



RAGE'S
BOUNTY

BOOK 13 OF RAGE MC

ELIZABETH N. HARRIS

Rage's Bounty.

Book 13 of Rage MC.

Elizabeth N. Harris.

ISBN 9781915977182

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Elizabeth N. Harris

Rage's Bounty.

Book 13 of Hellfire MC.

© 2024 Elizabeth N. Harris

ElizabethnHarris74@outlook.com



This book is registered and protected by copyright law.

Should you have downloaded from any site, not Amazon Kindle or Kindle Unlimited, please be warned that you're reading an illegal copy.

Cease and desist action will be undertaken, and legal action may follow.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. This book contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. Any unauthorised reprint or use of this material is prohibited. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage and retrieval system, without express written permission from the author/publisher.

Rage's Bounty.

He grieved for a love that could never happen and resigned himself to being alone. Then, his brothers began to claim their old ladies, and he grew hopeful. He didn't see the shame in admitting he wanted someone to love, spoil and worship, but as time marched on, she never arrived. Then, one day, out of the blue, he's part of a prophecy and his hope blossoms, even as he tries to keep it under control. After all, life never turned out the way he expected.

She lost her dad due to an accident and was left alone in the world, apart from an uncle. Belittled, enslaved, and ridiculed by her mother and stepmother, she wasn't strong enough to stand up to them. Not while she was grieving. Only seeing the light in life, when the darkness came, she wasn't prepared to handle it.

He sees her, the real her, and knows she's suffered. All he wants to do is worship the very ground she walks on. She's his soul mate. But then what of the other one? The one who riles him up, who is every dirty dream he ever had. Sweet versus vengeance, love versus bitterness, both appeal to him.

She also lost everything. In one night, her life was destroyed by the very enemy haunting Rage MC. She has a tie to them that nobody knows. And she wants cold-blooded revenge. Nobody should have seen what she did. And now she's nothing more than a killing machine. But she'll watch over Rage because she's blood.

A man torn between two women, light and dark, both opposite of each other. He knows what he wanted, but he's been thrown a curveball of epic proportions. Now, he has to choose, and it wasn't as easy as he thought. Or is it time to throw in the hat? See the end of the war and go nomad. That way, maybe he'll get peace.

Books by Elizabeth N. Harris

Rage MC series.

Rage of the Phoenix.

The Hunters Rage.

The Rage of Reading.

The Crafting of Rage.

Rage's Terror.

The Protection of Rage.

Love's Rage.

The Hope of Rage.

First Rage.

The Innocence of Rage.

The Sweetness of Rage.

The Range of Rage.

Rage's Model.

The Rage of Angels.

The Hell of Christmas Rage.

The History of Rage.

A Renewed Rage.

Rage's Legacy.

A 4th Full of Rage.

Escape from Rage.

Rage's Bounty.

Rage MC–The Prospects.

Calamity.

Klutz.

Cowboy.

Wild.

Gauntlet.

Hellfire MC Series.

Chance's Hell.

The Savagery of Hell.

The Scream of Hell.

Justice of Hell.

The Horror of Hell.

The Wild Side of Hell.

The Vengeance of Hell.

The Speakeasy of Hell.

Washingtons. (*Completed series*)

James.

Jaime.

Frankie.

Adam.

Love Beyond Death series. (*Completed series*)

Oakwood Manor.

Courtenay House.

Waverley Hall.

Corelle Abbey.

Eléonore Castle.

DeLacy Park.

Love Beyond Death–The Inns.

The Jekyll and Hyde.

The Black Cat.

The Green Man.

The White Witch.

Legendary Shifters.

Bloodlust.

CONTENTS

[Dedication.](#)

[Prologue.](#)

[Chapter One.](#)

[Chapter Two.](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four.](#)

[Chapter Five.](#)

[Chapter Six.](#)

[Chapter Seven.](#)

[Chapter Eight.](#)

[Chapter Nine.](#)

[Chapter Ten.](#)

[Chapter Eleven.](#)

[Chapter Twelve.](#)

[Chapter Thirteen.](#)

[Chapter Fourteen.](#)

[Chapter Fifteen.](#)

[Chapter Sixteen.](#)

[Epilogue.](#)

[Characters.](#)

DEDICATION.

This has been a harsh few months for my family. This book is dedicated to my ex-brother-in-law, Gavin. You were taken far too soon but you'll live on in our memories.

Love,

Elizabeth x

Thanks to the following people:

Cover by Joe Prachatree @ <https://www.indiepremakes.com>

Editor: Ellie Race.

Proofreader: Jordan Howes.

Beta readers: Jayne Rushton, Natasha Kemmer, Jacqui Edge, Julie McLain-Berger, Linda Cameron Brashears, Rachel Bay, Victoria Rae Stewart Hine, Marlleyy Koinaki, Gretchen Calder.

Elizabethnharris74@outlook.com

Elizabethnharris.net

[Sign up for my newsletter](#)

This book was written, produced and edited in England, the United Kingdom, where some spelling, grammar, and word usage will vary from US English.

A Quick Note!

After several reviews and emails commenting on grammar and spelling errors, I thought I'd explain. My work is edited thoroughly, and some grammar and spelling will differ from US English. For example, color to colour or focusing instead of focussing. But I type as I imagine the characters speaking. I've been around several MCs and know many bikers; believe me, they don't watch their grammar! So, you may find errors when one of the characters speaks; that's intentional! Even educated characters may drop their p's and q's occasionally, and we'll let them off because we love them so much!

Drake may use *don't* instead of *doesn't*, *it don't make* sense instead of *it doesn't make sense*. Or *I be* angry instead of *I am* angry! Or Phoe may say *me and you* instead of the grammatically correct *you and I*. They also drop words, possibly one of my own personal pet peeves! *You won't do it* becomes *won't do it*, or *it ain't right* turns into *ain't right*. However, typos are not deliberate, and if you find any, I sincerely apologise!

I hope you enjoy the book because I write from the heart and genuinely love my Rage MC characters and the world I'm creating around them.

“I’m fighting against a woman who already owns half your heart.”

Happy Reading!



Elizabeth N. Harris

This book contains triggers around violence, criminal enterprises and abuse.

While each book has a happy ever after, I would highly recommend you check out the reading order for the Rage MC, Hellfire MC, Washingtons and Rage MC-The Prospects series on my website at:- <https://www.elizabethnharris.net/reading-order>

PROLOGUE.

March 2022.

Klutz

Aurora Victoria shot up with a loud gasp and knocked Klutz straight out of bed.

Klutz sat up quickly as he noticed his wife's eyes. They were wide open but unseeing, and although this didn't happen much, it had happened often enough that he grabbed a pen and paper, which was always on their bedside table. Still half-asleep, Klutz hauled his ass back into bed and prepared to write down all of what Aurora said.

“Two shall fall at the same time. The streets will run red with lava... the decision made is the wrong one. Nobody listens to she who knows best... the president will decide on which one to save... a bond will be broken forever,” Aurora spat out.

“Anything else?” Klutz asked.

Her eyes moved rapidly, even while they remained unfocused. “War comes to Rapid City... an ally will stand and fall. Fought in the streets, the bodies litter the sidewalks... Death comes for us all.” Aurora gasped and froze as she tended to do.

Klutz shot his arm from under her as she drew in a deep lungful of air and fell backwards. Her visions always made her weak straight afterwards. Klutz still didn't believe in woo-woo shit, but he did believe one hundred per cent in his wife, and she'd not been wrong yet.

Death comes for us all...

His frown deepened.

How the hell was she seeing lava run through Rapid City? There were no volcano's here. The lava had to be a metaphor for something else. Maybe it meant fire or somehow represented Fury and the Venomous Fangs? Klutz rejected it. Aurora's visions had always been straightforward, kinda.

What she saw wasn't metaphorical. She literally had flashes of things, although they may not make sense at the time. Like when she had said, 'cars fell from the sky' and the bridge collapsed, making cars fall from the sky.

Somehow, RC was going to have lava running through it.

Klutz picked up his phone as he soothed Aurora with one hand. She often took a few minutes to come around, so he'd drop Drake a quick call, and then he'd be able to settle his beloved wife down when she woke. He just wished he could help her, as he hated to see her suffer.

CHAPTER ONE.

2007

Slick glanced at the man beside him while they received payment from a whore. Forty per cent of her takings for the week. It made Slick sick, so he reached out to Drake and gave the bitch her money back.

Drake nodded and turned to the woman.

“Jazzy, get off the streets around here. Warn your girls. War’s coming. I’m done taking cash you worked hard for. Get clear of Rage, hear me?” Drake warned.

The whore’s eyes widened. “What’s that mean?” she asked.

“It means tonight I take over Rage, and Rage gets free. The five miles surrounding Rage, no whores, nothing. We want our streets clean. We won’t be harming ya, but we will wreck your business. Find somewhere else, Jazzy,” Drake threatened.

“No more forty per cent?”

“Not working on Rage territory, so how can we charge you bitches?” Slick grunted.

He and Drake swapped a stare. Whores were whores. They may sell their bodies, but they were innocent of the bloodshed that was coming.

“You two always been decent to me and the girls.” She looked over her shoulder before continuing. “I heard something. There’s a target on one of your brothers’ backs. Your guys, Drake, be careful. Bulldog’s prepared for a takeover, that’s word on the roads,” Jazzy warned, snatching the money from Slick and vanishing into the dark night.

Slick sighed. Jazzy wasn’t ever going to get off the streets, but the forty per cent that Bulldog insisted on collecting may help her live a better life.

Drake watched Slick carefully as Slick rolled his shoulders and sent him a glare. They both understood what was gonna

happen. Shit had been building since Kayleigh disappeared. Her running away had driven home to all the decent brothers that they'd never have clean and beautiful while dirty themselves.

“Tonight?” Slick asked.

“Yeah, we're forcing it. Warn true Rage.”

Slick knew who Drake meant. Those Drake called the true Rage were men he'd recruited to get the club free of the illegal crap. Those that shared the same values that the MC once owned, the ones Drake displayed daily. Rage sported over forty members; out of those, he had a definite fourteen, possibly sixteen, standing with him.

Drake hoped that Texas would wade in on their side. Texas had influence. They knew that Axel, the last founding member, was siding with Drake. Axel held more power than even Drake and Bulldog. Throwing legs over their bikes, they headed back to the clubhouse.

One by one, Rage rolled in.

Bulldog called for church, and everybody filed into the inner sanctum.

The air was wired, and everyone guessed something was about to happen. Bulldog began going through the brothers, collecting their illegal gains until it came to Lowrider and Mac.

“Didn't collect,” Lowrider grunted.

Mac nodded in support.

Bulldog's beady eyes glared at the two men, but neither of them looked bothered.

“What?” Bulldog snarled.

At Bulldog's back, Hammer stilled and exchanged looks with Prof, who glanced at Drake.

“Nope,” Mac popped out.

“Why the fuck not?” Bulldog roared.

“Orders.” Mac grinned and settled in a chair.

Bulldog spluttered.

“Didn’t collect either,” Rock grunted, sat next to Ezra.

“Nor us,” Manny and Gunner agreed.

“We didn’t,” Lex said, placing himself steadily in Drake’s group.

Fish jerked his chin. “Don’t think I fuckin’ did.”

Ace at Lex’s side sent Bulldog a look that made some of the brother’s shudder.

Since Kayleigh had run away three years ago, Ace had become a different man. The brother’s laughter and joy had vanished, leaving him as cold and unyielding as metal. Ace had no qualms about sticking a knife in someone or pulling a gun.

Slick noted Bulldog checked where Ace’s hands were.

“Didn’t collect either,” Axel drawled, relaxed in his chair, and this time Archer took note.

“Who gave the fuckin’ orders?” Bulldog spat as he glared around the table. Dangerous vibes cut through the air.

“Who the fuck do you think?” Drake spoke up. “I’m calling a vote on pres.”

Slick readied himself. Now the shit would hit the fan. He checked those who were shocked and those who appeared resigned. None of Bulldog’s crew seemed ready or prepared for this.

“You fuckin’ call a vote on my position?” Bulldog roared, clumsily getting to his feet and shoving his chair.

Drake studied his nails and then looked at the fat, drugged-up man in front of him.

“I call a vote. This club is not what my da and first gen set out to create. Rage had different values when Da was alive. So, we’re taking my da’s MC back. Rage has legit businesses, so we ain’t gonna take a hit on cash. They bring in more

money than the illegal shit. Yeah, asshole, I'm calling a vote," Drake sneered.

Slick noted how, compared to Drake's calmness, Bulldog was zoned on coke and furious. The difference between them couldn't be clearer. He checked those who they weren't sure of. Ghost and Prof looked thoughtful. Sticks, of course, was against them; the asshole was as whacked as Bulldog. Archer and Hammer gave nothing away. Thunder was clearly on Bulldog's side.

"Who seconds the vote," Bulldog sneered, and his hand rested on his gun at his hip. The message was clear.

"I do," Ace spoke, and before everyone's eyes, a knife appeared in his hands. Ace flicked it through his fingers.

"You're not an officer, you can't. None of you assholes are."

"I am, and so's he. We second Drake," Apache interrupted and nodded at Fish.

Fish grunted an agreement.

"As first gen, I demand a vote. I nominate Drake, who the fuckin' club should have gone to a long fuckin' time ago," Axel boomed.

"Strange that, Axel," Drake stated, pulling an envelope from his cut and throwing it on the table.

"What, son?"

Everyone watched as Bulldog paled when he witnessed Drake pull some paper out of the envelope.

"I burnt that," he snarled.

"You burnt one copy." Drake grinned. "My Da saw the fucked-up shit you wanted to do. He wasn't stupid."

"What the fuck is that?" Texas asked, reaching forward.

Prince stabbed a knife in the paperwork before Texas could grab it.

"Touch it and lose a hand," Prince warned.

Prince was staying loyal to Bulldog.

Slick shifted slightly to cover him.

“That’s Da’s will and testament, appointing Texas as Rage’s guardian and pres until I reached twenty. You, Texas, should have been president, not Bulldog.”

Texas stepped back and eyed everyone around the table.

“Your da couldn’t leave the position like that,” Texas argued.

“Nope, but he made his feelings fuckin’ clear, and at the time of his death, greed didn’t control this MC. Drugs, arms, and whores did not run this fuckin’ MC. You’d have won the vote,” Drake snapped.

“Enough bullshit. I call for the vote,” Ace said into the silence that fell.

“For Drake to take over,” Axel bellowed.

“You won’t win.” Bulldog shook his head. “I own this club. No one wants a fuckin’ cut in money.”

“Nobody has too. Garage, store, shop, and bar bring in more cash. Everyone knows it. I’m calling a vote, so fuckin’ vote,” Drake roared, leaning forward and gazing around the sanctum.

Axel stood to take votes. Slick kept a sharp eye on his back. As the only first gen left, Axel had the power and clout needed to force the issue, which meant the big guy was vulnerable.

“Be easier to take sides,” Ghost said. “Rather than sit here and listen to bullshit as Bulldog bullies people. Over that side goes Bulldog for pres. Here for Drake.”

Slick gazed at Ghost suspiciously. Ghost often kept quiet, and most of them found the man mysterious. Private and protective around his daughter, for a start.

“When I win, I’ll fuckin’ excommunicate the lot of you,” Bulldog rasped.

“Me too,” Drake sneered, taking his place.

Every brother was present tonight. It’s why Drake forced the issue. He confidently had fourteen people. At once, real Rage stood behind him, including Axel.

Prof, Archer, and Hammer hesitated, then walked to Drake.

Fuck yeah, seventeen, eighteen with himself.

Shuffling about, Drake kept a sharp eye on Bulldog's side. He'd twenty-one. In the middle milled seven brothers, Texas, Ghost, Gid, and Jacked included.

Jacked and Gid moved over to Drake, and Bulldog went puce. He sent them a look that promised retribution. They were now equal. Three brothers stood. One moved over to Bulldog, and smugness crossed his face.

The two left were Texas and Ghost.

"What's your plan for the club?" Texas asked Drake.

"Take it back to our values, our roots, make us legit," Drake said.

Ghost strode to Drake's side.

Drake was again equal with Bulldog.

Texas held the casting vote, and Drake wasn't one hundred per cent certain Texas would side with him. Texas dropped his head and then looked at the picture on the wall of Arrow, Drake's da.

"I was first recruit, ya know? This illegal crap was never Arrow's preference. I attempted to undermine the shit that we were doing. Attempted to stop that cunt takin' the club the route he wanted." Texas pointed at Bulldog. "Tried to stop the assholes being brought in as brothers. Tonight, I get to do that."

Slick nearly crowed as Texas walked to their side, giving them the vote.

Drake moved to hug Texas.

Bulldog's face set, and before anyone knew it, he drew a knife. He aimed it at Drake's back and let go. Shouts erupted, and a body hit the floor. Everyone looked down at Ace, who was slowly getting to his feet and pulling the blade from his shoulder.

Ace stabbed it in the table with a death stare at Bulldog.

A stunned silence fell over everyone.

“You drew blood in the sanctum? Against a brother?” Ghost said, appalled.

“I’m the fuckin’ pres,” Bulldog snarled, spittle flying from his lips.

He was so whacked he didn’t even care he’d broken the most basic rule. No weapons allowed in church. And certainly no bloodshed.

“Not anymore, not by vote of your brothers,” Axel boomed, and a large, meaty hand came out and grabbed Bulldog and dragged him over. Axel took the knife still with Ace’s blood on and deliberately cut the pres patch from Bulldog.

“Fuckin’ no brother,” Axel intoned. “One rule above all others: never attack a brother. Don’t betray. Always have your brother’s back. Nothing comes before a brother.” Axel kept going as he sliced the Rage patch, followed by 2nd gen patch. He clenched his fist and rammed it into Bulldog’s gut, dropping him.

“Your justice,” he stated, looking at Ace and stabbing the knife into the table.

“Let him fuckin’ rot,” Ace snarled.

Blood dripped freely from his shoulder wound.

“All of ya, clear out. You took a side, and now Rage is ours. It was the wrong choice,” Texas demanded.

“You can’t kick us out!” Thunder exclaimed, shocked.

“All you wanna do is whore, drink, and do drugs. That ain’t for Rage anymore. Rage is returning to its roots. You aren’t welcome here. I’m excommunicating all of ya. Get your shit, fuck off. Black your ink, or we will,” Drake ordered.

He sauntered over to the table.

“To stab a brother in the back.” Drake picked up the knife. “Cowardly act. If you’re gonna come at me, come at me face to face. Like I did you. You never respected me, Bulldog, and

you always underestimated me. I'm the fuckin' founder's son. I outrank you, asshole. Fuck me, what an asshole move."

Drake shook his head and, in a move no one saw coming, jabbed Bulldog in the face and then shoved Bulldog's own blade into Bulldog's shoulder.

The overthrown president roared and reared away, and Drake pulled it out again. He took the knife and held it to Bulldog's throat next.

"One single move, and it's over," Drake whispered. "I come at your face; you came at my back."

Slick moved closer, ready to defend his pres; Drake needed to know he had their support.

Pres pressed harder, and blood appeared in a thin line.

Fear encased Bulldog's face.

"Leave," Ace hissed. "Tonight, you get peace. Tomorrow, it's war and certain death."

Drake stepped away and nodded. "On my VPs say so."

One by one, the excommunicated ex-members of Rage filed out.

"Blood gonna be spilled, asshole. You're not keeping Rage," Thunder blustered and sent hate-filled looks at Drake and Ace.

Ace stared expressionless, and Drake grinned. Brothers shuddered at the grin. It promised pain, death, and retribution.

Manny

A month later, Manny pulled into Rage. Bulldog's crew had been causing trouble—again. So he'd done a sweep with Mac. War had broken out between the two factions. Drake's Rage and Bulldog's Rage Revenge were fighting, and blood was spilling.

Bodies had dropped on Bulldog's side, too, but, most notably, they'd lost Ghost. His death had hit them all hard. Everyone focused solely on the battle, unsure of how to handle Ghost's memory. The time to grieve hadn't made itself know as Rage fought for every inch of the street.

Rage was not only fighting Bulldog but handling dealers, pimps, gangs and whatever else the streets wanted to throw at them. Block by block, they were gaining back territory.

