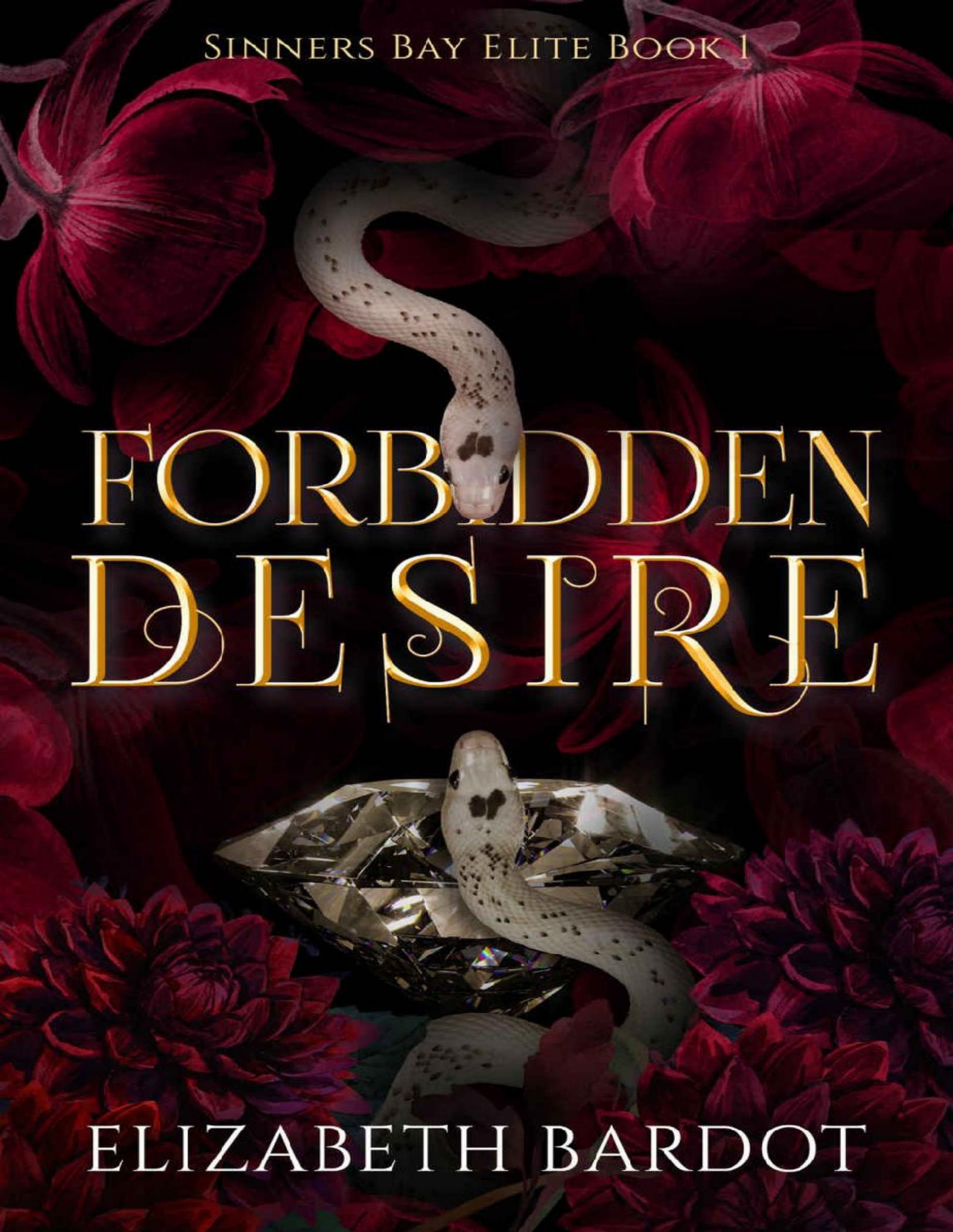


SINNERS BAY ELITE BOOK 1



FORBIDDEN
DESIRE

ELIZABETH BARDOT

Forbidden Desire

Elizabeth Bardot

Forbidden Desire
Copyright © 2023 by Elizabeth Bardot.

All rights reserved. Printed in Australia. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

For information contact : elizabethbardot.com

Cover design by Wynter Designs

Editor : Leavens Editing

First Edition: April 2023

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To every woman who watched daddy Pedro Pascal in that helmet and

wanted their own space man ;)

Prologue

12 months ago

“Charlie, you’re free to go. We can close up.” Chad yelled over the booming music. Giving him a salute, I poured myself a gin and tonic as a knock off drink and moved around to the other side of the bar.

Rapture was the hottest place in Sinclair Bay and my boss had called in a favor, asking me to work a shift here to cover for the night.

I stared out at the crowd, the last drinks were about to be called and the DJ had started playing music from the nineties, the crowds jumping up and down with excitement at the flashbacks.

I checked the tables, looking for where my boyfriend and his friends had been earlier tonight. I saw Chris sitting with Everly but there was no sign of Hudson.

No doubt he had already taken off with the rest of his mates to some place else. I don’t know why I expected him to be here, it wasn’t like he was one to wait around for a woman.

We had been together for almost ten years now. I was a new student at Sinclair Law School, he was about to graduate.

Only I never finished, I hated law, instead I dropped out to focus on building my reputation in the clubbing world as an events manager. Bar tending had a certain charm and I met some great people, but my career stalled when my brother got himself arrested for the first time.

Hudson changed after that day; it was as if he saw me as an extension of my brother and my less than fancy upbringing was a stain against my name.

It didn’t matter that I distanced myself from my little brother which resulted in my family shunning me. I had become the snob of the Elite class they feared, someone who turned their back on family.

But I was in love. Still in love with the man I had fallen head over

heals for in school. But Hudson wasn't the same man anymore and there was something between us, something that was growing every day.

We played the part, attended all the events as a couple, the galas, the openings, and everything else that the Elite of Sinclair Bay liked to do to show off their money, but my refusal to leave my job had become a sticking point.

Sighing, I made my way over to Chris and Everly to find out where he had gone. Chris was close friends with Hudson, both graduating at the same time and working in the same office.

I had seen Chris dancing with the woman earlier, Elsie I think her name was. I had met her a few times at events, she was Chris's brother's ex. Though the way the man Declan had reacted said she was definitely with someone else now.

Chris smiled as I approached, his eyes roaming down my body and taking in my shitty black clothes, now covered in various spirits and mixers from the night. It was hard not to get a little dirty in the process of serving drunk people at a bar.

"Charlotte. You look like you had a great night." He teased and I rolled my eyes. Chris was the flirt of the group. The playboy who knew he had the good looks to go with the money that made him irresistible.

"You should go home and rest." Everly said as she sipped the last of her wine. She glanced at her watch, a dainty little thing that sat on her slim wrist.

She was the workaholic of the group, and it was a common joke in the office that she was married to the job with no plans of getting with a man.

There were bets running to see if she would finally come out as a lesbian. I knew she wasn't, and it pissed me off listening to Hudson and the guys talk about her behind her back.

She was just a hard-working woman who had ambition and was trying to make it in a man's world. I knew she wanted to make partner this year and she worked twice as hard as the rest of them.

"I'm going home. I have a new case I'm working on tomorrow and I want to get ahead of the game." She smiled at me, grabbing her handbag, and disappeared through the crowds.

"And then there were two." Chris said and I rolled my eyes. "Where is Hudson?" I asked and he shrugged.

"He took off about an hour ago. I think he was planning on going

home. You want me to drop you off?” I considered his offer. Did I want to go home to that apartment with all the minimalist décor, perfect temperature control and the cold sleeping body of Hudson? Not really.

“Thanks, but that’s okay. I still need to wind down a bit from work. There’s a new indie bar that opened around the corner so I think I’ll go check that out.” Chris shrugged.

“That sounds fun. I’ll go with you.” I swallowed the last of my gin and tonic. I should say no. Tell him to go home, but I was pissed off. Hudson hadn’t even said goodbye.

“Sure. Why not.” He slid out from the booth and waited for me to grab my things from behind the bar before we headed out. The front parks were reserved for VIP parking and sure enough, Chris had his Mercedes waiting.

We drove in silence until we arrived out front of Bombay, a new bar that had an open mic for up-and-coming singers. I knew tonight would be jazz, but I liked that.

It was designed to be an old school place, dim lighting, burlesque style décor crossed with a seedy dive bar. It somehow worked and I knew the owner through my boss.

I had been desperately looking forward to seeing this place but Hudson wouldn’t be caught dead in a place like this, so I hadn’t been able to see it yet.

We found a table near the back, a woman crooning about a broken heart on the stage as someone played the piano. I felt the tension leave my body as Chris leaned over to speak to me.

“What will you be having? Wait, let me guess.” He looked at me for a while then grinned.

“Espresso martini.” I rolled my eyes. He knew I had a weakness for them, and this was the perfect place for something like that.

“Of course. Thank you.” He walked over to the bar and I watched his confident swagger, the way he flirted with the girl behind the bar with the boyish grin of his.

The man was so predictable. I would put money on it that he would come away with her phone number. He was in a simple blue suit that probably cost more than a month’s salary for me, and it fit him well.

I knew he took his health and fitness seriously, though I had met his trainer Eric and if he was my trainer, I would take it seriously too. Eric was a

thick, tattooed Viking looking man and hot as hell.

He owned a chain of gyms throughout the country and was about to break into the international market. His online following was in the millions. He was one of the Elite, just like the others.

A private club I always felt like an intruder in because I came from a simple background. Chris made his way back to our table, drinks in hand. I saw the napkin with a number and rolled my eyes again.

He laughed then winked at me.

“You know how it is.” I shook my head in mock disbelief.

“Is there anyone you haven’t slept with in this city?” He looked deep in thought as if considering that before he flashed me that wicked grin of his.

“There’s you.” I snorted as I took a sip of the drink, ignoring his teasing look and turned to watch the woman singing.

It felt nice, sitting here in a place that resonated with who I was, no pressure and no need to talk about numbers and business.

When the woman finished her song and said she was taking a short break, I turned to see Chris sitting closer, almost touching me.

“So, how are you, Charlie?” He was the only one in our group that called me Charlie, though not always and never in front of Hudson, who hated the nickname.

“I’m okay.” I shrugged as he signalled to the bar tender, the girl grinned and I knew she was making another round. It didn’t matter that he was supposed to go to the bar to order, Chris had a presence that meant he got what he wanted.

“Just okay? You seem a little down. I know Hudson left you there but you have to remember the guy doesn’t think well when he’s in the middle of a case.” I chose not to respond to that as our new drinks arrived.

“I guess I’m just stuck. My career stalled. I didn’t think I would be twenty eight and still working behind the bar. I thought I would be working events or own my own place by now.” I sipped my martini as Chris twirled his wine glass.

“You could still do that. Hudson won’t help with a start up?” Money was something we didn’t talk about. I had a card to use, and he purchased things all the time, but I never wanted to be that girl.

“I never asked. I want to do it on my own.” Chris studied me for a long time before he changed the subject.

“How’s the new apartment?” I shivered at the mention of the place. I

hated it. I wasn't a fan of heights and being so far from the ground always made me feel uneasy, but it was one of the top apartments in the city with views looking out over the Bay.

"It's okay."

Chris grinned. "Still getting used to the height difference?"

I was surprised he remembered that little confession I had made months ago when Hudson announced the new place.

"Yeah. Something like that."

He sat forward as peoples' voices grew louder.

"You could just tell him, Charlie." He was so close that I could feel his breath on my face, his spicy cologne surrounding me.

"Sure. Because Hudson cares about my fear of heights. The man doesn't pay attention to the real things I like. Did you know he got me tickets to some new rap show? He knows I hate rap." I scrunched up my face in disgust at the thought.

"Did you hear about the new band called Blue Desire?"

I raised my eyebrows at him.

"Yes. They're a new band that's a blend of jazz and blues. I love them." How did he know about that? I knew he wasn't into that kind of music himself.

"I know what you enjoy and you're a friend, so I pay attention to things like that." His eyes darted to my lips for a moment before he took a sip of his wine.

Chris was such a contradiction sometimes. His playboy ways made him one of the most sought-after men in the upper class of Sinclair Bay but then he had moments of being sentimental.

It was Chris who got me my favorite book for my last birthday. An original copy of a Beatrix Potter Peter Rabbit book, a childhood favourite of mine.

"If Hudson wasn't one of my best friends, I would be telling you to dump his ass and find someone better." I stared at Chris in shock at the seriousness in his voice. I had never heard him say something like that before.

"And who would you think is better?" I shouldn't be doing this, playing coy with my boyfriend's best friend. Perhaps it was the alcohol, the mood of the bar as the woman started singing again, crooning about forbidden desires, but my heart thumped in my chest as Chris leaned closer,

his hand on the back of my chair and fingers brushing my arm.

“I could be better.” He said softly, his mouth inches from mine as he stared into my eyes. Before I could stop myself, I leaned forward and kissed him.

It was stupid, foolish but so fucking good at the same time. A thrill went through me as he returned the kiss, his mouth claiming mine in a sensual dance.

His hand trailed up the back of my neck, fingers twining into my hair as he pulled me closer and took command. I relaxed into the kiss, let myself be pulled away by his warmth and the way his tongue coaxed me to open more.

His kiss was so sensual, dominant and yet soft, and something I hadn't ever experienced before. It made me think of long nights of sex and lazy mornings in bed.

As people began to clap, I was pulled back into reality and realized what I had done. I pulled away quickly, feeling shame color my cheeks.

“Fuck. We shouldn't be doing this. I have to go.” Before he could stop me, I grabbed my bag and hurried out the door. Luck was on my side as a cab sat at curb.

“Charlie, wait.” Chris's voice echoed behind me and I paused with the door open and shook my head.

“No, Chris. This is wrong. I have to go.” I slammed the door and gave my address to the driver, trying hard not to look back at the man who had just kissed me in a way that had my heart fluttering, the man who was now my forbidden desire.

One

Chris

“You have to do it. It’s part of the company’s program every year.” Hudson said with a grin. Every year our company offers a pro bono case for people who couldn’t afford our services.

Sinclair Law was a big company and specialized in many different versions of law and each department nominated a pro bono case to gift to a lucky person.

I personally operated in criminal law, which paid well ,so it wasn’t about money for me. It was who the case was for. It was my turn this year, and with Phillip Sawyer about to retire and let me buy in for more shares of the company, it was expected I should take it.

“These are the same people that were charged with the murder of my brother.” I said bitterly and Hudson frowned. It wasn’t a secret. My brother had gotten himself involved in gangs, specifically the notorious Forsaken Motorcycle club, who had ties to the Italian Mafia, and ended up dead.

It was still a sore point and a stain against my name I was trying hard to remove. It didn’t look good when your brother was balls deep in drug use within the criminal world and you were someone who defended those same people.

“This is an open and shut case, Chris. It’s minor drug charges and stealing. You do this every day. Get his sentence reduced and you walk away the hero.” Hudson said as Phillip walked in.

“You saw the pro bono case details?” I nodded as he slapped me on the shoulder.

“Once you get through that, we’ll organize all the paperwork for the other stuff. You deserve it, Chris. You work hard for the firm, and we want to reward you.” He sat down and grabbed the file for the case.

“This is an easy one.” He read through the details as Hudson started

droning on about his night out with some chick. It had been months since he and Charlie had broken up.

My thoughts roamed to that night we went out. The kiss. I should have stopped myself, but there was something about Charlie that called me.

Sure, I knew people saw me as the play boy of the town but I did still have feelings. None of the women I had met so far called to me.

I also had a fucked up desire for the women who were off limits to me. It had been the same with my brother's ex, Elsie. Though with her, it was different.

I liked her but it was more of a physical attraction, the woman was hot as hell and now she was remarried with a baby, living with men that I chose not to acknowledge, forgetting about her life before.

But Charlie, I had known her for so long and conversations had always been easy with her. She was so different to the people in our world, a feistiness that our world could never remove no matter how often Hudson tried to.

That night, she had been surrounded in a cloak of sadness, something I had seen growing over the last year, and it pained me. Hudson was a dick for letting her go.

I knew about her past, her brother and his connections to the wrong side of the law. In some ways, I felt like we had a connection, especially now. She would understand how it felt to have someone else tarnish your name and reputation in a world that was ruthless.

The Sinclair Elite Society were like sharks circling the waters, picking up the scent of blood and looking to take down anyone who was weak in order to take their place.

"Hmm. I didn't notice before, this name seems familiar." Phillip said as he frowned at the paper.

"What name?" I asked and he glanced at Hudson.

"The contact for the client. It's a woman. Charlotte Arden. Where do I know that name from?" I looked at Hudson and saw the way his cheeks flushed.

"Charlie? This is Charlie's brother?" Hudson shrugged and I realized he knew all along. Why he hadn't said anything was beyond me, but this changed things.

"Her last name is different from her brother's. She changed it to her mother's maiden name when she stopped talking to the family. I must have

missed it.” I saw the twitch in the corner of his eye that told me he was lying.

“Client is Jace Maxwell, aka Ace. In for drug possession and alleged stealing. Looks like it was chemicals with the intent to produce drugs. Known associate of the Forsaken.” I stiffened. Charlie’s brother was officially linked to the same people that my brother was.

“Look. I know you have a history with this gang, but you do this and your position in this company will never be questioned again. You have handled far worse than this.” Phillip glanced at Hudson and they stared at each other in silent communication.

Hudson had been offered the same opportunity a few months ago and I knew he had private meetings with Phillip and the other owner Craig Carlisle that made him privy to things I didn’t know.

“Okay, I’ll take it on.” I said with a sigh. I didn’t really have a choice in the matter, but I couldn’t help but feel blindsided by this.

“Good lad. We’re having drinks next weekend at the club house. You should come.”

And just like that I was invited into the inner circle. You would think being made Partner got you in, but there were circles within the circles.

“Sure. I’ll be there.” Phillip left with a grunt of approval, and I turned to Hudson.

“You knew about this. Why didn’t you tell me?” He grinned and it was the first time I had seen the truly malicious side of him.

“You think I don’t know about the kiss? Not that I care, but when I saw this case come across my desk, I knew it was the perfect way to return the favor of feeling screwed over.” He stood, pushing the paper towards me.

“Enjoy your time with the scum of society, mate. You fit in perfectly.” He left, his cologne lingering as a taunt. That fucker. He thought I wouldn’t take the case and would jeopardise my position.

I grabbed the file, feeling a mixture of fury and disgust rise. Hudson had just been waiting for the time to extract his revenge. I may have fucked up, but the man couldn’t wait to move on from Charlie. This was about his ego and need to have the final say.

The sharks were circling, looking for blood. My blood, and I refused to let them see me bleed.

Two

Charlie

I waited for my brother to be let into the room for visitation. I hated this place. Prison was a special kind of hell and even those who came to visit were subjected to the degrading behavior, as if we needed to be punished for choosing to continue to associate with someone who was locked away.

I should have walked away the day I got the call, but I couldn't. My parents were in no position to help my brother.

My mother was a junkie and my father an alcoholic. The years hadn't been kind to them and Jace had no chance in hell of defending himself. I let the guilt of all those years separated from them eat me alive and this was my penance.

"Hey, sis. Lookin good." Jace said as he sat in front of me. He was thin now, dark circles under his eyes and tattoos covering his body.

He smirked at me as I stared at him then opened his arms wide to gesture to the prison behind him.

"Like the new digs? I know it isn't like those fancy pants apartments you've been living in, but it suits me." He chuckled, sitting back in his chair, legs spread wide with an arrogant grin.

"Jace. You realise they're trying to keep you in here for twenty years right?" He licked his lips, shrugging as he glanced around the room.

"It's all good. I know plenty in here. The boss will look after me." I grit my teeth. How did he get so stupid?

"I was told they're sending you a good lawyer to work pro bono. We will fight this, Jace." He sat forward, arms on the table with a lazy grin.

"Why are you here, your majesty? Came down from your castle to cover up the peasants that tarnish your name?" I flinched at his words. I deserved that.

"You're my brother, Jace. I came to help." He shook his head with a

smirk, nodding to another man who sat down near us.

“I don’t need your help. We haven’t needed you for years. You made it clear you aren’t part of our family anymore.” I chose to ignore him, pulling out the paperwork I brought with me.

“The lawyer is meeting us in a minute. He’s going to go over the details that we need to be aware of and advise you on what course of action to take. Be smart and listen to him.” Jace sniffed, his arms hanging over the back of his chair.

“I ain’t no snitch. I won’t be makin no deal or whatever. I’ll do my time and come out a hero.” He said with a dreamy smile. I wanted to scream at him.

A guard stepped forward, the same one that had lingered as he patted me down, his fingers brushing my body in ways that made me feel disgusted.

“Your lawyer is on his way in.” He said with disgust before leering at my cleavage. I wasn’t exactly in my sexiest clothes, but I was trying to look professional in my simple blouse, pencil skirt and kitten heels.

I wanted the lawyer to take this case seriously, regardless of my brother’s situation. I gave him a tight smile and waited for him to step back from our table.

“Real class act, that one. Did you get the full experience?” Jace said with a laugh and shrugged. I wasn’t going to give my brother more ammo, he was being difficult enough as it was.

“Hello, Charlie.” Someone said behind me, and I froze. I knew that voice. I turned slowly and looked up into the dark eyes of Chris Whitlock.

He smiled down at me but the smile didn’t quite reach his eyes. We hadn’t spoken since that night a year ago, the night we kissed.

“Chris.” I said, my voice hoarse and I hurried to stand, holding my hand out for him to shake. He raised a perfectly groomed eyebrow at me before taking it and I shivered at his touch.

“You’re the lawyer?”

He chuckled, placing his briefcase down on the table and unbuttoning his navy blue suit jacket as he sat down.

“Yes. I am the lawyer.” I glanced over at Jace, who was watching the entire scene unfold with curiosity.

“You two know each other?” He said as he looked Chris up and down.

“This is Chris Whitlock. He works at the same firm my ex does.” I

said as I sat down, acutely aware that my leg was brushing against his under the small table.

“Ah. So I have the royal treatment, hey?” He laughed and Chris pulled out paperwork, ignoring his remarks.

“So, you’re being charged with drug possession and stealing, with a high possibility that they will also try to add on an intent to create and sell drugs. Currently, they’re going for a maximum sentence of twenty years. Are you aware of this?” He asked and Jace wiped his hand over his mouth.

“Yeah. I was there when they got me.” I groaned, was he incapable of trying to take anything seriously?

“They’ll also bring up your association to the gang known as the Forsaken. They have refused bail and your court date is set for three months time. Is there anything I should be aware of before we get started?”

Jace smirked. “Just that I ain’t no snitch.” Chris stared at him politely.

“I assumed as such. This isn’t my first case, Mr. Maxwell. I know how the court will treat a man in your position. I’m going to be straight with you. The chance of us getting you out is slim. I will try my best, but I want you to be aware that it will be most likely that I can get you a shorter sentence and then a smaller time frame for good behavior.” I let out a breath and they both looked at me before Jace considered Chris.

“Yeah. Alright. I can deal with that. You do what you gotta do, mister fancy pants. I’m fine either way.” Chris pushed some papers and a pen towards him.

“I need you to sign this to give me permission to act as your lawyer.” I watched in silence as they went through the paperwork before my brother stood.

