit. I hadn’t ever met them before, and if I was honest, I never really felt the desire to because when I thought about them, all I thought about was them stealing my husband away from me. Maybe that wasn’t fair because they were just doing their jobs too, but it was hard to associate them with anything else.

“Do they know I’m coming?” I asked him.

“Not yet,” David replied, making my eyes widen. He glanced at me and laughed a little, giving my hand a squeeze once we stepped onto the express train that would take us to the right terminal. “It was such short notice that I didn’t get a chance to tell them.”

I couldn’t blame him for that, but they were going to be jarred. What if they didn’t want me to come?

Oh, well. I was coming whether they liked it or not because none of them knew Vlastic. How could they help the rebels to the best of their ability if there was a language barrier?

David led me off the train and to our gate at the far end of the terminal where a group of guys in military fatigues stood.

“Look at this sorry group of jokers,” David said, making them turn around

with grins on their faces. He chuckled and greeted all of them with a brief embrace and a clap on the back.

It didn't take long for them to notice me standing there, interest and confusion ringing across their faces. Handsome faces, admittedly. And there were... *two* sets of triplets. What were the odds?

My slightly wide eyes swept over all of them as they peered at me, my face warming up from all the attention. I needed to say something, right?

"Hello," I greeted them, immediately shaking my head at myself in my mind.

David went back over to me, his hand resting on my back.

"Guys, this is my wife Brianna. She'll be our translator for this mission," he said.

One of the guys who wasn't a triplet and had slightly unruly hair that still somehow looked good narrowed his eyes in confusion.

"Wait, your wife is coming with us to Vlasica?" he asked.

David nodded.

"I cleared it with Major Beckett. She'll be able to help us talk to the locals, which will be vital in helping them overthrow Dimitrik," he explained.

One of the triplets with deep brown skin, a shaved head, and a faint scar on his left cheek approached me with a friendly smile. He held his hand out to me.

"Welcome to the club. I'm Aziel," he introduced himself.

Relief flooded through me as at least one of them took control of the conversation. I gladly shook his hand with a polite smile, hoping that some of the tension could be smoothed out before we endured a long flight together.

"Nice to meet you," I said.

Aziel motioned to his brothers, pointing to one with tattoos all over his arms first and then the other with a leaner build than the others and a neatly trimmed beard.

“That’s Amir and Andre. As you can probably tell, we’re brothers,” he told me with a light chuckle.

I smiled at both of them. Amir grinned and lifted his hand in a casual wave in response, while Andre nodded in a polite manner. He had the most beautiful hazel eyes.

“We’re the better set of triplets in the unit,” Amir told me, shooting a sly look at the other triplets, who all had dark brown hair.

One of them with wavy hair that stopped above his shoulders and a small birthmark on the side of his neck chuckled a little. He stepped closer to me, seeming a bit more timid than the rest.

“I’m Elijah,” he introduced himself, offering his hand.

I looked up into his piercing blue eyes, feeling something faint stir deep inside of me as the rest of them watched our interaction. They were all so united but so different at the same time.

“Nice to meet you,” I said as I shook his hand.

“That’s Erick,” Elijah told me as he pointed to his brother with brown eyes, neatly styled hair, and a small scar above his left eyebrow. He then motioned to his other brother, who had a more rugged looking demeanor with the shortest hair of the three, a scruffy beard, and a tattoo of a dagger on his forearm. “And Emmett.”

The three of us shared a polite greeting, and I could tell that this set of triplets were more guarded than the other set. Nothing wrong with that, though. I just hoped that we could all get along, especially for David’s sake.

David stepped up next to me and nodded to the guy with unruly hair, who looked to be closer in age to David than anyone else.

“That’s Bowen,” he said before motioning to another guy with friendly features, light brown skin, and dark hair. “And that’s Mo. I think that’s everyone. Sheesh, we’re a circus, right, boys?”

The other men grinned or chuckled in agreement. However, Emmett turned to David with a raised eyebrow.

“Is this her first time in the field? Have you warned her about what might be out there? Because it isn’t going to be pretty,” Emmett said, his eyes finding mine.

My heart raced as I tore my eyes away to look at my husband, gravitating closer to him.

“It’s her first time, but she can handle herself. She’ll stick close, and we’ll look out for her like we look out for each other. Understand?” David replied with a firm voice.

They all nodded, any other questions or concerns being withheld. The thought of how much control he had made a warm feeling stir low in my stomach, clashing with the cold nervousness that I felt about trying to keep up with all of them without embarrassing myself or David. He vouched for me, so I couldn’t let him down.

“Gate B40 is now boarding.”

“That’s us,” Mo said as he clasped his hands together. “Let’s get this show on the road.”

My eyes then widened. With all of the craziness, I forgot to tell Ryder and Delilah that I was going off for who knew how long. I took out my phone and quickly typed out a message to send before I boarded.

I know this is short notice but I’m going with David on one of his missions. I don’t know exactly when I’ll be back but I might not make it to the baby shower. I’m so sorry but I promise to make it up to you guys!

By the time I got on the plane and took a seat between David and Bowen, Ryder texted me back.

You’re going on a mission? Like a military mission? Isn’t that dangerous? Please tell me that you won’t be in the middle of battle or something

I smiled a little, not wanting to worry him. I would probably be close to battle, but I didn't see myself wielding a weapon or running into gunfire.

Don't worry. I'm just translating!

Ryder texted back a minute later while everyone else boarded and got situated in their seats.

Delilah told me to stop worrying and that you can take care of yourself. Can't blame your brother for worrying!

If he was in my position, I would've worried too.

Thank her for the vote of confidence. I'll be fine! Love you!

After sending my last message, I put my phone on airplane mode and settled back in my seat, sharing a small smile with David and immediately feeling warmth wash over me. Even if it was unexpected and unconventional, it was nice to be spending time with him again.

Who knew what this adventure had in store for us?

* * *

~* End of Sneak Peak *~

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Nicole Casey is a Contemporary Romance Author born and based in The City of Angels. She writes steamy contemporary romance with a happily ever after.

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