Mac swung off the bike next to him, and Manny raised an eyebrow. His brother was chatting away while Manny gazed around them, something making him alert. He saw a figure come out of the shadows, arm lifted towards them.

With a yell, he slammed into Mac, and his brother hit the ground.

Before Manny could move, a bullet shot into his back, and for a few seconds, he stood there, stunned.

Then, a second pierced him.

And he fell to his knees.

He met Mac's horrified stare and face-planted the floor.

Mac scrambled to reach him, but Manny, spitting blood, rolled and covered Mac's body. They wouldn't take two of them out. Not today.

Yells from the clubhouse echoed, and booted feet raced past him, and shots were fired. Drake hit his knees beside him and turned him over.

"He's taken three. Two shoulder and one in the gut. Call nine-one-one!" Drake yelled.

Manny felt pressure on his back as Drake covered the wounds. Another pair of hands caressed his face, and he gazed into Silvie's stunning face.

"Don't you die on me, Manny," she ordered.

Well, fuck him. Silvie was weeping for him. He longed to reassure the beautiful woman, but all he could do was spit up blood.

A second pair of hands pressed against his back. The pressure made him want to groan, but there wasn't room for sounds as blood clogged his throat.

"Silvie, get the hell out of here!" Apache yelled, skidding to a stop next to her as a wave of shooting began.

“Not leaving him, Apache,” the stubborn woman argued loudly as Apache forced her to the ground and covered her body with his own. Her warm hands didn’t leave Manny’s face despite Apache yelling and cursing at her.

“It’s Prince and Mad Dog.” Ace’s voice sounded close. “We got them. Locking them down until Rage is clear.”

Sirens wailed as an ambulance rushed towards them. EMTs pushed his brothers out of the way. Padding the shots, they rolled him onto a backboard and began moving quickly with him.

Footsteps walked beside him, and he looked up as Silvie climbed into the ambo.

“Not leaving you, Manny,” she promised as Apache reached to drag her to safety.

Manny grasped her hand, and she clung tightly to him.

“Silvie,” Apache warned.

She turned, hissed at him, and the doors shut as the vehicle sped away.

Slick

Two days later, Manny limped into the clubhouse. He’d had bullets removed and been stitched. Surprisingly, Silvie had stayed with him the whole time. The stubborn woman had refused to leave his bedside. Her actions had shocked most of the brothers and touched them all; the fact she stayed by Manny’s side meant the world.

Slick tilted his head at her as she hovered around Manny, to Manny’s despair. Even now, she didn’t waver in her watchful position over their healing brother.

Slick thought Manny was going to be driven insane, but he noted the rather smug gleam in Manny’s eyes, too. No brother would worry too much about a beautiful woman giving him attention.

“You out tonight?” Silvie murmured to him and grabbed some worn cushions to put behind Manny’s back. Slick stared, and she smiled. “Make them hurt.”

Slick offered her a shocked stare that tracked her as she returned a sad smile and walked away.

Marsha leant close to her, and Silvie whispered something.

Marsha nodded, glanced in his direction, and gave him a nod.

Slick moved toward Manny, wanting to watch his brother be fussed over, but Drake wandered towards him at the same time, Ace at his side and Apache at the other.

Drake had restructured Rage. Ace was now VP. Fish remained Sergeant at Arms. Apache became an Enforcer—alongside Gunner. Texas held Secretary, and Axel was Chaplin. Drake had put the positions to vote, and no one had gone against him.

“You can ride?” Ace asked Manny.

“Try to keep me from it.”

“Let’s roll,” Drake muttered.

Their new president’s leadership inspired faith in the club and brotherhood. Following his orders was natural—easy—and completely void of the constant moral battle that’d been waged inside of them each time Bulldog had come up with a new plot for easy money. So, they filed out and rode to the Black Hills. An old shack, filled with the promise of revenge, was waiting for them.



Tied to sturdy chairs, Prince and Mad Dog sat as Rage walked into the wet room. Prince had never been the type to give up quietly, but that was how he would leave the earth.

Ace picked up a knife.

Before Prince could say a word, he slashed the man’s throat. Clean and deep.

Mad Dog watched, horrified, as Prince choked and bled out, and Ace then turned a cold gaze on Mad Dog.

“I know Prince shot to distract while you, you fuckin’ coward, hid and took the shots at my brother.”

“Fuck you, asshole,” Mad Dog spat, his gaze flicking to his twitching brother as the last of Prince’s fight abandoned him.

Ace smiled, and even Drake shuddered.

“Yeah, you’ll be singing a different tune pretty soon.”

Thirty later, Mad Dog began begging. An hour later, his throat was hoarse from screaming. Two hours after, he joined Prince in death.

Ace casually cleaned his hands with an old rag.

“Take their bodies. Dump them on Bulldog’s doorstep. He’ll get the message,” Drake said.

Gunner and Apache dragged the bodies out to a waiting van.

“Even?” Ace asked Manny.

Manny shook his head, tone firm. “Not until Bulldog goes down.”

Slick fully agreed. Until that mad asshole was six feet under, there’d be no justice. Bulldog wouldn’t back down until he reclaimed Rage. And they’d no intention of allowing him to live and threaten them and their future.

“He’s next. Only eight men remain out of the original twenty who left with him. Skill, Mayhem, Buzz, Crow, Jiggy, Farmer and now those two pieces of shit are dead. Smokey, Tank, Breaker and Iron have gone and blacked their ink. That leaves Bulldog and seven. It’s time to eliminate him,” Drake said, speaking slowly.

“We’ll call church,” Apache stated.

“Yeah,” Slick agreed.



Cleaning up the rest of Bulldog’s crew was messy. Two more bodies hit the ground before everyone else deserted the man. Fish and Gunner were the ones who finally brought him in as defiant as ever.

Ace ensured the ex-president’s suffering before he met his death. He suffered for twenty-four hours. No more. No less.

The secret he'd taken to the grave, the knowledge that could've helped Ace, was never uncovered. Instead, Bulldog had gloated as Ace slit his throat with a blunt knife.

Slick's history was full of death and anger. He had blood on his hands. Over the years, he had watched his brothers fall in love and receive it back.

But as time marched on, Slick reached a sad realisation.
Who the fuck would want a man like him?

CHAPTER TWO.

March 2022

Slick

Shit was turning bad, and Drake realised it. Slick could see it written all over Drake's body language.

They were meeting with a small MC, The Lion Kings, in an attempt at Parley. It was going so far fuckin' south it was a miracle they weren't in Mexico.

Slick looked at Barracuda, the president of The Lion Kings, who was aiming a gun at Drake as Drake aimed one straight back at him.

Slick shook his head. With a name like The Lion Kings, capital T on the word 'the', it was no wonder Fury had sought them for a takeover.

Barracuda had reached out to Drake for help, and they had walked into a trap. An ambush they'd sort of expected but still had sprung, just in case The Lion Kings had been genuine.

"What fuckin' part of Rage is Rage, and you got no claim, don't ya get?" Drake snarled.

Out of the corner of Slick's eye, he saw Ace and Artemis take a stand behind one of the SUVs that was parked. They also had weapons out.

Texas, with Apache to his left, had drawn and were covered, too, and Slate was slightly further to the downwind of them.

"Ain't Rage if you can't hold it. Last couple of years, Rage got pussy and turned pussy."

A snarl echoed, and he hoped Ace had Artemis in check.

"We got blood on those streets; do not give a fuck. You think you got Fury backing you. You ain't going to steal Rage territory. Move away, change states, and don't look back. Rage

isn't giving up what we own, and Fury can go to hell," Drake snapped.

Slick watched, his gaze clocking The Lion Kings' members, who were also taking positions.

"Told ya, you can't hold it. We gonna take it." Barracuda sent a sneer in return.

Drake gazed calmly at the piece of shit in front of him.

Slick shook his head. Around thirty years old, skin pock marked from acne, scar down one side of his face, Barracuda was an ugly bastard—and even uglier inside.

Their paths had not ever crossed. The Lion Kings, newcomers at being a club for about five years, hadn't intruded on Rage.

Six weeks ago, Rage found pussy working their streets. The whores had been nicely moved off at first, but knowing Rage wouldn't lift a hand, they kept returning. Drake rounded them all up, had them hogtied and delivered to The Lion Kings compound. It'd sparked several incidents that had escalated to fists between the two MCs. Subsequently, Barracuda had reached out for Parley, and this was the aggravating result.

Barracuda had informed Drake that Fury was pushing for them to join, that they had no choice but to act as they had. Drake hadn't believed him but agreed to Parley.

Slick thought the meet was a dumb move. Still, he understood Drake wanting to gain allies. They had a lot to protect now, and that gave them more bodies for the final showdown.

It was clear from the moment they'd met Barracuda, The Lion Kings expected them to step down and let them take over. How he'd come to that decision, Slick didn't know. But Barracuda had ignored Rage's reputation, which right now meant shit was going to go bad.

Slick saw Barracuda's VP move, and before he could, a bullet spat in Drake's direction.

Rage didn't hesitate and opened fire.

Drake threw his long body to the ground and rolled. The closest cover was his fucking Harley.

Slick growled. He'd been vocal when Drake insisted on being open. Now, the president faced a dangerous situation because those warnings had done unheeded.

Bullets impacted around Drake and flew back towards The Lion Kings as they covered Drake. Slick kept his head low.

Artemis dived in the SUV and, ducking, she drove it straight at Drake.

She skidded to a halt in front of him, giving him cover, and unloaded her weapon through the open window.

Drake popped up from behind the hood and began firing. This was a cluster fuck. Both sides had cover, neither had the advantage.

Irish

Up on the hill, I watched as The Lion King's member, Tech, opened fire. He was opposite to me and had yet to spot me. Such a lack of awareness would be his downfall.

Drake dived and rolled behind the SUV, and I waited to see if he was injured. Instead, Drake came up firing and uninjured. The gamble had paid off.

I observed Slick take aim at Snake, who was creeping up to wipe Slate out from the side. He fired once, and the boom sounded through the air. Snake hit the ground, bleeding.

Tech turned in Slick's direction, and I aimed and got him with a thigh shot.

Screaming, Tech collapsed.

Barracuda looked around, panicked, and shouted orders. But the fucker was keeping his head down, making him a difficult target.

Bullets winged their way towards Slick, Artemis, and Drake and fell short of their target.

I aimed again and fired as Rain raised his body, and Slick hit him in the side. My bullet was a headshot. I wasn't messing

around. Aim to kill.

Barracuda was cursing loudly as he now had three guys down. The fucker was hidden from both Rage and me with his defensive position, but his men weren't. And nobody was going to back down.

I lay patiently by my laid-down bike and waited. Artemis dived out of the SUV and took down Satellite in a smooth move. My rifle covered her as they rolled in the dirt. I was prepared to cover her ass.

They wrestled on the ground, and I spotted Artemis freeze as he dragged her backwards, and I saw Tramp with a shotgun on her.

Ace bellowed and began to run.

No! That was a bad mistake! I aimed and shot Tramp in the back.

As he fell, Artemis was moving. She scissored her legs and took out Satellite with a precise attack.

As he collapsed, she rolled, smashing her gun butt into his head. Ace ducked behind the SUV as Artemis burrowed under it, and hands grabbed her.

“Ceasefire! Ceasefire!” Barracuda screamed.

Curious, I waited and watched to see what Rage would do. Drake held up his hand, and Rage stopped shooting.

“Get your brothers and go. You broke Parley. No second chance. This is war!” Drake ordered as he rose to his feet.

I covered him instantly.

Barracuda stood too, and my gun moved to aim at his head.

Drake looked up in my direction as a red dot appeared on Barracuda's chest.

Barracuda followed his gaze and scowled. “Fuckin' cunts,” he shouted. “Weren't no fair fight with a sniper in the hills, Drake.”

“Wasn’t ever going to be clean, asshole, when you planned to ambush us,” Drake retorted.

I snorted as Drake showed no sign of knowing there’d been a sniper hiding. I wasn’t the only one hiding up here.

Barracuda spat on the ground.

“Move states now or die fighting a war that’s not yours,” Drake ordered. “That ten miles just became fifteen around Rage. Give Fury the good news.”

Barracuda and his remaining brothers got their wounded onto backs of motorbikes—or onto their own bikes if they could ride—and sped out. Barracuda spat in the dirt in Drake’s direction, who simply narrowed his eyes.

I covered Barracuda until he disappeared.

Drake turned fully towards me and gazed up at my position.

Rising to my feet, I looked down at him as he tilted his head as an acknowledgement.

Then, I sensed motion behind me at my back.

Spinning, I snapped a gun in that direction, and the movement stopped.

A guy appeared from the bushes and stared at me. In one smooth motion, I lifted my Harley, mounted, and kicked it into gear. Loudly, I revved it and sped off. A quick glance as I passed the intruder showed me it was Artemis’s Japanese brother, Akemi. I saluted him and let my bike kick up dust and disappeared.

Slick

“We got trouble.” Apache said, walking towards Drake, who nodded sharply. His eyes remained on the biker and the cloud of dust he’d left behind. Akemi waved his arm and began jogging down the hill.

“He didn’t get him,” Drake muttered.

“Any ideas?” Slick asked.

“Not a fuckin’ scooby,” Artemis stated from the cradle of Ace’s arms.

“Thanks for that save,” Drake murmured and turned his gaze back to the diminishing figure of the biker.

“We got trouble, but also got a friend. I don’t like unknown friends. Give Dylan a call and get some feelers out on the street,” Ace ordered Slick.

Drake’s gaze snapped towards his brothers.

“Anyone hurt?” he asked, receiving head shakes.

“Whoever it was had a fuckin’ fine shot,” Artemis said. “From that distance, they could have easily hit me instead of Tramp.”

“Sniper?” Texas stated.

Slick wanted the answer, too.

“Got sniper training,” Akemi added as he arrived. “Couldn’t tell if it was male or female. Heavy leather pants and jacket, blacked-out helmet, also knew I was there. He/she was a ghost, much like me.”

Drake nodded; if Akemi didn’t want to be seen, then he wouldn’t. The guy gave the meaning to the word ghost.

“The Lion Kings won’t fuck off,” Slick said thoughtfully. “Fury has them by the balls, and Barracuda is too stupid to leave the state. Any intelligent man would. He could start his club again elsewhere. But his ego is bruised, and he’ll want payback. The Lion Kings won’t back down.”

“Agreed, we’ve got trouble there,” Texas stated.

“The whole rigmarole was a fuckin’ set up. Tech was already in position to fire. They were primed and ready, and if not for our friend, who knows how it would have ended? We’d still be here shooting,” Drake replied.

Slick felt tired, and he could see it on Drake’s face, too. Fury was upping his game and trying to wear them down. The asshole was taking sporadic shots at them and their allies. No rest was possible; they stayed constantly alert. Even with

Drake and the others covering one another's back, they were all still weary. Some more than others. Slick ruefully thought he was too old for this crap.

"Let's get home," Drake said finally, his eyes narrowed in the setting sun.

Slick took on a similar pose, wondering if they shared the same question. Who the hell was the biker who had come to their aid?

Three days later.

Slick and Ezra got off their Harleys at Rage's Hell. They'd had a call from Mac that three of The Lion Kings had been seen in the locality. As Mac and Lowrider were the only ones in the bar—apart from staff and customers—they'd phoned for back-up.

Slick heard a roar of pipes and looked up as six bikes pulled up around them and circled. His stomach sank. It had been a setup, and they'd walked into it.

Gravel spun as the bikers spun in circles, and a crowbar was aimed at his head. Slick ducked as his arm lifted to grab it, and he felt his shoulder wrench from its socket, but he held on and dragged the asshole from his bike.

Ezra's grunt indicated that he had been hit.

Slick twisted, aiming the bar at the biker about to cave in Ezra's skull.

Ezra rolled directly into the path of another man idling with a gun aimed at him. Slick moved, heart in throat, but knew he wasn't gonna be fast enough. Pipes were coming straight for him.

Ezra's eyes widened, and he began to turn.

A motorbike flew past them, and Slick saw a slender black figure, knees and legs up on the seat, push off and dive off the bike that kept going before falling to the ground. The figure launched at the asshole with the gun and took him down. There was a single shot, and the figure was moving with The Lion Kings' weapon in hand.

Ezra was up on his feet and had flung his body at a King who had a lump of wood in his hands.

With a gut punch, Ezra knocked him backwards, and they both rolled over the side of the bike.

Slick had already changed directions and threw a crowbar in the spoke of a bike speeding. The bar hit, jammed, and the biker flew over the top as the Harley jack knifed and crashed back down.

The black figure ran past Slick, moving fast. They put one foot on the downed bike and leapt in the air, scissor kicking out. Their legs wrapped around the neck of a King, then brought him down hard to the ground.

Slick heard their rescuer give a grunt and realised....

She was female.

Her elbow jammed in the dazed Kings' throat.

Slick caught the gun tossed in his direction and fired straight past the woman, taking out the King coming at her back with a knife.

Their friend did not stop and ran at Slick.

She slid into Slick, jolting him, just as a blade slashed where his head had been.

Flipping to her feet, she slammed an arm into the forearm of the attacker, slashing towards him with a knife of her own.

And then Ezra was there, and the King hit the floor.

Shouts from the bar echoed, and Lowrider and Mac came running, weapons drawn.

With more allies on the way, the woman did not pause and jogged to her downed bike. Her intention of making another easy escape clear.

Slick made a grab, an attempt to stop her. But she shook her finger at him and drove off.

Lowrider and Mac skidded to a halt.

“Fuckin’ hell,” Lowrider ground out, looking at the carnage on the carpark floor.

Four bikers were groaning or unconscious. The remainder were pulling off, chasing the stranger. Slick jumped onto his bike and shot off after them.

Minutes later, he returned to find the others still out back.

“Lost her,” he grunted, annoyed.

Mac was down on his haunches next to Ezra, who was shaking his head.

“He okay?” Lowrider asked.

“Took a blow, he’s fine,” Ezra answered his brother-in-law.

“Second time our friend came to help.” Mac sounded thoughtful, looking off in the direction the biker had taken.

“She’s female. No hiding that figure tonight,” Slick replied.

In the distance, sirens were screaming towards them. Ramirez was answering the 911 call, but with the escalating conflicts, they were just as exhausted as the MCs.

“You get anything?” Mac questioned, and both Ezra and Slick shook their heads.

“Female?” Lowrider threw his hands up at his brothers’ looks. “Artemis?” he asked as a possible explanation.

“Fuck!” Ezra roared; they all felt his pain.

Artemis was a law unto herself. Another Artemis running around could be either highly beneficial or very detrimental.

Cops pulled into the parking lot, and Lowrider walked over to meet them.

Five days later.

Slick got off his bike and stretched before looking towards Drake. It was their night to patrol, and two dealers had been reported to be on a local corner. They were going to move them off and get rid of their shit before patrolling again. It was The Lion King’s way of pushing back. Adding strain in every way they could. No matter how small.

They moved toward the men, who looked fuckin' nervous.

Slick felt his spine prickle, and he hit Drake as a bullet rammmed into the wall where Slick's head had been.

The dealers took off at a run.

Keeping his body between Drake and the shooters, Slick rolled them both into the shadows. Bullets pinged for a moment, then stopped suddenly.

Three loud blasts followed. A shotgun, he thought.

And then silence again.

Slick heard bike pipes roar, and he looked up as their fucking friend rode past them once more.

He got to his feet and hauled Drake up. A quick glance showed Pres was okay, and then he walked to where three Kings were rolling on the ground with shotgun blasts in their legs.

"Call it in." Drake sighed.

Three days later.

Irish

I watched as the old ladies danced crazily on the dance floor. The women were half drunk, and judging by the looks on their men's faces, they were gonna get some tonight. I glanced over my shoulder and saw a few other brothers from the MC at the bar.

I also clocked a hitman as he wandered through, blending in pretty well. But now well enough.

The asshole's orders were to wait, then do maximum damage as they all left.

I rose to my feet and walked slowly towards the exit. I didn't intend to draw attention, but Slick noticed me as his eyes studied up and down my body.

Yeah, I looked good. I knew it.

He knew it, too, and a grin hit his face.

Slick was hot. Freakishly so. Any other time, I would have stayed and played a bit, but I'd a task to finish.