“I think we’re done here.” He looked at me with a sneer then bowed mockingly.

“Your majesty.” I watched as he walked away, shaking hands in some weird gang way with a guy who was also walking back through the door. This wasn’t the same man I had grown up with.

“Are you okay?” Chris said, startling me. I stared at him before nodding.

“Can you send me all the information I’ll need? I’m his main contact for everything.” I watched as he packed up everything.

“Why did you take this case?” I blurted out and he slowly turned, a stiffness in his posture and something in his eyes.

“Because that’s my job. I didn’t realise it was you until I had agreed to take it, not that it would have mattered.” He followed me out and we stood awkwardly in the carpark.

“Are you okay, Charlie? I tried to contact you after I heard you and Hudson broke up, but your number was disconnected.”

I rolled my shoulders and started looking for my car key as a distraction.

“I’m fine. I changed all my details afterwards. I wanted to let go of that part of my life.” I started to walk away but Chris stopped me, his hand warm on my arm and shot electricity through me.

“Charlie, you know you can talk to me. I’m still your friend.” My chest tightened as I looked at him. I wanted to cave, I wanted to say that I wasn’t doing good and that I was working two jobs to make ends meet, that I lost my entire life when Hudson walked away, and my dreams were up in smoke, but I couldn’t do it.

I didn’t want his pity and I didn’t want to let him into my bleak world. He was a part of my life that was no longer available to me and that kiss... if I wasn’t careful, I would ask him to do it again.

“Chris, I’m fine. I don’t need your help. You’re no longer a part of my life. I just need you to help my brother. I assume all my details are in his file.” I pulled away from him and made my way towards my car, a beat up old Ford that did the job but didn’t look the part.

I could feel his eyes on me as I got in. I took a deep breath and started the car, wincing at the squeal of the fan belt, refusing to let embarrassment take over.

Don’t look. Don’t look. Don’t. Look. But I couldn’t help it. I glanced up at him, frustration in his eyes as he looked at me before I put the car into gear and drove away from the only person who had given a shit about me in the last ten years.

Three

Chris

Seeing Charlie was harder than I thought it would be. She was so fucking stunning and just as stubborn as ever.

Watching her drive away in that shitty car left me feeling helpless and more determined than I had ever been to help her.

Her brother's case was going to be an easy one, there was no way the judge would let him off with his connections, but I was confident I could reduce his sentence.

I still felt uneasy about the Forsaken side of things. I loved my brother, and my parents had suffered the brunt of his death with the press and others in our world. I chose to sink into work.

I knew that he was doing drugs, it wasn't hard to see but I didn't realise it had gotten so bad. I was the one who had to identify his body, the body that had been brutally stabbed to death.

I was angry with him. His actions always fell back on others. I was his older brother and always left cleaning up his messes, but that was one I couldn't fix.

My mother blamed me, saying I should have been aware and helped him. But I was too wrapped up in my own world to worry about his stupid behavior.

I sat back at my desk, taking another sip of the scotch I had poured while going over Jace's case. There wasn't enough evidence to prove he was going to make the drugs or sell them and the amount he was in possession with at the time was small enough to classify it as a small-time dealer.

It was his association with the Forsaken that bothered me. The judges were trying to crack down on the crime syndicate, specifically the motorcycle gangs. Any known associates were taken down hard. I grabbed my phone, dialing the one person I could trust in the Sinclair Police Department. I knew

he was on the edge of being made Chief of Police and a busy man, but he always made time to talk to me.

I waited as the phone rang, getting more impatient as it continued to ring before his voice greeted me.

“Whitlock. What can I do for you?” Liam Walker said, annoyance in his voice.

“I have a new case that came my way. I’m working it pro bono and I needed to ask you some questions.” I could hear voices in the background as Liam’s muffled voice responded.

“I’m kind of on a tight deadline here, I don’t know how much help I’ll be.” He replied and I stifled a sigh.

“This is up your alley. It’s about the Forsaken.” I swear I could hear his brain ticking as I heard a door closing softly.

“What are you doing getting caught up in a case about them, Chris? You know they’re death to anyone’s career right now.” I had to admit he was right. Not many people liked to get involved with them right now.

“It’s pro bono. We do it every year and this time was my turn. Besides, I know the sister of the client. It’s a pretty open and shut case, I just needed to know what I should expect.” He sighed and I could hear the exhaustion in his voice.

“I know they were tied to your brother’s death. You sure you want to poke this hornet nest? All the MC gangs are under the spotlight right now, I have my own shit to deal with regarding a new gang.” He was shuffling some papers then I heard him typing on a computer.

“I’m sure. I just need to know if there are any details not in the report.” I knew I was pushing the line, technically Liam wasn’t supposed to give me any details, but we had a good working relationship.

Liam pushed the boundaries of right and wrong often enough for the right reasons that it was looked the other way.

“Name of the client?” He asked and I gave him Jace’s name and the details of the arrest.

“Hmm. There’s a flag here in the system. Looks like someone put him on the radar. How much do you know about the Forsaken currently?” He asked and I had a sinking feeling in my stomach.

“Only that they’re a motorcycle gang connected to mafia.” He snorted.

“Yeah. But that connection has caused some unrest within the club.

There's talk of a split. No one knows how it's going down, they're keeping a tight lid on things, but word on the street is there is a lot of in-house violence right now. The gang is at war with itself. People taking sides. This kid is on the side that has decided to split from the main club. That's a dangerous place to be." I ran my hand through my hair, sitting back in the chair with a sigh.

"What does that mean for my client?"

Liam sighed, "maybe nothing. But you have to watch out. These guys are ruthless, and they won't hesitate to go after anyone who helps the other side. Watch yourself with this one." It wasn't the first time I had been warned like this.

Taking on criminal cases came with its own risks, but that was why it paid so well.

"Thanks. I'll keep an eye out. Hey Liam, you doing, okay?" Liam chuckled.

"Yeah. I'm up for a promotion I never really wanted and there's this woman..." I laughed, understanding the way he felt.

"Say no more. I understand. If you ever need to talk or just want to let off some steam, you know you can give me a call." He grunted in response as we said our goodbyes.

I stared at the paperwork in front of me, feeling a little twinge of something, fear perhaps? I thought this was going to be a simple one, but if things really were getting bad with the Forsaken, it might end up more complicated than I thought.

My thoughts drifted to Charlie and I had a twinge of fear. This could put her at risk. I needed to warn her. I sorted through the paperwork to find her new number and gave her a call.

It rang out and went straight to voicemail. "Charlie, it's Chris. I just wanted to call and let you know that there could be some backlash from the people your brother is associated with. Please, keep yourself safe. Call me when you can." I hung up and hoped that was enough.

I noticed that her work numbers were listed on the file, should I call them too? No. It would make me look stupid. She was working at two places now, still at the club Mariposa and another dive bar in the Industrial district called Sloane's.

Why was she working two jobs? Why was I worried so much? I had to stop thinking about her, she didn't want me in her life, so I had to respect that. But it hurt like hell.

I turned off the lights to the office and made my way down to the underground car park. I needed some sleep and then I would see if I could move the court case forward and get this case done and out of my life.

Because that was what I wanted, to move on. I had no interest in using this as an excuse to see Charlie again. That's what I would continue to tell myself.

Four

Charlie

Sloane's was a shitty place with shitty people, but it was the only job I could find that fit in with my hours at Mariposa.

I was already working the maximum I could there, and I didn't want to push my luck by asking for more. Sloane's was open twenty-four hours a day for coffee and a meal, and until three in the morning for alcohol.

I had been here for three months now, working my ass off until the early morning, sleeping for five hours then starting another shift. My newest apartment was not far from here, the only thing I could afford on my own while I saved every penny I could to go towards my own plans.

"Honey, you go home. You look dead on your feet." Lydia said, the old as hell waitress that had been working here since Sloane's opened.

She was the only kind person in this place. I gave her a grateful smile as I took off my apron and went to the lockers in the staff room to grab my bag.

It was four in the morning. No wonder I felt like death. I pulled out my phone, seeing a missed call, and waved my goodbye to Lydia as I walked to my car and listened to the message.

It was from Chris. His voice stirred things in me that I desperately tried to ignore and the concern in his voice was touching.

I sat in the car as I replayed the message on speaker, adjusting the rearview mirror and waiting for the car to warm up.

I paused as I saw someone behind the car, goosebumps erupting over my body but when I turned to look, there was no one there.

I must be imagining things now. I was so tired it wasn't a surprise. I put my car into gear and made the short drive to my apartment. It was located in a complex with a bunch of other buildings. A mixture of immigrants, half way homes, domestic abuse survivors and people like me lived here, everyone minding their own business.

I pulled into my allocated parking spot and slowly trudged my way up the stairs. The elevator had been broken for months now with no sign of being fixed.

I paused as I put the key in my door, feeling like I was being watched. I turned around, peering into the darkness outside but couldn't see anyone.

I was just paranoid after hearing Chris's message. I pushed the door open, dumping my bag on the small table that doubled as my kitchen table, turning to lock the door and slide the security chain in place. I started taking off my clothes, needing to have a shower to wash away the grime from my shift.

Grabbing my toothbrush, I brushed my teeth as I walked into the bedroom to plug in my phone to charge. That was when I heard the distinct sound of footsteps coming up the concrete stairs outside.

I paused in the doorway, listening to see if it was just one of the neighbours out for an early stroll or late night walk about.

The footsteps stopped out the front of my door and my stomach dropped. I could see a shadow beneath the door and when the door handle jiggled, I whimpered.

Someone was trying to get inside. I took my phone and ran to the bathroom, locking the door behind me and spat out the toothpaste, hands trembling as I listened to the door rattle.

Fuck. Someone was breaking in. I could call the cops but I knew their response time in this area was slow. Who else could I call? I glanced down at my screen, my breath coming in short pants as I stared at the missed call from Chris.

I dialed his number, putting the small chair I had in the bathroom for extra storage in front of the door, jamming it under the handle.

The phone kept ringing and just when I thought he wouldn't answer, he picked up.

"Hello?" His voice was sleepy and I shuddered a breath. "Chris?" I whispered and I heard the rustle of his sheets.

"Charlie?" He said, a little more awake now.

"Are you okay?" He asked and I closed my eyes as who ever it was at the front door cursed as they hit the security chain. Fuck, they had the door open.

"Someone is breaking into my apartment. They have the front door open." I said quickly as I climbed into the bath tub, looking around the room

for something I could use as a weapon.

“Charlie. Stay calm. Where are you?” He was wide awake now and I could hear him grab the keys.

“I’m in the bathroom.” I whispered.

“No, I mean your address. Give me your address.” I typed out my address and sent it as a text to him, hearing his phone vibrate as he received the message.

“Okay. I’m getting in the car right now. It says you’re ten minutes from me. Stay on the phone, okay. Tell me what’s happening.” I paused, listening to hear what was happening.

“They’re trying to get through the security chain still.” My hands were clammy, and I nearly dropped my phone as I frantically looked around the bathroom, seeing the toilet brush and grabbed that.

It was stupid but I felt better holding something in my hands.

“Okay. Stay calm, Charlie. It’s going to be okay. I’m coming.” His voice was soothing and I nodded, knowing he couldn’t see me.

A loud bang shocked me and I realized they were using force to break open the chain. “Charlie, what’s happening, talk to me sweetheart. Tell me what’s happening.” Tears sprug to my eyes as my stomach dropped and another bang echoed through the apartment followed by a slam that said the door was officially open.

“They’re inside. They broke through.” I whispered, shrinking back into the corner of the bathtub.

“I’m only a few minutes away. I promise you, everything will be okay.” He must have been speeding if he was getting here that quickly, but I didn’t care.

I heard the footsteps and the rustling of someone searching my drawers. Whoever it was, they were looking through my things.

“Charlie? Are you there? Talk to me, please.” The bathroom door handle jiggled, and I whimpered louder. I dropped the phone, watching in horror as the door started to move.

“I know you’re in there, little mouse. Come out and play. I just want to talk.” The voice crooned as I sobbed, fear gripping me.

I could hear Chris yelling on the phone but couldn’t bring myself to pick it up. The person on the other side of the door started banging against it and I watched as the chair slid on the tiles a little.

The door handle stopped moving and was replaced by someone using

force against it. The chair squeaked as it slid again and I watched the door rattle on its hinges.

They hit it again, and I screamed. Surely someone would hear me and come and check. The person laughed, hitting the door again and I watched the wood split, splinters falling to the ground.

I was a fool, no one in this complex would come looking. Everyone minded their own business to avoid getting in trouble. I was going to die in this shitty apartment.

The door rattled again, wood splitting further and I slid to the ground, closing my eyes and willed myself to another place.

It went silent on the other side of the door, then footsteps hurried away with a curse. I sat there, tears wetting my face as I took deep breaths.

“Charlie? Charlie, it’s Chris. Let me in, sweetheart. Please open the door so I can see that you’re okay.” Chris’s voice brought a new round of sobs as I slowly climbed out of the tub, pulling the chair out from under the door and opened it.

Chris stared at me, eyes roaming over my body to check if I was okay before he pulled me into his arms. He was in nothing but a pair of track pants, his usually neat hair was sleep mussed and he had no shirt or shoes on.

“Hey, it’s okay. You’re okay.” He murmured, hugging me to his chest and rubbing my back.

“You can put that down now.” he said softly, taking the toilet brush from my hand gently. I laughed, the stupidity of thinking that could be used as a weapon seemed absurd now.

He dropped it to the ground. There were papers everywhere in the living room, the paperwork from my brother’s case.

“Come on. You can’t stay here. It isn’t safe.” He searched my dresser as I watched him, feeling numb as the adrenaline left my body and when he pulled out a sweatshirt I realized I was standing in my black jeans and a bra.

“Here. It’s cold outside. Put this on and you can come with me until we get this sorted out.” I shook my head, logic starting to return to my brain.

“I don’t have anywhere else to stay and I can’t stay with you.” He frowned, pointing at the door.

“That isn’t safe. I don’t know if they’re watching or not, but you can’t stay here, Charlotte. You can stay in my guest room and then tomorrow I will make a call to a friend at the station and get this sorted for you.” Before I could protest, he grabbed my handbag and waited for me at the door.

I hesitated but fear got the better of me. I couldn't stay here tonight, I wouldn't sleep. So, I followed him out the door, watched as he tried his best to keep the front door shut and followed him downstairs to his Mercedes, double parked and still running. The man hadn't taken his keys out. He was lucky it was still here.

He opened the door for me to get in, putting my seat belt on for me when I didn't move myself and hurried around to the other side.

We drove in silence back to his apartment and I felt the glances he kept giving me, looking me over as if he expected to see some kind of injury.

I didn't pay attention to where we were or any of the details as we rode the elevator to his floor, exhaustion was winning the fight in my body.

He guided me through the apartment to a spare room, switching on a lamp beside the bed and pulling the sheets down so I could climb in.

As he turned to leave, I looked over at him, his bare back was firm from the gym.

"Chris. Thank you." I whispered and he smiled.

"You're welcome, Charlie. Get some sleep." He replied before he closed the door.

I didn't try to fight it, sleep came like a freight train as I was pulled under, surrendering to the darkness.

Five

Chris

I couldn't sleep after bringing Charlie back to my place. Hearing her scream in terror through the phone had set off some primal part of myself, a need to protect and kill whoever it was that had caused her so much fear.

When I found her with tears running down her face and a blank expression, I knew that I wouldn't be able to let her stay in that place.

It was a fucking disgraceful apartment, I had no idea why she was in such a shitty place and I was going to find out, but first I had to find out who had broken in.

It was almost nine and I left a message on Phillip's phone letting him know I wouldn't be in the office today, and now I needed to call Liam.

"Yeah?" He said after a few rings, clearly still half asleep. I could hear someone talking in the background and hid my smile. Must be the woman that was messing with his head.

"Someone broke into Charlie's place this morning." I said as I sipped my second coffee.

"Who's Charlie?" He asked and I held back my frustration.

"The sister of the case I have. They broke into her place while she was in it, Liam. They were trying to get to her." Liam sighed and I heard a door close.

"Send me the address. I'll send some people over and see if we can pull some prints. I warned you they would move quickly. If they have put her on the radar, she's a target now." He confirmed my worst suspicions.

Fuck her stupid brother for getting her into this mess. The asshole probably didn't care either.

"I'll send you the address." I said as I hung up and sent it through. I put the phone down and considered our next move.

I had continued to look in on her every hour since she fell asleep,

worried that something would happen, but she slept soundly. I decided to make her breakfast, hoping that would ease my way into having the conversations I knew she would try to avoid.

I got to work on bacon and eggs and as I was plating it up, she appeared in the doorway looking bleary eyed and still exhausted, but no less beautiful.

Her brown hair was messy and hung wild around her shoulders. Those dark blue eyes of hers pierced mine as she glanced around the apartment.

She was still in her jeans and the sweatshirt but I couldn't erase the image of her in her bra last night. She wasn't necessarily considered beautiful by society's standards, but she had a uniqueness that captured you, held your attention, and her body was soft and womanly.

Curves in the right places, meat on her bones to grip when you wanted and enough weight on her that you knew you wouldn't break her.

Damn, I had to get my head out of the gutter. I could feel my cock hardening beneath my sweatpants and the last thing I needed right now was to get hard.

"Hey, I made you some breakfast. Sit down and I'll get you a coffee." She nodded, her silence making me uneasy. She wasn't exactly a talkative person but she wasn't a quiet one either, and I knew the shock from last night was still fresh in her mind.

"So, I made some calls this morning and a friend of mine is sending some people over to your place to see if they can get some prints to run through the system and catch this person." She looked down at the plate with the bacon and eggs, then at the coffee before looking at me.

"This is because of my brother, isn't it?" Her voice seemed hoarse, timid and shy, and I fucking hated it. I hoped we caught who it was, and I was going to make damn sure they never saw the light of day again.

"Yes. That's what we think. There's a conflict of sorts happening between the Forsaken gang that your brother is associated with, and anyone caught in the crossfire or connected to someone in the gang has a target on their back. My guess is, they want to know what you know." I had seen this happen before in some of my higher profile cases, mostly to witnesses when they wanted them to keep quiet.

"You can't go back there, Charlie. It isn't safe. At least until we get extra security in place." I added, seeing the argument in her eyes.

“Where am I supposed to stay, Chris? I can’t stay with family, and I don’t have any friends to stay with. That apartment is all I have.” She looked down at her plate, pushing some of the eggs around.

“You can stay here for as long as you need to. I’m your friend, Charlie. I always have been.” Her head shot up and she narrowed her eyes at me.

“Do you think that’s such a good idea, considering our past? What about Hudson?”

I shrugged, “our past was always one of friendship. I don’t know why you’re so hell bent on trying to dismiss that because of one kiss a year ago.” She went to protest, and I shook my head.

“No. Don’t try to drag that into it. I am a thirty six year old man, I can keep my hands to myself. Besides, Hudson isn’t an issue. He and I aren’t exactly the closest these days.” I didn’t want to say that it was because I was pissed off at him and his vindictiveness, or that I didn’t agree with his behavior towards her.

“You work together. You see each other outside of work. This will get awkward really quick.” She said with a hint of bitterness.

“Hudson is a dick, Charlie. I’ve seen a different side of him lately, and just because we work together doesn’t mean I share all the details of my private life. He was the one who handed me your brother’s file. He knows I’m going to be associating with you.” She stared at me then laughed.

“So, he did it to get back at you for the kiss. I knew he would throw something at you eventually.” I considered what she said, realizing that she knew he knew.

“How did he know about it?” I asked, curious now. She looked away, nerves in her eyes which made me want to know even more.

“Charlie.” I snapped and her eyes shot to mine, a fire in them that made me want to lean over and kiss her again. Damn this woman, she was too sexy for her own good.

“I told him. It was in the middle of an argument about sex. He wanted to know why I wasn’t fucking him anymore. It had been months since we had sex and I didn’t know why at the time, but after that night with you...I realized it was because the spark was gone. I needed something more.” She sighed, sipping her coffee before she continued.

“I told him I didn’t feel attracted to him in the same way, that the intimacy was gone and I felt like I was nothing but a body for him to stick his

dick into. He said some rude things about that, told me that my pussy should be grateful to have his cock.” She laughed, anger in her eyes as she remembered the story, and part of me wanted to find Hudson now and punch him in the throat.

“He told me I live in a fantasy world, that I read too much romance and things aren’t like that in real life. That was when I snapped and said they were. I told him about the kiss, I told him the way I felt with you just from one kiss was better than I had ever felt in all the years we had been together.” She stared at me, waiting for me to reply.

My ego was on a high, knowing that she had felt that way just from my kiss. I had to bite my tongue to stop myself from saying I could make her feel that way again, and more, if she let me.

“I take it he didn’t react well.” She shook her head, the ghost of a smile on her face.

“No. He kicked me out after that. I stayed in a hotel for a few weeks until I found my apartment. I picked up a second job to start putting some money aside so I could buy my own place, but it isn’t easy. Sinclair Bay isn’t exactly a cheap place to buy.” So that was why she was in that place and working another job.

“Why didn’t you tell me? I could have helped.” I watched that spark light up inside her, the stubborn streak that always drove me crazy and wild at the same time.

“It wasn’t your problem and you were part of his world. I didn’t want that. I needed to do it on my own. I also didn’t think I could face you. I was in a low point, vulnerable and weak. I wouldn’t have been able to resist you, the fantasies in my head had gone wild at that point.” Now *that* was an interesting little bit of information.

“I did what I needed to do. I reconnected to my family in the only way I could. I realized very quickly that the people I was friends with, were only friends because of my connection to Hudson. I started over. Now, I’ll do it again.” The way her shoulders sagged with defeat had the hero complex in me needing to come to the rescue.

“Not alone, Charlie. You have me. This time, let me in, let me help.” She nibbled on her lip as she considered, a war in her eyes and I saw the moment she decided she would let me help.

“Okay, but only for a little while.” I smiled, unable to hold back the triumph, when my phone rang. I picked it up, seeing Liam’s number on the

screen.

“Bad news.” He said before I could say anything. My eyes darted to Charlie as she finished the last of her breakfast.

“What is it?” I asked, tension in my body as I waited for the blow.

“Whoever it was that broke in, went back after you left. The place is trashed, and I mean trashed. Someone tried to set it on fire and there was graffiti on the walls with a message.”

Anger rolled through me as Charlie frowned at me.

“What did it say?” I asked, hearing the strain in my voice.

“It said ‘stay away, bitch or we come for you next.’” Liam sighed. “Look, this is clearly gang related and the place is now sealed as a crime scene. I can send someone over to put her in protective custody if you like.” The idea of Charlie leaving now had me seeing red. I needed to know she would be okay and I was no fool, the crime families had connections to the department and could find her if they wanted.

“No. She’s safe here. I’ll let her know. Thanks for passing on the message.” I hung up and looked at Charlie, hating the way her eyes looked full of fear and defeat.

“Your apartment was trashed. They tried to burn it down and left a message saying to stay out of it or they will come for you.” I watched her breath hitch, the tears formed in her eyes and I rushed over to pull her to my chest, needing to offer her some comfort.

“It’s okay. The police will figure it out and in the mean time we’ll see what your brother knows to help. You can stay here as long as you need to.” She sniffed and I felt her sag in my arms.

“My whole life just went up in smoke. It wasn’t much but it was all I had left.” I ran my hand over her hair, trying to offer her some comfort.

“Stay here. I’ll go into the office today and make some calls. You relax, get some rest, have a shower, and tomorrow I’ll take you out to get some new things.” She pulled back and shook her head.

“I have to work tomorrow.” I rolled my eyes.

“Charlie, call in sick for the day. I mean it. You need to take a few days to get yourself together. They know where you work.” She finally agreed and I sat back in my chair. I would fix this. I would find who it was and make them pay.

The Forsaken had taken my brother, I wouldn’t let them take the woman who I had been infatuated with for the last ten years, as well.

It was time to get real. I'd make some calls and start working with the police to build a case against the Forsaken. I was going to take down the entire gang if I could. The law had to win, or my entire life had been a lie.

Six

Charlie

I had spent all day dozing on the couch after showering and finding some clothes that I hoped Chris didn't mind sharing.

His sweat pants hung low on my hips and his university sweatshirt was baggy on me, but comfortable, and they smelled like him.

I still couldn't believe I was in his apartment after all this time, and that my life was now up in smoke. I glanced at my phone, waiting for a call back from my boss to let him know I wasn't going to come in tomorrow at Sloane's. I didn't have a shift at Mariposa for a few days, so I had time up my sleeve there.

I was drifting in and out of sleep again when my phone rang, startling me until I nearly fell off the couch.

"Charlie, you called?" Steve said with his usual gruff voice. "Yes. I have to call in sick tomorrow." He cut me off before I could continue.

"That's probably for the best. I was going to speak to you tomorrow. Look, we're going to have to let you go." I sat up straighter.

"What? Why? I'm a good employee. I never call in sick and I'm always on time." Steve grunted.

"Yes, but I was just informed by an associate that there has been some trouble with you and some people we don't like to associate with. I can't have any gang problems in my place. Sorry, Charlie." He hung up the phone before I could protest.

What the hell just happened? I couldn't afford to lose my second job, not now. I paced the apartment, not sure what to do. It felt like my entire world was crumbling.

I couldn't deal with this. When Hudson left me, I barely survived to get to this point and now I was losing what little I had left.

The front door opened, and I stopped mid pace to see Chris coming in

with a bag of takeout. His eyes narrowed on me before he hurried over, putting the food onto the table as he walked.

“Charlie? What happened?” I hated that he could read me so easily, it made me feel vulnerable.

“They fired me. Someone told them about what happened to my place and they said they couldn’t have any gang problems.” I hated that tears were threatening to spill again, I hated crying with a passion and yet my emotional side was on tap tears.

“Hey, it’s okay. I’m sorry, Charlie. You still have your other job, right? That’s good.” He hugged me and I let myself sink into his touch, his warmth and his scent.

Chris was the kind of man that you felt safe with, and hugged you like you meant something. As long as you didn’t consider how often he was playing around with women, you could almost imagine him as a man that was the ideal partner.

“Hey, I have Chinese and gin. How about we sit on the couch, watch some Netflix, and get hammered.” I laughed, leaning back to look up at him with a smile.

He stared down at me, then gently cupped my face and used his thumbs to wipe away my tears. It was so sweet and gentle my heart fluttered a little as I looked up at him.

His hands still cradling my face, I watched his eyes flick between my lips and my eyes as if he was considering kissing me, and nerves pulled me back into the present.

“I get to choose what we watch.” He rolled his eyes but didn’t protest as I flopped on the couch and flicked through to find something I wanted to watch, trying to ignore the tension that was growing between us because it would be a mistake to let my libido get her way.

“Tell me again why I’m watching space men?” Chris said as he handed me my third drink for the night. I rolled my eyes as he sat next to me.

“This isn’t space men. It’s the Mandalorian. It’s Star Wars, which is classic. Tell me you’ve seen all the Star Wars movies.” He stared at me blankly.

“You have got to be kidding. Where have you been living? Under a

rock?” He shrugged.

“I still don’t get it. Why doesn’t he take his helmet off and what’s the little green guy?” I paused the episode to stare at him with disbelief.

“He doesn’t take it off because it’s part of his creed to not show his face to anyone. The little green guy is special and a rare being. Besides, I love listening to Pedro Pascal’s voice. It’s like a wet dream in audio form.” Chris laughed at me, a hint of mischief in his eyes.

“Oh, I see how it is. You’re getting your porn dose and I’m just a witness to it. I didn’t realise you had a thing for men in space suits.” I smacked him with the cushion.

“I don’t. But I DO have a thing for Pedro Pascal. That man is literally sexy daddy material.” I smiled dreamily and Chris hit me back with his own cushion.

“Hey, get your kicks somewhere else. I don’t want to watch a woman get off over another man in front of me.” I hit him back again which started a pillow fight.

I screeched as he pinned me to the couch with his body, pulling my arms overhead and yanking the pillow from my grip.

I was acutely aware of every inch of his body against mine and the fact that only a thin tshirt and grey sweatpants separated his skin from my touch.

He looked down at me with a grin. “Surrender.” I shook my head, licking my lips as I tried to focus on his eyes instead of the feeling of his firm thigh between my legs.

“Never. I fight to the death.” We stared at each other, our breath mingling, and I was suddenly very aware of the fact that it had been more than a year since I had any sex.

He shifted and I felt his hard length against my hip bone as he stared down at my lips. This was wrong. I should stop this right now before it got out of hand but damn, my body had other plans.

Chris looked into my eyes for a moment before his lips delicately brushed mine. It wasn’t a kiss, but a caress, a tease, a temptation to seek permission.

Every logical thought left my body as I let out a breathy moan, parting my lips in silent invitation. He still had my arms pinned above my head as he leaned down, capturing my mouth with his and deepened the kiss.

My body was on fire with desire, need and a desperation to lose

myself to this man. His kiss was slow, consuming and just as good as I remembered.

The kiss changed tone, becoming more desperate and demanding as his tongue stroked mine. He tugged on my lower lip with his teeth, a moan escaping his mouth as his hand flexed over my wrists.

“Charlie, tell me to stop and I will.” He whispered and I opened my eyes to stare at him. I didn’t want him to stop. I wanted this, I needed this more than anything right now.

“Don’t stop. I want this. Need this. Need you.” I whispered and he groaned, eyes closed as his hip rolled against me, igniting heat through my entire body.

“Fuck, Charlie. If I continue, I won’t be able to stop myself. I’ve wanted you for so long.” His words sent flutters through my stomach, and I made a decision. One night. I can do this. One night and we can put it behind us.

“Then take me.” I arched my back into his body and his eyes darkened before he captured my lips again, the kiss was darker, dominant and possessive.

His free hand roamed my body, caressing the skin of my stomach that was exposed from the sweatshirt before he reached into the waistband of the sweatpants.

He sucked in a breath when he realized I was wearing nothing beneath them. His fingers grazed over my wet heat and he growled. Literally growled like an animal.

“Fuck, you feel so wet already.” He nudged my head to the side, kissing the length of my neck.

“I’m going to sink my fingers into your gorgeous pussy and fuck you until you come all over my fingers. Then, I’m going to taste you, lick up every bit of your desire until you come on my face.” He bit my neck softly as his finger rolled over my clit.

“Only then, will I bury my cock deep inside you and fuck you until you scream.”

I moaned, his dirty words spurring me on as he sank first one finger, then another inside of me.

He paused, not moving, just resting his fingers inside me, the palm of his hand cupping me possessively.

“I am going to ruin you for all other men, sweet Charlie. Make this

pussy mine.” I whimpered as he sucked on my neck then started moving his fingers slowly, teasingly as the palm of his hand pressed against my clit.

I writhed beneath him, my body trapped between him and the couch, his hard cock against my hip and his other hand still pinning me. I shifted so I could open my thighs for him, giving him more access.

“That’s it, sweetheart. Open yourself to me. Soak my fingers.” His teeth tugged my earlobe as he pushed a third finger inside me, stretching me in the most delicious way. My hips rocked against his palm and he shifted the angle of his fingers until they hit that spot inside me that had me cry out, the orgasm crashing through me.

“Good girl.” He whispered in my ear before kissing my neck. His words were like fire in my blood, sparking a wildfire of desire. He slid his fingers out of me and showed me how wet they were.

“Look at how much you soaked my fingers.” He put them in his mouth, sucking on them with his eyes closed and mask of pure ecstasy crossed his face.

Fuck, that was hot. I’d never seen a man do something so fucking sexy and primal before.

“You taste like heaven.” He murmured before he shifted, pulling me up to sit.

“As much as I love seeing you in my clothes, you need to get naked now.” He snarled before he tugged my shirt off, leaning in to kiss then suck my nipple hard.

Gasping, I arched into his mouth, my hands threading through his hair to hold him in place as he licked and sucked my nipple into a hard peak. He shifted to the other, giving it the same attention and I swear, I was close to coming just from his mouth on my nipples.

“Up. I want these off.” He tapped my thigh as I pushed my hips up and watched him slide the sweatpants down my legs, his eyes dark with desire as he stared at my pussy.

He gripped my thighs, pushing me back against the back of the couch then spreading me wide, kissing my inner thigh as he stared up at me.

Fuck, seeing Chris on his knees between my thighs was like seeing a sex god worship you. I could feel how wet I was, the cool air against my pussy felt exposing and yet the way he stared at me made me feel sexy.

“Look at you. So wet and needy. I’m going to have to clean you up.” He dove in, licking me like I was his favourite ice cream.

I moaned so loud as he spread me further, pushing my thighs higher until I was completely spread for him.

“I want you to come all over my tongue. Be a good girl and give me what I want.” He crooned against my thigh before he his tongue buried deep inside my pussy.

He alternated between tongue fucking me and licking my clit, torturing me until I felt like I was going to combust.

“Fuck, Chris...” I whimpered and he laughed.

“That’s it, sweetheart. Let it go. Show me how much you love my tongue on you.” The orgasm exploded through me and he continued to stroke me with his tongue until I squirmed from the sensation.

He kissed my inner thigh, pure masculine satisfaction in his eyes as he sat back with a smile. His mouth was glistening in the light with my desire and I watched as he stood slowly, undressing as his eyes roamed over my body with hunger.

I watched the strip tease, pausing on his nipple ring before my eyes trailed down to his hard cock. It was thick and long, pre-cum beading on the tip as he fisted it, watching me.

“Spread those thighs for me, sweetheart. I want to see my pussy.” I shivered at the possessiveness, his claim that it was his.

I obeyed, spreading my thighs apart for him and watched him stroke his cock.

“Slide your fingers into your pussy. I want to watch you fuck yourself.” I bit my lip, nerves flooding my system. I had never done something so blatantly sexual like this, but the way he watched me, I couldn’t deny it.

I slid two fingers inside my heat, feeling how wet I was and felt the lust rush through me as he groaned, his hips jerking as he gripped his cock.

“Taste yourself. Tell me what you taste like.” I slowly pulled out of my pussy, sucking my fingers into my mouth with a moan.

“I taste like desire for you.” I whispered and he moaned then picked me up from the couch and laid me down on the floor.

“I want to take you raw, sweetheart. I promise I won’t finish inside you, and I’m clean. Do you trust me?” My breath came in fast pants as I stared at him.

“Yes. I trust you. I’m clean too.” I said softly and he kissed me deeply before pushing my thighs apart, angling one of my legs up onto his shoulder.

He pressed the head of his cock against my entrance and slowly lowered himself into me. We both moaned at the sensation, his cock stretching me perfectly.

“Oh god.” I cried out and he nipped my neck.

“When I am inside of you, I am your god, sweetheart.” Fuck, the mouth on this man. He started moving inside me, using my leg as leverage to angle himself in a way that was hitting a magical place inside me.

“That’s it, baby. Surrender to me. Your pussy feels so good around my cock. Soak me with your desire until you’re dripping.” He picked up his pace and I gripped his arms, needing something to hold onto as the pleasure built again.

“Please.” I whimpered and he chuckled.

“What do you need, baby?” He kissed my ankle, as he rolled my nipple between his fingers.

“I need more. Harder. Please.” My head thrashed as the sensations built.

“I love hearing you beg for me.” He shifted again, pushing my thighs wide open before he started thrusting into me like a desperate man. My back slid against the carpet, but I didn’t care. The pleasure was too much.

I screamed, my nails digging into his arms as the orgasm crashed through me, stars dancing behind my eyes. He groaned as my pussy clenched around his cock.

“Good girl. Fuck, you feel so good when you come on my cock.” He pulled out suddenly and I opened my eyes to watch as he stroked his cock, thick ropes of come landing over my lower stomach as he came hard.

He stared down at me with a smile, then swirled his finger through the cum. It felt like he was painting my skin.

“What are you doing?” I whispered and the wicked grin sent shivers down my spine.

“I’m writing my name on your skin with my cum. Claiming you as mine.” Holy fucking hell, batman. It was so caveman and yet it sent heat straight to my pussy.

He laid down next to me, tucking me into his shoulder and kissing the top of my head. We lay there, coming back down to earth.

Reality set in and I realized that I had just fucked Chris Whitlock. I could walk away from this. He wasn’t addictive at all.

But as his hand idly stroked the length of my body and he gently

pressed kisses against my temple, my heart fluttered, and I knew I was in trouble.

Seven

Chris

I was addicted. After tasting Charlie last night, there was no way I was going to be satisfied by anyone else ever again.

I couldn't stop thinking about her as I sat at my desk, going over the notes for her brother's case. I saw it in her eyes this morning, she was going to try and fight me, but I had other plans.

She pulled on every primal desire I had, no one ever made me feel like this before and I knew that I could never sleep with someone else without comparing them to her. She was it. She was the unicorn woman I had been looking for, and I would make her mine.

A plan formed in my mind and I grinned. I had just the way to convince her and play to her softer side. I jumped online to see if I could find exactly what I would need to convince her.

When I found it, I high fived myself for the genius plan. She wouldn't be able to resist. I put the order in, seeing it would be here in a few days.

Good. That gave me a few days to make my plans to have this unfold exactly as I needed. My phone rang, pulling me from my imagination.

"Chris Whitlock." I answered and felt the dread as the person on the other end stated who they were.

"This is Abigail from the Sinclair Prison. I am calling to inform you that there was an attack on your client last night and he is currently in surgery but in a stable condition." Fuck. Had they called Charlie yet? She was going to have a complete meltdown.

"When will he be out and available for visitors? Have you informed his sister yet?" I could hear her clicking away on her keyboard.

"Yes. Charlotte has been informed of his situation right before I called you. He will be out of recovery later this afternoon." I thanked her, hanging up and dialled Charlie.

“Chris? Did they call you?” She answered on the first ring.

“Yes. I heard. I’ll come and get you in a few hours so you can see him. I’ll make some calls and see what else I can find out.” She sniffed and I knew she was crying.

“Charlie, listen to me. He’s going to be okay. I’ll make an urgent request to get him transferred to max security, okay? I know a guy who can make it happen.” She took a deep breath, the phone distorting as she calmed herself.

“Okay. I’ll see you in a few hours.” She hung up and I rubbed the back of my neck. This was bad. So fucking bad.

I called Liam next and he answered almost right away, as if he was waiting for the call.

“Whitlock. You heard then? My guy at the prison just called it in.” I sighed.

“Yeah. This is retaliation. Clearly, Jace knows something. I want to put a request in to get him into max. I was going to call Judge Hoper.” Liam cut me off.

“Already on it. This case is one we’re watching closely as well. There are connections to an ongoing investigation. He will be transferred once he’s out of surgery.” The fact that the police were watching this so closely told me there was something I didn’t know.

“What aren’t you telling me, Liam? Is there something about this case that I need to know?” He went silent for a moment, as if considering what else to tell me.

“I can’t say anything just yet. But know that we are working closely with the Mexican Cartel and the Irish to figure out some details. Something big is brewing with the Forsaken and we’re trying to get in front of it before all hell breaks loose.” I didn’t expect that.

Liam Walker was one of the good guys, who never believed in working with the criminal world and hear he was admitting they were working with some of the biggest crime families to take down a gang.

“I need to know if my client and his family are in the line of fire, Liam. This is already getting out of hand.” Frustration grew as I considered our options.

“Just keep her with you. Find out what Jace knows and why they would want to kill him. The word on the street is the hit wasn’t placed by a gang member. It was someone else. That’s all I know right now.” He hung up

before I could ask any more questions.

Fuck. This was supposed to be a simple open and shut case, but now it was like a can of worms burst open and we were trying to find them in the dark.

I didn't have a choice but to wait for a few hours and hope that Jace was smart enough to start talking.

Charlie was frantically pacing the sidewalk when I pulled out front, wearing her jeans and one of my sweatshirts. It was adorable and also pulled at the possessive side of me.

I made a note to myself that I had to take her out to get some things tomorrow. She said she had a shift at Mariposa tomorrow night.

She didn't wait for me to speak, just jumped in the car and twisted her hands in her lap.

"Hey. It's going to be okay." I said gently, reaching out to take her hand in mine. She gave me a tight smile and the drive to the prison was a tense silence.

When we arrived, they hurried us through the usual checks before taking us through to the infirmary. Jace was hooked up to the machines, his face covered in bruises and cuts.

"Oh my god." Charlie whispered as she walked over to his bed. He opened his eyes, smirking at her.

"Hey, your majesty. Come to check on your peasants again?" her mouth tightened as she stared down at him.

"Jace, stop it. You're my brother, and someone tried to kill you." His eyes flicked to me.

"I've been informed that you are being moved to maximum security for your own safety. Jace, this was more than just a simple attack. What do you know?" He narrowed his eyes at me, wincing as he tried to sit up.

Charlie tried to help him and he batted her hand away.

"Max won't save me, fancy pants. These men have people everywhere and if they want me dead, they will make it happen. This was a warning." Charlie sucked in a breath.

"Jace, you have to tell us what you know. We can help you." He laughed bitterly before coughing uncontrollably.

“Nah, I can’t. If I talk, I’ll definitely be a goner. I got the message loud and clear.” I could see Charlie’s frustration, felt it myself but I knew these tactics.

“Is it another gang?” I asked and he smiled slowly. The look he gave me sent chills down my spine.

“You could say that. Not in the usual sense though. That’s all I’ll say.” He looked at Charlie.

“You can go back to your castle now. I’m fine.” She glared at him.

“They’re coming after me too, Jace. They broke into my apartment when I was home and then tried to burn it down after I left. This isn’t just about you anymore.” He rolled his eyes, wincing as he shifted in the bed.

“Then stay out of it. I didn’t ask you to get involved. Go back to your ivory tower, Charlotte. This world isn’t for you.” He closed his eyes, signalling he was done with the conversation and my hand itched to reach out and pull Charlie to me as she stared down at him, anger and sadness in her eyes.

“Fine. But you can’t get rid of me that easy, Jace. You are still my brother, and I am not going anywhere this time.” She barely whispered it and I’m sure she didn’t think he heard but as she turned her back, I saw the look in his eyes when he opened them, watching her leave.

They had a haunted look, pain and something else that looked a little like hope. It was that look that spurred me on. I had to get to the bottom of this case and keep this kid alive, for Charlie’s sake.

Eight

Charlie

I watched Chris make breakfast for me again and felt the pang of longing. I had to stamp that out really quick and get my shit together. Chris Whitlock was not a man to fall in love with.

He was a play boy, a serial womanizer who had no intentions of settling down. But the way he kept looking at me, it let my mind wonder.

“Here you go. Eat up and I’ll take you out to get some clothes and things you need. It will be a few months before your apartment is repaired and safe. I heard back from the fire department today that they have closed the crime scene side of things and ruled it as arson. Now it is a matter for the insurance to take care of.” He put the plate of bacon and eggs down in front of me, then returned to the kitchen.

Watching him be so domestic was doing things to me, bringing images of future plans and ideas that were only fantasies.

“I can find somewhere else. You’ve already been generous enough. I don’t want to get in your way and cramp your style.” He turned, eyebrow raised at me as he leaned on the counter and sipped his coffee.

“Cramp my style?” He questioned and I shrugged.

“Yeah. I’m sure you would rather have the space to yourself to bring home dates and such. I know how much you go out and party.” I watched as a muscle ticked in his jaw.

“No. You will stay here. It won’t cramp my style, as you put it.” I rolled my eyes.

“Look. I don’t exactly need to be privy to your conquests. I prefer not to have porn soundtracks in my place of living.” He moved quickly, pushing me back into the chair with a smile and a crazed look in his eyes.

“I said no. You will stay. I have no plans on bringing other women back here, if that’s what you are worried about.” I swallowed, looking at his

lips before I looked into his dark brown eyes.

“I know who you are, Chris. You’ve never been a one-woman kind of man.”

He smirked, “that’s because I haven’t found the right one.”

My heart thumped in my chest as we stared at each other.

“Look, the other night was a mistake. I was tipsy and horny. I shouldn’t have let that happen and it won’t happen again.” He frowned, then sighed loudly.

“Charlie, look. I don’t expect you to believe me, but I don’t regret it. I fucking loved it. Hearing you moan my name is the hottest thing I have ever heard and if I could have my way, I would do it again. No. I would do it all day, every day, for the rest of my life.”

I knew my mouth was hanging open in shock.

What the hell was I supposed to say to that?

“Chris, stop. You’ve never shown signs of commitment. You don’t know what you’re saying. You will meet another woman and life will go on. I don’t expect anything from you. It was one night of passion, nothing more.” He leaned towards me again, his lips inches away from mine.

“I will prove to you that it wasn’t just a night of passion, Charlie. I’m not asking you to believe my words. Believe in my actions. I’ll show you.” He moved away from me and the sudden loss of his body heat was a rude shock.

I ate the rest of my breakfast in silence, contemplating what this meant. As I got up from the table to get changed, he stopped me with a hand on my arm.

“For what it’s worth, I’ve only slept with one woman since that night we kissed and all it did was make me realise that everyone pales in comparison to you.” He let me go and I nodded, unsure what else to say as I retreated from him and tried to ignore the yearnings in my own heart.

I finished wiping down the bar and putting the last glasses away, wincing at the loud voices of the few stragglers that had refused to leave even though last drinks had been called an hour ago and we were almost completely finished tidying up.

“Hey, Charlie. You all good out here?” Nathan asked from the staff

room where he was busy counting the takings.

“Yeah. I’m just about finished up. I’ll hang around until these guys get going.” I said and he looked over to see the group of guys sitting at the table with their drinks in hand.

“You sure? I can handle that.”

I shrugged, “no issues. I’ll do another sweep of the tables and kindly ask them to leave.” He smiled and nodded once before ducking back into the room.

I did a lap of the private tables, making sure there were no glasses missed before the cleaners came through in a few hours and made my way towards their table with my customer service smile.

“Hi guys, we’re closed now, you’re going to have to leave so we can lock up.” Three sets of eyes landed on me and I could see the slight glazed look in all of them. Great. They were well and truly drunk.

“Hey, sexy. Why don’t you sit down with us and have a drink?” One of the guys slurred and I gave him my fakest, sweetest bartender smile.

“Thank you, but I have an early morning tomorrow.” He mock pouted and the others shoved each other, laughing.

“Come on. Just one drink. We promise we won’t keep you up too late.” He wagged his eyebrows and reached out to touch my arm.

“She said no.” I turned to see Chris standing there in his suit with a dark look in his eyes. What was he doing here?