I smiled shyly at him and then leant over a table as if I were saying goodbye to friends before leaving. His eyes followed me, and I could feel his gaze burning into my back. The minute I was out in the air, I faded down an alley and climbed the fire ladder to the top of the building next to the bar.

Quickly, I shrugged out of my dress and heels, pulled on my riding gear, and packed my discarded clothing away. I grabbed the backpack and prepared for battle.

I walked to the edge where I had my rifle set up. Getting comfortable, I settled in for the wait. The hitman come out of the bar an hour later, and I observed as he made his way to the building opposite. I tracked his movements. Every glance and twitch of his fingers.

He moved to the window, where he had his own rifle. A rifle I'd already found earlier.

The asshole crouched down, and I sought him until he was in my crosshairs. Patiently, I waited for him to tense up when he saw his target.

I couldn't see Rage leave because I was on the same side as them. But I spotted the miniscule movement as he tensed, and I fired before he did.

As usual, I'd waited until the last moment before taking the kill. He might have changed his mind, which meant he wasn't my business. Instead, his head exploded, and my scope filled with blood. It was a good kill.

Shouts from the street erupted, and I deftly packed up my rifle, then grabbed the single shell casing and climbed down my alternative escape route.

Hurrying to my bike, I halted when I saw Slick sat on it.

Now, this was unexpected.

Slick's ass was on my seat, and he had one booted foot on the floor and another on my footrest. He merely looked at me.

Was he trying to play cute?

I sensed a presence at my back and didn't hesitate as arms came around me and missed capturing my body. Rotating, I caused my attacker to stagger.

I was vapour.

They wouldn't contain me so easily, especially not in a messy, unplanned grab.

Annoyed at Slick, I pulled a smoke bomb from my waist and smashed it on the ground. Slick and my attacker coughed and choked as I walked in the direction of my motorbike.

I shoved Slick's body hard, and he stumbled to the side.

I was astride and roaring out before he took his next breath. Cursing in my head and out loud, I raced down the street, hearing Harleys behind me. I opened the throttle and let her rip.

Skilfully dodging cars and oncoming traffic, I headed towards the outskirts of the city. As soon as I hit the open stretch, I opened the throttle and pulled ahead.

I cut the engine as I headed into a clearing and stopped.

Pipes got closer, and then they, too, passed.

Luckily, the ground was dry and the night blacker than black. I was safely hidden here. A few minutes after, I heard bikes coming back and far slower. I knew they were looking for signs and slowly dragged the bike backwards, away from the road.

Pipes opened up, and Rage moved on.

I took a deep breath and looked skyward.

Two days later:

Drake

"You want to tell me what is happening on my streets?" Ramirez let rip at Drake and the MC.

"I'd like to know," Drake muttered. They had been so close.

Slick had seen the parked bike when he came to the bar and had clocked it. They had kept an eye out, but all Slick had noticed was a woman who left pretty quick after saying goodbye to friends. A few questions and Slick had sussed out she wasn't their friend, so he'd left to guard the motorbike.

"This is war. I have bodies and injuries piling up, Drake," Ramirez snapped. He dragged his hand through his hair.

"Not by Rage," Drake shoved up from the bar and faced Ramirez.

"Only reason it ain't Rage is because of this vigilante we got. I've six Kings behind bars so far. Three have made bail. We have a hitman with his brains blown out on a roof and a vigilante on the streets with shotguns. Chief is unhappy, but not because of the bodies dropping, Drake. Fury is stepping up and sending fodder at us. We are in the middle of something we didn't start, but RCPD will fuckin' end it. Don't tell me that if Shotgun Biker wasn't getting there first, Rage would not be putting bodies in the ground."

"Ramirez, you wouldn't find them. I thought we were allies. You telling me Chief changed his mind? Remember who we buried not so long ago?" Drake shot back.

"I know. A good man and father. I think about him every day and miss his ass. Chief hasn't altered his perspective, but reality is setting in," Ramirez growled out.

Drake put his hands on his hips.

"We've got no idea except this person is determined to protect Rage," Texas interrupted.

"Remind you of anyone?" Ramirez snapped and pointed at Artemis.

She grinned and waved, and he narrowed his eyes and stared back at Drake.

"You hear anything, you let me know, even if they need protection."

Ramirez looked up as Dylan Hawthorne walked into the compound with Davies on his heels.

“Yeah, we’ll let you know,” Drake agreed.

Ramirez was still whiter than grey. Despite the fact he’d watched Bobby Lucas put a bullet in the brain of the man who had killed Justin Goldberg, Ramirez remained a good cop. Bobby Lucas, on the other hand, was fully prepared for war and quite happy to take out any asshole bringing trouble. Nando Hawthorne, who had been in a coma, had also been present. The loss of his partner had been hard for Nando, and Drake understood Nando still grieved.

It had come to Drake’s attention that Lucas and Hawthorne were now partnered and often hunted together. And they weren’t hunting for fun. Venomous Fangs were well within their parameter for viable game.

Ramirez growled and stamped out.

CHAPTER THREE

April 2022

Drake

“Problems in paradise?” Hawthorne smiled grimly once Ramirez had left.

“He is a brother, but he’s got a job to do,” Drake answered shortly.

“Siobhan O’Riley. That name mean anything to you?”

“Not a thing.”

“Sure?”

“Yes, damn it,” Drake snapped.

“Bitch has ties to the club.”

“Shit, O’Riley?” Axel questioned, striding forward.

“Axel?” Ace asked.

“Irish. Toby O’Riley,” Axel expanded.

“Siobhan is too young to be his child. He blacked the ink years ago when the battle for Rage happened,” Dylan stated.

“He had a granddaughter,” Axel replied.

“Irish, as in Irish of the second gen?” Slick quizzed, trying to keep up.

“Yeah, Irish was recruited after Apache and Texas. Totally loyal to the club until Bulldog targeted his kid,” Axel explained.

“Irish had a boy who was gonna ride with us until Bulldog. Irish walked. Didn’t want that shit. Kept his son away. From what I remember, the boy was a fuckin’ marine. Hardcore,” Drake said.

“This woman is how old?” Slick asked.

“Siobhan’s twenty-five,” Dylan answered, checking the file in his hand.

“She’s too young. Our saviour has too much experience in her actions,” Lex muttered.

“Is she?” Artemis stated, stepping forward and looking at the file. “This all you got on her?” She shook the file at Hawthorne.

“Yeah, couldn’t find shit, but the woman could fit the bill. Siobhan disappeared off the face of the earth seven years ago. It ain’t certain, but it’s a possibility. Especially with a marine father and ties to the club,” Dylan explained.

“She’s wiped,” Artemis said.

“Explain,” Axel demanded.

“This is nothing. You have a name, address, social security, school. That’s it. Siobhan’s been wiped. You can dig as deep as you want, you won’t find her. She is a ghost.”

“One of yours?” Ace murmured.

“Nope. This is government and a deep hack. She’ll work some part-time day job somewhere, a shop or something similar. Siobhan will have a nice house in a decent neighbourhood and drive an all-American car, probably a few years old. She’ll have good credit and no outstanding debts. Her home would have been left to her by a family member, and her neighbours will say she bakes cakes and does her yard herself. Always brings stuff to the neighbourhood barbeque.

Elsewhere, she’ll have a base, guns, weapons, garage for the bike. Computers and all the other shit Siobhan needs to do her job. Alternative ID and thousands in cash and bonds in a safe. Siobhan has a bag packed to go.”

“Girl’s wiped.” Drake nodded.

“I’ll dig deeper,” Hawthorne stated and turned on his heel with Davies and left.

“Why would Siobhan watch over Rage?” Ace asked.

“Loyalty?” Artemis quizzed.

“Irish loved the MC. Her father was a prospect when he walked. Could be misplaced loyalty to her grandfather’s and father’s old club,” Axel mused.

“Could be freaking anything,” Drake complained, and no one disagreed.

Summer

I checked the order, ready to be picked up by Rage a second time. I was always double-checking orders, especially for those who’d be big clients. And Rage, with their multitude of businesses, would be major customers. Two of the brothers owned a construction business, Apache and Rock. Ezra ran a landscaping company, and Slick ran a leasing company in which he owned multiple houses. Then there was Casey, who had a specialist shop with soaps, creams, and lotions, and Aurora Victoria, who had a witchcraft store. My herbs would be very welcome there.

I’d already secured the old ladies’ business. Now I was seeking to lock Rage down. If I gained their patronage, I would be sitting very, very comfortably indeed. My garden centre was always busy. I was reasonably priced, unlike the other centre that charged ridiculous amounts, and my items were of high quality.

This order was for Ezra, and I was hoping he’d be pleased with my product.

I was incredibly worried because Ezra would know plants. Obviously, I wasn’t worried about the quality, but I was nervous.

This would give me the extra money I needed to live. What with Mother Dearest and my evil stepmother. Every cent counted. For a few moments, my shoulders slumped as I thought of what waited for me at home, and then I straightened.

Those miserable bastards may put me down, but they won’t keep me so. Should I secure these contracts, things would change. I really hoped to gain Rage’s business.

Slick

He shook his head as he pulled into the new garden centre that had opened. Then he nodded in approval at the expansive store and the large greenhouses behind it. They were lined up uniformly, which pleased his slight OCD. An older man sat by the door, warmly greeting customers and offering advice on where to go. The shop itself looked a pleasant building, and Slick was impressed with the quality.

Ezra was delayed at a site. He'd been remodelling the gardens for a large house, and the owner had decided to change the plans. Ezra, who'd already ordered everything, was unhappy, to say the least, and was now listening to the client while trying to hold on to his temper. He'd called Slick and asked him to grab his pickup truck and hit the garden centre because his order was ready.

When Slick had arrived, Ezra had been grinding his teeth as he listened to the middle-aged woman whine. Slick had grinned as Ezra explained the plants had already been bought, and if she wanted to change them up now, she'd still have to pay for the discarded lot. That wasn't going down well, and as Slick pulled away, Ezra had been demanding if she remembered the contract she'd signed.

Slick guessed Ezra's contract would cover any contingencies like this, and the woman was screwed.

She was one of those he couldn't stand. Fake boobs, Botox, facelift, liposuction, and she clearly thought she was in her early twenties. The saggy skin on her neck gave her away. She was at least fifty, if not sixty. Slick hated false women. Nothing worse in his box.

But the bitch was giving it her all as she had thrust her massive bosom under Ezra's nose on multiple occasions, which he'd studiously ignored it.

The woman would be damn lucky if Ezra deigned to notice her. Not that he would. Ezra had a well-built internal sense of grabby hands, and his customer certainly had them. Slick knew her type. Bored housewife whose husband was banging a chick half her age. She wanted a revenge bang to upset the man, and then Ezra would be dirt under her shoes.

Rage was too aware of bitches like her and avoided them at all costs, which made Slick smirk as he recalled Vivie was a duchess. Yeah, real-life nobility—and nothing like that poor excuse of a female Ezra was dealing with.

Slick swung down from the pickup and approached the guy.

“Hey, I’m looking for Summer Ward,” he announced.

“Here for the order?” asked the older man. Slick noted how one of his legs seemed stiff as it stretched in front of him.

“Yeah, Ezra sent me to collect it for him.”

“I’ll call Summer.”

Slick spotted a name badge with Brian on it as the man pulled a walkie-talkie from his belt and radioed through. A crackle broke the silence, followed by a woman’s voice answering.

“Summer’s on her way,” Brian offered, turning back to Slick.

Slick nodded and looked curiously around. There were a hell of a lot of shoppers present. “Busy place,” he stated.

“Summer has a talent I’ve not seen before. She truly does have a green finger, but even better, she knows how to display them. Sticking plants on a shelf is boring. Summer created little gardens throughout the shop so everyone can see what the flowers would look like. People enjoy coming and viewing them, and then Summer will help them pick what colours they want. We have the products on shelves outside each garden, so they’re easy to collect,” Brian explained.

“Clever marketing idea,” Slick said, nodding.

Now even more curious, he felt the urge to investigate. But he spotted a woman hurrying towards them. Hair the colour of wheat in the warm sun was pulled back in a ponytail that hung over her shoulder and hit her waist. Blue eyes similar to a summer’s sky and a pert little nose caught his attention. Slick barely hid a smile as he spied freckles, and as she smiled, he forgot to breathe. She had dimples, real bona fide dimples.

Slick's idea of his perfect woman was slowing to a stop in front of him with a quizzical expression. She wasn't tall, about five foot five, and she was slender, but Slick could envision the curves under the long gypsy skirt and blouse she wore. His fingers itched to touch her skin to see if it was as warm and soft as it looked.

"Hi, Ezra?" Summer asked, and Slick's cock twitched. Holy fuck, this was his ideal woman. Her voice was soft and melodious, and Slick wondered if she sang.

"Slick."

Summer frowned, and Slick found her even cuter. He began berating his cock as it wanted her to notice it.

"Sorry?" Summer replied, and Slick heard her confusion.

"I'm Slick. Ezra is caught up arguing with some bitch that changed her mind at the last minute. He sent me to get the order," Slick added, and his cock tried to burst through his pants as Summer offered him a cute smile. Damn, not now, he cursed silently.

Moments later, his dick died a death as Slick envisaged the horrific image he'd seen two days ago. Gunner's hairy ass and balls. Slick had been walking down the hallway when Gunner's door had popped open, and Slick had caught an eyeful. It was a thing of nightmares.

Slick's cock cursed him as it wilted, and he crowed at winning this battle.

"Okay, so would you like to inspect the order?" Summer asked, and then Slick's words seemed to catch up with her. Summer paled, and Slick wondered what was wrong. Had Summer noted the war with his cock?

"Are you here to cancel?" she whispered.

"No!" Slick bellowed, and Summer took a step away in surprise. "Sorry, I meant no. Ezra informed the bitch she'd have to pay for this order, anyway. If she still doesn't want it, Ezra can use it elsewhere. Either way, you and Ezra will be paid."

Slick wanted the smile back and watched as the frown lifted from Summer's brow. Beside them, Brian snorted, and Slick glared.

Brian's eyes told Slick everything—that Brian knew Summer had just knocked Slick on his ass metaphorically—and Slick sent him a scowl.

“Oh, that's okay then. Would you like to come with me, and I will show you the order?” Summer asked.

Slick nodded pathetically as Summer turned on her heel and he caught a good look at her ass. Hell, it was beautiful. Round and plump and totally delicious. Christ, he felt like a teenager again. It was a heck of a nice butt, even if Slick refused to let his cock acknowledge it.

“I'll be in Greenhouse number one, Uncle Brian,” Summer called over her shoulder as she walked away.

“Okay,” Brian replied, and Slick took a double take at Brian as a smirk crossed his face. Brian levelled two fingers at his eyes and then pointed them at Slick.

Slick looked away quickly, and his gaze caught off the wriggle on Summer's ass. That was a far better sight.

Summer

“So, Brian's your uncle?” Slick asked as he drew level with me.

“Kind of. He was my dad's best friend and stuck around after he passed. I've known Uncle Brian from the moment I was born. Dad said he was the third person to hold me after him and my mum.”

“That's sweet,” Slick replied.

“Yeah. He is the one steady presence in my life since Dad died.”

Slick caught the pain in my voice as he sent me a sharp look. “Was his death recent?” he asked gently.

“Three years ago. He was coming home from purchasing this place when he was hit by a truck. The driver was drunk and crashed straight into him. Dad passed on impact... luckily. I wouldn't have wanted him to suffer.”

The grief from Dad's passing rushed me again. Even after three years, the pain remained excruciating. The guy who hit him had tried to carry on driving, dragging Dad's car with him before realising he'd hit something. I was so glad Dad hadn't suffered, but so bitter I'd lost him.

They said the good died young; well, Dad hadn't even been fifty. He was a man everyone would miss. Slick's face softened as he took in my words.

Nobody apart from Uncle Brian had mourned Dad like me. We'd both been heartbroken, and, despite my wicked mother and stepmother, we had grieved heavily together.

Uncle Brian had retired from the marines before Dad was killed. He had got out five years earlier than my father because he'd been wounded in a freak accident. Uncle Brian had been training some new marines when a supposedly dud landmine had detonated and cost him the movement of his left leg. He'd been damn lucky it had delayed before exploding. Otherwise, he might have lost it completely—and maybe even his life.

That meant Uncle Brian had become a more permanent fixture when Dad asked him to watch over me. Uncle Brian took that duty seriously. Especially with the two wicked witches about. Dad had divorced Mom when I was ten, unable to bear her vitriol anymore or her rampant jealousy. He'd married Marianne two years later, a bigger mistake than Mom. Sadly, Dad had died before his divorce to Marianne came through.

Which led to a total uproar when Dad's will was read. At twenty-five, I inherited everything. Marianne and Mom had both clearly expected to inherit something and were both furious when I got his home, the new business, and his life insurance. Marianne had challenged the will in court and lost, but soon became my burden, as did Mom. Both of them were

lazy and greedy. They'd moved into Dad's house together and demanded for me to look after them.

Grieving and beaten down with so many years of verbal abuse from them both, I'd agreed to help them. It was a mistake; I knew that now, but I'd no energy to fight them. I still didn't think I had the strength, but hiding the extra money from them would allow me to move them out of Dad's house or buy my own.

"Summer? I'm sorry to have upset you," Slick said, interrupting my thoughts and touching my arm.

His fingers sent little waves of electricity running through me, and I gazed up into his eyes and offered a smile.

"You didn't. I love remembering Dad. We were very close. Now shall we see to this order?" I smiled gamely and tilted my head towards the greenhouse.

Slick gasped as he entered. It was a reaction I was familiar with and one I loved. Visitors were amazed upon entering the greenhouses, and rightfully so. It was a riot of colour and scents, not overwhelming but eye-catching. Ezra's order was placed on six double-tier tables at the beginning of the greenhouse, three on each side. Behind them, rows of flowerbeds stretched out on the right. A narrow path ran down the centre, with beds on the left.

"Wow," Slick muttered.

"It's something," I agreed.

"Beautiful." Slick's eyes were on me.

I felt a blush begin and turned. "This is everything Ezra ordered. If you'd like to check it off, I have the paperwork?"

"No. I'm sure it is fine. Can I drive the truck here, or do we need to carry it out?" Slick asked.

"Yes, if you follow the road to the left, it will bring you to a small car park at the rear of the greenhouses. We'll still need to transport the plants to it, but it's a far shorter journey."

"Be back soon," Slick said and walked his ass out.

My eyes were drawn to the way his jeans clung lovingly to his butt. Jesus! I fanned myself with my hand and turned deep red as Slick peeked behind him and caught me.

He sent me a wink and disappeared as I wished the ground would open up and swallow me.

Slick

Damn, that was one fine woman. Sweet and sincere, and he longed to get to know her better. But his gut told him she wasn't a good-time girl at all, that Summer wouldn't be interested in a fling. No, this woman would be for keeps, and as much as Slick wanted to offer her that, he didn't think he had it in him.

He swung into Ezra's truck and stared out of the window for a few moments. Was this his chance to grab something beautiful? Summer was the whole package, from what he could see in his few minutes of speaking with her. And he was seriously sick of casual sex. Slick hadn't fucked anyone for a year, in truth. He was done with barflies and wanted what his brothers had. Hell, even the prospects were falling faster than flies.

Slick knew damn well if one of his single brothers saw Summer, they'd snap her up. There was no barrier to starting something special with Summer—and he guessed she was interested—other than himself.

Slick accepted he'd changed since Artemis had kidnapped him. Until then, he'd been more open and less cagey. What Artemis had put him through had choked him emotionally.

She'd gone to great lengths to make amends, and while Slick forgave her eventually, their relationship had never been the same. They both knew it, too. Sometimes, Slick saw a sad expression on Artemis's face when she gazed at him, which was quickly hidden. Slick could have taken the beating and walked away and no hard feelings. The fact she'd drugged him and tried to seduce him to get the truth was what caused the damage. Slick couldn't shake the feeling of betraying Ace.

He'd loved Kayleigh and, towards the end, might have even been a little in love with her. But he'd never poached from a brother.

Artemis's seduction methods had nearly broken him, and Slick would not have been able to forgive himself if he had given in. He fought against his sexual feelings while heavily drugged. If he'd surrendered, Slick would have had to leave Rage because facing Ace, knowing he'd fucked Ace's woman, wouldn't have happened.