“Awww man. You need to loosen up. We’ll share.” I almost gagged at the thought of these sleazebags touching me.

“She said you need to leave.” I saw the anger in their eyes and let out a sigh. Before it could escalate, Nathan came around the corner with a polite smile.

“Hey, guys. Time to go. We’re closed.” His eyes hardened as they went to challenge him and finally, they slid from their chairs and stumbled to the exit.

Chris stepped closer to me, watching them leave and I raised an eyebrow at him.

“What are you doing here?” His eyes swung to me and there was a heat there that had my breath catch.

“I’m picking you up. It’s late. I wanted to make sure you got home safely.” He reached around me, hand out towards Nathan.

“Chris Whitlock. Nice to meet you.”

Nathan grinned, shaking his hand in return with an amused look my way.

“I’ve seen you in here before, Nathan. Charlie, you’re good to go. I’ll lock up.” He said with a cheeky grin and I wanted to clarify that there was nothing going on, but Chris put his hand on my lower back to steer me away.

“I need to get my bag.” I muttered, hurrying away from his touch and leaving them there together. What was he doing? The way he had reacted to those guys was almost territorial, which was ironic because at one point, in his younger years, he would have been no different to those guys.

I came back from the staff room to see Nathan and Chris in a casual conversation like they were best buddies. Damn him and his natural charisma. He pulled out his card.

“If you ever need me, these are my details.” Nathan took the card and they shook hands again before Chris turned those dark eyes on me.

“Ready to go home?” He waited for me to go first, his hand gently resting on my lower back as he walked me out to the car.

He opened my door and when he reached for the seat belt I snapped.

“I’ve got it.” I said stiffly and he held his hands up in surrender. What the fuck was wrong with him? It was like some kind of switch had been activated in his brain after having sex and now he was hell bent on being the chivalrous knight.

I stared at him as he got in, starting the car and reversing out with his arm around the back of my seat. There was something sexy as hell watching a man reverse a car like that.

I didn’t speak the entire drive home and when we got to his apartment, I closed my eyes as we stepped through the doors to the elevator.

It was stupid I know, I had lived in an apartment similar to this for years, and yet I could never quite get over the fact that we were hundreds of feet in the air.

“Still not handling the height issue?” He said with amusement and I cracked my eyes open to glare at him.

“No. The elevators remind me just how far it is to fall.” He pulled me closer, tucking his arm around me with a grin.

“Don’t worry. I won’t let you fall.” I glared up at him but didn’t object to the closeness. He felt solid and I needed solid right now.

We walked out into the small foyer that led to the penthouse apartment and I waited for him to open the door.

“Want me to make you something to eat?” he asked casually and I couldn’t take it any more.

“What are you doing, Chris?”

He slowly loosened the tie around his neck with a frown, “offering you sustenance.”

I rolled my eyes.

“No, this nice guy act, the protective guy act. The pick me up from work act. Why are you doing it?” He removed the tie and I pushed aside the image of him wrapping it around my hands. Damn my libido.

“Because I want to. Because you deserve to be treated like that.” I licked my lips as he leaned against the counter, unbuttoning the top buttons of his shirt.

“But you aren’t my boyfriend. I don’t belong to you. I already told you that it was one night.”

He moved towards me, backing me up until I was pressed against the wall.

“And I told you that I wanted to show you how I felt. I want you, Charlie and I can be patient.” He looked down at me, caging me in between his arms and I felt that flicker of fire roll through my body as he pressed me into the wall with his own.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea, Chris. We have history. You’ll get tired...” He cut me off with his finger on my lips.

“Stop. I get it. You’re worried about my past. About the past we both have. I promise you, I have no intentions of moving on. I know what I want and I won’t stop until I have it.” I swallowed as his fingers drifted from my lips, caressing my cheek and down my neck.

“Wh...what do you want?” I stammered, feeling lightheaded and flooded with desire.

“You, Charlie. I want you to surrender to me. To let me inside your heart and your world. I want to wake up with you in my bed, feed you breakfast every morning, and fuck you all night long. I want what everyone wants. A happily ever after with you.” My stomach dropped and I swear my heart skipped a beat.

“Those are pretty words.” I said, trying to push aside how I felt. He bent down and kissed me softly, so softly that it was barely a kiss.

“I plan to keep my word to you, Charlie. I have never lied. I never told anyone I wanted anything different than a fling, but with you, I want

more. I want it all and I have since the moment I kissed you and tasted what life could be like with you in it as mine.” He kissed me again before he pulled away slowly with a sad smile.

“I know your heart was broken and you need to learn to trust again. I’ll help you put the pieces back together and show you that life can be full of happiness again.” He walked away, leaving me panting against the wall.

We were from different worlds and yet he made me feel like I was at home. He always had, even when we were just friends. But could I let the play boy of the Sinclair Bay Elite into my heart and risk it being broken again? The thought both terrified and thrilled me.

Nine

Chris

Opening the package, I grinned. It was perfect. My plan to woo Charlie tonight was going to be amazing. She had an early shift and was due home around nine tonight, giving me plenty of time to get things ready.

I knew she was afraid, hell I was too, but damn I wanted her. The more I was around her, the more I knew there was no one else who would satisfy me the way she did.

I had to push through the barriers she had put around her heart and show her that I wasn't the same man she knew a year ago.

We had a charity ball coming up and I wanted her there on my arm. I wanted to show her off to the world as mine, but I had to convince her to take that chance first.

Tonight was stage one of operation "Woo Charlie" and I was going to use a mixture of romance and humor, the perfect combination to get her to relax.

Damn, I wanted to taste her again, to feel her writhe beneath me and hear those breathy moans as she came apart at my touch.

I wanted to open her up and then let her see the real me. The possessive me that wanted to own her and only her. I had never let that side of me free completely with anyone out of fear, but with Charlie, I wanted to unleash the primal beast beneath the surface.

I checked the sauce on the stove, a simple Bolognese sauce that was always a great comfort food, and opened the bottle of wine.

It was seven thirty. I had plenty of time to shower and get the room prepared, because tonight I wanted her in my bed. Tonight, I wanted my sheets to smell like her and I wanted to claim her in my space.

I trailed the rose petals through the apartment, making sure all the candles were in place and got the music ready.

Soft jazz that would set the mood and relax her. I had the ingredients for espresso martinis on the counter so I could have one waiting for her when she arrived home.

Glancing at the clock, I hurried to the shower and double checked my surprise with a grin. Yes, tonight, I was going to capture Charlie's heart and make her mine.

The mood was set and she would be home any minute now. My heart was thumping in my chest as I prepared the martinis. I was nervous.

I never felt nervous. But this had to go well. I had to convince her that I wasn't the same playboy guy she knew, and that I wanted her, had always wanted her, and that I could be the right man for her.

The door opened and I wiped my hands on a towel and waited with the martini in hand as she slowly came down the hallway.

Her eyes were wide when she looked at me and I smiled, holding out the glass.

"Hey, welcome home. I have dinner on the stove and a whole night planned." She took the martini, eyes roaming over the entire apartment that was littered in rose petals, fresh roses that gave off a sweet scent when crushed under foot, and candles flickered everywhere.

"Chris, what is this?" She whispered and I reached over to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear that had fallen from her ponytail.

"This is me trying to impress you. Trying to woo you and show you that I am not the man I used to be. Please, go get changed then come and sit down." I took her handbag from her, gently nudging her towards her room.

She sipped the martini as she went and didn't say a word. Speechless. That was just how I wanted her. I hurried to finish the last preparations of the starters.

Charlie came out a little later, hair damp from a shower and wearing a jersey style simple dress that clung to her body in a way that had my mouth watering.

"Sit. I'll bring the starters over." The music played softly in the background, setting the mood perfectly as I came over to the table with my platter of melon and prosciutto. As she took the last sip of her martini, I

swapped out the glass for a white wine glass and poured a small taste.

She looked at the table then up at me with a frown. "I don't get it. Why are you doing this?" Leaning down, I brushed my lips over hers because I desperately had to touch her.

"Shhh. Don't think. Don't over analyse this, Charlie. Just sit back and enjoy yourself. Let me take care of you and show you what I have to offer." I sat down with a smile at her wary look.

I would show her that she can trust me. I picked up a piece of the melon, wrapped it in a slice of prosciutto and held the offering up for her to take.

She hesitated then parted her lips, and I fed her the morsel, my cock twitching as her lips closed on my fingers.

"Now taste the wine." I said softly as she chewed. She picked up the glass, taking a sip and smiled. "Good?" I asked and she nodded.

"Relax, Charlie." I ran my thumb over the side of her face affectionately before sitting back in my chair and watching her.

She finally started to relax, her shoulders lowered and she sat back in the chair with a sigh as she told me about her day. Her voice was hypnotizing, lulling me into a world of imagination where every one of my dreams and desires lived.

When I served the main course and poured her a glass of red, she'd finally let down her guard. I watched her tell stories about funny customers and grit my teeth through the pick-up lines she had heard tonight and my heart swelled every time she laughed.

This woman was amazing. I had always thought she was all these years, but having her in my own private world was another level. Hudson was a fool for letting her go and I planned on making sure she knew how much I wanted to fill that void in her life.

"So, I didn't realise you were such a good cook." I shrugged. I have a friend who's a chef. We've known each other since we were kids and he always used to use me for experiments through culinary school. I picked up a thing or two over the years." She hummed cheekily, looking at me over the glass as she sipped her wine.

"I have one more gift for you. Stay here." I said excitedly and she giggled at my enthusiasm. I hurried down to my bedroom and checked my layout. I had a selection of fruits, cream and chocolates laid out on a tray for dessert.

I had planned on eating my dessert off of every inch of her body, but it was the costume sitting on the bed that was my gift to her. It was silly, stupid, and childish but I had to do it. This woman needed to know I wasn't just another rich guy who knew how to seduce a woman with his money.

So I quickly undressed and got myself into the costume, trying to ignore the nervous feelings that were making my stomach flip. I felt like a teenage boy again about to have his first time.

I glanced at myself in the mirror, rolled my shoulders back and walked out of the room.

Ten

Charlie

This was crazy. I should be stopping him, but the part of my brain that read far too many romance stories was lighting up with desire right now.

He was a player, he knew how to woo women, and just from looking at the apartment right now, I knew he had dumped thousands of dollars into tonight.

The rose petals alone would have cost him a small fortune. I couldn't stop myself from wondering how many times he had done this before, how many women he had seduced in this way. *Stop it. Just enjoy the night.* I could do that. I could give in for another night. The last one had been amazing, and I deserved this.

After all the crazy shit that had been going on in my life, I deserved to feel good again and no one, no man, had ever done this for me.

Chris cleared his throat and I slowly turned to see him standing in the hallway and had to bite back the laughter.

He was standing there proudly in a costume. Not just any costume. He had a full body suit on with a helmet. *A Mandarlorian helmet.* Oh my god. He was dressed up as the Madarlorian.

“My Lady. If it would please you to follow me, I shall show you the rest of your evening.” He bowed dramatically and I couldn't stop the laughter.

“Chris, what are you doing?” He walked over to me, looking down at me through the helmet and I had to admit, it was fucking sexy and adorable all at once.

“I am your space man, here to take you to a world of pleasure and orgasms.” He took my hand and tugged me into his arms.

“Come. This is the way...to the bedroom.” He said with a low voice, and I couldn't stop the snort of laughter. Chris Whitlock, playboy and top

lawyer in Sinclair Bay was wearing a costume to seduce me, and judging by how clammy his hand felt, he was nervous too.

My heart expanded like the damn Grinch as I followed him. Questions filtered through my mind. Maybe I could trust him, maybe he was serious about what he meant.

His bedroom was covered in rose petals and candles everywhere and there was a tray set up on a small table next to it with a selection of different fruits and condiments.

“Come. Sit. Let me feed you like the goddess you are.” He pushed me down onto the bed and I stared up at him with that silly helmet.

He held up a finger, poured a glass of champagne and held it to my lips, feeding me the drink. I took the offering, feeling the bubbles explode on my tongue.

He picked up a strawberry and offered it to me. He continued to feed me berries and champagne, each time getting closer to me, teasing me with the food.

When he began to trace my lips with the berry slowly, I gasped as my nerves came alive. It was slow, sensual and sweet in a way I had never experienced and I could see the bulge in his costume that told me he was just as turned on.

“Why this costume?” I asked, needing to understand his reasons. He knelt in front of me, pushing my thighs apart, and even though I couldn’t see his eyes, I could feel them on me.

“You said he never takes off the helmet. I wanted to show you that I don’t either, but for you I will remove every mask, every version I show to the world, and give you the real me, the vulnerable man inside that wants nothing more than to make you happy.” I gasped at his confession.

This was too much, too real, too raw and too soon. I may have known him for more than ten years, but this man kneeling in front of me was new.

“Let me make you happy, Charlie. Let me show you what it is like to really be with me.” He shifted, pushing my dress over my hips and slowly pulled it over my body, tossing it to the side.

I couldn’t resist him. I wanted this, god I wanted this, and he had just broken down every barrier around my heart.

Tugging me to the edge of the bed, he hooked his fingers into my underwear and slowly slid them down my thighs, his fingers brushing over my skin and sending shots of fire through me.

The fact that I couldn't see his face in his costume, made it even more erotic somehow.

He pushed me back onto the bed, hand caressing my stomach and hips, his other hand stroking my face gently.

“Open those thighs for me, sweetheart. Let me give you all the pleasure you deserve.” I whimpered, parting my legs as his fingers caressed my inner thighs, brushing over my pussy before he continued to caress my other thigh.

He teased me until every nerve was alive, then when I was almost too sensitive, he pressed his finger to my clit and I gasped, hips rocking into his hand.

He continued to stroke my face with so much tenderness that I wanted to cry until he slid two fingers inside me, pulling a moan from deep in my throat.

“That's it, sweetheart. Ride my fingers, let me make you feel good.” He murmured as he fucked me slowly, fingers stroking my inner walls in that expert way of his.

The orgasm came suddenly, my entire body exploding with the sensation as he continued to stroke me through it, while caressing my face.

“Good girl. You feel so good when your pussy clenches on my fingers, soaking me with your desire.” I reached for him, tugging on the costume.

“Take it off. I need to feel you. I need to see you.” I whispered and he hurried to comply. I watched him as he took off the body suit first, his hard cock hanging heavily between his thighs, then slowly removed the helmet.

The hunger in his eyes took my breath away as his eyes roamed over my body. He gripped his cock, stroking it slowly before he dropped to his knees again, pushing my thighs apart and lapped at my pussy like a starving man.

“I am going to feast on you until you scream my name, my little goddess.” He crooned before climbing over my body and reaching for the chocolate sauce.

I watched as he dripped it over my breasts, licking his lips as he watched the trails run down my body.

The sensation of feeling it slowly make a trail between my breasts had me squirming until he gripped my hips, holding me in place.

“Don't move, let me feast on you.” His voice was strained as he

lowered his tongue to my body, following the trails with deep strokes.

“Fuck.” I whispered as his tongue circled my nipple, lapping up every bit of the chocolate.

“Not yet, sweetheart. But I will fuck you soon.” He chuckled before reaching for the cream. It was a cold shock to my body as he covered my nipples, grinning down at me.

“Now I will have to go searching for those beautiful cherries.” Before I could reply, he licked the cream away, moaning as he reached my nipple beneath and sucked it hard, tugging gently with his teeth.

He moved to the other side, repeating the process until I arched my back, my body begging for more.

“Please! I can’t take any more.” I whimpered as he kissed me. His lips tasted sweet as his tongue stroked mine, fingers finding my clit again and tormenting me with pleasure.

“Do you want my tongue on your sweet pussy? Do want to come on my face, sweetheart?” I bit my lip as his fingers dipped in and out of my wet heat, spreading my desire all over my entrance.

“Yes. Please, Chris. I need you.” His growl of approval sent ripples of heat through my body as I watched him climb down my body until he was kneeling between my thighs again.

“I am going to bury my tongue inside you, pushing you to the edge until you scream and then I am going to spread your thighs wide and fuck you hard and fast, claiming you as mine.” I shivered with anticipation at his possessive words before he did exactly what he promised, burying his tongue deep into my pussy, fingers gripping my thighs.

I rocked against him, desperate for more and he nipped the inside of my thigh. “That’s it, baby, fuck my face.” He murmured, the sounds of his voice muffled between my thighs.

He slid a finger inside me as he sucked on my clit and I clenched his head with my thighs, having a brief thought that I just might smother him to death like this, but I didn’t care.

He hummed his approval, the vibrations sending me higher as he fucked me harder with his finger and his tongue circled my clit.

I screamed, back bowed and body taut like a bow string as stars winked behind my eyes. It was the most intense orgasm I had ever felt. As I sunk into the bed, my body pulsing with the aftershocks, tears sprung to my eyes from the intensity.

“That’s my good girl.” He whispered, kissing my inner thighs as he slowly climbed up the length of my body, leaving a trail of kisses behind until he pressed a gentle kiss to my mouth.

I gasped for breath as he pressed his weight into my body, his cock nestled against my entrance. He cradled my face, smiling down at me with tenderness as his thumbs wiped away the tears.

“You look so beautiful like this, completely undone for me. Let me take you higher.” He kissed both of my cheeks as he rolled his hips, the head of his cock slipping inside me with ease.

I spread my thighs to give him more access and he continued to kiss my face, my nose and my eyes, the whole time slowly working himself inside me until he was as deep as he could go.

“I want to stay here forever. My favorite place is being deep inside you, being connected to you in the most intimate ways, and feeling your pussy clench around me to hold me inside.” He started moving slowly, rolling his hips in a way that made him hit a deep place within me.

“Come for me again, sweetheart. I want to feel you come all over my cock and mark me as yours.” This sweet and yet possessive side of him was my undoing as I gripped his shoulders, thrusting my own hips to meet him stroke for stroke.

He bit my neck softly, growling in that delicious way as I felt him begin to lose control. He sat up, spreading my legs as wide as they could go and fucked me harder. The sound of our skin slapping together drove me crazy and his grunts turned me on even more. I could feel myself building again and I had to close my eyes from the intensity.

“That’s it. Are you going to come for me again, baby? You’re nearly there. Come with me, follow me over the edge.” He coaxed and let go of one of my legs to play with my clit.

I went off like a detonator, screaming as I came hard. He continued to thrust inside me, his speed brutal and deep as I felt him lose control.

I loved when he lost control like this, it made me feel powerful, sexy and desired in a way I never had before.

“Fuck, baby. I can’t hold back any more.” His voice was hoarse as I felt his cock swell, then jerk inside me as he came hard.

He collapsed over me, kissing my neck and stroking my sides until his breath steadied.

“Fuck. Charlie, I didn’t think. I didn’t use a condom.” He whispered

and there was a primal part of me that was satisfied with that. *Okay then, down girl. Put that feral part of yourself back in the box.*

“It’s okay. I’m only a couple days away from my period starting, so I think we should be fine.” I said, not feeling worried about the timing. He pushed off me, leaning on his arm as he stared down at me with an unreadable expression then smiled, kissed the tip of my nose and his cock slipped free from me.

He looked down at my pussy and there was something feral in his eyes as I felt his cum leak from inside me.

“Well. That is fucking hot as hell. I truly did claim you as mine.” He whispered before I felt his fingers swipe through his cum and push it back inside me.

“I can sleep better knowing that you are filled with me.” He said softly before he gathered me into his arms.

“Let’s get you cleaned up then we can go to sleep.” He ushered me into the shower, turning it on for me then disappeared back into the bedroom while I quickly cleaned myself up.

He appeared a few minutes later as I was rinsing my hair, getting in beside me to soap up his body. I tried to ignore how sexy he was, how domestic this felt but failed.

He was like a god, his body lean and muscular and that nipple ring glinted at me like a naughty temptation.

He pushed me against the wall, his wet body sliding against mine as he kissed me. It was soft, gentle, and possessive all at the same time. When he pulled away, stroking my cheek with a soft look in his eyes, I felt vulnerable suddenly. Exposed.

Turning off the water, he quickly dried himself before bundling me in a thick fluffy towel then dried my hair with the hair dryer.

It was so sweet and tender and that little sinister voice inside me coiled to the surface, wondering how many times he had done this before.

“How often do you do this?” I blurted out as I watched him in the mirror. He switched off the hair dryer and it suddenly felt too quiet as his eyes met mine.

“Never. I don’t invite women back to my apartment. I usually stay at their place or a hotel room. This is my private space and I don’t like strangers here.” He stared at me in the mirror and I swallowed the lump in my throat.

“I told you, Charlie. I want to show you the real me. I am not that man

you think I am. With you, I'm just Chris, the man who has been infatuated with you for years, fantasized about you for years, and longed to have you since you kissed me." He placed a kiss on my shoulder, eyes never leaving mine in the mirror.

"I know you've been hurt and I know it's hard for you to trust, but please let me in. Please believe me when I say I only want you." I nodded, unable to talk because I knew I would cry.

He tugged me out of the bathroom and I realized he had cleaned up the bedroom already, the side table lamps giving off a soft, welcoming glow.

He slid the towel from my body, pulling back the blanket.

"I want to sleep next to you tonight. I want to feel your warm skin against mine when I wake up." I climbed in, watching as he turned off my lamp then climbed into his side of the bed.

He turned me around until my ass was pressed against his crotch and I felt his cock harden. He turned off his light, hands idly stroking my body and when his fingers dipped inside my pussy, I wasn't sure if I was ready for more and I flinched.

"Shhh. I don't want to fuck you. I just wanted to get you ready for my cock. I want to fall asleep inside you." Oh hell. My body instantly reacted, my core tightening with desire as I relaxed against him, adjusting my hips to give him better access.

He pressed his cock inside me, shifting to find the right position before he let out a sigh, kissing between my shoulder blades.

"This is perfect. Falling asleep with my girl in my arms and her pussy wrapped around my cock. This is how I want to sleep every night." His words were sleepy and he nuzzled my neck, arms pulling me close.

His girl. He called me his. Did I want that? Was I ready for that? As I felt his body relax into sleep, arms squeezing me tightly any time I shifted, I realized I did.

There was no denying that I was a goner and I was about to trust this man with the thing I held most dear... my heart.

Eleven

Chris

It had been four days since the dinner and things seemed to be going well with Charlie. She was hesitant sure, but she had slept in my bed every night since and gone out to dinner with me like we were a couple.

We had been living in a bubble of romance and I knew I had to burst it eventually, introduce her to the world that would mean revisiting the world she had once walked in with Hudson.

The benefit ball next weekend would be perfect and I planned on taking her out this weekend to shop for a dress. I was going over the final details of Jace's case after getting the judge to move forward his hearing in four weeks time.

There was something missing though. Something that I knew Jace had knowledge of, and wasn't planning on sharing, that could help his case or at least help him in some way.

I had dug through the case notes and all his known connections a hundred times but was still coming up empty, and now I was frustrated as hell.

My phone rang, offering me a welcome distraction from staring at my screen.

"Liam, to what do I owe this pleasure?" The noise in the background was almost deafening and I winced, holding the phone away from my ear.

"Whitlock, I called to let you know we just arrested a known associate of Jace's for murder and his fingerprints matched some that we found in Charlotte's apartment. We offered him a deal and he's squealing like a pig. Thought you might want to come down to the station to hear what he has to say." I stood quickly, grabbing my keys.

"When are you questioning him?" I asked, shutting down my computer.

“I’m just finishing up at the crime scene now and heading down there to get started. I’ll see you soon.” He hung up and I hurried out the office, nearly bowling Hudson over in my haste.

“Watch it, Chris. What has you so wound up?” He refused to move, forcing me to interact with him.

“I have a break in the case. New information has come to light.” He frowned at me.

“You mean that pro bono one? The one that is a simple open and shut case?” He eyed me carefully.

“What kind of break through?”

I sucked in a breath as my frustration rose to the surface.

“There are more players involved in this case and the information could be crucial to reducing his sentence.” I watched as something flickered in his eyes before he smiled.

“Well, enjoy. How’s Charlotte?” He asked with a bitter tone and I wanted to snap his neck for mentioning her name.

“She’s doing really well.” I muttered pushing past him. I hit the button for the elevator, watching the numbers slowly change.

“I heard someone tried to burn down her apartment and no one knows where she’s staying now. You wouldn’t know about that, would you?” He called and I looked at him. He knew. Somehow, he knew she was with me.

The elevator doors opened and I chose to ignore him, pushing the button to close the door so I didn’t have to see him.

I don’t know why it bothered me, but after he had told me that he had given me the case deliberately, I didn’t trust his motives and I certainly didn’t want to hear his opinion on me being with Charlie. I wanted to protect her from him and this world.

The drive to the station was quick and I arrived at the same time as Liam. He was talking to another officer when he saw me walking towards him.

“Chris, good to see you.” He shook my hand and we walked inside.

“So, what’s the deal with this guy?” I asked as we made our way to the back where I knew the interview rooms were.

“Calls himself the Slicer. He’s a contracted killer that operates for some of the MC clubs but has been known to contract out to others if the price is right. We’ve been chasing him for a while and he happened to get busted in a brothel of all places.” He rolled his eyes as he opened the door to

the room we could watch from.

The guy looked to be in his late thirties, tattoos covered his arms and neck, and he had dried blood on his face. He had a smirk on his face as someone spoke to him.

“Why did you offer him a deal?” I asked curiously.

“Because he has information that we need. Turns out that some powerful people have been using his skills and he can help us solve a bigger case.” I nodded as I watched someone else walk into the room and sit down in front of him.

“You understand why you’re in here and what the terms are for your plea bargain?” The officer said and Slicer nodded.

“Can you tell us who you work with?” Slicer sat back in his chair with a grin.

“Anyone who has the coin to pay for my services.” They went back and forth for a while and I glanced at Liam, who looked tense and tired.

“Your fingerprints were found at the scene of a crime recently, an apartment of a woman called Charlotte Arden. Why were you there?” I held my breath as I watched him lean forward.

“Because someone paid me to be there.” My blood ran cold.

“Who paid you to be there?” He shrugged.

“Don’t know their real name. I only know the code name they go by. Sweet Lullaby is their name. Stupid if you ask me.” I wanted to tell him his own name Slicer was worse.

“Do you know who this Sweet Lullaby is?” The man asked and he shook his head.

“Nope. Like I said, don’t know about them. The only thing I do know is they ain’t part of the crime families. They usually have me target people involved in cases that you pigs are following, and word on the street is they’re in a position of power.” I stared at Liam, who looked grim.

“Is there anything else you can tell us about this contact?”

He shrugged, “no. Although, I did overhear a communication once where they were talking to someone else in the room and mentioned something about a company or organization known as Redvue.” Liam swore under his breath and typed into his phone.

“What? What is it?” Liam looked at me and there was anger in his eyes and a wariness that hadn’t been there before.

“The case I’m working on has heard of the code name Redvue. It’s a

ghost that no one can track. Let's hope that your Sweet Lullaby person can be tracked to give us something else." He ran his hand through his hair.

"Look, I think it would be best if you meet me tomorrow evening. I can give you information that's strictly off the books that may help. I'll send you the address." I nodded not sure what to make of this information.

"Okay, I'll bring Charlie with me. She deserves to know what's going on." I said my goodbyes and headed back to my apartment, not wanting to face Hudson again in the office and Charlie would be finished her shift in a few hours so I planned on taking her out for a late dinner if she was up to it.

This case was becoming more complicated than I expected and I felt out of my depth. The only thing I knew was I had to keep Charlie safe, and knowing that someone had put a hit out on her left me feeling terrified and more determined than ever to get to the bottom of this.

Twelve

Charlie

I was tired and frustrated and this shift had been dragging on. I had dull cramps that had been persistent all night in my stomach and this period seemed to be kicking my ass.

I kept glancing at the clock, desperately hoping time would go faster. We had a bachelor party in full swing tonight and the men were insanely loud.

I did a sweeping round to collect empty glasses before serving some women who were close to being cut off from the bar.

Thirty minutes. I only had thirty minutes left to go before I could go home and fall into bed, hoping for death to take me.

The last few days had been a dream with Chris, he had wined and dined me and been so sweet and attentive in a way that still shocked me.

He was nothing like the man I used to know and I was still waiting for the other shoe to drop.

The sound of glass shattering had me groaning with frustration. I looked over to one of the standing tables near the dance floor and saw the carnage.

“I’ve got it.” I yelled to Nathan, wanting to be away from the bar and speaking to people. I grabbed the broom and dust pan, dodging people as I started sweeping up the mess.

“Are you Charlotte?” A voice said from behind me and I turned to see who it was. A man in a fancy suit smiled at me and his friend watched me like a hawk.

Their hands were covered in tattoos and I could see some peaking over their collars. When he shifted his jacket, I saw the glimpse of a gun beneath and froze.

“What do you want?” He leaned forward, the scent of cigarettes on

his breath as he gripped my arm tightly.

“Your boyfriend is digging into things he should leave alone. If he keeps digging, the only thing he will find is his own grave, and yours.” I stared at him, my mouth dry as he smiled politely at me.

“Your apartment was a message. Stay out of our business or we will come back to finish the job.” He let me go, both disappearing into the crowd as I stood there shaking.

Those men were responsible for what happened at my apartment. Was he the one who had broken in that night? I hurried to clean up the mess as I saw one of the casual girls arrive for her shift.

Tears threatened to spill over as I pretended to be okay, smiling at customers and serving the last few drinks before I yelled at Nathan.

“I’m done. I’ll see you in a few nights.” He waved at me before taking another order and I hurried to the staff room, grabbing my phone.

I stared at the text from Chris telling me he was outside and waiting. I felt a little more comfortable knowing he was waiting, but then the stranger’s words filtered into my mind.

What had he found out today? I kept my head down as I walked outside, seeing Chris leaning against his car on his phone. He smiled when he looked up at me but when he saw my face he instantly pulled me into his arms, worry on his face.

“Baby, what’s wrong? Tell me what happened.” He soothed, running his hands over my back as I let the fear take hold, tears coming of their own accord. Stupid hormones.

“Come on. Let’s get you home and you can tell me what happened so I can fix it.” He opened the door and helped me in the car, kissing my temple before he shut the door.

“What happened, sweetheart?” He asked gently as he got into the driver’s side. I told him about the men as we drove, watching his hands clench on the steering wheel.

“Don’t worry. We will catch these guys.” He said, gripping my hand.

“We’re going to see some people tomorrow evening that can help us. Tonight, just relax and trust me that everything will be okay.” His thumb ran over my knuckles as he pulled into the private parking garage for his place.

“You just want some takeaway tonight?” He asked and I nodded, wiping my face and feeling stupid for getting so emotional.

I didn’t have the energy to talk about this and if he said we were

going to see someone to fix it all, I trusted him.

“Come on, sweetheart. Let’s get you into something comfy.” My heart swelled as I followed him to the elevator like a lost puppy.

He tucked me into his body and I inhaled his scent, feeling myself relax for the first time tonight.

“What do you want to eat?”

I laughed. I couldn’t help it, he felt like he was being a doting mother duck right now.

“Do I amuse you?” He asked playfully.

“Yes. You’re like a mother duck. I’m sorry I’m being so stupid. It’s just the hormones, they make me weepy and sensitive, and I’ve had horrible cramps today.” The elevator opened and I waited for him to open the door.

“Okay. Well, you go have a hot shower and I’ll get the food sorted okay? Then we can watch your space man show and have an early night.” I rolled my eyes but secretly loved how sweet he was being.

I hurried to wash my day away, rummaging through his drawers to find one of his sweatshirts and pants. I liked his clothes, and they were comfortable compared to the things I had. When I walked out, I could smell the pizza and my mouth watered.

“Damn, woman. Are you trying to tease me?” He said as I walked towards the pizza box with determination.

“What are you going on about?” He pulled me onto his lap and kissed my neck.

“Seeing you in my clothes drives me crazy. It makes me feel all primal and masculine, like I want to beat my chest and say mine.” He nipped my ear and I giggled.

“I like your clothes. They’re comfortable.” I slid off his lap and he presented a hot water bottle for me.

“For your cramps.” He said with a smile, and I swear the tears were on tap as I started crying. He laughed, kissing my cheeks as I took it from him.

“Thank you.” I whispered and he tucked me into his body as we settled in to watch TV. When I kept yawning, he switched off the tv and pushed me gently.

“Go to bed. I’ll pack this up and be in shortly.” I went to protest but a yawn stopped me. I rolled my eyes but dragged my feet to the bathroom first to brush my teeth.

He came in a few minutes later and brushed his own, both of us watching each other in the mirror. It was so domestic and, in some ways, more intimate than anything we had ever done before, but it felt right.

When I climbed into bed, he acted as big spoon and pulled me against his body, rubbing small circles over my stomach in a soothing way.

“How are you feeling?” He asked in the darkness and I sighed.

“Better. Still some dull cramps but I feel better than I did before.” He kissed the back of my neck, continuing the circles on my lower stomach and I was suddenly very aware of his touch. Fuck me and my hormones.

Now my body chose to get turned on? When I couldn't do anything about it. I wiggled against him, feeling tense and frustrated and it was then that I realized his cock was growing harder against my ass.

“You know, I did read somewhere that orgasms can help with cramps.” I whispered boldly into the dark and I swear I could feel him smile against my neck.

“Is that so? Well, if it is all in the name of pain relief, how could I refuse my woman?” He murmured before he moved his hand lower, tucking his fingers into the waistband of the pants.

It was then that I was suddenly very conscious that I had decided to wear period underwear and I grabbed his hand to stop him.

“On second thought, it would be too messy.” He made a sound that could have been agreement or something else and then I felt him get out of bed, the light came on in the bathroom for a moment before he came back to the bed, pulling the blankets down.

“Move over. I'll put a towel down so we can make all the mess we need.” He switched on the lamp and we stared at each other as he waited. My hormones were screaming yes, yes, yes! And my mind was saying no, no, no, this is wrong.

“Don't overthink it, Charlie. You think a little blood from something your body naturally does is going to turn me off? Look at how hard you make me.” He pointed to his crotch and the bulge beneath his pants.

I nodded and moved off the bed, watching him lay down the towels before he stripped naked then gestured to me.

“Come on, baby. Get naked and dirty with me.” His cheeky grin was my undoing as I slowly undressed then climbed onto the bed, laying over the towel.

This was so wrong, so weird, and yet it felt so right. What man was so

attracted to you that he was willing to have sex when you were bleeding?

“Let me give you some pain relief, sweetheart.” He whispered into my ear, pressing against my body as his fingers circled my clit. I gasped, my hormones screaming in victory as he leaned down to take my nipple into his mouth, sucking gently.

I whimpered, already so on edge and could feel my body rising to meet him. What was it about periods that made orgasms come so much quicker?

“That’s it. Let me make you feel better. Come for me, baby.” He crooned, kissing his way up my neck. He pressed on my clit firmly, maintaining the rhythm until I cried out, the orgasm a steady pulse through my body.

“Good girl.” He praised, kissing my jaw line. I thought we were done as I came back to myself but he shifted between my legs, nudging my thighs apart.

I stared up at him with wide eyes.

“What are you doing?” I whispered and he kissed me gently.

“If you don’t want this, I can stop. But I would desperately love to feel your pussy clench around my cock right now. I want to come inside you and know that you’re mine.” He nipped my neck and I moaned, arching against him.

“But you’ll get blood all over you.” He chuckled.

“Baby, I don’t care. I want to make it look like a crime scene.” Well holy hell, that is quite possibly one of the hottest things a man has ever said to me. I nodded, pulling him towards me as his cock nudged my entrance.

We both gasped as he slowly slid inside, stretching me in the most delicious way and when he didn’t move, just rested inside me, I almost went mad from the pleasure.

I leaned up and licked his nipple ring, sucking on it until his hips rolled and I smiled with satisfaction. Good. Now he knew how crazy I felt.

“Fuck, baby. You keep doing that and I’m going to come like a teenager.” I laughed against his skin, flicking my tongue over the piercing and rolled my hips beneath him, desperate for more.

He growled and I shivered at the sound, how was it even humanly possible for a man to sound that sexy? He sat forward, spread my legs wide, and slammed inside me.

I screamed, the pleasure was too much and my greedy body wanted

more. “More. Please.” I whimpered and the masculine chuckle of satisfaction pushed me higher as he pistoned his hips, slamming inside me deeper and deeper, until I swear I could feel him in my throat.

“That’s it, baby. Scream until you wake the dead so they know who you belong to. Whose cock makes you feel this good?” He teased as he slammed into me again, rolling his hips in a way that hit differently but felt fucking amazing.

“Yours. Your cock makes me feel this good.” I gasped, and he thrust harder, his speed increasing until I had to put my hands above me to stop me sliding up the bed.

“I want to feel this pussy milk my cock. Scream my name when you come.”

I moaned, my senses were buzzing and my body felt like liquid heat as he thrust harder, his moans driving me wild.

“Fuck! Fuck! Chris!” I screamed like a fucking banshee as the orgasm hit, my entire body felt tense as wave after wave of intense pleasure rolled through me.

He grunted, thrusting deeper inside me and I felt his cock swell and twitch as he came. He let go of my legs, which fell like a dead weight to the bed before he leaned down and kissed me so tenderly that I knew I was going to cry.

“Hey, sweetheart. You doing okay?” He stroked my hair and I opened my teary eyes to smile at him.

“I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

I bit my lip and shook my head, reaching out to stroke his gorgeous face.

“No. These are good tears. It was so intense, so good.” I murmured, unable to form any other words. He kissed my cheeks, sliding out of me and looked down at the bed with a grin.

“Well, we definitely made a fucking mess.” I sat up to see what he meant and embarrassment flooded my cheeks. His cock was red with blood, both our thighs were smeared with it and the towel beneath me was definitely ruined.

“Hey, don’t you be embarrassed. That was possibly some of the best sex I have ever had. Come on. Let’s have a quick shower.” He helped me up and ushered me into the shower, disappearing to clean up the bed before he came back and climbed in next to me.

He took the wash cloth from my hand and slowly ran it over my body, massaging me with his other hand as he went.

“You okay?”

I smiled, nodding at him as my body hummed with pleasure, “yes. I feel great, thank you.” He kissed my shoulder and then washed between my thighs. It was so intimate and gentle and by the time he was done, I felt like putty in his hands.

“You are so beautiful.” He said as he looked down at me with emotions that made my heart flutter. This man was breaking down every defence I had put in place to protect myself, and I knew that I was falling for him. Not that I wanted to admit it out loud.

We climbed back into bed, both in comfy clothes and he tucked me into his body, hand cradling my stomach and for the first time in a long time, I felt so calm and at ease with life.

Thirteen

Chris

I glanced over at Charlie in the passenger seat and watched her twist her hands in her lap. I reached out to take one, smiling at her.

“Hey, it’s okay. We’re going to get everything sorted out.” She nodded, pinching her brow.

“Who are we seeing again?” I glanced at the GPS and rolled my neck.

“Office Liam Walker. He’s currently up for the position as Chief of Police. I’ve known him for years.” She pursed her lips as we pulled into the street where the house was located. He had been a little cagey about who it belonged to and that made me uneasy.

As we rolled down the street, the houses got bigger and bigger. I had money. Lots of money, but these were mansions that were either celebrities or people who got their money through not so legal ways.

When we pulled up front, waiting for the gate to open and the security guards nodded us through my stomach dropped. Who the hell lived here?

The driveway was wide and circular and I pulled up behind a flashy looking Ford F250 that seemed out of place.

Liam was waiting at the door with amusement in his eyes. I got out and hurried around to Charlie’s side to open her door, but she beat me to it with a glare. I rolled my eyes, putting my hand on her lower back in a subtle gesture of possession.

Liam watched us approach and bit back a smile. I could hear squealing from inside that sounded distinctly like kids.

“Whitlock. Welcome to the Mendez home.” The blood ran from my face and I felt Charlie flinch. She stared at him with wide eyes.

“Do you mean Dante and Alejandro Mendez? The men who own Mariposa?” She whispered and Liam nodded. A deathly scream echoed through the house and made us flinch.

“Ahh. You will have to excuse the noise. Serena and Dante are babysitting and...well. You’ll see.” He rolled his eyes and gestured for us to come inside.

We walked past a security room where two men were busy on the computer and Liam led us into a large formal living room that looked like a bomb had gone off in.

The furniture had been moved to accommodate sheets draped everywhere and what looked like forts. There were toy swords and guns everywhere, along with boxes that were stacked up with writing on them.

What was the most shocking however was seeing Dante Mendez, psycho king pin for the Mexican Cartel, dressed in what looked like fairy wings and a tutu with a sword and shield.

A little girl was dressed similarly to him and they were hiding behind some boxes, yelling at a woman who was dressed in armour with a nerf gun in hand and a little boy in a batman costume.

“Give up you fairy scum!” she screamed, shooting bullets at Dante.

“Never, wench! Surrender your fortress of Secrets to the Princess or die!” He replied and I watched with my mouth surely hanging on the floor as they rolled around on the floor like commandoes.

“I hate to interrupt, but can we put a truce in place for a moment?” Liam said with amusement and all four sets of eyes turned to us.

The woman smiled politely and took the little boy’s hand and held out her other one to the little girl.

“Of course. It’s time for snacks anyway.” The kids jumped with excitement, running into the kitchen hollering about what they wanted. She smiled seductively at Dante, gripping the front of his shirt and pulled him in for a kiss.

“This isn’t over, scum.” She teased and he gripped her ass, kissing her with so much heat that I felt I had to look away.

“I’ll have you on your knees before the day is through.” He purred and she laughed, walking towards Liam with a smile.

“Do you want anything to eat?” She asked, wrapping her arms around him. What the hell? Liam pushed a strand of hair out of her face and kissed her gently.

“Nothing I can say in front of children.”

Dante cackled as she slapped him on the chest playfully.

“Fiend.” She said as she walked away. Dante and Liam looked at us

and I didn't know where to look. Dante was still in those fairy wings with a tutu and it was unnerving seeing him like that.

"Dante, this is the man I told you about, Chris Whitlock." He tilted his head to the side with interest and I felt like I was being scrutinized by a predator.

"You are related to Sean Whitlock." I stiffened at the mention of my dead brother before I nodded stiffly.

"How did you know him?" Dante smiled before his eyes went to someone behind me.

"We know Elsie." A voice said behind me and I turned to see Alejandro Mendez stride in with another man following behind.

Alejandro looked around the room and let out a sigh. "Christ. It looks worse than it did an hour ago. Let's go to the office." He gestured for us to follow and I stared at Liam, so many questions rolling through my mind.

The office was decked out with a table big enough to sit ten people and a desk sat in the rear of the room. Bookshelves lined the walls and two chesterfield couches sat off to one side.

Liam took a seat next to Dante, and Alejandro gestured for us to sit. The amusement in his eyes told me he enjoyed seeing us look so uncomfortable.

"This is Theo. He is our head of security and all things tech related. Liam you obviously already know, and Dante." He stared at Dante.

"You couldn't take the wings off before coming in?" Theo chuckled as he opened the laptop and Liam rolled his eyes.

"I like to look pretty at all times." Dante replied, making kissy faces at him. Alejandro muttered something under his breath before he looked at Charlie.

"This is Charlie. She actually works at Mariposa." Alejandro smiled and nodded.

"I am aware. Nathan speaks highly of you." Charlie shifted nervously in her seat and I put a hand on her thigh in comfort.

"Liam filled us in on your situation. The reason he asked you to come over is because we have been doing some research ourselves into the company known as Redvue. They started making trouble for the Madden's last year and we recently discovered they had been linked to us as well." He glanced at Liam before continuing.

"The Forsaken are going through a split and it is only a matter of time

before a war breaks out. Clearly, your client, Jace, has information that could upset the plans. We have all been keeping a close eye on their situation so it doesn't spill over."

I cleared my throat, "there has been some developments since I spoke to Liam last. Two men came into Mariposa last night and threatened Charlie." I watched all four men stiffen and look at Charlie.

"What did they say?"

She hesitated and the man called Theo smiled gently.

"Can you also tell me what time? I will find them in the security footage to see if we can get a match."

She nodded, "it was towards the end of my shift so it would have been somewhere around eight or eight thirty." She looked at Alejandro and I squeezed her thigh in encouragement.

"They told me that my boyfriend was digging into things he shouldn't be and if he didn't stop, he would be digging his grave and mine, and that my apartment was a message to stay out of it or they will finish the job." Liam swore and Alejandro looked at Dante.

"I'm sorry this happened at work. You have my word that from now on, you will be protected and security will be doubled. I won't have any of my staff feeling threatened and unsafe in our club." Alejandro said and Dante got up, making a phone call as he left the room.

"Is this them?" Theo asked, turning the computer around where it was paused on a shot of Charlie looking terrified and two men staring at her. My blood boiled and anger rolled through me at the nerve of these men.

"Yes, that's them." She whispered and Theo nodded as he continued to type on the computer.

"We can have security set up for you if you wish. Someone to watch your apartment. These people don't mess around." Liam said softly and I considered that.

"Just out front, right? Nothing invasive?" He nodded once and I agreed. I wanted to make sure if I wasn't home, Charlie was safe.

"Does your brother have any information we can use?" Alejandro asked and Charlie sighed.

"Probably. But he isn't talking. He keeps saying they will come for him anyway and he isn't a snitch." Alejandro sat back in his chair, running his hand over his chin as he considered this.

"We have some people who may be able to help. Leave it with me

and I will see what we can do, and Liam will be in contact.” He stood, clearly indicating this meeting was done.

“It was a pleasure to meet you, Charlie. If you ever need anything, Nathan knows how to get in contact with us. Your comfort and happiness is important to us.” He shook her hand before shaking mine.

“Mr. Whitlock, a pleasure. You are nothing like your brother, which is a good thing. I would hate to see you as my enemy.” He walked out, leaving me staring at the back of his head wondering what that even meant.

Liam walked us to the door, amusement and wariness in his eyes.

“So, the woman.” I asked and he grinned.

“Serena. She is the love of my life and graciously decided to let me back into her world.” I raised an eyebrow and looked back at the house.

“You are all in a relationship together?” He laughed.

“Yeah, it’s complicated I know, but it works.” I shook my head in disbelief.

“You’re a cop. How are you dating a woman who is connected to the Mexican Cartel and still in your job?” The look in his eyes was dark, wicked and a little scary.

“Because no one knows what I do in my private life and those that do, keep their mouths shut.” I heard the unspoken threat beneath the words and held up my hands in surrender.