Slick parked at the back of the greenhouse and wondered if fate was giving him a reward for denying his emotions towards Kayleigh. Although Kayleigh and Artemis were the same person kind of, he never felt that way about Artemis. Slick knew he wanted a gentle, caring homemaker as a partner. But he also loved the feisty, strong sides of women. Ideally, he planned to settle with someone who would allow him to look after her and treat her like the queen she'd be. Summer seemed to fit.

She was waiting outside with a trolley laden with plants and a sweet smile on her face. As he turned the engine off, Summer was already moving to load up the order.

"Here, let me help," Slick suggested, exiting the pickup.

"I'm used to lifting these," Summer said while hefting a heavy pot.

"But you can take a break and watch me sweat," Slick returned with a wink.

Summer's eyes wandered to his muscular arms, and she blushed again as she ducked her head. "Be my guest," she murmured, and Slick grinned.

He'd no problem flexing his muscles if it impressed Summer.

"Anytime, honey. What are your plans after work tonight?"

The light faded from Summer's face, and he felt a kick in his gut.

“I have stuff to do,” she muttered, and Slick heard the resentment in her voice. Summer had a secret, but despite his curiosity, he couldn’t bring himself to ask. They’d only just met.

“Do you want to go on a date when you’re available?” Slick asked.

“I’d love to, but I’m really busy at night.”

Slick felt she was giving the cold shoulder, and he shrugged. Summer looked worn down, and Slick checked her ring finger. He could have sworn it was bare. Maybe she had a boyfriend.

“How about lunch?” Summer suggested, brightening.

Slick was puzzled, but if he wanted to get to know her better, he would take whatever she offered. Once he was sure he was in there with her, then he’d question what kept her so busy at night.

“Would be great. Today?” Slick said hopefully, and Summer broke into laughter.

“It’s almost lunchtime now. How about tomorrow?” Summer asked.

“I’ll be here. Say... one o’clock?”

“Perfect. Uncle Brian takes his lunch at noon every day without fail,” Summer replied.

That fact interested Slick. “Does he run this with you?”

“No, Uncle Brian helped me organise everything and get the centre open. The first few months after Dad’s death, I couldn’t operate. But Uncle Brian put his boot up my backside and got me moving. Together, we got this place open in time for spring this year. He even helped plant the field we own and do all the pots,” Summer said with a smile.

Slick nodded.

“This must have been a shitload of work, it’s damn beautiful.”

“I think we worked eighteen-hour days. Sometimes, we

grabbed sleeping bags and slept overnight and got up early again the next day. But looking at this, Dad's dream has come true."

Slick felt his heart kick at the grin Summer released.

"He liked gardening?"

Summer laughed. "Dad hated it. I was the gardener, and Dad wanted to see me succeed. He bought this as a surprise for me. He said his green-fingered girl needed to showcase her talents."

"Good man." Slick nodded as he loaded the last pot, and Summer grabbed the trolley.

"I'll fetch the second load," she stated.

Slick watched her ass as she walked away before realising he should be offering her a hand. He chased after her, still admiring the view.

CHAPTER FOUR.

Slick

He still had a grin on his face after dropping Ezra's pickup at the job and collecting his motorbike. Drake was on the forecourt when he roared up and Slick tried to wipe the smile and couldn't.

Drake's eyebrow rose as Slick swung off his bike.

"Good day?" Drake questioned curiously.

"Yeah, so far it is," Slick replied.

"Helping Ezra?" Drake asked, clearly curious about Slick's smirk.

Slick's grin widened as he nodded and walked past Drake. He let out a chuckle as Drake huffed at him and entered the clubhouse.

The first face he caught sight of was Artemis, and as usual, he got that little kick of fear. Not that he was frightened of her but more afraid of what her actions could have cost him. And like he usually did, he pushed them to one side. A quick glance around told him the rec room was nearly empty, apart from Axel and Ellen, Artemis, Mac, and Gunner.

"Everything okay?" Slick asked Axel, who nodded.

Slick's eyes narrowed on the founder of Rage. Ever since Axel had been hurt, he had been quieter, and it worried him. Ellen had assured many of them in private that Axel was managing, but everyone had concerns.

Slick knew that Justin Goldberg's death, in coming to Axel's rescue when he'd been ambushed and shot, had rocked the man. But Slick was beginning to wonder if Axel was suffering from depression. Sometimes, the guy seemed like himself, and other times, he was quiet and morose.

"Axel, need a talk," Slick said, and Axel's head jerked up.

“My room,” Axel replied, and Slick noted the big man’s usual boom was missing. Axel limped his way down to the elevator, which would allow him to reach his office, and Slick joined him there.

As soon as the door shut, Axel heavily took his seat and stared at Slick.

“Out with it,” Axel demanded.

“I don’t have an issue. But you do, brother,” Slick stated. He almost winced as Axel’s face blanked.

“Why ya wasting my time?” Axel snarled as he went to get to his feet.

“Sit down, or I’ll pull Drake in,” Slick ordered.

Axel’s eyebrows disappeared under his bushy hair.

“What the fuck did you say?” Axel boomed, and Slick relaxed a little at hearing that fire in Axel’s voice.

“You’re blaming yourself for Goldberg’s death.”

“The boy died because he came to help me.” Axel didn’t meet Slick’s eyes.

“Goldberg was killed because there’s a fuckin’ egomaniac on the loose who’s nuts and power hungry. Fury has no claim to Rage. He chose to side with Bulldog and his gang of assholes. That wasn’t on me, you, or anyone else apart from him and his greed and bad choices,” Slick pointed out.

“It was my sorry ass Goldberg was coming to save,” Axel boomed, anger crossing his face.

“And he died doing so, on the job, and as a freaking hero. Think we all wouldn’t want him to walk through those doors today? Of course we do, but nobody knew it was an ambush. Unless you did?” Slick poked.

“No, I didn’t!” Axel thundered.

“Would you have stopped them coming if you’d known?”

“You’re making me mad,” Axel warned.

“Would you have told the cops answering the call to not come and given your own life?” Slick pressed.

“Yes, God damn it!”

“If offered the choice, what would Goldberg have said?”

“He would have sacrificed me to stay with his son,” Axel boomed.

“No. He’d still have answered the phone because that’s who he was. If he didn’t want to risk death, he wouldn’t have been a cop. Goldberg picked a noble profession. He chose to protect and serve, and he died doing just that. We’ll get our revenge on Fury, and the Fangs will pay. They’ll bleed hard and heavy. The Fangs have taken over The Lion Kings, and they are continuing to fall. They’re losing.”

“It doesn’t make me feel no better,” Axel muttered.

“And it won’t. Do you think I don’t relive what happened to Kayleigh every single day? That what she went through doesn’t torture me?”

Axel’s head snapped up. “You’ve never said.”

“No, because it’s my guilt. Something that always lingers in my thoughts. Since we discovered the truth about Kayleigh, I wonder every damn day if I missed a sign, a look, anything that could have tipped me off to what Misty, Thunder, and the others did. None of us would be without Artemis, but she wasn’t who Kayleigh was supposed to become. Ace shouldn’t be the killer he is, and I blame myself. I should’ve spotted a warning sign. But I didn’t.”

“Slick, you can’t be blaming yourself for what happened. Any one of us should have foreseen Bulldog targeting the women. We didn’t.”

“And you can’t hold yourself accountable for not realising those officers walked into an ambush. We have done what we can. Dan Norton is back on the force, although a desk job, but he’s still a cop. Phoe swung that. We’ve all, and I mean allies too, chipped in to ensure Goldberg’s son never goes without, and his parents won’t have financial worries raising him. And the cops will keep his father’s memory alive by telling stories

about what a hero the guy was. We've done everything we could to make sure that Goldberg's family will come through this," Slick said.

"Minus having the man around," Axel retorted.

"Yeah. But he'll live on in our memories. Goldberg will be forever praised and recognised as a hero. Every time Goldberg put on his badge, he knew there was a slight chance he wouldn't return home. And he still did the job. Are we to blame for that?"

"No," Axel denied.

"Then we do what Rage does best: we fight, and we win. Because I'm fucked if Fury will take us down again."

"Slick's correct. And I think you need an appointment with Janet. Get those thoughts out of your head," Drake said, and Slick jolted. He'd not heard anyone approaching; damn, he was getting old.

"I ain't seeing no doctor," Axel snarled.

"If our Chaplin hasn't got his shit straight, then how can he help others?" Drake retorted.

Axel glowered as he struggled to find an answer.

Slick knew he wouldn't either. Axel's shoulders eventually slumped, but there was a light in his eyes that he wasn't going to just roll over. All that mattered was that the big man showed some fight.

"Any news on our Biker Bitch?" Slick asked, turning his attention to the pres.

"Nothing. She's not been seen since the previous incident," Drake returned.

"And there's been no other incidents. I can understand once or twice that she might have discovered a planned attack on Rage. However, she has been present since the ambush by The Lion Kings. Anybody else think she has an inside track on Venomous Fangs?" Slick asked.

"Possible," Drake agreed.

“Are we even sure that Siobhan O’Riley is involved?” Slick inquired.

“No, and we can’t freaking locate her, either. Mac has run Siobhan to the ground, and nothing. He’s handed it over to Hawthorne’s. If anyone can find her, they will,” Drake said.

“Nobody can hide from them.” Axel looked bothered.

“What’s on your mind?” Drake prompted.

“Why would this girl, out of the blue, suddenly turn up and defend us? What’s in it for her?” Slick demanded.

“Those are all good questions. And we will get answers to them; in the meantime, we stick to what we’re doing, and if we catch her, we’ll question her,” Drake said grimly.

Drake

The door flew open, and Ace stood there. His face was impassive, and Drake felt his gut tighten. Something was about to happen.

“You better come upstairs,” Ace announced.

Drake didn’t ask why but climbed to his feet and marched up the stairs behind Ace. In the rec room, Ghost stood alongside a woman and two young girls.

Drake’s stomach tightened even further. He wasn’t ready for this.

“Fury found her. I just got her out in time,” Ghost said as the kids drew closer to their mother.

Drake stared at the woman, who was his half-sister. Carmelle was five foot-four with long black hair. Her skin was tanned, lighter than most Mexicans, but darker than his. Her eyes were his father’s, and that shook Drake to his core. She was slender but slightly rounded on her tummy and hips, no doubt due to the two girls hiding behind her.

“My office,” Drake gritted out, not wanting an audience for this. “Axel, take the—my... the kids. They’ll be safe with him,” Drake added to Carmelle, who looked anything but reassured.

“Ghost?” she asked, tilting her head.

Drake’s temper rankled that Carmelle didn’t accept his word but stared at a brother who’d been distant from Rage for so long.

“They’ll be okay,” Ghost comforted.

Carmelle held Ghost’s gaze for a few moments and then nodded and turned to Drake.

“Lead the way,” she stated, her voice full of derision.

Drake glowered and stomped off. From the corner of his eye, he saw Ellen whip her phone out. Any moment now, Phoe would be getting a call updating her that Carmelle was here.

“Take a seat, both of you,” he ordered on entering his office. “What happened?”

“As said, Fury located her. As we left her street, Fangs turned the other end. Only Anderson and I knew where Carmelle was being hidden, and neither of us leaked it,” Ghost explained.

“So you brought her here?” Drake asked, keeping his voice even. It had been over a year since he had found out about his sister, but he’d shoved it to one side because he wasn’t ready to handle it. Not only was Carmelle an unexpected surprise, she was also unwelcome because her grandfather was none other than Fury himself.

Ghost claimed Carmelle and her two kids had been kidnapped and held captive by Romeo Santos. He only had Ghost’s word for that. And the one time she’d been seen, she was escaping in Santos’s helicopter with the children. Drake, right now, didn’t want anyone linked to Fury in his clubhouse, but he was facing his half-sister. And truthfully, Carmelle didn’t look too friendly towards him either.

“Oh, believe me, if I did not have to be here, I wouldn’t. As soon as Ghost finds another safe house, we’re gone,” Carmelle spoke, and Drake stared at her.

“I don’t know you or trust you,” he said bluntly.

Carmelle laughed, and it was bitter enough to make Drake flinch. “I’ve already guessed you don’t need me in your life. I’m Arrow’s dirty secret, although Mom always claimed he died before she told him. With you knowing I have existed for over a year, and you haven’t reached out once, believe me, I know you don’t want us around,” Carmelle spat. There was anger and hurt in her eyes, and Drake held her gaze.

“The DNA results tell me my father was also yours. But I don’t know you, for all I’m aware, you might be Fury’s clone,” Drake replied.

“Except the one time I met Fury, he murdered my husband,” Carmelle’s voice hitched, but she continued, “and he ordered me to be kidnapped. That’s all the information I have about that motherfucking scumbag, and even that is too much. I want nothing of your club wars, spilling of innocent blood, and territorial fights. All Fury wants from me is my bloodline and my daughters. He’ll force me to marry some little prick to grab Rage, as I’m also Arrow’s legacy, and so are my babies. Santos took great glee in explaining what would happen to me, Shannon, and Sadie when they turned sixteen.

“That vile piece of shit even assured me that as soon as they began their periods, they’d be claimed by a man who’d teach them how to be a wife. I’d slit their throats before I allow that to happen. I do not like you, I don’t like Rage, and I hate the fact that your situation has killed my husband and ruined my family,” Carmelle spat.

Drake blinked in the face of her anger even as his own temper rose. It stung because what she was saying was the truth.

“Don’t blame me for Fury killing your husband. This MC was mine by rights, and Fury doesn’t like it. That old motherfucker hates that I took Da’s club back and turned it into a clean, successful MC. You wanna blame someone, blame your grandfather,” Drake hissed.

Carmelle looked at Drake, and he saw sadness in her eyes again.

“That monster has nothing to do with me except the fact he was my maternal grandfather and kidnapper and murderer of my husband,” Carmelle snarled. Rage flashed across her face. “Place him before me right now, and I’ll put a bullet in his fucked-up head. Beau was a good man, and I loved him. He tried to protect us, and as we fled out the back door, Fury killed him. I want to bathe in his blood.”

Drake blinked at the hate in her voice and wondered if he’d made a mistake. When he found out about his sister, he’d been excited. Another living family member. And then the bullshit began with the Venomous Fangs, and Drake shoved her aside. He told himself he was doing it to keep her safe, but if he was completely honest, he didn’t trust her. Drake had allowed self-doubts and his dislike of Fury to take away the precious fact he had a sibling.

Even now, looking at Carmelle’s expressions, there wasn’t any deception. Shit, her emotions were clearly displayed on her face, but Drake still held back.

“With everything happening around us, sorry if making you my priority didn’t go down well,” Drake sneered.

“Did I ask to be that? Or anything else to you? After the first month of discovering I had a brother, the excitement died down when it became clear you’d no interest in me or my daughters. We don’t need you, and now we certainly don’t want you. Ghost, I’m finished here. Take me and the girls somewhere safe until this bullshit is ended. Stay out of my way, Drake, and I’ll stay out of yours,” Carmelle snapped.

“That’s going to be hard as you’re coming home with me,” Phoe stated from the door, and Drake wished he could bang his forehead on the table.

“That’s not happening,” Drake and Carmelle responded together.

“I’ve no idea who the hell you are,” Carmelle added.

“My wife,” Drake ground out.

Carmelle studied Phoe from head to toe and assumed a blank look again.

“So, you are the famous Phoenix Michaelson.”

“And you’re my husband’s sister. Carmelle Travers—and those two gorgeous girls out there are my nieces. My husband is a bonehead at times and stubborn to his core. Ghost, there is nowhere safer than Reading Hall, and you can’t deny it. Should Fury send another wave at us, we’ve the basement. In fact, I’m putting you all in the Lilac Bedroom, which has its own secure panic room. Should we be attacked, Carmelle and the girls will be fine,” Phoe said as she marched across the floor and placed a hand on Drake’s shoulder.

For once, her touch didn’t soothe him. Drake was riled at being confronted by his sister unexpectedly, and worse, Phoe now wanted her to move in. He was resentful of both situations.

“Not Reading Hall. That puts a target on the kids,” Drake snapped.

“They already have targets on their backs. Fury placed those there. And you are mad at everything that you can’t control, but Carmelle and those babies didn’t cause this war. An evil man did. Rage, RCPD, and allies will put him down like the mongrel he is. But for now, your sister, *your blood*, needs help, and you’re going to help,” Phoe ordered and squeezed his shoulder hard.

Drake shrugged her hand off and glowered at Carmelle. He found it difficult to meet her eyes. They just kept reminding him of Arrow and what they’d all lost and then suffered when Bulldog took over. Those damnable eyes of hers.

“Do what you want, but should anything happen to the kids, it’s you I’ll blame,” Drake muttered, glaring at his wife and sister.

“Maybe I should have taken that attitude when my sons were pinned down on a camping trip?” Phoe snarled, and Drake knew he’d gone too far.

“Phoe—”

“Stuff it. Stay here tonight. You’re not welcome home in this mood. Carmelle, come,” Phoe said and began walking out.

“I’ll be home!” Drake shouted.

“Try it and see what Liz has in store for you. Take a night to reflect on your behaviour, twatface,” Phoe retorted.

Carmelle got to her feet and walked out after her.

Drake stared at Ghost, who kept his expression blank.

“I blame you, asshole,” Drake muttered as he rubbed a hand over his face.

“Yeah, it’s not that you’re having issues getting your head around who her grandfather is or the fact you have an adult sister. Nah, nothing to do with that shit at all,” Ghost said with a heavy dose of sarcasm.

“Get out!” Drake roared. Jesus, everyone was against him.

Slick

Drake was in a vile mood when he emerged from his office, so Slick spent the rest of the day avoiding him. Unfortunately, that meant that he had to avoid those who Drake had upset as well. Instead, he rode to Hawthorne’s, wondering if they’d dug up anything on Siobhan O’Riley. She intrigued him. If she was the mystery Biker Bitch as everyone had taken to calling her, how had she ended up so? What turns had her life taken to bring her to this point, and why was she so focused on Rage and protecting them?

There were far too many questions for Slick, and while he wanted answers, he couldn’t get them until they found her. She was a ghost drifting in the wind. He pulled up at Hawthorne’s and buzzed the bell. He saw Dana through the security glass doors look up, and then she let him in. As he approached her desk, he noted Dana looked her usual self.

“Is Dylan in?” he asked.

“He is, but on a call, take a seat, and I’ll let him know you’re here,” Dana said.

“No probs,” Slick replied, sitting down.

Hawthorne had moved to this building two years ago as his team expanded and needed more space. It was three stories

high, the first being the reception, a conference room, kitchen, gym, and a locker room. Slick knew the second floor was offices. The third floor was split in half. The first part being more offices, but the second part was a huge security room where they monitored the businesses they were hired to protect.

Dylan employed not only a group of investigators but also a big security team that did two things. The first was to monitor the screens, searching for trouble, and the second was to patrol businesses if hired as on-site security. The guards were different from Dylan's team, who took on the more investigative role. Although they were really two separate businesses, they operated under one name, Hawthorne's Investigations.

"Slick, Dylan's free now," Dana announced. "You know your way?"

"Yeah," Slick answered, heading for the stairs. Next to them was an elevator, but Slick preferred to take the stairs. He hated tight spaces.

Dylan had a large office on the second floor, classily decorated. In fact, the whole building had been furnished with style and class in mind. It was professional, clean, and offered reassurance that you'd get the service you were paying for. Nothing seedy about Hawthorne's.

Dylan met him at the door and nodded.

"Leila will meet us," he said, knowing why Slick was there.

Dylan led Slick up the second flight of stairs and then entered a code into the keypad before he bent for a retina scan. If Hawthorne's did anything right, it was security. He opened the door, and Slick followed him through and headed down a corridor.

Leila Gibson, Hawthorne's expert hacker, met them at an entrance.

"Come in," she invited and moved to sit behind a desk.

Slick and Dylan took seats opposite her.

“I gather you’re here for an update on Siobhan O’Riley. Sadly, I don’t have much to tell you. As hard as I dig, I’m hitting walls everywhere. It would have taken a top hacker to wipe her clean like they have. I’ve been able to track her from birth to school, and then, at seventeen, she totally disappears. Nigel tried tracing her through her father’s inheritance, but again, nothing. Someone has buried her deeper than the core of the planet,” Leila stated, looking frustrated.