“I make no judgements. I won’t be saying anything to anyone.” He nodded and reached out to shake my hand.

“You needed to meet them. The families are key to understanding this case and they can help and get information we can’t. We will catch these people one day. It’s only a matter of time.” We said our goodbyes and got into the car in silence.

“Well, that was something I will never forget.” Charlie said with amusement. I looked at her and she grinned.

“We saw Dante Mendez dressed up as a fairy princess. That’s an image I will take to the grave.” I laughed with her as I considered the absurdity of the situation and realized that we had just made a relationship with the devil himself. Life really did have a sick sense of humor.

Fourteen

Charlie

My period finished three days ago, and I finally had my energy back. I had today off and spent the day in bed, waiting for Chris to come home so we could go over the details of Jace's case.

We had settled into a routine over this past almost month now, and it was hard to imagine what my life was like before.

This weekend he had invited me to a charity Gala and I was nervous about going. The little bubble of protection would burst. I knew most of the people there and the last time I had seen them all, I was with Hudson.

Chris assured me Hudson wasn't going to be there as he had other commitments, and said he wanted me to be there, that he wanted to show people I was his.

There was so much pressure in that idea, not only because of my past but also because of who Chris was. He was the playboy no one could pin down, so the rumors would fly about how we got together and did it happen before the break-up.

Not to mention that he was working a case involving my brother, which would be the scandal of the year to these people.

The door opened and I looked up from my spot on the couch to see Chris looking dishevelled and frustrated.

He smiled when he saw me, walking towards me with determination that had butterflies flitting in my stomach.

"Hey, sweetheart." He whispered before he pulled me to him for a kiss. He set me on fire with his touch and my mind felt clouded and muddy every time he was near.

"I'm going for a workout with Eric before we have dinner." He looked at me for a minute then smiled.

"Want to come? Eric could teach you some self defence moves. The

man's a skilled fighter." I considered the idea and had to admit, the idea of learning how to defend myself was appealing right now.

"Okay. Let me get changed, but I swear to God if you make me do any form of running, I will be running far away from this apartment and never returning." He chuckled, eyes darkening as he held me against his body.

"Don't threaten me with that. I'll chase you and bring you right back." I snorted, rolling my eyes, but the seriousness that crossed his face stopped my smart remark.

"There is no where you could run that I wouldn't follow, Charlie. I told you. I'm all in and that means you're stuck with me." He gripped my hips, kissing me with so much heat that I contemplated just stripping him down and fucking him right now.

"Hurry up before I change my mind and take you right here, right now." He said, voice hoarse with desire.

I loved that he couldn't control himself around me, it made me feel special.[KL6]

I hurried to get changed into something casual then met him in the living room, trying not to perv on his tight ass in those loose sweat shorts, before he took my hand and we made our way down to the gym in the building.

My lungs screamed for air and I felt like I was going to vomit. Fuck these men. I was laying on the ground, panting for breath and feeling like death was coming for me as I eyed Eric with Chris.

They were both shirtless, sweating up a storm as Eric coached Chris with his swings in the boxing ring. Eric was like some kind of Viking god, his body covered in tattoos and thick muscle, his tall frame at least 6ft and his blonde hair tied up in a bun.

But Chris was lean and fast, dodging the blows Eric was swinging at him, and I couldn't stop watching the way his muscles rippled beneath his skin. I may be dying but at least I had a great view before death.

They slowed down, talking softly before both sets of eyes landed on me with a grin.

"How're you doing, Charlie?" Eric said, his slight accent a sexy purr.

I glared at him as Chris chuckled, wiping the sweat from his face.

“I’m on my way to Valhalla, you brute. Death is circling the battlefield and I will tell everyone that Eric the Brute sent me to my grave.” He laughed, a rich sound that did things to your body, and I could see why he was always booked out for months in advance.

Chris leaned over me with a grin, handing me a bottle of water. “Come on, drama queen. You’ll live.” I glared at him as I sat up and took the bottle from him.

“Easy for you to say. You’re like a panther and built for this. I am not. I am done. I hit my quota for exercise for the entire year. You said self defence, not death of the self.” He tweaked my nose as I drank the water like a fish.

“Every muscle in my body is screaming for mercy. Muscles I didn’t even know existed are broken. You broke me.” I said with venom as I stared at Eric. He grinned.

“You did good. Same time next week?” He said to Chris who nodded.

“Over my dead body, which should be soon.” I muttered as he packed up his bag and slapped Chris in some kind of bro hug and handshake.

Chris sat next to me and tucked me into his sweaty body.

“Come on, my broken girl. Let’s have something to eat and then I’ll put you back together with a nice long massage.” My body shook at the idea of being oiled up and massaged into submission.

“That sounds good. You owe me for this torture session.” I said as I stood, my legs a little shaky as we made our way back to his apartment.

“Go have a shower. I’ll have dinner sorted when you come out.” He said as we walked into the apartment and I shuffled down the hallway feeling like an old lady.

Damn, I was unfit. As my body calmed down, the steam from the shower lulling me into relaxation, I sighed and smiled to myself. It felt good. I felt good.

I knew the insurance was taking a long time to come through on my apartment, the building wasn’t exactly owned by people who liked to move fast, but I was secretly hoping it would continue to drag out just so I had an excuse to stay here.

Being with Chris was different than when I was with Hudson. Our lives had always been a whirlwind of flashy events, meet and greets, and his deep seated need to prove to the world just how rich and fancy he was.

Chris, on the other hand, was different. He was always the life of the party and that hadn't changed; but he never really did push his wealth the way Hudson did. Never felt the need to prove to others that he was from money.

I had met his brother a few times at gatherings and knew that he was the opposite, loud, flamboyant and always in your face about status.

His wife Elsie was quiet and soft, often not coming to many of the events, which caused a lot of talk towards the end of their marriage.

I had heard that his brother had died and realized that I hadn't said anything to him about it. I really should talk to him, especially since the circumstances of his brother's death were connected to the same world that my brother was now in.

Chris had been true to his word, showing me a side of himself I had never seen before, and if I was honest, I was more worried that it was only because we hadn't been around the people who brought out the playboy side in him.

I hurried my shower, following my nose to the smell of something delicious in the kitchen and found Chris with his shirt off and still in his gym shorts, cooking.

"Fried rice. Comfort food." He said as an explanation. "I'll just go have a quick shower if you want to get the bowls ready, and then we can eat." He kissed my cheek and left the kitchen, leaving me feeling full of emotions again. Damn this man. He was adorable, sexy and attentive in a way I thought that only existed in the movies or romance novels.

We sat together and ate in silence, watching some crappy reality tv show that I wasn't even paying attention to until he took my empty bowl, turned off the tv and pulled me to my feet.

"Come on. Let's go get you nice and relaxed. A good rub down will do your muscles good." He wagged his eyebrows suggestively and I couldn't help the laugh.

He had laid down a towel over the top of the bed and lit a few candles to set the mood.

"You know, you're too good at this. I feel like the other shoe is about to drop and you're going to tell me you moonlight as a serial killer or something." He grinned, pulling my clothes off until I stood there naked.

"Lay down, my little victim. Let me prepare you for the offering to the dark lord." He said in an ominous voice. I shook my head and rolled my

eyes. This guy. The goofy side of him was my favorite.

I laid down on my stomach, goosebumps on my flesh as I felt him straddle me, then the cool oil hit my back.

I sighed as his firm hands moved it over my back, slowly working the oil into my skin until his touch became firmer.

His hands kneading the tension in my shoulders, my body slowly relaxed and I sighed as he moved in firm circles, coaxing my muscles to relax.

He slowly eased down my arms, squeezing and massaging the muscles until reaching my palms, working down to my finger tips then slowly back up the length of my arms to my shoulders and neck.

He shifted again, his thighs on either side of my hips as he began the slow descent along my spine, working the muscles on either side until he reached my lower back and pressed firmly, kneading and rubbing the muscles there until I moaned softly.

He worked over my glutes, massaging with his fingertips, shifting to the point my thighs and ass met, digging in firmly to release the tension.

It was soothing, relaxing and just a little erotic, and as he shifted to my inner thighs I gasped, my pussy pulsing with desire at his touch.

He moved lower, working my hamstrings firmly and I melted into the bed as he continued the descent over my calves then to my feet, working the pressure points that activated my entire body, coaxing it to relax.

He shifted again, working his way back up my body where he nudged my thighs apart and in a sweeping motion, continued to spread the oil so close to my core which ached with need.

He kissed my lower back and I felt him pour more oil over my ass, the cool liquid dripping between my cheeks before he began to massage it in, each stroke spreading me further apart.

“Do you trust me, sweetheart?” He whispered and I opened my eyes to look up at him over my shoulder.

“Yes.” I said, anticipation and curiosity rolling through me. He grinned, then pushed down on my shoulders until I was laying flat again.

“Good. Let me make you feel better. I got something for you the other day and I’ve been fantasizing about using it with you since then.” I tensed a little at his words but trusted him to look after me. He hadn’t hurt me yet.

I heard him reach into the bedside table before he climbed back over me, knees on either side of my hips. He dripped more oil over my ass,

massaging again before I felt his finger press against my back hole.

I flinched and he ran a hand over my back as he used the pad of his finger to massage me.

“Shhh, just relax baby. I’ll go nice and slow and if you want me to stop at any time, you tell me.” He leaned over, kissing between my shoulder blades as he continued to massage my hole and I slowly let my body relax again, the sensation drawing more heat into my body.

“I’ve fantasized about filling your pretty ass while I fuck your sweet pussy. Do you want me to fill you in both holes?” He whispered in my ear, teeth tugging on my earlobe.

Desire shot through me as I imagined what he said and I sank into the bed, willing myself to relax. The last time I had done this with Hudson, it hadn’t been pleasant.

“I promise I won’t hurt you. We’ll take as much time as you need.” I moaned softly as he held his finger against my entrance.

“I trust you, Chris.” I whispered, feeling a mix of excitement and desire as he sat up, working more oil into my body, one hand massaging my lower back as the other pressed against me until I felt his finger slide inside.

I gasped at the sensation, relaxing into it as my body adjusted and he continued to move his finger in and out, working me into submission.

I arched my back slightly, the desire spurring me on for more as I adjusted, and he groaned softly then pressed a second finger inside, scissoring his fingers to stretch my body.

I was so relaxed, my body limp from his massage and my pussy wet with desire. He moved again, removing his fingers and I cried out at the loss, needing more.

“It’s okay, baby. I’ll make you feel good.” He assured, and I felt more oil drip down my body before I felt a cool object pressed against my hole. I glanced over my shoulder, tension making me wary.

“It’s just a butt plug. A small one too, so it won’t feel like too much. I’m going to work it inside you then I’m going to fill that sweet pussy with my cock.” I let out a breath, laying back down and closed my eyes to focus on the sensations.

He worked the edge of the butt plug against me, each move a little deeper as I felt myself stretch, it was almost uncomfortable and just when I was about to say stop, I felt it slide into place.

“Damn, baby. You have no idea how sexy you look right now with

this cute little butt plug inside you. I could come just from looking at you.” His voice was strained as he gripped my ass cheeks, rolling them around and causing the butt plug to move.

I felt full, stretched in a delicious way and his words sparked a desire for more. He dipped his fingers down to my pussy and I moaned, arching my back to give him better access.

“You’re so wet. Do you want my cock now?” He asked and I sucked in air, my pussy clenching around his fingers as he slid them in and out.

“Yes! I need more.” I whimpered and he chuckled as I felt him shift to take off his clothes. His hand ran over my left thigh before he gripped behind my knee, pushing my leg up until my knee sat at my waist, opening me in a way that had the butt plug touch a new part of me.

“Oh, fuck.” I moaned, his answering moan making me desperate until he pressed his cock against my pussy, teasing me with just the tip.

“Chris! Please.” I begged, needing more. I felt on fire with lust and he chuckled before sliding inside me to the hilt. His pubic bone rested against the butt plug, pushing it further inside me and I knew I wasn’t going to last long.

“That’s it, sweetheart. Take all of me. I’m going to fill you up with my cum, make that sweet pussy milk me until you scream.” He shifted, one hand still gripping my thigh and the other he closed his hand around my throat, pulling me up slightly to angle my body better.

His hand was firm, secure and just enough to make me gasp for air. There was something so fucking hot about having his hand around my throat, a dark and forbidden side of myself rose to the surface.

I rocked back against him, seeking more and the sounds that came from my mouth were animalistic, desperate and loud.

“Good girl. Fuck yourself on my cock. Make yourself come.” He snarled, his thrusts harder and deeper with every one of my moans.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!” I screamed, the orgasm so intense that I felt like I was going to pass out. Chris groaned louder, letting go of my throat and leg to grip my hips and fuck me with such intensity that I slid up the bed.

“Fuck, you are perfect. So fucking perfect.” He murmured as I felt him slam home, his cock twitching hard as he came. He collapsed onto me, kissing my neck softly.

“You are like an addictive drug I can’t get enough of.” I laughed, half rolling to look at his face.

“You’re pretty damn addictive yourself. I don’t think I’ve ever come as hard as I do with you.” I kissed his lips when he grinned, pride in his eyes.

“Hold on. Let me help you, then we can clean up.” He slid out of me, and I felt his cum wet my thighs. His fingers trailed through it, pushing it back into my pussy before he slowly pulled the butt plug out of me.

I sighed, sinking deeper into the bed and let the waves of pleasure pulse through me. It was like being in bed with a sex god and every time we were together, he pushed my body to new heights.

“Shower time, my little oiled up queen.” He laughed as I groaned in protest, his strong arms helping to steady me on my feet.

“Okay, then sleep. You fucked me into a coma.” I mumbled. I followed him into the bathroom and we showered together.

Maybe the ball wouldn’t be so bad after all and we truly could have this happy ever after that I had desperately longed for, but never thought possible.

Only time would tell.

Fifteen

Chris

The words on my screen started to blur together as I went over the final points for Jace's case. The hard part wasn't going to be the existing charges. It was the association he had with the Forsaken that was going to be the hurdle I needed to overcome. I desperately needed something to be a bargaining chip with the judge.

I had been given the details on who would be presiding over the case and seeing Judge Hollands name had cemented my difficulty. That man was the front runner of legal cases against the war on crime and gangs, notorious for being a hardass and the favorite of the state to use in these cases.

My phone rang, giving me a much-needed excuse to distract myself from the dilemma.

"Hello, are you willing to accept a call from Sinclair Prison?" the woman on the other end asked and I sat back with surprise.

"Yes, of course." She patched me through and Jace's voice greeted me.

"Fancy pants. I want to talk to you about the information I have." He said and I sent a little prayer to what ever god was listening.

"Okay, let's talk." I pulled out my pen and paper.

"Narr. We gotta do it here. I don't trust the phone lines. They could be listening." I glanced at the time and swore under my breath. It was already Friday and there was no way I would make it there in time tonight and we had the ball over the weekend.

"I can come in first thing on Monday. Jace, what made you change your mind?" I was curious why he was suddenly so eager to talk.

"Got paid a visit from someone under the Mendez banner who promised me protection, cash and a position in their own crew once I'm out." He chuckled and I realized that this is what Alejandro had meant when he

said he would see what he could do.

“See you Monday, fancy pants.” He hung up and I sighed before texting Liam a thank you. I still didn’t quite understand the relationship he had and the dynamics over there, but if this made our lives easier, I was happy to get any help I needed.

“Whitlock, how’s your case going?” Hudson asked as he leaned against the door frame. I glanced up at him and shrugged.

“As well as expected. I have some information that will change things.” I didn’t want to give him any more than that, there was something about his need to pry that was rubbing me the wrong way.

“So, where’s Charlie?” I looked at him, saw the smirk on his lips and realized that he knew something. He was fishing for more information.

“She’s at work right now.” He nodded as if that was the answer he expected.

“You going to the ball this weekend?” I felt uneasy now, like he was leading up to something.

“Yes. I always go.” He crossed his arms over his chest.

“Good. I guess I’ll see you and Charlie there then.” He winked and walked away, leaving me wondering how the fuck he knew I was bringing her and why he was now coming to the event. I had told her that he wasn’t going to be there and now I was stuck. If I said he was, she might not come. I desperately wanted her to be there but if I didn’t tell her, she would resent that I threw her in the deep end.

I had decided that Charlie was the woman I wanted and there was no way anyone was going to take her from me. I’ve never felt such a strong possessive urge in all my years of being around women, but Charlie was different.

I wanted to care for her, protect her and mark her as mine. She didn’t know that I had been tracking her cycle since the day she got her period.

I can’t explain why, it was some kind of primal desire to know when she was fertile. The first time I came inside her, a switch had flicked in my brain and I wanted her as the mother of my children.

Intense? Fuck yes. Too soon? I don’t fucking care. There was no one else and I was running on pure instinct with her.

I wanted to pick her up from her shift, she had negotiated for an early shift tonight in order to get ready early for tomorrow’s event.

I knew she was nervous; it had been over a year since she had been

around these people and in the middle of the spotlight, but I wanted them to know who held my heart, who had captured my attention. I wanted them all to know Charlie was mine, including Hudson.

I finished off my notes for today and grabbed my keys, figuring I would just grab a drink and wait for her shift to finish. I loved watching Charlie in her element behind the bar.

I knew she had wanted something for herself once and I was going to broach the subject soon for her to buy her own bar, but I had to be careful. I didn't want her to think I was doing it as a charity case.

I had to plan my timing perfectly so she knew it was only coming from a place of desire to see her win and nothing more.

I sat at the bar watching Charlie make some cocktails, laughing with one of her co-workers. I was answering emails on my phone, watching her out of the corner of my eye and loving seeing her so relaxed.

"Hey, there. You here alone?" A woman purred and I looked up to see a beautiful blonde woman in a form fitting black dress smiling at me. She was the kind of woman I would have wined and dined in the past, but seeing the seductive way she looked at me just made me irritated.

"No, I'm waiting for my girlfriend." She pouted a little, twirling the straw in her drink and looked at me through her lashes.

"I can keep a secret if you can."

I stared at her and the last ten years of my life flashed before my eyes. The Chris from a year ago would have flirted back and said yes, taking her somewhere fast and dirty before meeting another woman, without a second thought.

But the present me... no. I felt nothing but annoyance and disgust. "Thanks, but no thanks." I deliberately turned away from her, going back to my emails while I sipped my wine.

I looked up to see Charlie watching me, a curious expression on her face, and I smiled. She was wondering if the old me would come out to play. She returned the smile before turning to serve a group of men.

I narrowed my eyes when I noticed the flirtatious way they were leaning over the bar. Charlie didn't react, doing her job as she smiled politely in return.

One of the guys reached out to touch her arm and I saw red. How fucking dare he touch what's mine! Before I could go over there, Charlie pulled her arm away and took a step back from the bar, saying something that had them all laughing.

I couldn't concentrate as I watched them continue to flirt with her and I desperately wanted to punch that dick head in the face, but she would get mad at me.

"Hard to watch your girl interact with another man isn't it?" A voice said, pulling me from my thoughts and I turned to see Alejandro Mendez grinning at me.

"Yeah. I want to kill him, while claiming her in front of them all so they know who she belongs to. I don't know what's wrong with me, this woman makes me feel like a caveman." Alejandro chuckled as he leaned against the bar.

"Sounds like you're in love." I raised an eyebrow at him as I considered that, and I realized that I was. I loved this woman. So, this is how it felt to be in love.

"No wonder people say you do crazy things for love." I muttered as I sipped my wine.

"Hmmm. That's why I think the wedding ring was invented. Not to chain a woman to a man, but as a visual 'back the fuck off' territorial mark from a man who was possessively in love." Alejandro said with a dreamy look like he knew the feeling.

"Guess I'll have to put my mark on her too then. That and a baby inside her. No one can challenge my claim then." Alejandro laughed deeply, a look in his eye that had me realizing how crazy I sounded.

"Don't worry. You aren't the first person I've heard this from, and you're certainly not alone." I wanted to ask him who but didn't feel like it was my place.

"You got the call from Jace?" He asked and I nodded.

"Thanks. I don't know what you said to him, but I'm meeting with him on Monday." He nodded, glancing at his watch.

"Good. Pass on the information you find out to Liam. It was good seeing you, Chris. I'm sure it won't be the last time." He smiled once more before disappearing into the crowd.

That man had a presence about him. He looked like a businessman, but he oozed confidence and an intensity that said don't fuck with me.

I looked at Charlie again, thinking over his words and my own feelings. God, I wanted her more than anything, and the idea of putting a ring on her finger to show the world who she belonged to pulled some primal part of my brain to the surface.

My mind flashed to seeing her belly swollen with my child and my cock got hard, desire rolling through me. Fuck it. I was going to make this woman mine in every way I possibly could.

She is mine.

Sixteen

Charlie

Chris had been here for the past hour, waiting for me patiently, but always watching. I'd felt his eyes on me, felt the heat of his stare and the way he kept undressing me with his eyes.

It was so weird to see him here after all the years I had seen him sitting here with friends and leaving with a new woman. When that blonde woman had approached him, my heart had leapt into my throat as I watched them.

The way he blatantly refused her had something inside me settle into place. It was like watching that play out had shown me that he really wasn't the same man.

As I grabbed my bag and said my goodbyes, Chris stood, waiting for me with an intense stare that had me feeling a little uneasy.

He pulled me to him, sealing his lips over mine in a kiss that set my body on fire and had my toes curling.

"Let's go home. I need to fuck you." He said hoarsely and my pussy reacted, instantly clenching. I rolled my eyes playfully.

"Why? What has you so worked up?" He leaned in, cupping my ass possessively as he whispered in my ear.

"I watched those men flirt with you tonight and I wanted to kill every one of them. So, I am going to take my woman home and I am going to fuck you until you scream my name so everyone to hear who you belong to." He licked my neck and I shivered with anticipation before he took my hand, tugging me out the door with hurried steps.

I loved him like this, the possessiveness was absolutely caveman style, but it was hot as hell. No one had ever felt that way about me before and to have Chris Whitlock, playboy of Sinclair Bay, say I drove him that crazy was like pigs flying.

We drove home in silence, his hands gripping the steering wheel tightly and he kept glancing at me, his looks becoming more and more intense as we got closer to the apartment.

I glanced down at his crotch and saw the bulge of his cock. When I looked back at him, he smiled in a way that made him look just a little crazy.

Holy hell. I felt like I needed to say some prayers to my pussy, because she was about to get fucking hammered by caveman Chris.

When we pulled into the garage, he got out of the car so damn fast it was like watching the flash move and when he came around to my side, I had barely gotten the seatbelt off when he pulled me into his arms.

“Fuck, I want you so bad, Charlie. You drive me so fucking crazy.” He kissed me deeply, one hand cupping the back of my head, fingers threaded in my hair to hold me in place while the other fumbled with the button of my jeans.

“Chris! We’re in the garage. Anyone could see us down here.” He groaned, his hands finding their way into my jeans and pushed my panties aside so he could plunge his fingers into my wet heat.

“I don’t fucking care. I can’t wait to take you. I need you now.” He snarled and I felt more heat pool between my legs as he backed me up to the hood of the car.

“Turn around. I’m going to fuck you over my car. I will own your body the way you own my heart.” He whispered and my stomach did a little flip. Did he just say what I think he said?