“Anything on the father?” Slick asked.

“We’ve collected information on him and how he passed. But as for Irish, your ex-brother, he’s dead, and so is Siobhan’s mother. We have a date of death for them, but both their deaths have been scrubbed. What’s interesting is they died on the same day,” Leila stated.

“Irish and his daughter-in-law passed together?” Slick questioned his mind, trying to work the puzzle out.

“We don’t know. They just died on the same day; whether they were together, I can’t tell you... yet. But we’ll keep digging. Nigel hacked into the police system where they used to live and found nothing.”

“Been scrubbed?” Slick asked, looking shocked.

“No, the files never existed in the first place,” Leila replied grimly.

“What does that mean?” Slick was confused.

“It means that a government agency came in and dealt with their deaths. An agency that we believe links to Siobhan. Whoever she is, she covered their passings and blanked it from records,” Dylan said.

Slick leant forward. “Who the fuck is this woman? CIA?”

“No, Nigel checked their records, and there’s zilch on her there,” Leila replied.

Slick didn’t bat an eyelid at the news Nigel had hacked into the CIA. Nothing Nigel or Leila did would surprise him. “And no government records anywhere? Not even taxes or a driving licence?” he pressed.

Leila shook her head.

“She’d harder to find than Artemis. At least with Artemis, we had an image. We’ve got nothing on Siobhan. Even her class photos have been scrubbed despite us having her records. This is a deep clean, which, to be honest, I’m jealous of, this is good work,” Leila admitted.

“We’ll keep searching,” Dylan stated.

“Yeah, and I know sooner or later, Leila or Nigel will find something,” Slick said, then nodded to them both.

His mind was whirling. What the hell had Irish’s granddaughter got herself into?

CHAPTER FIVE.

Summer.

Pipes roared loudly, and I lifted my head to see a beautiful black Harley Davidson pull up in the car park. Puzzled, I wondered who it was and was surprised when Slick swung off it with a smile. I felt a bit stupid as I realised that, of course, he'd have a motorbike, but him being in a truck yesterday had thrown me off.

He yanked a hamper off the back of his bike and swaggered towards me in a loose stride. He was sex on legs, and the smug look on his face as I stared speechlessly at him made me blush. Slick knew what he was doing and appeared to take joy in my reactions. Stopping just short of me, he winked.

“Lunch is served,” Slick teased and forced a laugh from me.

“I hope that’s not dried up bologna sandwiches,” I retorted, and Slick looked insulted.

“Well, I can prepare a picnic. So, where we eating?”

“We’ll eat in the garden, come,” I answered and led the way to the far end of the greenhouses. There I had a field where I had the hardier plants growing.

Slick whistled as he took in the greenery and colours.

“This reminds me of Ally-kat’s farm. She grows rare flowers and shit,” he said as he opened the gate for me. He carried a blanket over one arm, and when he decided where to sit, he flicked it open and spread it out.

Slick dropped to the ground and held out a hand to help me down. The blush returned in force. Nobody had ever treated me so nicely, and I didn’t know how to handle it.

Shyly, I waited as Slick opened the hamper and began pulling out food. He hadn’t brought sandwiches but subs instead, and they were packed full of meat. There was potato salad, cold chicken and sausages, and a pasta salad. My eyes widened as Slick continued to pull out items, including my

favourite crisps, some cheese and crackers with grapes, and some cakes. He yanked out two cans of coke and handed me a plate and cutlery.

“Wow,” I said, staring at the feast, unsure where to start.

“Shit, I never asked. You’re not a vegetarian, right?” Slick suddenly looked uncertain of himself.

“Hell no, I love a good steak as much as anyone. And don’t let me near ribs, although my one weakness is crab legs. I can eat my weight in them and forgo dessert every time,” I replied with a giggle.

Happily, I began loading my plate up. I’d missed breakfast thanks to the two witches, and I was starving.

“Love a woman with a healthy appetite.”

“Oh, these hips of mine took a while to sculpt.” I laughed.

“You look beautiful today. You did yesterday, too,” Slick announced.

I blushed again.

He leant forward and ran a finger down my cheek. “Reactions like that, Summer, make me realise how innocent you are. If I was a decent man, I’d pack up and leave before I ruin you. But I’m weak and selfish, and you’ve been on my mind constantly,” Slick said.

That was a statement that needed picking apart.

“I’ve had sex before,” I blurted and turned the colour of a ripe tomato.

Slick blinked in surprise and then chuckled. “I meant innocent, as in darkness hasn’t touched you, but nice to know you’re not a virgin. I’d hate to be the one to hurt you your first time.”

“Oh, there’s going to be a first time?” I asked.

“I am damn well praying there will be,” Slick said, and bit into a chicken leg.

That gave me food for thought.

“I’ve not dated much Slick. There was college and then Dad’s death and the garden centre to run. I may be innocent in the ways of your world, but I need to ask, what do you want from me? I’m attracted to you but not built to be in a causal relationship,” I said.

Slick’s eyes warmed. Clearly, he liked my honesty.

“This is our first date; we do not have to get heavy. Let me tell you this, Summer, I don’t court women. Never have and didn’t think I ever would until I met you yesterday. I understand you are not a throwaway or a barfly. That you’re extraordinary. I’ve been searching for that special someone for a long time, and darlin’, I’m liking what I’ve seen so far. Rage men don’t mess around when claiming women. If we do, one of our brothers might snatch them up.

“However, I’m here with a picnic—an unusual choice for somebody like me. Let’s approach it one day at a time and see where we end up. But know I am serious about seeing you, and I don’t think of you as a casual lay or one-night stand.” Slick sounded earnest.

“I couldn’t be that,” I honestly replied.

“Guessed that, hence the dating.”

“Slick, dating is hard for me. I don’t have many free evenings.”

“So, we’ll work around it until we can settle your nights down.” Slick grinned.

Oh, how I wished I could do that. Mom and Marianne would throw a fit if they had to actually do something instead of sitting on their lazy asses. Both of them were entitled bitches and somehow had got past their bitterness towards each other. Now, their sole aim was to make my life a misery while ruling the roost.

“Summer, you okay?” Slick asked, concerned.

“Sorry, my mind went somewhere unpleasant. It has no bearing on the picnic. So, tell me about yourself. How long have you been Rage MC?”

“Jesus, too many years to count. I joined Rage at sixteen in 1994.”

I quickly did the maths. “Get out of here. You’re forty-four?” I gasped. Slick looked a good decade younger.

“Suppose you are gonna say I’m too old for you?” he asked, looking worried.

“I’m twenty-eight, and no, I don’t believe age makes a difference.”

“Twenty-eight, that’s as long as I’ve been in Rage.” Slick chuckled.

“Do you feel like a perverted, creepy, old dude?” I teased.

“Oh honey, I know I am a dirty old man. But at least you’ve got the stamina to keep up with me!” Slick shot back and yet again made me blush, even as I laughed.

“Yup, you’re definitely something,” I agreed.

Slick winked and took another bite of chicken. “This I can see myself doing forever,” he murmured as he relaxed on an elbow.

Funny enough, despite the fact I’d only met him yesterday, I could envision the same.

Drake

He picked up his phone, not paying attention to who was calling, as he gazed at a spreadsheet in front of him.

“Drake, any of your guys near Black Hawk?” a woman asked him, and Drake took a few moments to pin the voice down.

“Dana, what’s happening?” he questioned, hearing the urgency in her tone.

“Jace and Arturo are pinned down in Black Hawk. Dylan has already left with Davies, and they’re calling for back-up. They’re on Quarry Road. They were watching a warehouse there. Jace reported at least ten members of Venomous Fangs have opened fire on them.” Dana’s soft voice was harsh with worry.

“I’ll call Rage and get Axel on the allies. If anyone’s close, we’ll ride. I’m hitting my bike now. Tell Dylan,” Drake replied, rising to his feet.

“Thank you, please hurry. Jace and Arturo aren’t heavily armed. It was an information-gathering mission,” Dana begged.

“Let me get off the phone and set Axel in motion.” Drake cut the call.

He bolted from his office and found Axel in the rec room.

“Call Rage first and then the allies.” He paused. “Hawthorne’s has two men in Quarry Road, Black Hawk. There are some warehouses there. They were watching them. At least ten Fangs have Jace and Arturo pinned down,” Drake announced as he hurried past.

Axel lumbered to his feet and was moving to his office by the time Drake flew through the doors.

Slick

He was loving this. Good food, great conversation, and a pretty girl. Summer was ticking all his boxes. Which is why when his mobile pinged, he glowered at it. What now? Couldn’t he have one fuckin’ lunch without someone needing him for something. He ignored it, and then it sounded again.

“Sorry, honey, looks like this might be urgent,” Slick murmured as he pulled his phone out. He willed his face not to respond to the message on it as he read it twice and shoved it away. “Summer, an emergency’s come up, one of my brothers. I’m sorry, sweetness, but I need to cut this short.” Slick held regret in his voice.

“Is this the thing women do on bad dates when they have a friend call them away?” Summer asked sweetly and nibbled her lip.

His cock twitched. He wanted to nibble that lip. “No honey, honest, this is an emergency. All the brothers are being called in,” Slick replied, cupping her cheek.

Summer gazed into his eyes. “It’s okay if it is that thing, I guess I am not exciting enough for someone like you,” she muttered, her gaze lowering.

Slick felt like he’d been hit with a sledgehammer. “Like me?”

“All masculine and alpha. I’m rather a mouse,” Summer replied.

Slick saw the self-doubts and cursed. Talk about bad timing.

“Forget that bullshit. You’re perfect. And I am going to spend my days making sure you know it. This is a genuine emergency. Can we do dinner tonight?”

Summer wanted to say yes. Slick could see it on her face, and then a shadow crossed it, and she shook her head.

“I can’t, Slick; I’m sorry,” she whispered.

“Then I’ll bring breakfast tomorrow morning and lunch, too,” Slick said, getting to his knees.

Summer bit her lip again, and Slick couldn’t stop himself. He leant forward and stole a soft kiss from those rosy, tempting lips. Summer looked shocked and then kissed him softly back. There was no tongue action; it was just a gentle peck. But Slick’s cock went rock hard.

“I can taste strawberries,” Slick murmured.

“My lip gloss,” Summer replied.

“I like it. Wear it tomorrow and bring it with you. I’ll kiss it straight off you,” Slick ordered and kissed her one more time before getting to his feet.

“Tomorrow, baby, don’t eat,” Slick stated and, with a heart filled with regret, walked away. It was one of the hardest things he had done to date.

As he reached his bike and sped off, Slick’s attention turned to the Venomous Fangs. Those fuckers would pay for interrupting the best date of his life.

As he wove through the streets, he allowed his anger to seep into his bones. He had finally found something precious and was enjoying himself, but those jerks had to ruin it.

Slick growled as he hit the highway and raced towards Black Hawk.

Pipes roared, and a quick glance told him that Gunner and Savage were behind him. He pumped a fist and put his foot down. There wasn't much time to spare. Jace and Arturo had to have been pinned down for at least twenty minutes, and Black Hawk was a ten-minute ride away. He planned to make it in five. Luckily for him, Summer's garden centre was on the closest side to Black Hawk, which had cut travel time down.

He parked his bike on Valley View Drive with Savage behind him. Gunner had taken Merrit Road, which also led into Quarry Road. They'd seen Calamity turning into it ahead of them, and Gunner waved to say he'd back Calamity up. A quick glance told Slick that he and Savage were the first to arrive on this street.

"You armed?" Slick demanded as Savage parked next to him.

Savage sent him a derisive snort and opened his cut before pulling a weapon.

"Stay back and cover me," Slick ordered, and Savage nodded.

Slick wracked his mind for what he could recall of this place. He knew there were derelict warehouses towards his end of the road and guessed Jace and Arturo would be in one of them. He moved forward, using the parked cars as a shield. Ahead, he could hear the revving of several bikes, and he popped his head up and saw the Fangs moving in circles and aiming at a building.

As abandoned as this street was, nobody would have called the cops. Plus, the BHPD wasn't exactly like Rapid City's. Rage didn't have a contact there. Slick aimed at the closest Fang and waited for Gunner's signal. The sharp whistle echoed, and Slick popped his head up and fired.

Seconds later, Gunner repeated his action, and two Fangs fell.

The others immediately began evasive actions as shots were fired from the building that they had been aiming at. Slick felt some of the tension in his gut ease as someone was still alive. They'd got there in time.

Slick aimed his gun as two bodies ran from the building wearing cuts. He took the first, but the second spun and, using his buddies' body to protect himself, aimed at Slick.

To avoid being hit, Slick hit the ground and rolled behind the car as Savage dived into an entranceway of another building.

Savage's hand came around the protective wall, and he fired blindly, making the Fang dive for cover. Those on bikes began firing back, and Slick cursed as he realised that half aimed at him, and the other half aimed in Gunner's direction.

Two more Fangs fell as a bullet from Savage hit its mark, and somebody in the building got a headshot.

"Let's get out of here. I told you we'd been here too long," one of the remaining Fangs yelled.

Two of the injured limped to their motorbikes as Savage and Calamity laid down the cover for Gunner and Slick.

Slick rolled back to his knees and took aim at one of those hurt and brought him down a second time. Slick's head flew up as a familiar black Harley rode past him. The rider had one hand raised and was firing steadily at those on motorbikes. Slick leapt out from behind his car and laid down covering fire for Siobhan.

This time, the bitch wasn't escaping.

There was a roar of a powerful engine, and a black SUV sped around the corner, brakes squealing. Hanging out of the window was Davies firing into the middle of the Fangs.

Savage took Slick's right side as they both fired around Siobhan.

She hit her brakes and slid her bike sideways, still shooting. As soon as the bike was stopped and she had a foot on the floor, her second hand pulled a gun, and she laid down even heavier fire.

Slick raced towards her as Fangs dropped.

Dylan Hawthorne had joined the fight, shielded behind his car door as he fired into the diminishing group of Fangs. More pipes roared, and from behind Gunner came Drake, Ace, and Rock.

Slick swivelled his head, and Gauntlet, Jett, and Blaze appeared, too.

Bullets were flying, but not for long. Without cover, the Fangs dropped easily.

Slick raced for Jett, who was closer. He sensed Siobhan was ready to make a break for freedom.

“Give me your bike,” Slick roared, throwing Jett his own keys. Jett hopped off as Siobhan spun her tyres and sped towards them. Her helmet was black, as was her visor, and Slick couldn’t get a look at her face.

He swung onto Jett’s motorbike and took off after her.

This time, he wouldn’t lose her.

Drake

Drake was happily complaining, “This situation is a mess, and the cops will arrive soon,” as he surveyed the scene.

“I’m on the call to Ramirez and updating him,” Ace stated, moving away from them.

Hawthorne raced past the two of them and headed for the building. As he approached, the door swung open, and Arturo appeared carrying a wounded Jace.

“How bad,” Hawthorne demanded.

Arturo carefully lowered Jace to the floor. “Gut shot. Need an ambulance,” he answered and put pressure on Jace’s stomach.

“I’m here,” Klutz bellowed as his bike skidded to a halt, and he jumped off with a medical kit. Everyone moved away as Klutz dropped to his knees and began rendering first aid.

“Ambo and cops are on their way,” Ace said.

“Guess we’re all spending the night in jail.” Drake sighed.

After Phoe’s banishment, which still rankled, he had been hoping to snuggle and fuck his wife into oblivion tonight. It seemed unlikely that would happen. He wasn’t too worried; it wouldn’t be the first time he’d been locked up.

A black SUV with sirens on top skidded to a halt, and Drake glanced up as a woman jumped out. She scanned the mess as another guy climbed out and stared at them.

“So, the Venomous Fangs brought their war to Black Hawk,” the lady finally said. “I’m Chief Anne Dyer. Who’s who?”

Everyone spoke their names as they crowded together in a group.

“What happened?” Chief Dyer asked.

“We were doing some recon. There’s word of something sketchy happening at a warehouse nearby. Jace and I were five hours into our shift when the Fangs arrived. They began shooting before we could do anything, and I called for back-up,” Arturo explained. “Jace was hit in the first volley they fired at us.”

“And back-up included Rage MC?” Chief Dyer said, amused.

“We were in the area,” Drake announced.

“So, if I check traffic cams, I won’t see Rage racing to the rescue from Rapid City? Don’t play me for a fool, Drake. Are any of them alive?” Chief Dyer demanded.

“Not sure. They were firing blindly,” Ace replied.

“Nobody’s bothered to check their pulses? Williams, do the honours, please,” Chief Dyer ordered and folded her arms.

“We under arrest?” Drake asked, needing to know.

“Did Rage start this?” Chief Dyer inquired.

“No, but we ended it,” Drake answered honestly.

“From what I can see, I wouldn’t disagree. Isn’t it lucky for Rage MC that I got wind of a gang of biker thugs approaching the city today with the intent of tearing my town up? It’s also very fortuitous that I deputised some friendly bikers to help patrol my streets and protect my residents? Of course, the paperwork is back at the office, and I’m sure you’ll all agree to give a statement there,” Chief Dyer said with a raised eyebrow.

Drake stared at the woman, not believing his ears. Was the Chief of Black Hawk helping them out?

“There’s a war coming, heading straight for Rapid City. Chief Howser and most of the other chiefs around this area have been having fortnightly meetings. We know what this group, Manticore, who runs the Venomous Fangs, intends for RC and the surrounding towns. We refuse to tolerate their behaviour. So, deputising helping MC members and PI investigators, as long as their records are clean, is a strategy we’re happy to employ. Of course, it helps that we’ve both the congressman and senator signing off on this particular policy,” Chief Dyer continued.

“Very helpful,” Drake murmured.

“Obviously, it can’t happen too often, but when one of our towns is threatened, I’m sure we’ll have volunteers to help. After all, this Manticore and the thugs they run threatens all of us here locally. I am grateful that you and your friendly allies have offered to step up and be deputised when needed,” Chief Dyers said.

Beside him, Hawthorne snorted. The Chief couldn’t be more obvious with what she was saying. Drake was also amused. He’d not expected this reaction. In fact, his wrists were aching from where he’d imagined cuffs tightening around them.

“Rage MC and our allies will always be happy to help out law enforcement, no matter what,” Drake replied, sending his

own message.

“That’s the understanding Detective Ramirez and Chief Howser gave me. BHPD is very grateful that you prevented the bloodshed of innocents in our town today. We’ll take any witness statements, and I’m certain my boys will provide doughnuts and coffee if you can all make your way to the station?”

“Doughnuts? Hell yeah, I’ll be there.” Calamity grinned.

“Of course, Mr Hawthorne, I’m sure you’d like to accompany Mr—”

“Jace,” Hawthorne offered.

“—Jace, to the hospital. We’ll take your statements there. And I will release your men asap to join you there.”

“That’s very kind of you,” Hawthorne said as an ambulance screeched around the corner, followed by two black and whites. Everyone apart from Klutz moved back to allow the paramedics to handle Jace.

Klutz stood up. “I can come too, but I arrived after the event and gave medical aid. Would you need a statement?”

“Yes, that would help determine that the Fangs were targeting innocents,” Chief Dyer responded. “Thank you for your support today.”

With that, Chief Dyer got back in her car, left Williams behind, and carefully backed up, avoiding the four black and whites now parked up.

“I’m Detective Williams. I’ll trust you can all make your way to the station?”

“Sure thing, detective,” Drake answered. He nodded at his brothers, and they all began walking in the direction of their bikes.

“Drake,” Detective Williams called.

Drake paused as the detective approached.

“While I will always side with the law, what’s happening with this Manticore group and the Fangs is gonna be

bloodthirsty. You keep on the side of right, and we won't have problems," he said in a low voice.

"Detective, all Rage wants to do is live in peace. Fury and his band of assholes wish to destroy that and control our cities and towns. Rage will go down fighting to protect the way we all wish to live. And that means a good life, detective, one with mouthy women, bratish children, and happiness. If you understand that, then you know it's worth fighting for," Drake replied.

"I get it. My woman is as mouthy as they come, and we're expecting our first. See you at the station," Williams said and walked off.

Drake headed for his bike. Despite the violence today, it was a good day. Rage had found another ally.