Before I could say anything, he shoved my jeans and underwear down my thighs, pushing me down over the hood until my ass was in the air.

I moaned at his forceful ways. His desire driving him in a way I had never seen before.

“I’m going to fuck this pretty little pussy until you come on my car, then I’m going to come deep inside you, filling you up so your body knows you belong to me.” He leaned down to kiss my neck, his fingers plunging in and out of my pussy until I whimpered, needing more.

“Fuck... Chris!” I cried out as I came suddenly, the intense desire and knowledge that anyone could see what he was doing to me driving me wild.

“Good girl. This pussy belongs to me. You belong to me.” The growl in his voice was so deep and dark that I almost didn’t recognize him.

“Say it. I want to hear you say it.” He circled my clit, spreading my wetness everywhere until I writhed beneath him. His other hand slid through

my hair, holding me in place.

“I belong to you. My pussy belongs to you.” I gasped, tilting my hips higher to give him more access.

“Good girl.” He whispered before I felt him shift behind me, his hand never leaving my hair. I felt the tip of his cock press against me as he ran it through my wetness then slammed inside me.

I cried out, my voice echoing in the garage as he shifted his hold to grip both my hips, slamming into me with so much force the car rocked beneath me.

“Fuck, I love this pussy. You feel perfect, baby. This is where I am meant to be, buried deep inside you.” He grunted with the force, the sound of our skin slapping against each other leaving nothing to the imagination for anyone who heard us.

“I’m going to fill you up with my cum. I’m going to put a fucking baby inside you so everyone knows you’re mine.” Oh my god. My mind was screaming what the hell, but my body was screaming fuck yes at his words.

“Oh, my fucking god.” I whimpered, bracing my hands on the hood of the car as he slammed into me. The feeling of his balls slapping against my clit were what pushed me over the edge, his fingers sinking deep into my hips in a way that I knew would bruise as he groaned his own orgasm, pumping so hard and deep inside me that I realized he meant it. He was planning on filling me with his cum.

“Fuck, baby. You’re killing me.” He murmured, leaning over to kiss my cheek before he slid out of me and snarled with satisfaction as I felt his cum drip out of me.

He gathered it on his fingers, pushing it deep inside me then held his hand over my pussy, leaning down over my shoulder.

“Clench that pussy and hold it inside you, baby. I want every drop to stay in that pussy.” He whispered, teeth tugging on my earlobe and damn my body, it instantly reacted with a wave of pleasure for more.

He pulled my clothes back into place, turning me around to do the zip and button up before he kissed my nose.

“What do you want for dinner, sweetheart?” He asked softly, the caveman Chris morphing into gentle Chris.

“Ahhh. I don’t care.” I mumbled, feeling like I had just done a marathon. My body was still on a high and my head was trying to make sense of what just happened.

“Let’s go get you comfortable then I’ll feed my girl whatever she wants.” He tucked me into his arm as we walked to the elevator and I chewed my lip as I considered what the fuck to say and do from here.

I didn’t know what to think and I had to figure it out real quick, because as hot as caveman Chris was, he was also damn scary with his proposals. If I wasn’t smart, I could lose my head and my heart.

Seventeen

Chris

Charlie sat at the kitchen table deep in thought as she ate her breakfast. She kept glancing at me and it made me uneasy.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, feeling as though she was about to drop some kind of bomb on me and walk away. She put down her fork and sighed.

Yep. She was definitely about to rip my heart out and smash it into a thousand pieces.

“I think we need to talk about yesterday.” My stomach sank and my hands were clammy. What the hell was wrong with me? I never felt like this around anyone.

“What would you like to talk about?” I asked and she hesitated, as if looking for the right words.

“What is this between us, Chris?” She was looking at me with such intensity that I had to look away. Charlie may be gentle most of the time, but when she was determined to get something, she scared me.

“What would you like it to be?” I deflected, feeling like things were suddenly all too real. She rolled her eyes.

“Don’t dodge the question. You’ve been so intense with me since I came here, possessive and calling me yours. Last night, you said you wanted to put a baby in me. I need to understand what’s happening here. What is going through your mind?” I swallowed the lump in my throat.

I had to be honest. It was now or never and I needed to put it all on the line.

“I see you as my girlfriend. I want you to be mine, Charlie. I don’t see this as a short term thing. I want marriage, kids, happily ever after. I want it all with you.” Her eyes widened a little before she pursed her lips in concentration.

“Don’t you think it’s a little too soon? Don’t you want to take this

slow? You aren't exactly known for your monogamous ways, Chris. This could just be a novelty to you." And there it was. The reason why she was worried.

"Sweetheart, I understand why you feel that way, I know my past and I cannot change that, nor am I ashamed of who I was, but it isn't too soon for me. I've known you for over ten years. Sure, you weren't my girl, but you were my friend. This feels right. You feel right. I can't explain it, all I know is the thought of never having you in my life hurts. I've felt like that for the last year when you disappeared and I don't want that ever again." She looked away and I desperately wanted to demand she tell me her thoughts.

"Chris, I never thought I would come back to this world. I never thought I would love someone again after Hudson. I thought I would just spend the time focused on my own life, my own dreams. I don't want to lose myself to another man." I stood, walking over to her, spinning her in the chair until she faced me and knelt in front of her.

"I didn't think a woman would ever capture me the way you have and yet here we are. I would never ask you to sacrifice your life, your dreams for mine. I want to help you achieve those dreams; I want to be by your side cheering you on." I grabbed her hands, kissing the palms as I stared at her, hoping she could see how true those words were.

"You're easy to get lost in, Chris. Your presence is so big, your energy is consuming. I'm worried if I let go and let you in, I will become Chris's girl and not Charlie. I've done that already and I don't want to go back there." Her voice was barely a whisper as the emotions threatened to spill out.

"Charlie, please understand this, I'm not Hudson. I would never ask you to be anyone else but yourself. I want you to be my woman, but not at the expense of yourself. Please, trust me. That's all I ask. Let me show you that I'm different." The way she looked into my eyes was almost heartbreaking.

"I'm afraid." She murmured and I reached out to pull her to me, kissing her neck softly as I tried to comfort her.

"So am I, sweetheart. I'm already all in. I fell for you the moment my lips touched yours a year ago. You haunted my dreams and I knew then that you were the woman I wanted by my side. I've already fallen for you so all you need to do is take that step and trust that I will catch you." I heard her sniff before she buried her face into my neck.

"Okay. I'll trust you. Catch me, Chris." I smiled, hugging her tighter.

“Always, my love. I’ll always be there to catch you.” She let out a sigh, as if this conversation had released a weight on her shoulders.

“Did you really mean it that you wanted to put a baby in me last night?” She asked and I laughed, leaning back to kiss her lips before grinning.

“Oh, yes. You have awoken the demon in me and he wants to stake his claim for everyone to see. I plan on a long and happy life with you, and lots of children.” I watched the shock before she considered me.

“Don’t worry. I also plan on putting a ring on your finger. But, before that we have something important to discuss.” I stood, going into my office to get the paperwork that I had asked for earlier this week.

“Here. This is for you.” She stared at the paper, frowning as she pushed the sheets around.

“I don’t understand. What am I looking at?” I smiled, drinking the rest of my now cold coffee.

“They’re the deeds to a new building down at the Bay for a bar. Your bar. All you have to do is sign the paperwork and it’s yours.” Her mouth opened and closed before she shook her head.

“No. I can’t take this. You bought me a bar?! It’s too much, Chris. I won’t owe you money like this.” I sighed, sitting forward and giving her my best businessman stare.

“You can and will accept it. I have the money and it pleases me to get you something that I know you truly want. This is your dream, Charlie. I want you to live it.” She continued to shake her head and I waved my hand in dismissal.

“If it makes you feel better, you can look at this as I’m the silent partner. An investor, the first of what I am sure will be many more to come. Take this, Charlie. This is how people start their empires. By accepting help from those willing to invest.” She swallowed, tears in her eyes as she stared at the deed.

“Let me help you build your empire. My queen deserves nothing more than a king willing to help her build the foundations of her kingdom.” She jerked as if slapped and I smiled.

“I told you, I am all in. What good is having all this money if I can’t help you? Take the gift, sweetheart. Please.” I slid the pen over to her and she stared at me like I had grown two heads before she picked up the pen.

“Okay. Thank you, Chris. You have no idea what this means to me.” I

shook my head.

“Yes, I do and that’s why I want to do it. Making you happy makes me happy. You have the makings of a successful businesswoman in you, I just want to give you the leg up that you need.” She signed the paperwork and looked at me with a dazed expression.

“Congratulations, sweetheart. You are now the proud owner of your own bar.” She grinned, her eyes full of tears and in that moment I knew I had done the right thing. If making her feel happy made me feel this great, it was my new favorite feeling and I planned on doing it every single day for the rest of my life.

I waited at the door for Charlie to come out of her room. She had been in there for hours getting ready for tonight and I still had to tell her that Hudson was going to be there.

When I heard her door open, I swallowed nervously and adjusted the bow tie around my neck. Tonight was my night to announce to the world she was mine, and I had a little surprise game planned for her to show her just how much I didn’t care about the thoughts of the others in this world.

When she walked down the hallway with a shy smile, my heart stopped in my chest and my dick was instantly hard.

She was dressed in a red slinky dress that hugged her curves perfectly, a slit on the side went from the floor all the way to her hip bone, flashing her thigh as she walked.

The dress was a halter neck style with a low back, exposing so much skin that I almost wanted to demand she remove it but fuck, it was so damn hot I was going to come in my pants.

Her hair was in a neat, sleek ponytail and hung between her shoulder blades, the make up was understated and perfect, not taking away from her own natural beauty, and the heels she wore were black with red jewels.

“Fuck. There’s no way we can go tonight. I’m going to kill everyone who looks at you.” She giggled and pulled out a cashmere wrap to drape over her shoulders and I wanted to wrap it around her body.

She was clearly not wearing a bra underneath and her nipples peaked through the fabric. Gods above, I was going to go crazy tonight.

“You look so damn gorgeous. I can’t wait to show people how lucky I

am to have you by my side.” She smiled as I kissed her cheek.

Time to rip the bandaid off while she had time to back out.

“Charlie, I found out that Hudson is now going to be there. Are you okay to handle him too?” Her brow pinched and I felt her body stiffen before she gave me a small nod.

“I have to face him eventually. At least at a public event like this he will have to be polite.” She straightened her shoulders and I wished I had the same confidence as her. I knew Hudson. He wouldn’t be polite if he wanted to take a dig, but I wasn’t going to let him make her feel guilty.

This was his time to understand that she was no longer his. He lost her and I was going to enjoy rubbing it in his smug fucking face.

“Let’s go. The driver’s waiting for us.” She took my arm as we made our way to the elevator and I tucked her into my body as she stiffened, like she always did at the reminder of how high we were.

Now that the business had been taken care of, my next point of call was to get a house sorted out for her, one that eliminated her fear of heights. A family house where we could spend our lives together.

I already had my agent looking for the perfect place and now I knew she was definitely all in, I was going to speed the process up.

Eighteen

Charlie

The ball was beautiful. It was set up in the national library, giving it an old world feel. The charity event was raising money for children with learning difficulties, and I had to hand it to the event's manager, they knew how to appeal to the tastes and the pockets of the rich and famous.

The classical music in the background created a calming atmosphere, but I knew the truth. These people were nothing but sharks looking for their next meal.

Chris had his hand on the small of my back, guiding me up the stairs to the open foyer that held tables set out for donations to be made and waiters holding fancy glasses of sparkling wine.

"Charlie! I haven't seen you in so long." The voice was a high pitched croon that made me cringe. I knew who it was Stacy Alexander, the daughter of an investment banker, and one of the biggest gossips in Sinclair Bay.

She was notorious for spreading rumors and her little posse of other rich housewives were the bane of my existence.

I turned to smile at her, hoping it looked real and not like I had just sucked on a lemon. She was with Gretchen and Sandra, who both eyed me up and down with a critical eye.

"Stacy, hi. I've been busy." She smiled politely but her eyes roamed over Chris and paused on his hand that sat at my back.

"Yes, I'm so sorry to hear about you and Hudson. We all thought you were forever." I heard the amusement beneath her tone, saw the glee in her eyes. She was such a bitch.

"Yes, well we just drifted apart and decided it was best to go our separate ways." I said politely but I wanted the floor to open up and swallow me. These people were nasty.

"I'd heard a rumor that you and Chris were seeing each other. It

would seem it's true." Chris stepped closer to me, his warmth seeping through to my chilled bones.

"Charlie and I recently became reacquainted. She captured my heart in the process." He leaned down to kiss my shoulder and I stiffened at the public display of affection.

The women's eyes widened as they watched him, his fingers glided down my arm with a delicate touch and I parted my lips, heat surging through me.

"Yes, we always wondered who would be the one to tame the playboy, Chris Whitlock. Looks like we have our answer." The sweet venom in her voice pissed me off but before I could reply Chris steered me away, giving them a polite smile.

"We have others to meet. Lovely seeing you ladies." They nodded before whispering to each other in fast, hushed tones.

"I always hated those women." He muttered and I laughed.

"I don't think anyone likes them, even their husbands stay away. They're like vipers." He grinned before kissing my cheek.

"You did well. I know this isn't easy facing them all, but you aren't alone." He gripped my hand as if to reassure me and I raised an eyebrow at him.

"What's with the public display of affection? Not what people usually do at these events." He rolled his eyes but I was telling the truth.

The elite rarely indulged in affection, as if it was a sign of weakness and beneath them, and I always wondered if that was why they were all so unhappy.

"You're mine and I plan on showing everyone that you are. I can't keep my hands off you and I have no intentions of stopping just to please these assholes." He whispered, pressing a kiss to my temple.

"Well, I see it didn't take long for you to swoop in and catch yourself another rich man, Charlotte." I knew that voice. Hudson.

I turned to see him sneering down at me and I plastered my polite smile on my face.

"Hudson. I wish I could say it is a pleasure to see you, but I don't like to lie."

He laughed, his eyes like daggers.

"No. You just like to fuck other men behind people's backs. How long did you wait before you tried getting into bed with him? Have you both

been secretly seeing each other this whole time and used the case as a way to make it public?”

I went to reply but Chris stepped in front of me, the smile on his face was charming and perfect, but the look in his eyes sent chills down my spine.

“Don’t insult her, Hudson. You know as well as I do that you and Charlie were never good for each other, and she never did anything behind your back. You chose to leave her, let it go.” He glared at Chris.

“No, she just kissed you when she was with me.” Chris shook his head.

“That was me. I kissed her and she stopped me and left. The case you gifted me with was what brought us back together. So truly, I want to thank you because if it wasn’t for you picking this case for me to work on, I never would have found the love of my life.” I sucked in a breath at his admission and Hudson’s eyes widened with shock, then disgust.

“You both deserve each other.” He slammed his glass down on the table next to him then walked away. I let out a sigh, knowing that eyes had been on us the entire time.

“Would you like to dance?” Chris asked me suddenly, holding his hand out for me and I looked into his face, saw the tension and beneath that the fierce passion and pride he had when he looked at me.

“Of course.” I replied, knowing I couldn’t refuse a man who would defend me to every one of his peers. Hudson never did that, he threw me to the wolves and expected I would hold my own, because it was a test to see if I had what it took to survive his world.

But Chris, he sheltered me and when I thought back to all those years ago, he always did. Even as a friend, he would jump to my defence, pull me away from uncomfortable conversations and get me to laugh.

He was always there, had always been the knight in shining armor I never saw and now that I could, I didn’t want to let that go.

“You look so beautiful tonight.” He murmured as he pulled me closer to him, taking my waist and hand as we slow danced on the make shift dance floor with a few other couples.

“I have a little game I want to play with you, if you’re willing.” He said with a smile that looked like a naughty boy who had been caught doing something he shouldn’t.

“Oh? What kind of game would that be?” He leaned forward, his lips brushing my ear as he whispered.

“A game of chase. I’ll give you a head start to run and try to hide, and I’ll catch you.” I shivered as his fingers caressed the bare skin of my back.

“What happens when you catch me?” I asked and he pulled back to look down at me with a wicked smile.

“I’ll fuck you. So you better make sure you find somewhere you’re happy to be fucked because I don’t care if it is here on the dance floor. I am going to fuck you amongst all these people so they know you are mine.” I licked my lips as I studied him and realized he was serious.

“Here, I brought this with us to add to the fun.” He pulled out a little pouch from his pocket and gave it to me. I opened it, frowning when I saw the rose petals.

“Leave a trail for me to follow.” He watched me as if waiting to see if I would play. I had to admit it was sexy as hell and the idea of having him chase me sent a bolt of heat through my entire body.

“Will you play with me, baby?” He asked and I nodded. Adrenaline running through me when he smiled like the big bad wolf.

“Good. I’ll give you a minute head start.” He looked at his watch before pushing me away. I turned quickly, looking around the room to see where I could go and slipped between the crowds, my heart thumping in my chest.

I was going to do this. I was leaving a trail of rose petals for Chris to follow before he caught me and fucked me. I almost burst out laughing at the insanity of it at such an event but I had to give it to him, I was turned the fuck on.

I ducked and weaved through the crowds, dropping some petals as I went. A few rooms were open with more crowds and I slipped into one that held a stunning backdrop of old books. Smiling politely at people as I went, I glanced over my shoulder and caught sight of Chris following my trail.

I had to make it harder, he would catch me too quickly if I stayed in the main rooms. I noticed the stair case that led to the upper levels and was dimly lit.

That was perfect. I made a big circle back, leaving my bread crumb trail of rose petals in my wake and I loved that no one would know what they meant if they saw them, the calling cards of a man on the hunt for me.

When I reached the staircase, I glanced around to make sure no one was watching and quickly removed the silk rope that was blocking the staircase off from people and hurried up the stairs, dropping petals as I went.

When I reached the top, I saw Chris standing at the base with a hungry gleam in his eye. I giggled, the adrenaline coursing through me made me feel like a kid again, before I hurried across the small passageway that acted as a bridge between the two sides.

I was almost out of petals and I knew he was close. I ducked around the corner, searching for a door that was locked when I heard his voice.

“Seems that you’re cornered, my little mouse.”

Nineteen

Chris

I licked my lips as I stared at Charlie, the rise and fall of her breasts beneath the thin material of her dress, nipples puckered and her eyes dark with desire.

Damn, she was sexy. Chasing her through the building had given the exact affect I wanted; to distract her from the assholes while showing her that I would always desire her, claim her as mine.

“You’re trapped, baby. And now you are mine.” I purred, walking towards her as she tried to open the door next to her. I smiled as her eyes darted to the room below where all the people lingered, the music drifting to us and the soft murmur of voices.

It was dark up here, the glow from below the only way we could see and I had to give it to her, she chose the ideal spot.

I know she was worried about people seeing and this was the perfect blend of privacy and risk of being caught.

I caged her in between my arms against the door, kissing her neck and inhaling her delicate floral perfume.

“I’m going to fuck you right here, I’m going to put a baby in you tonight. I know this is your fertile time.” I whispered, my hand trailing down her arm and I groaned as she gasped, goosebumps on her skin.

“How do you know that? H..have you been tracking my cycle?” I smiled down at her, the way her breath sucked in as I pressed my hand against her pussy through the fabric.

“Yes. Since you got your period. I plan on tracking every cycle, and on the days that you are in your fertile window, I am going to fill you with cum until your body has no choice but to get pregnant.” I nipped her shoulder, the feral side of me imagining how fucking sexy she would look, swollen with my child.

“Fuck, Chris. I... are you... are you sure? I’m not on birth control.” I laughed, pulling her towards the railing, spinning her in my arms until she was in front of me, back against my chest.

“I know you aren’t. I’m sure. I have never been more sure of anything in my life. Your chance to back out is now, because if you stay here with me, if you choose to be with me, I intend on doing exactly what I said until you are with my child.” I pressed my hard cock against her ass, hands wrapped around her belly to emphasise my point.

I wanted her, but I wouldn’t take her without permission. I could almost hear the cogs in her mind working as she considered what I asked, then she pressed her ass against me.

“It’s crazy, but fuck. I want you. Fill me with your cum, Chris.” I swear my heart leapt out of my chest as the words passed her lips. I kissed down the length of her back until I was kneeling at her feet.

I cupped her ass in my hands and she looked at me from over her shoulder.

“Hold onto the railing, baby. Try not to make too much noise and get us caught.” She swallowed but did as I said, leaning forward slightly until she gripped the railing, her eyes on the people below. I lifted her dress, kissing her ass as I slipped my head beneath the fabric then pulled her underwear down.

The fabric was soaked with her desire and I bit my lip as I ran my fingers through her wet heat. She flinched at my touch until I tapped her inner thigh.

“Spread them wider. I want full access to what’s mine.” She moaned softly as she shifted her legs and I gripped her hips and licked along the seam of her pussy, my cock twitching in my pants at the taste of her.

My face was buried into her from behind, her ass cheeks pressed against me as I fucked her pussy with my tongue until she writhed, seeking more.

I sank my fingers deeper into her skin, holding her in place before I sucked on her clit hard. I heard her cry out softly and I laughed against her, knowing she was going to struggle to stay silent.

Shifting, I let go of one of her hips and slid my finger inside her, fucking her as my tongue rolled over her clit with just the right amount of pressure.

“Come on my face, baby. I won’t fuck you until you do. If you want

my cum in you, you have to come on my face first.” She pressed that sexy ass further into me, her breath coming in little pants at my words and her pussy clenched on my finger.

I slipped a second one in, the sound of her wet pussy and muffled cries were like music to my ears, and my cock strained against the fabric of my suit pants, desperate for release.

When she gasped and whimpered, I felt her pussy pulse and wetness soak my face as she came as silently as she could. I stroked her through it, helping her to come back down from the high before I stood, gathering the back of her dress in my hand to bare her ass for me.

“Good girl. Do you want my cock now?” I whispered against her and she turned to look at me over her shoulder before smashing her lips against mine.

Her tongue danced with mine as she hungrily took from me, demanded more with every stroke of her tongue, and who was I to deny my woman.

I fumbled with the zipper on my pants, letting them drop to the floor before I slammed my cock inside her, both of us grunting with the pleasure.

“Look at all those people. If they looked up, they would see you bent over and taking my cock like such a good girl. *My good girl.*” I emphasized before I gripped her hips and slammed into her.

I was desperate, hungry for release and she had to catch her weight as I fucked her.

“Hold on, baby. I’m going to fuck you hard and fast.” She whimpered again, bracing herself against the railing as I gave her what I promised. I watched my cock disappear inside her, the sound of our flesh and her wet pussy sucking me back into her greedy body spurred me on.

“Oh, fuck. Give me your cum, Chris. I need to feel you come.” She moaned softly, loud enough that a few people below frowned and looked around and damn her, begging for my cum was my undoing.

“Come with me, sweetheart.” I reached around and pinched her clit, feeling her pussy clamp down on my cock like a fucking vice as she came, her lips pressed against her arm to muffle her cries.

I slammed inside her as deep as I could go, coming inside her so fucking hard it almost hurt. Her sweet pussy pulsed around me, milking every drop.

“Fuck, Charlie. I don’t think I’ve come that hard before.” I panted,

my head resting against her shoulders as she chuckled.

The movement caused her pussy to clench again and I hissed out a breath, my cock so damn sensitive. I slowly pulled out of her, saw some of my cum leak out and snarled.

“That stays nice and deep inside you.” I pushed it back into her pussy, fucking her a few times with my fingers for good measure. I helped pull her underwear back up and adjust her dress as I pulled her into my arms, kissing her as she snuggled her face into my chest.

“Well, I didn’t expect this tonight.” She murmured and I laughed, running my hands up and down her back to calm her down.

“I want to take you everywhere and anywhere. That is how crazy you make me. Come on. We should probably go make some small talk before I make the obligatory obscene donation then we can go home and eat some real food.” She laughed, pulling away to look up at me with a soft smile.

I kissed the corners of her mouth, then her nose, forehead, and cheeks.

“I love you.” I whispered and I heard the breath she took, the startled way she looked at me with unshed tears in her eyes.

“I love you, too.” She replied before closing her mouth against mine.

“Excuse me. You cannot be up here.” A voice pulled us from our embrace and we looked over at a stuffy looking old man with glasses on his face. He was glaring at us.

“Sorry. We just wanted to see the view.” I replied, giving him my best playboy charming smile. He pointed towards the stairs, and we hurried past him like a pair of teenagers, giggling as we went.

As Charlie looked up at me, with happiness in her eyes that I hadn’t seen in a very long time, I knew that I had made the right choice. This was the beginning of the rest of our lives.

Twenty

Charlie

Chris and I sat together, eating breakfast as he typed away on his computer. The real estate agent wanted to meet me today at the building that would become mine and Chris had a meeting with my brother.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to come?” He asked and I shook my head.

“No. You need to see Jace and find out what information he has.” He pursed his lips, a little frown forming on his forehead that was absolutely adorable.

“Charlie, you know that no matter what happens, the best I will be able to do is get his sentence minimalized and ensure he isn’t put away on additional charges.” I sighed as he stared at me with worry.

“Chris, it’s okay. I know that he fucked up enough that no judge would let him walk free and I trust you. You are one of the best lawyers in Sinclair Bay, probably the world.” He laughed, shaking his head.

“Definitely not the world.” He said playfully and I walked over to cup his face, kissing him softly.

“My brother is a douche bag. He probably deserves to spend a few years behind bars to learn his lesson. I love him and always will, but I don’t feel bad for him.” He wrapped his arms around me, resting his head against my breasts with a sigh.

I idly ran my fingers through his hair, loving the casual affection between us. I still couldn’t believe that Chris Whitlock was in my arms, or the filthy things he said and did to me, the way he possessively claimed me as his.

“You better go before I bend you over this table and fuck you crazy.” He purred and I laughed.

“You are a beast. Don’t you ever get tired of sex?” I went to walk

away, and he held me tighter.

“With you? Never. I will be a horny old man chasing you with my walker and still fucking you like a teenager, and we will have a whole brood of kids who think their parents are disgusting horn dogs. You drive me crazy.”

I laughed at the vision and kissed him softly.

“Just how many kids are you planning on putting in me, Mr Whitlock?” He grinned up at me, wagging his eyebrows.

“As many as I can, until the doctors tell me I can’t anymore. Your body belongs to me, my love. I plan on filling it at every possible moment.” I rolled my eyes, gripping his hair and pulling his head back to stare up at me.

“I don’t think so. My body will break before that happens.” He licked his lips and I felt his cock harden against my thigh.

“Very well. We can stop at four. I think that’s reasonable. But don’t ever tell me to stop filling you up. Because I can’t.” I laughed at his idea of reasonable.

“Perhaps. But remember, you also own my heart.” His eyes softened and he reached up to press his hand to my chest.

“And I will treasure it every day until the day I die.” I felt the tears threaten to spill over until he shifted his hand, cupping my breast instead.

“Off, you horny kid. I have to go.”

He slapped my ass as I walked away.

“Fine. But I will be fucking you tonight.”

I grinned, shaking my head as I walked out the apartment to my meeting, feeling like I was on top of the world.

“There is a bit of cleaning up to do but the bones of what you will need are already here.” Gary said as he walked me through the building.

It had been a restaurant once; the family had retired and their children didn’t want to take over the business.

I walked to the front of the building and looked out the floor to ceiling windows. This was prime real estate, we had views as far as the eye could see of Sinclair Bay, the sound of ship horns and seagulls echoed through the air and I inhaled the salty scent.

“Beautiful view, isn’t it?” He said as he stood next to me, and I smiled.

“It’s stunning.” He handed me a set of keys.

“And now it’s yours. You have my card. If you need anything at all, please don’t hesitate to call. I have to run; I have another appointment. Stay and enjoy the scenery until you’re ready. Settlement happens on Friday.” I took the keys from him and watched him leave.

I turned back to look over the room and smiled. I could imagine it now. A cocktail lounge with a jazz twist. I wanted to play on the traditional seaport idea, where the sailors would come during their time at port to find some love.

A naughty edge with class. It was perfect and unique. My mind was already a whirlwind of ideas as I walked around the room, planning color schemes and menu ideas.

This was the kind of dream I had longed for and Chris hadn’t questioned it, hadn’t told me it was unrealistic or that I should get a proper job. He had purchased a building in my name, given me the keys to my dream and told me to have fun.

That was how I knew I was completely and utterly in love with him. He had never once ridiculed me for my dreams or that I dropped out of school. He saw this as the beginning of my empire and that made my heart soar.

I sighed as I leaned against the counter, pulling out my notepad so I could start keeping track of all the ideas I had for drinks, menu plans and the décor.

I wanted this to be perfect. I was going to tell my bosses that I was handing in my resignation at tomorrow’s shift so I could get started as soon as possible.

My plan was to have this ready before Christmas, just in time for the Christmas trade. Summer in Australia was peak trade time and the fact that our summer happened to be during the Christmas season made it all the better.

Tourists came from all over the world to bask in the sun on our beaches and I wanted to use that as the launch pad for something grand.

Shoes scraping on the floor pulled my attention from my daydream as I turned to see who it was. I felt the blood run from my face as I stared into eyes I was familiar with, and a smile that promised pain.

“Hello, Charlotte. I thought I would catch you here.” Hudson said as he looked around the building.

“I had heard through the grapevine that Chris purchased this building in your name. I thought it was a joke at first, but now I see it’s true.” I rolled my shoulders, confused to see him here.

“What are you doing here, Hudson?” He walked towards me, the look in his eyes was wild with satisfaction as he pulled out one of the chairs stacked in a pile.

“I came to see you. We need to talk.” I shook my head, attempting to move past him when he pulled out a gun.

“Sit down, Charlotte. I said we need to talk.” I stared at him and the gun, my stomach rolling as I backed up, grabbing a chair for myself.

“What are you doing?” I whispered as I watched him, he crossed his legs in that arrogant way I had always hated, tilting his head as he looked at me.

“I am here to fix a problem. A problem that you and Chris have created for me.” My heart thudded in my chest as I stared at him.

This was about Chris as well. I glanced at the counter where I left my phone. Okay. I just had to reason with him. I could do that.

“So, tell me, what do you know about the Forsaken?”

Twenty-one

Chris

I waited for the guards to bring Jace in and tried to ignore the feeling of unease that sat in the pit of my stomach.

I glanced at my phone when a message came through from the real estate agent saying he just left Charlie with the keys.

I hoped she liked the place. I knew she would turn it into something amazing, and I couldn't wait to celebrate with her tonight. I was going to make her a beautiful dinner, make sweet love to her and then put a ring on her finger.

I smiled to myself. That was the feeling of unease. Just nerves at asking the woman I was head over heels in love with to marry me.

The door buzzed as Jace was walked inside. He still had a limp and a few bruises on his face that hadn't quite healed, but the cocky grin was still present.

"Fancy pants, how kind of you to meet me here." He said with a grin and I had to bite my tongue. The man was irritating as hell.

"You asked me. So, what information do you have that couldn't be said over the phone?" He sat in the chair, legs wide and arms hanging over the back of it, in what I assumed the thought was an intimidating position.

"It's like this. I was working with the Forsaken crew that were splitting from the main club. There were a group of us who were being hired to be the go betweens for both sides, to spread word that the OG Forsaken were done and to step down." He wiped his hand over his mouth, glancing around him as he sat forward.

"I overheard a call one day with someone they called Sweet Lullaby." I felt my blood run cold at the mention of that name.

"They were putting a hit out on some of the key players in the OG crew. I like to know things you see, never know when knowledge might

come in handy, so I stayed around to listen. After they got off the call, the guys were talking about the theory behind who Sweet Lullaby was.” Jace smiled and I knew I had something big.

“Turns out Sweet Lullaby has been bank rolling some of the Forsaken crew, helping with the split. Don’t know why, but they aren’t working alone. The new Prez had a tap out on him, trying to find who he was so they had leverage in the future, and they had found him.”

I swallowed, clenching my fists so I didn’t lean over the table and shake the answer from him.

“Who is it?” I asked, hearing the frustration in my voice.

“Didn’t get a name. They said he was some rich guy from the upper class. Someone in a position of power.” I ran my hand over my face. That didn’t help me at all.

“I did get the phone number though. The idiots left their phone out when they went to check on some product, so I looked at the call log and memorized the number. It was the same one he always called from.” I pushed the paper and pen towards him.

“A number I can use. Write it down.” He grinned as he stared at me.

“How do I know I won’t get popped in prison?” I glared at him.

“You have my word, and I will ensure the police and the Mendez brothers know what you have done.” He studied me for a long time before he nodded. I watched him write the number down.

“Before you go, they also said something about a company or organization that was behind him. Red something. I don’t know if that helps.” I took the paper and stood, needing to get to Liam straight away.

“Thank you. I promise you I will get your case to the minimum requirement and keep you safe.” He looked away and shrugged.

“Chris?” He called as I walked away, and the use of my name had me pause.

“Tell my sister I said thanks for not giving up on me.”

I smiled, seeing the boy behind the man.

“Of course. I’ll be in touch soon.” I hurried out of the prison, pulling out my phone to dial Liam. When it went to voicemail, I dialed again. Then again and again. On the fifth time he picked up.

“Jesus, Whitlock. What the fuck is wrong with you? I’m in the middle of something.” He said through the phone.

“I have a number. Sweet Lullaby. Can you trace it?” I sounded

breathless as I spoke and Liam swore.

“Hold on. I’ll head down to that section of the station now. Jace?” He questioned and I sighed.

“Yeah. He said it was someone with money and had the backing of the Redvue people. They’re bank rolling the split with the Forsaken.” Liam swore louder this time as I heard a door slam.

“Give me the number.” I read out the number, knowing I was on speaker.

“We have a trace going at the moment.”

I waited, needing to know the answer myself.

“Well, that’s interesting. It’s showing up at a location at Sinclair Bay, right on the Bay itself. An old business that used to be called Hutties.” I felt my heart stop.

“Did you say Hutties?” I repeated and Liam snorted.

“Yeah. Did I stutter?”

I swore. Jamming my keys in the console.

“Liam. That’s the business I just purchased for Charlie. She’s there right now. She got the keys today from the agent. The fucker is there with her!” I slammed the car into gear, tires screeching as I pulled out of the lot.

“Fuck. Okay. I’ll send units out right now. She’ll be fine.” Liam said, worry clearly in voice.

I tossed my phone into the passenger side as I sped towards the Bay.

This person knew who she was. They were with her right now. My mind raced as I tried to figure out who it could be, and I prayed I got there in time.

If something happened to her, I don’t know what I would do. I picked up my phone again, scrolling to her number and dialed.

It rang out. I tried again and it continued to ring out. Slamming my fist into the steering wheel, I screamed.

“Fuck! Fuck!” I took a breath, trying to calm myself as I prayed to anything that would listen that she stayed safe, that she was okay. She was a smart girl, and she was mine. I was going to kill this mother fucker with my own bare hands.

Twenty-two

Charlie

“Hudson, you need to be smart. What are you doing?” I asked, watching him with wariness. He glared at me.

“Answer the fucking question! What do you know about the Forsaken?”

I flinched as he waved the gun in the air.

“I don’t know! Just that they’re a motorcycle club and my brother was involved with them. I swear, that’s all I know.”

He laughed, raking his hand through his hair.

“Your stupid fucking brother. That dick head should never have been caught. He fucked it up for everyone.” He pointed the gun at me.

“Your new boyfriend was supposed to make this an open and shut case. It was simple. Easy. But he had to start digging. Always the good lawyer. That was my fault though. I thought he would get distracted enough by you that the case would be closed quickly. Clearly, I was wrong.”

I shook my head, not understanding.

“What are you talking about?” He sat forward, arms resting on his knees as he smiled.

“We warned you at the club. Stop digging. Then you had to get the Mexicans involved. You’re no better than your scum brother. I wouldn’t be surprised if you spread your legs for them too.” He sounded like a crazy person as he continued to run his hands through his hair, a nervous gesture I had seen him do plenty of times.

“Now, I have got them breathing down my neck to fix it. To clean up the mess. Your fucking mess.” He snarled and I raised my hands in submission.

“What do you mean? Who is breathing down your neck?” I had to keep him talking, to stall him. I had seen my phone light up before, Chris

would get worried when I didn't answer.

"When I graduated, my father introduced me to a private organization. A group of powerful people, and I was initiated into their ranks. These men pull all the strings. Politicians, governments, countries, war. They're behind it all." He smiled, a dreamy smile that sent chills down my spine.

"I was given a piece of Sinclair Bay to manage. A piece that kept money rolling in to fund us, and the right people in our back pocket. I approached Chris's brother to become a member. That fucker was too stupid for his own good and didn't know how to keep quiet."

My heart pounded in my chest at the mention of Sean.

"Then your brother was like a gift sent from heaven. You may not have wanted to speak to him, but it was the perfect opportunity for me to make connections that didn't tie me to anything." What the fuck was he saying? He had been talking to my brother the entire time?

"I don't understand. You never saw my brother."

He smiled, "no. But I knew his name and I used him to my advantage. I had them pull him up the ranks to become a grunt. I knew how to manipulate him and what drove him. What I didn't anticipate was his stupid ass getting arrested." He glared at the floor.

"I couldn't work the case myself. It had to be Chris. I knew that he would have a soft spot for you and thought he would draw it out long enough to be with you. When he tried to speed it up, I realized that we didn't have a choice but to get rid of your brother." I couldn't believe what he was saying.

"You were the one who tried to have my brother killed? Why?"

He laughed bitterly, "to prevent him from talking. But the people didn't do a good enough job. I didn't plan on him having protection from the Mexicans behind bars. So, now I'm left with the only leverage I have. You." I felt my hands go clammy.

"What are you going to do?"

He stood, the gun loose at his side as he reached down to stroke my hair.

"I'm going to tell Chris he has to choose. You or your brother. If he won't stop digging where he doesn't belong, I'll give you to my dogs." He pulled me up by my hair and I screamed at the shock.

"You're insane. I don't understand." I gripped his hand when he

grabbed my arm, trying to pull myself from his grasp and he backhanded me with the gun.

Fire rushed through my body, pain blinding me as I tasted blood in my mouth. I gasped for air, the shock that he had just hit me settling into my bones, and rage replaced the fear.

“Let her go.” We both looked up to see Dante Mendez standing in the doorway, gun out and a crazy grin on his face.

“What the fuck?!” Hudson screamed as he pointed the gun at Dante.

“I won’t ask you nicely again. Let her go and I promise I’ll make it quick. Or, you can push your luck and I get to have some fun.” The smile that crossed Dante’s face had me shiver. That was the smile of a fucking psycho.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Hudson, the fool, ignored him.

“A call from a friend.” He replied, eyes darting to me.

“Chris and Liam are on their way.”

I nodded, not sure who was the bigger threat here.

“You have all of two minutes before this place is surrounded by police. I don’t have time for paperwork today. Don’t make me angry.” He took a step towards us, and Hudson pulled me in front of him. Dante narrowed his eyes as I heard footsteps running down the concrete path.

Chris rounded the corner, stopping short as he stared at Dante then at Hudson and me.

“Last chance, pretty boy. You’re making me late for a date with my woman.” Dante snarled and Hudson pulled me closer to his body, swinging his arm around to push the gun to my head.

“I will shoot her.”

Dante smiled, “no, you won’t.” The sound of a gunshot echoed through the room and I screamed, feeling blood splatter my face as I turned to see Hudson scream, dropping the gun.

I operated on instinct, reaching down to pick it up and point it at him, seeing him hold his arm where blood was soaking his suit.

Sirens wailed in the distance and Chris rushed to my side as Dante walked closer, his eyes on me then on Chris.

“I can’t stay. The paperwork is too much and Liam has enough on his plate.” He tucked his gun into the back of his pants and Chris stopped him.

“Thank you.” Dante nodded and disappeared out the door. I took a shuddering breath as Chris slowly took the gun from my hand, ignoring a wailing Hudson, who was screaming about bleeding to death.

“Charlie, look at me. You’re okay.” He cupped my cheeks and kissed me. I nodded as more footsteps rounded the corner and Liam Walker came in, gun drawn. He looked between us all before he nodded to the men with him.

“Arrest the bleeding one. I’ll handle the rest.” The officers hurried to cuff Hudson as Liam reached out to take the gun from Chris.

“He was here.” Chris said and Liam nodded once.

“I called. He was closer than I was.”

I looked between them, realizing that Liam just admitted to calling the Mexican Cartel to save me, risking his job, and knowing that it may have ended up in a death.

“I’ll clean it up. Get the paperwork sorted out. Charlie, if they ask, there was a struggle and you managed to get the gun from him, shooting him in the arm right before Chris arrived.” I licked my lips as the shock settled in.

“Okay.”

He smiled gently as Chris tucked me into his arm, “go get yourself checked out. Ambulance should be outside. You did good, Charlie. It’s over. They won’t come after you now.”

I took a shuddering breath as more officers piled into the building and Chris guided me outside to the ambulance.

He kept me tucked into his body as officers parted for us, their own orders to let us through. I climbed into the ambulance, Chris never letting go of me as they checked me over.

“It’s over. I promise you.” Chris murmured as we stared out at the chaos around us. It wouldn’t be long before the press arrived, and I had no interest in being here then.

After we got the all clear to leave, Chris put me in his car, buckling my seatbelt, and drove me home as I let the exhaustion pull me under and sleep took me.

Twenty-three

Chris

“All rise.” The man said as the judge re-entered the room. It had been two weeks since Hudson was arrested and the information Jace gave us was key in his own case.

Hudson had been charged with attempted murder as well as conspiracy and a bunch of smaller charges that would put him away for a long time.

I glanced at Liam, who was in one of the seats behind us to watch the outcome, and Jace stood next to me in a suit.

“I have reached my verdict. Due to the help you have provided the Sinclair police that has led to the capture of another criminal and other possible associates, I am reducing your sentence from twenty years to four, with the option of good behaviour after two years.”

I let out a sigh of relief and clapped Jace on the back.

“May this be the wake up call you need to get yourself straight.” He said to Jace before he left. Jace turned to me and glanced at Charlie behind us with a smile.

“Thanks. Four years isn’t so bad.” Charlie rolled her eyes and reached over to give him a hug. She whispered something in his ear I couldn’t quite catch but made him smile.

The guards waited patiently before they led him from the room. Liam reached out to shake my hand.

“What are you going to do now?” I sighed, gathering my things.

“I handed in my resignation today. The way the firm reacted to Hudson had me thinking they knew something already and I have no interest in staying there. I’m going to open up my own practice.” Liam nodded as Charlie smiled at me.

“I’m sure we have a few acquaintances that would be willing to give you plenty of work if you’re up for it.”

I knew who he meant and I had to admit, after seeing Dante save Charlie, I felt like I owed the guy.

“I’ll think on it. For now, I have some other important things to attend to.” I smiled at Charlie and Liam grinned. He knew what I was doing.

I had settled on a new house last week, one that sat in the fancy suburbs and was as safe and secure as you could get. Not a set of stairs in sight for my woman who was afraid of heights.

I picked up the keys yesterday and had everything set up. Now, I just needed to take Charlie there.

“Come on, sweetheart. I have a surprise.” She raised an eyebrow at me but took my hand and followed me to the car.

We drove in silence and the closer we got, the more the nerves fluttered in my stomach. I hoped she liked it.

“Where are we?” She asked as she stared out at the street, the houses getting bigger and bigger as we went further into the suburb.

I pulled into a gated driveway, punching in the pin code to open the gates, and grinned at her confusion. A fountain sat in the center of the driveway, the sound of tinkling water greeting us as I opened the car door. I ran around to her side and opened her door, holding my hand out to her.

“Welcome home, sweetheart.” Her eyes widened as she took in the ostentatious building. It was a huge thing with six bedrooms, a formal dining room, two offices and an abundance of living space.

“Are you serious?” she whispered and I dangled the keys in front of her face.

“Yes. This is our new home. Plenty of room for four children, and not a stair to be found.” She stared at me for a minute as the words computed before she laughed.

I took her hand and walked to the front door, unlocking it and before we could step inside, I swept her into my arms.

“I have to carry you over the threshold.” I said as I kissed her lips. She rolled her eyes but wrapped her arms around my neck as I pushed open the door.

Candles were everywhere, rose petals covered the floor and soft music echoed in the background. I set her down on the floor as she stared at the set up.

I dropped to my knee, pulling out the ring in my pocket and waited for her to turn back to me. The tears in her eyes as she looked down at me

had my heart beating wildly.

“Charlie Arden, will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?” She giggled and reached down to kiss me.

“Yes! Of course. A thousand times, yes.”

I let out a breath and took her hand, sliding the diamond ring onto her finger before I stood, pulling her into my arms.

“Welcome home, my love.” She wrapped her arms around my neck and kissed me deeply. My cock twitched in my pants as I gripped her ass.

“Now, Let’s go christen some bedrooms.” She laughed, patting me on the chest before she took off down the hall at a run and I shook my head, wondering how I managed to get such an amazing woman as my own.

It was the happily ever after I never knew I needed or wanted, and I was so glad to have found it.

The End

Thank you so much for reading Forbidden Desire. If you aren’t ready to leave the world of Sinners Bay, make sure you check out the Sinners Bay series based on the crime families of Sinclair Bay.

You haven’t seen the last of Chris and Charlie; stay tuned for more forbidden stories of the Elite!

Head on over to my Facebook group to stay up to date with all the latest on what stories are coming next including sneak peaks.

Also by the Author

Sinners Bay Series

The crime families of Sinners Bay – all RH

These Sinful Delights

These Sinful Nights

Sinners Bay Elite

The rich and famous of Sinners Bay – all M/F

Forbidden Desire

Black Moon Alphas

Paranormal romance RH

Chained By Duty

Bound By Desire

Forged By Love

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my readers first and foremost – it is because of you that I do what I do and your support and love for the worlds I create keep me going.

Thank you to my husband who continues to support my dream and listens to me go on and on about book worlds. Even though you aren't a bookish man – you are still my favourite real life book boyfriend.

Thank you to my cover designer Lara from Wynter Designs, who always creates magic even with my vague descriptions and ideas. You are a rockstar.

Thank you to my editor Kira from Leavens Editing, for being so fast and efficient as well as supportive of my worlds.

Thank you to friends and family, who always support my dream and listen to my continued ideas for new worlds created.

As always, thank you to the muse who gifts me with the ideas even if they come at weird times. This is my dream and I am living it.