Slick

Siobhan raced out of Black Hawk with him on her heels. Finally, she pulled up at a rest stop on the I90 near Piedmont. She stopped the motorbike and swung her leg over, facing him as he approached.

"What do you want?" she demanded before he'd even turned his bike off.

"Your identity," Slick said.

"Not a chance."

"So, you're not Siobhan O'Riley? Irish's granddaughter?" Slick struck hard.

She was good. He had to give her that. The helmet covered her facial expressions, but her body language remained relaxed.

"No idea who she is," the woman Slick was convinced was Siobhan answered.

"Remove your helmet," Slick ordered.

Siobhan laughed. "Take a hike."

"Do it, or I will."

“You can try, biker boy, but you’ll lose.”

Slick growled and moved closer to her. The fact she remained loose-limbed gave him pause. He recognised that from Artemis. Whether she looked it or not, Siobhan was poised to strike.

“Why do you keep turning up and saving Rage?” he asked, changing tactics.

“Who says I am? Maybe this once, but you can’t prove I’ve done it before,” she retorted.

“No, I can’t prove it was you at the other scenes, but it would make no sense for you to be here today. Let’s cut the bullshit. Tell me why you’re helping.” Slick spread out his hands.

Siobhan stared in his direction intently, though he still couldn’t see her eyes.

Slick wondered what she was thinking about.

Finally, she spoke with a cock of her head. “That place doesn’t do bad coffee. Meet you over there.”

“Deal,” Slick agreed.

He was gonna get his answers at last.

CHAPTER SIX.

Slick

He followed Siobhan across to the truck stop, half expecting her to run, but she didn't. Without a word to each other, Slick watched her slender figure enter the diner and let her pick a table. He noted how Siobhan chose one where she could put her back against the wall and watch the door. Slick decided to trust her and sat opposite. No sooner had they done so, than the waitress scurried over.

"What ya want?" she asked, giving Slick the once over.

"Coffee and a menu," Slick replied, avoiding the greedy glint in her eye.

"And I'll take the same," Siobhan said and removed her helmet.

Slick nearly choked on his tongue as he stared at the beautiful woman in front of him.

Siobhan's hair was cut short, about level with her chin, and was silver. Slick knew instantly that was her real colour. Dark green almond-shaped eyes coolly studied him, and he noted her pert nose and plump lips. The high cheekbones gave her the air of a waif, but Siobhan was all beauty. Despite Slick's curiosity, his cock twitched in reaction to it. He slapped it down with images of Summer and concentrated on who he believed to be Siobhan.

"Name?" Slick asked.

"Siobhan O'Riley. I go by Irish," she responded, and Slick nearly pumped his fist in the air. Rage's intel had been right. She was Irish's granddaughter.

"That was your grandfather's road name," Slick replied.

"Tell me something I don't know," Siobhan retorted.

"What are you?"

"A woman," Siobhan quipped, and Slick narrowed his eyes.

“Honey, you get what I mean. You’ve been trained by a government agency or something. Where are you getting your intel? Why are you so determined to protect Rage?”

“Who says I’m protecting Rage? Maybe I like pissing off Fury.” Siobhan picked up the menu the waitress had dropped off.

“Why?”

Despite Siobhan’s relaxed body language, Slick knew she was hiding information, and whatever it was, it would be horrible.

Siobhan’s gaze flicked to him. “Because Fury pissed me off, and I am an eye for an eye girl,” Siobhan replied.

“Asshole did something to you,” Slick guessed.

Siobhan nodded and pursed her lips as the waitress approached, then amusement hit her eyes. When Slick glanced at the waitress, his stare immediately sought to avoid her. She’d undone a few buttons showing cleavage and had primed her hair.

Oh, Jesus, he thought.

“Wanna order?” she inquired in a husky voice.

“Siobhan?” Slick offered, deferring to her as he grabbed a menu and quickly ran through it.

“A bacon double cheeseburger with fries, onion rings, and corn on the cob, please,” Siobhan said. “And I’ll also take a vanilla milkshake.”

“That sounds good; make that two of those, and add wings,” Slick added. He waited for the waitress to disappear and turned to Siobhan.

“What’s your story?” he demanded.

Siobhan clearly pondered how much to tell him before speaking.

“Grandad left Rage when Bulldog was in charge, I’m sure you remember. He ran in nineteen-ninety-four before I was even born. But Dad was twenty back then when Grandad made

his decision. Bulldog was trying to force Dad into the club and make him do illegal shit. That's when Grandad walked.

“Dad joined the army. He loved the life, and he met my mother on leave. They fell into instalove, as Mom used to say, and she moved onto base with him. When Dad had to go on tour, Grandad would come and stay and ensure we were okay. We were pretty tight-knit,” Siobhan began.

Slick nodded.

Siobhan had a faraway gaze in her eye, but her voice was unemotional. She was stating facts, not feelings.

“Like every father out there, mine worried about me being taken advantage of, so Dad ensured I knew how to fight from an early age. That was something he and Grandad heavily agreed on. Grandad believed that Bulldog would come for him. Even when he heard the news that Rage was clean, Grandad never stopped looking over his shoulder. He sensed something bad was coming.

“When I was seven, Dad came back in a body bag. That nearly broke us. The army kicked us off base, and Grandad found us a new home. We lived together for years, and at eighteen, I was recruited by the government. They paid for my college while I did some work for them. No, I can't tell you which branch or what I did. Don't bother asking. With their training, I became a lethal weapon.

“Grandad and Mom didn't know, and I visited when possible. Then, when I left college at twenty-two, I worked for the department full-time. Luckily, my cover had a lot of downtime, so I could spend holidays with them and visit often. However, I had an apartment elsewhere.

“I was coming home for one holiday when I was twenty-three, two years ago, and as I turned the corner of their street, a group of bikes rode past me. I caught their patch and some of their names. Fury was at the front.”

Aw shit, Slick's gut twisted as he guessed where this was going.

“Fuckers killed Irish and your mom?”

“No. They abused and slaughtered them. As I pulled up to the house, I sensed something was wrong, so I entered carefully. The downstairs was empty, but I found them in Mom’s room. Mom had been stripped naked and raped. Beaten many times. Even in death, Mom’s face retained a look of sheer horror. She’d also been sodomised; Fangs had completely tortured her.

“Worse, they’d forced Grandad to watch. He’d been battered and cut up badly and had been tied to a chair, and his eyelids glued open, so Grandad had to see what they did to my mother. Broken-hearted, I called in a cleaning crew and then quit my job. My handler gave me what I needed to track the Venomous Fangs down. And I’ve been doing that ever since. Fangs know I’m out there; they’ve tried taking me down plenty of times. Fury is beside himself; the asshole wants me found and buried alive. Unluckily for Fury, I have eyes and ears in his sanctum. I know everything that fucker plans as soon as he does so.”

“That’s why you took your grandfather’s nickname,” Slick said.

“Yes.”

“I’m sorry about Irish and your mother. Damn, I can’t imagine the horrors they suffered,” Slick murmured.

“Oh, I can. After all, I saw their faces, their bodies, and I know what suffering Fangs caused. I won’t stop until the Venomous Fangs are wiped from the earth and long gone,” Siobhan snapped.

“Nobody can fight alone,” Slick said and jolted at Siobhan’s laugh.

“What do you think I’ve been doing for the last two years? My agency wouldn’t approve a vengeance mission. I’ve been working alone since they died. Don’t patronise me, Slick. I’m no fool.”

Slick started to reply and closed his mouth as the waitress approached with their food. She placed it down and asked if

they needed anything else. Once Siobhan refused, Slick said thanks and sent the woman away.

“Didn’t think you are. But are you over your head? Yeah, I’d say so,” Slick replied.

Siobhan leant forward, anger blazing.

“How many Fangs have you killed, Slick? My total is thirty-nine. Have you put down that many alone? No? Has anyone in Rage? No? Do not fuckin’ tell me I am out of my depth. Rage ain’t got no idea who or what I am. I could kill you right now, and nobody would blink. No one would realise you’re dead until the waitress came to kick you out. You have Artemis, big deal. I’m worse than her. Far worse. Don’t make the mistake of treating me as an airhead again. As if I don’t understand what I’m up against. You did not see my mother and grandfather, you patronising bastard,” Siobhan snapped in a low voice.

“Siobhan...”

“The name is Irish; can you manage to remember that?”

“Look, I get I’ve upset you. And I didn’t mean to, but with you running around on your own, who has your back?” Slick said, trying to come at Irish from a different angle.

“I have my back. Do you believe I discover shit and rush off without a plan? Oh yeah, of course I do. Because I have tits and ovaries, right? Clearly, according to the males in Rage, I’m not capable,” Siobhan sneered.

Slick sighed. Siobhan—no, Irish—was as stubborn as hell. He had completely approached this wrong. Whatever Slick said had put her and her strengths down.

Irish bit savagely into her burger, and Slick winced. By the expression on her face, Irish was imaging all the things she could do to him, and they weren’t good.

“That’s not what I meant, and you know it. Don’t fuck my words around. I’m merely showing some concern. Every move, I have a brother behind me,” Slick pointed out.

“Do you? So, where’s your backup now? Slick, I could kill you, and Rage wouldn’t know until the cops contact them about your body. See, this is the insult I meant, the patronising bastard bit. Because I’ve tits and ovaries, I’m not a threat. But if you met with a Fanger, you’d have backup. But me, no, not a threat, and don’t need anyone supporting you,” Irish snapped.

“Didn’t think of it that way. Thought more along the lines of you’ve come to our rescue several times now, so why the fuck would you want to harm us?”

He felt slightly stung. Irish was correct. Slick had underestimated her because of her gender. Slick hadn’t consciously made that decision, but he had.

“If I have someone cover my back, then I have to worry about them, too. Alone, I can use whatever means necessary to escape a trap. If somebody’s with me, then I can’t leave them. You have to realise, I don’t need anyone. If Fangs captured me, sure, they could torture me or worse, but I’ve nothing left to lose. If Fangs take my backup, then I wouldn’t let Fangs torture them while keeping my mouth shut. At the end of the day, I am best off alone,” Irish said, eating calmly.

Slick shook his head in disbelief. This woman was a true loner.

“And what about sharing information?”

“Sure, we can share, if it’s relevant to Rage or your allies. But don’t expect me to become bosom buddies. Slick, I’m doing this for one reason: revenge. Once I have it, Rage and I won’t cross again. Fury rode at the head of the convoy that left my home, and I’ll not stop until he’s dead—and those who hurt my family are buried along with him,” Irish hissed.

“Rage could support your efforts,” Slick pushed.

Irish snorted. “More like I’ve been supporting Rage.”

“Why bother if it’s so difficult?” Slick demanded.

“Because of Grandad. Even though he quit Rage, Grandad kept tabs on you. He celebrated on a weekend binge when Drake took the club back. You can take the guy out of Rage,

but not Rage out of the man. Grandad was still loyal to Rage, but his priorities were family. Fury had a hard-on for Grandad because he was denied access to my dad and because Grandad put his family first.”

“And you call yourself Irish to honour him?”

“Yes. Plus, Grandad was Irish, if you remember. Which means Dad and I are of Irish descent. Mom was also born in Ireland and moved here when she was about ten,” Irish explained.

“Oh, we all remember that accent,” Slick said with a small smile.

Irish shoved the last fry into her mouth. “Are we done now? You go your way, and I’ll go mine.”

“Irish, you still have a family. If you reach out, Rage will be there,” Slick stated.

Deep down, he knew Irish wouldn’t. This woman had the stubborn streak of the Irish and her grandad’s, too. If Irish hadn’t wanted to move on something, he hadn’t. Slick well remembered that about the man.

“If I need you, then I’ll be already dead,” Irish said as she slid out from the booth. She threw thirty bucks down on the table. “And I pay for myself.”

Before Slick could utter another word, she vanished through the door.

Sighing, he ran a hand over his face and wondered what to do next.

Summer

I opened the door, prepared for the usual complaints. The wicked witches started before I’d even taken my coat off.

“Summer? You’re late, dinner isn’t ready!” Mom called out, sounding angry.

“I’m hungry. How dare you be late! What were you doing? Flirting with someone?” Marianne shrieked.

“Yeah, let me get in the door,” I muttered. My happiness, which had lasted all afternoon from the picnic, was rapidly fading. It couldn’t do much else with this pair.

“Get your lazy ass in here and put dinner on,” Mom screeched.

Angrily, I gritted my teeth. “I’m taking my coat off, or isn’t that allowed?” I asked sweetly.

A dread silence fell from the kitchen, and I wished I’d kept my mouth shut.

“Are you back chatting me?” Mom demanded.

“No. But at least let me get my coat off.”

I’d worked a twelve-hour day, arriving at the garden centre at six this morning, and it was now just gone six at night. Brian was shutting the centre as he did every evening. I should have been home an hour ago, but I’d been taking an order for Ezra, who’d been very happy with the previous order.

Of course, the two harpies wouldn’t have got off their asses and started a meal. Not when they had Cinderella at their beck and call.

As I strode towards the kitchen, I realised that there’d not been a reply from my last comment. I walked in and saw Mom and Marianne sitting at the breakfast bar with eyes narrowed. In front of them were martinis. Clearly, they’d been able to make them.

“What did you say?” Mom hissed.

“Mom, I’ve worked twelve hours and just got home. You hadn’t even let me take my coat off before making demands. Yet, here you and Marianne sit with drinks. Couldn’t one of you have started dinner?”

That was a mistake. I never usually answered back, but somehow, that picnic today had given me some self-confidence. Mom thought she’d beaten that out of me years ago, and she had. But Slick’s interest made me feel good, and I’d been revelling in it.

“How dare you! I brought you into this world, fed and clothed you for eighteen years until you stood on your own two feet. And you deny making me a simple dinner?” Mom exploded.

“You didn’t feed and clothe me. Dad did.”

Marianne sucked in a deep breath. “What disrespect to show your mother! You’re such an ungrateful child. Everything we did for you as a youngster, and listen to you now,” she snapped.

“What you did?” I asked, putting the coffeemaker on.

“Look at her. Of course Summer’s putting her own needs before ours. So damn selfish,” Marianne taunted.

I bit my tongue hard. Ezra’s new order flashed through my mind, and I imagined the profit from it. Money that would finally let me live the life I wanted. Freedom from the wicked witches.

I grabbed the three steaks from the fridge that I had put in there to defrost yesterday. The cake that I’d made last night had been eaten, and the two greedy pigs hadn’t saved me a slice. In pure silence, I put the steaks on to cook and began gathering ingredients to make a pasta salad.

“I don’t want that,” Mom said snidely. Her tone bit deep.

My anger flared. “Then make your own fucking dinner!” I shrieked and flung the items in my hand at the pair of them.

Both looked shocked, but not as much as me. I hadn’t lost my temper in years, and the only thing I could think of was... I’d finally had enough.

“I beg your pardon,” Mom said in a tone of voice that I knew very well.

My sudden flare of anger faded, and my shoulders slumped.

“Pick this mess up right now. Get the laundry and drying done. The towels need folding, and the bathroom needs a scrub. In the meantime, put dinner on,” Mom hissed.

Marianne smirked, which fired back up my flagging temper.

“Get off your asses and do it yourselves. I work twelve-hour shifts while you sit here day in, day out and do nothing. Not a single damn thing!”

“You ungrateful ingrate!” Mom screamed, causing me to flinch.

“How dare you speak to us like that,” Marianne added.

“You belittle me at every turn!” I replied, struggling to remain calm.

“I gave you everything!” Mom snapped. “All I ask for is a few things in return, Summer. You’re so selfish and greedy. Good lord, child, if not for me, you’d have ended up in a terrible place. All the times I was ill, and I got up and looked after you, when I went hungry to feed you, went without to buy you Christmas presents. And this is the thanks I get?”

Oh, Mom was excellent at the guilt trip.

“And what about me? When your dad was abroad, I took care of you to help your mother out. Made sure you ate well and had clothes on your back at your dad’s. How many times did I call you to speak to your dad on video chats? I can’t believe you turned into this—this—I don’t even have a word for the shame,” Marianne spluttered.

“I don’t begrudge you anything, but to jump down my throat before I have my coat off is ridiculous. It was clear I’d be late home when I didn’t walk through the door at half five, so why couldn’t one of you, just once, have started dinner? Neither of you help out in the house. You do not do laundry or wash plates. You sit around while I’m busting my ass earning money, which you think you’re entitled to spend. I can’t handle much more; something has to give,” I said, clenching my hands into fists.

“I fight depression over your father’s death every day. And you expect me to get over it?” Marianne challenged.

“You expected me to,” I shot back.

“He wasn’t the love of your life!” Marianne snapped.

“No, he was just my father. Do what you want tonight. I’m worn out and so done with this bull,” I said and turned on my heel.

As I walked away, vile comments were thrown at me. I snatched my purse up as I passed it because they’d only steal money to buy a takeaway. Let them cook for once. All I needed was my bed.

Slick

He bit his lip hard as he heard the insults flying from the window. Maybe the two bitches inside weren’t aware it was open, or more than likely, they didn’t care. He was disgusted with them. This was why Summer refused dinner? Because she had to be home to pamper these spoilt bitches?

One he guessed was her mother, and judging how she used Summer’s father against her, he guessed the second was a stepmother. Slick wondered why they were living in the house that Summer’s dad had left to her. And why they didn’t have jobs. It was pretty much obvious that Summer worked her little socks off at the garden centre. Why weren’t they looking after her instead?

A screech about an ungrateful, nasty child made him realise why. Slick would lay money that they expected Summer to look after them; all the while, they broke her self-confidence down. If they could control Summer, then they controlled the cash and everything else. And Slick had little doubt they had done that. He assumed that they’d moved themselves into the house when her dad died, or soon after. And while Summer was grieving and at a low point, Slick believed that they’d broken her spirit further.

He was contemplating storming up the drive, grabbing Summer, and taking her for a decent meal. Of course, if the two bitches answered the door, he’d also let them have it.

Slick glanced up and spotted a light switch on in a tiny room. Fuck, Summer didn’t even have a big bedroom in the house?

Slick's temper began to rise, especially as the women's voices became shrill as they realised Summer had taken her purse. Clearly, they were looking to steal money from her.

Slick heard distant pipes just as he was about to swing off his bike. Knowing Rage wouldn't be around this area, Slick took off with a rueful glance over his shoulder.

As he turned the corner, he saw six Fangs at the crossroads ahead.

Slick drove his bike behind a van and hoped that they didn't come this way. He wasn't worried about himself, but Summer. As much as Slick wracked his brains, he couldn't think of a single reason Fangs were in this area.

His heart jumped as the Fangs rode away from Summer's Street. Slick released a breath he wasn't even aware he was holding. His heart slowed as he held a hand to his chest. The fact the Fangs had been so near Summer had nearly caused him to panic. And they made Slick question whether he was right to date Summer. Irish had put forward a great argument for not having a partner...

Then Slick's mind caught on Summer's laughter and the shy smile she'd offered him, and he knew he couldn't walk away. He was already half in love with Summer, and he wanted more.

Those fuckin' bitches needed to be handled. There was no way he would leave her open to them for much longer. Mac had found Summer's address but hadn't mentioned anyone living with her. He'd get Mac to do a dive on Summer's family and check those women out.

No one disrespected his woman and got away scot-free. Slick had the two bitches in his crosshairs, and he would protect Summer. Especially if she was too nice to do it herself.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Summer

I looked up as footsteps headed down the path towards me. Today, I was working in greenhouse number four, and I wasn't expecting visitors. Somebody politely knocked on the door, and then it opened, and a lady stuck her head in.

"Hi there, are you Summer?" she inquired with a warm smile.

"Hi, yeah, I am. Can I help you?"

"I'm Casey. You've been providing herbs and flowers to my shop and to Aurora's, too," she said as another woman popped up under Casey's arm.

"Hey! Yes! Oh, is there a problem?" I asked, suddenly worried.

"Why would there be? Your stuff is amazing, such high quality. My sales are going through the roof, and Aurora's are too," Casey replied as she was shoved to one side.

"Hello, Summer, you're perfect," Aurora said with a gentle smile.

"I am?" I quizzed, puzzled. What was Aurora talking about?

"Yup, for Slick." Aurora beamed.

"He's spoken about us," I guessed.

"No. Keeps his cards to his chest, but I've seen you coming for a long time," Aurora replied.

I was completely confused, and it must have shown on my face.

"Aurora is psychic. She sees visions sometimes," Casey explained.

Okay, that was something I'd not expected. I wasn't sure how I felt about things like that, but Casey was nodding her head vigorously.

“Yeah, Aurora has been telling Slick you were coming for him. And from what I hear, Slick’s been paying some visits out here?” Casey pried.

I wiped sweat from my brow; it was hot in here today.

“Let’s sit outside. This is called a hothouse for a reason,” I teased with a smile.

Casey and Aurora backed away to let me out.

“So, breakfast?” Casey asked as I waved them towards a couple of benches. I was glad my back was to them when a heavy blush hit my cheeks.

Slick had kept his word and brought food this morning. He had fed me strawberries and fruit salad with warm pancakes. He’d even remembered coffees, one of which was my favourite cinnamon latte, either by luck or planning. I’m sure he might have pressed Brian for information.

“It was nice,” I said, a little reluctant to discuss what was happening between Slick and myself. After all, these two women were strangers.

“Just nice?” Casey teased.

“Very pleasant,” I admitted. The gentle kisses Slick had dropped on my lips had been very good indeed.

“You’ve kissed!” Aurora squealed in delight.

“Our mouths may have touched,” I said with a laugh, even as the blush remained on my cheeks.

“He brought lunch for you yesterday,” Casey pried.

“Yup.”

“And?” Aurora pushed.

“You’re both very nosey,” I stated, laughing. Neither woman looked put out at my statement, and, in fact, they both nodded.

“Yes, we have a habit of sticking our noses in. The brothers are used to it,” Aurora replied sheepishly.

“I’ve seen you coming for a while. In truth, at first, I saw you in relation to Casey and me. I believed we would find a

new supplier. But then you kept popping up with Slick. So, when we signed the contract with your uncle, I was really upset to have missed you. But I knew we'd meet soon," Aurora said.

"Yes, I'm sorry about that. I was sick that day," I murmured.

The truth was, I hadn't been ill.

Mom and I had been fighting. She'd shoved me in the temper, and I'd hit my head on the wall, blacking out. When I came around, Mom had taken my credit card and left me to go shopping. It had been then that I began making my plans to get the two witches out of my life. What parent does that to you? Mother had showed no remorse as she admitted running up three thousand dollars' worth of debt and leaving me in a crumpled heap.

That wasn't a parent.

Later on, when she and Marianne had passed out, I took most of the clothes back and received a refund, explaining my mother had stolen my card. The shop assistant had been appalled and reluctant at first until I agreed to call the police and report the theft. Which I did. But outside, I told the officer my mom was ill, and I didn't want to press charges, and Mom got away with it again.

Since then, I had cancelled all cards apart from one. The business card stayed at the garden centre, so Mom and Marianne couldn't spend the profits. Whatever. Luckily, Uncle Brian had stepped up that day, signed the contracts on my behalf, and talked to Casey and Aurora. We'd spoken over the phone but not met in person until now.

"We love your stuff. Absolutely adore it," Casey said, smiling and interrupting my thoughts.

"I'm glad. Everything I send out is grown by my own hand."

"Well, we came to be nosey, but I also wanted to talk business," Aurora admitted with a wriggle.

A pang hit my gut. Were they going to tell me they didn't need me anymore?

“There are some ingredients that I use that you do not grow. I was wondering, if we paid you, would you be able to include them for us?” Aurora looked worried.

“Of course!” I exclaimed happily. More business!

“Here’s a list. Growing some of these may be challenging, but I believe you can manage it. You seem to have an affinity with plants,” Aurora said, handing over a piece of paper.

I scanned the list. Aurora wasn’t wrong. Some of these were downright difficult, but I could handle them.

“Could you put how much weight of each you use a month next to each item, please? That way, I can ensure I have enough to cover you through the year.”

“Sure,” Aurora said, rummaging in her bag for a pen.

“Aurora’s best at doing that. My order is on the flip side, and I have already added my weights.” Casey grinned.

“At least you’re honest,” I replied.

“Amongst the old ladies, you will find honesty is a must. You’ll fit right in,” Casey teased as I blushed. “So Slick, is he coming for lunch today?”

“Oh boy!” I murmured as I saw the light in Casey’s eyes.

Clearly, Casey loved gossip!



“Tell me about Aurora, please?” I said as I leaned back against Slick’s chest. We’d eaten half an hour ago and were just relaxing on the picnic blanket.

“What’s to say? That woman has some serious woo-woo shit going on?” Slick rumbled.

“She’s for real?” I pressed.

“Yeah. I don’t believe in stuff like that, but Aurora is the real deal. She’s had several visions that have come true. And it’s impossible she could have imagined them. The one worrying us at the moment is she keeps saying she sees lava running through the streets of RC. Yet we don’t have an active volcano around.”

“How strange. Could it be a metaphor?” I curiously trailed a hand up and down the arm he had wrapped around me to keep me close.

“I think so. But Aurora’s visions are usually real images. Like once, she saw vehicles falling from a sky. When the bridge collapsed, cars did fall,” Slick explained.

“Oh wow, so when she says she sees lava, she means lava?”

“Yes, which is confusing all of us. She says it’s coming soon, so we’ve been checking our safety equipment and everything. All of Rage is enrolled as Search and Rescue. We get a few callouts a year,” Slick stated.

“All the brothers?” I inquired, surprised.

“Yeah, it’s something Drake insisted on. Even candidates and prospects are told they’ll need to join,” Slick replied.

“That’s a nice way of helping the community,” I responded.

“It’s what we believe in. Rage was dirty years ago, and we got clean. Now we are about protecting our city—and our people,” Slick murmured as he stroked my hair. He seemed fascinated by it.

“Tell me about Rage’s past,” I mumbled as I wriggled against his chest and found a more comfortable spot.

“It’s dark.”

“And if we’re dating, I should be told the truth,” I challenged. “Isn’t it better if it comes from you?”

Slick sighed and then began telling me about the history of Rage.

Carmelle

I gazed at the woman who was my sister-in-law. Two days later, I remained unsure about Phoenix. In return, she stared back at me, patiently waiting for me to speak.

“Are you going to keep Drake away?” I asked finally.

“When he gets his head out of his ass, he can come home. Until then, it’s crucial that you, Shannon, and Sadie have a

safe place to stay. This is it.”

“Drake’s your husband,” I stated.

“Yes, he is. And I’m completely in love with him. However, that does not mean he gets a pass when he is being an asshole. I’ve told him multiple times to go and meet you, but he’s struggling with having a sibling. It was him and Chance against the world for years. Drake has no idea how to handle a sister,” Phoe said.

“He doesn’t have to do shit with me. I have money... if I can visit a bank.”

“And get caught by Fury? Come on, Carmelle, you’re not stupid. Fury is hunting you even as we speak. He won’t attack here after he lost last time. And Reading Hall is a fortress when we need it to be.”

That wasn’t a lie. The girls and I were staying in the Lilac Room, which had a hidden panic room in a closet.

There was also their... well, I suppose it would be called a basement. It had a heavy bomb-proof door; another panic room. Although it wasn’t a room, but an entire level. There was a bowling alley, cinema, indoor swimming pool, and much more down there. Anyone locked inside would be extremely comfortable and entertained.

There were also the prominent security personnel that milled around the estate. And the motion sensor cameras alongside infrared ones. Phoe took protection very seriously. It felt good—safe—for Shannon and Sadie, knowing they were so highly protected, and the estate boasted a lot of things for them to do, distracting them from the chaos of our lives recently.

But this wasn’t home; our home was gone. Home had been Beau, and he was dead. The memory of Fury firing a bullet into his head as we sought to leave through the back was one I’d never forget.

“Carmelle?” Phoe asked, jolting me from my train of thoughts.

“Drake doesn’t want to know me, let alone have me in his house. He’s not bothered about the girls or me. All we are, is a reminder his dad found comfort with another woman before dying,” I snapped.

“That’s not true. Drake is a family-minded man, but with the craziness happening recently, life has been extremely unsettled. And we just lost a good friend. Drake hasn’t mourned properly. Justin Goldberg meant a lot to many people. Plus, it takes time to understand and accept Fury being your grandfather.”

“Phoe, I appreciate all you’re doing for me and my girls. But I’m not asking you to put your marriage on hold.” I felt tired suddenly.

“Drake is a man. A good guy. But he has flaws. Like most men, he’ll make a mistake and take time to chew it over before making amends. That doesn’t mean Drake doesn’t care. He’s juggling plates on sticks and trying to keep everything up in the air so it doesn’t crash around our ears. Our own children have been targeted, too.

“I know you lost your husband, and he sounds like a good man, too. I can’t imagine the horror of watching him be killed in front of you and the girls. Then being held captive, with the threat of harm hanging over your head, yeah, that I can understand. I lived it too. My second husband did similar; only he beat me—and often. Things turned my way, and we escaped. But even now, I wake sometimes in the night sweating and scanning the bedroom for him.

“He’s dead, but not forgotten. Martin is like an insidious wraith, waiting for me to get comfortable, and then he pops up. Drake deals with that and reassures me when I bolt upright, it’s not as often, but it still happens. When it does, Drake takes the guilt on himself because the last time I got hurt was because we fought. Your brother, despite his rampant complexities, remains a man. And Drake will make mistakes and then fight to ensure he corrects them.”

“He hasn’t contacted me for a year, Phoe,” I denied.

“Because he didn’t want to endanger you.” She sighed. “We all know Fury has spies on us. Drake could have led them straight to you. He also wants to stick his head in the sand because he has no clue what to do with a sister who has already lived a life. You were married, had children, and were happy. Drake is wrestling with the idea of having a sister and having missed out so much. Yeah, he has gone about it in an asshole way, but that doesn’t mean he does not care. He’s unsure how to show it.”

“You understand a lot about him,” I said.

“Honey, I know your brother like the back of my hand. Drake cares. He’s conflicted and confused, guilty and stubborn, but he does care. Just let Drake work shit out in his little mind. As it’s so tiny, it won’t take too long.”

“Took him a year,” I retorted.

Phoenix laughed. “You both inherited that from Arrow. Sheer bullheadedness. Drake has faces to match your names. He’s been smacked in the face with your existence. Now, there’s no choice for him except to deal with it.” She grinned.

“We’ll see.”

“Drake will surprise you; he has surprised me many times. He’s not as unbendable as you think he is. As I said, Drake is flawed. But in the same way that everyone else.”

“Okay.” I sighed, knowing I wasn’t going to win this argument. Phoe wasn’t wrong, but I couldn’t bring myself to accept her words fully, either. In my mind, Drake really was not interested in my girls—or me.

Drake

“Are you certain?” he asked Inglorious on the phone.

“Would I be calling if I wasn’t? Tonight,” Inglorious replied.

“I’ll bring everybody who wants to come,” Drake said.

The Unwanted Bastards’ president had invited Rage for a cookout. It had just turned April, and they were having a rare few days of warmth and sun. Inglorious had clearly wanted to jump on the weather.

“You do that and have the women bring sides,” Inglorious demanded.

“Anything else?” Drake asked, amused.

“Nope, not unless you got some classy lady hidden somewhere?”

“If I had, my brothers would be claiming them.” Drake chuckled.

Inglorious let rip with a rude noise and said goodbye.

Drake sent a group text out informing his brothers and old ladies of the plans for the night. Being Saturday, most should be able to attend. He knew as soon as Phoe got the message, she would be organising babysitters for the Hellions at Reading Hall.



Six hours later, Drake rode through the gates of the Unwanted Bastards’ compound with Phoe clinging to his back. She’d met him at Rage, telling him she’d be bringing food, but he still wasn’t allowed home. It made Drake chuckle, but he knew he had to resolve his issue with Carmelle soon.

When she’d arrived in Rage, she’d greeted the old ladies and piled platters into the SUV’s that would be bringing them. No old lady rode behind a brother when pregnant, well apart from Artemis, who simply refused to fight with Ace and would get her own bike out. Nobody told her what do to.

He parked his motorbike and sent a wave at Inglorious, who was coming out of their clubhouse to greet him. Beside him was Ace with Artemis. Most of Rage had come: Axel rode his trike, which Ellen loved as it was more comfortable than his old bike. Drake recognised but wouldn’t ever admit that Ellen was too old to ride a traditional Harley.

Apache arrived minus Silvie, who would be comfortably encased in one of the SUVs. Her condition wasn’t improving, but it had stopped getting worse. Her pain was almost constant, and there was now talk of an operation to help her Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction. Drake hated seeing her in the wheelchair, but it caused her agony to walk.

One by one, his brothers and old ladies rolled in behind him. A couple would be coming later, agreeing to meet up and ride together. Nobody rode alone.

“Yo!” Inglorious called out as he reached for Phoe and swung her around before giving her a loud kiss on her cheek.

Drake instantly scowled and dragged her back, but Phoe managed to give Inglorious a peck in return.

“You’re so fuckin’ funny,” Inglorious taunted as brothers snatched their women close.

“You do it on purpose,” Drake snapped, and Inglorious didn’t deny it.

“Good to see you, brother,” Inglorious said, reaching out to one-arm-hug Drake.

The Unwanted Bastards milled around, mingling with Rage and the old ladies. Drake sighed in contentment. They all needed this, a chance to let their hair down.

Slick

Slick’s gut was hurting, telling him something was wrong. It wasn’t often he felt like this, but he sensed someone was watching them as they walked around the Unwanted Bastards’ compound. He wanted to have brought Summer, but she’d already informed him she was busy. Slick knew damn well what she was occupied with, and he made a silent vow to put a stop to it soon.

His gaze raked the yard again, looking for the thing that was setting him off. He couldn’t pinpoint anything out of the ordinary. Even as he contemplated his feelings, Slick’s eyes swept to the entrance. A dust cloud in the distance sent his gut into overdrive.

“Attack!” Slick bellowed before he considered what he was seeing. Autumn, Silvie, and Lindsey were all close to him.

Without a second thought, Slick was bending and picking Silvie up carefully and racing to the clubhouse with her. Autumn and Lindsey chased behind him.

“Attack!” he yelled again as Rage and the Unwanted Bastards were slow to react. The beer and liquor had been flowing freely.

Drake cursed as Phoe and Artemis raced for the old ladies, both with weapons out.

Slick carried Silvie into the clubhouse and placed her gently on a chair. “You armed?” he asked.

“Yes.” She nodded.

“If it ain’t one of us coming through that door, you shoot,” Slick ordered as Lindsey and Autumn approached. They grabbed the armchair and began dragging it backwards with Silvie still sitting on it.

“Will do,” Silvie promised.

“Follow Phoe and Artemis’s orders,” Slick stated to the other women approaching and disappeared outside. Just as he ran out, Carly belted in, accompanied by the sound of bullets being fired. Slick checked her over and gave her a push to safety.

Popping his head out of the door, he saw the dust cloud was on top of them, and shots were being sent blindly into the yard. The dust cloud was created by bike’s wheel spinning. Almost everyone had taken cover and shot back, but Slick noted two Unwanted Bastards down on the ground. One was Bomber, the Unwanted Bastards Enforcer, and the other was Pink, a brother. Bomber was moving, but Pink laid still, his face turned to the sky.

Slick couldn’t tell if Pink was dead or alive, but Bomber was closer to him. Bullets pinged around the guy as he sought to move.

“Lay down cover,” Slick yelled.

Rage opened fire instantly, swiftly followed by Unwanted Bastards. Slick dashed out from the doorway and grabbed Bomber by the scruff of his cut, then heaved the man backwards and behind a low wall that surrounded the clubhouse.

“How bad?” Slick asked.

“Shot to the leg and gut. I’m okay. Pink took several as he went down,” Bomber gritted out.

A small hand touched Slick. “Check Pink,” Artemis said as she opened a first aid box.

“Stay down, okay?” Slick demanded and waited for a lull in the shooting.

“Cover fire!” Slick yelled again, and a rain of bullets headed towards their attackers. He raced out, and without checking Pink, hauled him backwards.

Behind three kegs, he hid and glanced down at Pink.

Sightless eyes stared back at him, and Slick sighed. Pink was riddled with bullets; he’d not had a chance.

A body fell through the gates, followed by a second. Pipes roared, and the attackers began to flee. Slick saw a third man fall and guessed Irish was somewhere out there.

He raced for the parked motorbikes and flung his leg over the first one. He didn’t even notice he had taken Inglorious’s bike as he headed out. Loud pipes growled, and Slick knew there were brothers at his back. The bikes ahead were letting off smoke bombs and mixed with the dust, making shit hard to see. Slick did catch sight of a Venomous Fang’s cut, which named Florida as the home chapter.

He just had to follow the dust cloud for now, and they’d get their revenge eventually.

A Harley racing down a small hill caught his attention. The rider had her arm raised, and she was pumping it and pointing towards the compound.

Slick frowned. It was most definitely Irish, and she was trying to tell them something. Slick could see her mouth moving as she came closer.

“Turn back. Ambush. Ambush!” Irish shouted as she approached them.

Slick looked at the biker on his left, Inglorious, who glanced at Irish.

She hit the road beside them and continued yelling. “Ambush! Up ahead, an ambush!”

Slick saw the indecision on Inglorious’s face. “She’s with us,” he yelled to the infuriated president.

“Trust her?” Inglorious demanded.

Irish sent them both a glare.

“Yeah,” Slick shouted.

Inglorious struggled briefly before signalling for everyone to turn around. The cost of doing so weighed heavily upon his shoulders, Slick noted. Inglorious wanted revenge for the attack, but if Irish was right, Inglorious couldn’t risk more men being hurt.

Silently, they rode back to the compound with Irish beside Slick. No sooner had they parked than Inglorious was off his bike and seeing to the injured. Psych met him, and Slick left them to talk as he gazed at the woman who’d stopped next to him.

“If you’d continued, there was at least thirty more waiting to ambush you just down the road,” Irish stated and pulled her mobile out. “Fury was with them.”

Slick snarled as she showed him the pictures she’d taken.

“Send them to my phone,” he demanded, rattling off his number.

“One dead, more injured,” Gunner announced in his approach.

“How many Rage?” Slick asked, feeling sick.

“Savage, Mac, Lex, and Ezra. Ambulances are coming from Monument Health Lead-Deadwood Hospital, the closest hospital they’ve got. Police are incoming, too. Unwanted Bastards have three down, and one dead,” Gunner murmured.

“Pink,” Slick stated grimly.

“He didn’t stand a chance,” Gunner replied.

“Bomber?”

“He’ll live, he’s the worst injured, but all seven need a hospital,” Gunner explained.

“I’ll be there in a minute,” Slick said as he glanced at Irish.

She held his gaze as Gunner walked away.

Slick felt his stomach churn. Yet again, Irish had saved them.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

Irish

Slick was looking at me like he wasn't sure whether to throttle or hug me. I decided not to give him the chance and grabbed the helmet from the back of my bike.

Before I could shove it on, strong hands grasped my forearms, and a mouth landed on mine.

My eyes were wide open, and I could see it was Slick.

God damn, though, he knew how to kiss.

My eyelids closed, and I sank into it before I realised what was happening and pulled away.

“What the hell?” I exclaimed angrily.

Slick looked confused and then ashamed. “Shit, sorry! Irish, I didn't mean anything. Fuck, I'm seeing someone,” he sputtered.

“Yeah, so what the fuck?”

I was well aware of Slick's interest in a woman called Summer. He'd begun dating her last week, and from what I'd seen, he was very interested in her. Which made kissing me a terrible idea, even if Slick knew how to kiss.

“I don't know! I just had to kiss you,” Slick whispered, pale.

“Are you some sort of cheat? Summer's your main go-to, and I'm the side piece? Asshole, I don't do that shit!” I snarled as my temper rose.

“Damn it, I'm not a cheat. And I want something with Summer. I don't fuckin' understand why I kissed you.” Slick's eyes held devastation.

He actually meant what he was saying, so I decided to throw him a bone.

“We'll chalk it up to the emotions of the day. Don't ever touch me again, though. I'm not the other woman, nor do I

encourage cheating.”

“Thank you. Let’s just forget it happened,” Slick stated fervently. His eyes revealed shame and guilt, which made me feel bad. Especially as I had responded to his kiss. But I would never be the mistress, that’s for certain.

“I gotta go,” I grumbled and started my bike.

“Drake will want to talk to you,” Slick replied, trying to stop me leaving.

“I’ve nothing to say to him. See you later,” I said and moved out, weaving my way around a few members of Rage and the Unwanted Bastards. I resisted the urge to glance over my shoulder, and in the blink of an eye, I hit the road.

Slick

Shit, what had that been? He had been filled with relief at seeing Irish uninjured and knowing that she’d saved some lives again, that he’d just had to kiss her. While Summer was his perfect woman, Slick couldn’t deny he wasn’t attracted to Irish and her fire. There was something about her that drew him in, and he ruthlessly acknowledged it. But Summer was his dream: soft, sweet, gentle, and loving. Slick knew that when Summer offered her heart, she gave it completely. There’d be no holding back with Summer.

Slick’s emotions had already engaged with Summer, and he guessed she’d fill most of his empty space. But Irish, with her strength and fight, also appealed to him. It was like they were two sides of the same coin. Slick shook his head. He had everything he desired within reach. A real woman to call his own. Slick wouldn’t let this little infatuation with Irish derail that.

From now on in, he’d deal with Irish professionally and keep her at a distance. Sparks were not enough for Slick; he desired something more. He wanted love and a life.

Surely he deserved that after everything?



The return to Rage was chaos. Drake and half the brothers had gone to the hospital. He'd sent the rest to the clubhouse with Ace. The old ladies went to Reading Hall. Before leaving, they'd helped tidy up the compound for the Unwanted Bastards, and the women had stored the food in their fridges.

Drake had been annoyed that he'd let Irish go, as Drake thought she might have been able to feed them further information. Slick had shrugged and let Drake's anger roll off his back.

He'd returned to the clubhouse with Ace and was antsy. The fact Florida had been seen on the cuts meant that Fury had sent his own guys in. This wasn't an associate club—or one they'd taken over. These men Fury had recruited to Venomous Fangs. They were far from home. It made Slick wonder if Fury was also present in Spearfish. The police had swarmed the Unwanted Bastards compound, took statements, and watched security footage.

There'd been many phone calls to other departments involved in the brewing war; Chief Howser weighed in as well. It had taken several hours, but finally, they'd all been released. The return trip to Rage had been quiet.

The clubhouse had a strange atmosphere, as if they were all on edge, Slick noted. Pink's death was hitting them hard, even though he hadn't been Rage.

When Ace's phone began to ring, everybody tensed. Ace clipped out a few words and ran his hand through his hair before hanging up.

“Everyone is fine. They've made it through surgery or whatever was needed. Drake needs a prospect to head to the hospital to bring our brothers home,” Ace said, his gaze falling on Harley.

Harley nodded and disappeared.

“No major injuries?” Slick questioned.

“To us, no. For the Unwanted Bastards, Bomber's out of action, and Pink is dead. When's this shit gonna end?” Ace asked no one in particular.

Slick found it was a question he wanted answers to.

Summer

Slick was waiting with breakfast the next day when I arrived at the garden centre. We didn't open till ten on a Sunday, so I usually got there at nine, gaining me a couple of hours to lay in. He was smiling as I approached, but I sensed there was something hanging over him.

"Morning, baby," he announced, bending and giving me a sweet kiss.

"Is everything okay?" I searched his face.

"Bad night yesterday. But don't worry," Slick answered, which immediately caused me to fret.

"How so?" I questioned as we walked to what was now our picnic spot.

"Told you how Rage got clean and all the details," Slick said.

I nodded.

"Well, there was a founder, Fury..." Slick began, and as we sat, the entire story fell from his lips.

I felt horror cross my face when he stopped talking. "Wow, you started dating me, knowing all this?" I asked.

"I couldn't stay away from you, Summer. You're like catnip, my own personal drug," Slick said honestly.

I let loose a giggle, but it wasn't a happy one.

"And this Fury? He won't agree to a chat or anything?" I inquired.

"No. The last meeting we had ended up with them taking potshots at us. If Drake hadn't expected a trap, some of us could have been killed."

"Slick, I don't know what to make of this."

And I didn't. I was so confused. Vigilantes and street wars were not a part of my life. Such a level of violence was unfamiliar to me.

“Well, I really do appreciate the fact you’ve been completely honest with me,” I finally said.

“I was hoping that this would disappear, that Fury would realise he couldn’t win. But last night proved he’s got no intention of backing down. Fury wants a full-scale war, and Rage and Rapid City won’t roll over and show him our bellies. If Fury wins, he’ll control every aspect of this town. I won’t let him win. None of us will. He’s killed a police officer, disabled our founder Axel, and paralysed a second cop.

“Summer, I didn’t wanna drag you into this. Fuck, I want you as far away from this shit as possible, but I can’t keep away from you. I’m drawn to you, and I already care. Yeah, we’ve only been seeing each other for a few days, but you consume my thoughts,” Slick confessed, taking me aback.

I chewed the inside of my cheek. Such honesty from a man was rare. Apart from Dad and Uncle Brian, most men were liars who’d try anything to get into your pants.

“This is a lot to understand. I’m heavily attracted to you, too. And I want more; I deserve more. I’m unsure I can handle being in the middle of such a bad situation. The way you’re living is beyond my experience; this isn’t something I’m familiar with. Nor, in honesty, do I wish to be up close and personal with it.”

“Get that, Summer. Maybe I ought to walk away and see if you’re still available after we settle this?” Slick said morosely.

I didn’t like that ridiculous notion. The way I felt sick at the thought of not seeing Slick spoke volumes. I was just about to speak when cold fear hit.

“What’s this? All your complaining about working hard, and here you are sitting down with a man!” Mom exclaimed from behind.

Damnit, not now! Not in front of Slick.

“Mother, what an unexpected surprise,” I whispered, turning and not only seeing Mom but Marianne too, who looked gleeful.

“I imagine it is. You come home and say you’re tired and working twelve-hour days, and here I find you lounging about with a guy,” Mom said with a sniff.

Mom’s gaze took in Slick, and I wanted to squirm. No good-looking man was safe from Mom and her demands, and Slick was definitely handsome. And if it wasn’t Mom, it was Marianne. Slick’s fingers wove their way through mine, and he squeezed in reassurance.

“I’m having breakfast. That’s not a crime. I’m entitled to eat,” I replied.

“Dear God, girl, did I say you weren’t? But I expected you to be extremely busy considering all the complaining. And who are you, as my daughter lacks the manners to introduce us,” Mom said pointedly.

“This is Slick. He’s a member of Rage MC. This is my mom, Carrie Winters, and my stepmom, Marianne,” I murmured, reluctantly making the introductions.

“Rage MC? That biker gang?” Marianne mumbled with a sniff, matching Mom’s earlier one.

“Rage is a club,” Slick retorted.

“Is there a difference?” Marianne asked snootily.

“Yeah. As a club, we abide and help the law. A gang is the opposite. So don’t insult me again,” Slick said firmly.

Marianne jolted, and she gazed at Mom, who was staring at Slick.

Gut twisting, I recognised the glare in Mom’s eyes. There was disgust and lust. Mom loved a strong guy but would also manipulate them. It wouldn’t matter to Mom that Slick was here with me. Mom desired something, and she would do anything to obtain it. Mom had done that several times. Any man I dated, either she or Marianne flirted with—at least until they got them in bed—and then they’d kicked them out. They thought they were getting one up on me; instead, they were saving me from making a bad mistake.

“Rage MC, you own a lot of businesses around here.” Mom smiled sweetly at Slick.

As much as I hated to admit it, Mom and Marianne were both beautiful women. They’d aged well, but then, considering they refused to work, it was no wonder they had time to take care of themselves.

“Yup, we work hard to be a success,” Slick said.

“How about we go for lunch or dinner, and we can chat?” Mom suggested as she thrust a hip out and her boobs.

“Why would I do that?” Slick asked, and he was genuinely puzzled.

“Wouldn’t you like to get to know us?” Marianne inquired, batting her eyelashes at Slick.

“Once I’ve got Summer locked down, then yeah, sure, but my attention is focused solely on her,” Slick said bluntly.

Mom and Marianne blinked. That hadn’t been the reply they were expecting, especially as they were now plainly flirting with Slick. They didn’t care which one he took out, as long as it stopped Slick from seeing me.

The red blush at my neck and cheeks threatened to deepen as I watched them play their sick game.

Slick was not like any other guy I’d dated. He wasn’t a ‘nice malleable man.’ Slick had lived and experienced life and understood what he desired. And it hit me with the speed of a bullet. He wanted me. Slick was dating me. He didn’t view me as a pushover or a reason to screw one of the moms. Slick genuinely wished to be a part of my life. The realisation made me beam at Slick in happiness.

Slick’s face softened as he caught sight of my expression, and he ran a finger down my cheek and across my lips.

“See, you are starting to get it, honey,” Slick murmured.

“Well, if you’re looking for cash, you’re searching in the wrong place. The garden centre does okay, but it won’t make you rich,” Marianne sneered.

Slick stiffened as he twisted his head to stare at the two witches.

“Don’t need Summer’s money. Got more than enough of my own. The fact is, Summer’s my idea of a perfect woman. Ain’t my fault if you can’t recognise how special she is,” Slick growled out.

Mom broke into amused, loud laughter and actually had the audacity to wipe a tear from her eye.

“You’re trying too hard. Summer is the perfect woman! She’s a dormouse, little experience, lazy, cruel, and selfish—”

“Stop describing yourself right now,” Slick interrupted as Mom gasped.

Nobody cut her off.

“You two are two of the worst narcissists I’ve ever seen or met. You’re both highly jealous of Summer because people see how special and talented she is. Meanwhile, you sit on your fat lazy ass and expect her to chase after you and do everything.”

Mom began again. “Look, I don’t know what stories Summer’s been telling—”

“Heard you. The other night, I came to visit, and I listened to what you were saying to her. It’s clear you don’t give a fuck about Summer except as a wage packet. Well, she’s my girl now, which means Summer’s under my protection.”

A warm feeling started in my stomach. Nobody had stood up for me like this apart from Dad and Uncle Brian. And the two witches avoided Uncle Brian as much as possible.

“Protection? Why would somebody like you want her? Honestly, Slick, Summer’s seeking to trap a man into looking after her. Is that what you want?” Marianne asked.

“Shit, it amazes me how blind you are. You’re nothing but botoxed leeches, and I won’t let you harass or bully Summer anymore. What I overheard is you literally do fuck all. Well, it stops here. Summer will not be washing your clothes or cooking your dinner. She has a man now, and I’m entitled to her nights,” Slick snapped back.

“How dare you dictate to us!” Mom seethed.

I flinched because I knew she’d get revenge for this.

“I’ll dare anything. Summer’s no longer your slave and bank. She’s gonna live life free and happy. And if you two think of crossing me or Summer, you better reconsider, bitches. Summer may not raise a hand to you, but Rage has plenty of old ladies who love a good brawl. I suggest you fuck off and think how you’re gonna change your lives and attitude towards her,” Slick snarled.

Surprised, I leant into Slick as Mom and Marianne sent him a filthy glare.

“We will see you at home,” Mom threatened. “And we’ll talk about your liaison with this... this man.”

“No, you won’t,” Slick warned. “One word to upset Summer, and the gloves come off.”

“We’ll see,” Mom said, having to have the last word.

To Mom’s amazement, Slick turned his back on her, clearly done with the conversation, and dragged me against his chest.

“Tonight, I’m taking you to Bernard’s. If you ain’t ready, those two bitches better be prepared for me to throw them out on their asses,” Slick said as his fingers traced lazy circles on my arms.

“Bernard’s? That’s so expensive,” I whispered, bemused at what had just happened.

“And you’re worth every cent,” Slick replied.

Two loud huffs came from behind us, but Slick paid no attention. We heard their footsteps as they left.

“Baby, I get you don’t like confrontations, but what the fuck?” Slick finally said when we couldn’t hear them anymore.

“I felt guilty. Dad left them nothing. Okay, Mom shouldn’t have expected anything, but I still felt bad. I think Mom cared for Dad, but greed overruled everything, as did loneliness. Mom knew what she was getting when she married Dad, but

Mom never wanted children. She would have been happy being a social butterfly and being queen bee on the base.

“When Dad divorced her, he got joint custody, which upset Mom even more. The courts decreed that when he was home, I could live with him. It was a rare agreement, considering we weren’t sure when Dad would be back. But it worked for me, and him, but not for Mom. She hated losing the house on base and his money.”

“And Marianne?”

“Dad didn’t love her. He was content but not in love. Marianne knew, but she received the status of being an army wife and didn’t have Dad hanging over her daily. The bitch also had affairs. When he retired and came home, Marianne’s nose got put further out of the joint because Mom and Dad were swapping every other week with me. Marianne hated me being there.

“A couple of times, Marianne looked after me when Dad was away, and she made my life a misery. But when Dad returned, she put on this show of making a fuss, but I had no doubt how she really felt about me. Dad must have sensed something because when he died, everything was left to me. Including the house he shared with Marianne. And Dad ensured the will was iron-tight. They both challenged it but got nothing. The judge upheld it.

“I was so low and grief-stricken that Mom said she needed to move in to care for me. Then Marianne claimed she had nowhere to go as this was her home, and I felt so guilty I let them both stay. By the time I began to get over the grief, they had entrenched themselves, and I found I was doing everything. Marianne and Mom had both quit their part-time jobs on the pretext of taking care of me. The truth was, they thought they’d get Dad’s money a different way.”

“Oh damn, baby,” Slick murmured.

“Worse, I was so tired from getting the centre up and running, going home and looking after them, I’d no spirit left to fight them. It was a relief to fall into bed and escape them. But a couple of months ago, I began to heal from Dad’s death,

and I started making plans. I've been hiding money to either put down as a deposit for a house for myself or to offer them to get rid of them both," I admitted.

"Summer, don't give them another cent," Slick ordered.

"I might have to, to get them to leave. The accounts from Rage have given my finances a huge boost. I started saving at that time."

"Not a cent more, Summer. If they want shit, they can go and earn it like the rest of us," Slick said firmly.

"If only it were that simple," I muttered.

"Give it time, baby, and it will be," Slick promised. He dropped a kiss on my head and was seemingly content just to sit in the quiet with me.



I checked myself out again in the mirror. I wasn't one for dressing up, as I'd rarely had the occasion to. I was wearing a cute summer dress and sandals. Slick had told me he'd pick me up in a cage, which had caused consternation until he explained that's what they called cars. It had made me laugh.

Now, my hair fell in a shimmery sheet down my back, and my skin was soft from the moisturiser I'd smothered myself in. As I wasn't one to wear a lot of make-up, I had gone for a natural look, with bronzes and browns. I did look quite nice.

Mom and Marianne had been waiting to pounce on me when I got home, but I'd escaped easily. I told them Slick was picking me up in an hour, and if I wasn't ready, he'd be blaming them. That had shut them both up, but I had no doubt they'd wait until I returned tonight.

Determinedly, I shoved that nasty thought away and checked the time. I had twenty minutes until Slick arrived, so I decided to wait outside. As I stepped out, a faint whiff of smoke caught my attention.

I wondered if the neighbours were having a barbecue and sat on the porch swing Dad had installed for us. We loved sitting together on a summer night, reading books and talking

about anything and everything. The swing remained my favourite place in the house. The front door opened, and Marianne and Mom stepped out, both giving me a dirty look. I ignored them as I gazed at the houses opposite mine.

The scent of smoke drifted on the wind again, but stronger smelling.

“What is that?” I asked, sitting up.

Mom and Marianne stared, not saying anything.

“No, seriously, can you smell fire?”

I stood up and began searching up and down the street. Then, my gaze turned further away, and I saw a thick plume of black smoke.

“Is that coming from the garden centre?” I stammered as I finally realised what I was looking at.

I told myself it didn’t necessarily mean it was the garden centre. There were other buildings close by. A feeling compelled me to go there.

“Oh my God!” I exclaimed. “If Slick comes, tell him where I went, please.”

I raced down the steps to my old car and jumped in, throwing my purse on the seat. Quickly, I reversed out of the drive and headed in the direction of the burning. As I approached, the smoke got thicker, and I could almost hear the roar of flames. I turned into the lane leading to the garden centre, and my heart sunk.

The smoke was indeed coming from here. There were flashing lights everywhere as the fire engines wrestled a blaze in greenhouse three. All my new samplings and shoots were inside. Several weeks’ worth of work.

I parked the car and raced forward, and a uniformed officer caught me.

“Ma’am, you can’t go over there,” he stated.

“This is my business. I need to get the sprinklers on in the other greenhouses, or the fire could spread,” I gasped loudly.

A passing fireman stopped.

“Do you have a sprinkler system? We’ve got hoses on the greenhouses closest, but I fear they may go up,” he said.

“Yes, I have sprinklers. Can I turn the system on? I can’t lose my business!”

“Wait here,” he ordered. He returned a couple of minutes later carrying something.

“Put those on,” he demanded.

I shrugged into a pair of fireman’s pants and tightened the suspenders to stop them from falling down. He helped me into the jacket and shoved a helmet on my head. I stamped into the heavy boots he offered and let him pull the trousers over the top.

“Stay with me and lead the way,” he said.

I nodded and began dragging him towards greenhouse two.

I could see two firemen holding a hose on it, and I raced to open the door. The fireman came with me as I fumbled for the lights and switched them on. Anxiously, I rushed to the panel on the wall and turned the air conditioner on and the sprinklers. The heat in here was horrendous, and I worried I might lose the plants anyway.

Once everything was operational, I allowed the fireman to lead me to the greenhouse four and repeat my actions.

“I must start the sprinklers in the remainder because of the heat. The plants and flowers will be severely damaged otherwise,” I said.

At first, I thought he was going to argue, but he led me to number five, and even though it was further away, the heat was still bad. I could almost hear the plants sigh in relief as the air-con and sprinklers switched on. The fireman led me around his colleagues to number one, and I stumbled inside and repeated my actions. As I went to leave, I tripped over something and crashed to the floor. I lay there stunned as the fireman began to curse, and then he was shouting for paramedics.

“I’m not that hurt,” I gasped, shoving myself into a sitting position.

“No, but he is,” the man replied.

And I turned and nearly fainted as I saw Uncle Brian lying on the floor with blood coming from his head.

CHAPTER NINE.

Summer

I sat numbly in the ambulance as it rushed towards the hospital. The sirens were screaming to everyone that an emergency was on board. The paramedics had let me tag along as long as I stayed out of their way. In quiet desperation, I watched as they stabilised Uncle Brian. From the bruises on his arms and face, he'd been in quite the fight.

The paramedic had speculated that Uncle Brian had caught whoever was setting the fire and fought them. His partner had agreed that the marks and injuries Uncle Brian had sustained had been due to an attack.

With a squeal of brakes, the ambulance pulled up outside the emergency bay, and nurses rushed to take Uncle Brian away. I was standing there lost and forlorn when one of the paramedics approached and explained how to book Uncle Brian in and where to wait. Kindly, he led me into the hospital and took me straight to a receptionist. I'd left the clothing the fireman had given me behind, and my dress was creased from being shoved into the trousers. But I didn't care about my appearance, even though I was getting sideways glances from other visitors.

Once I had booked Uncle Brian in, I sat nervously on a chair and waited for someone to update me. There was nobody to call. Uncle Brian and I only had each other. The two witches wouldn't give a damn, either.

A female doctor softly asked, "Summer?"

I glanced up at her. "Yes?"

"Hi, I'm Lynda. I was called in. The hospital thought Mr Chambers might have burns, but he is okay," she said, sitting.

"Sorry?" I muttered, confused.

"I'm the premier burns specialist in South Dakota. I have my own clinic, but Mr Chambers was brought here because of

other injuries. They asked me to attend in case he'd been burned. He's not, but they are working on the head injury right now, and he seems to have some broken bones," Lynda replied.

"Oh, thank you for coming," I whispered as I stared at the doors that Uncle Brian had disappeared behind.

"I'm also Wild's wife from Rage MC. Is there anyone I can call?" Lynda asked gently.

"No. I'm alone apart from Uncle Brian."

"Wild is contacting Slick. I thought you might like him with you," Lynda stated, and I saw the curiosity in her eyes.

"Slick?"

"Yes, you are dating him, aren't you? That's the gossip in the clubhouse. Everyone is delighted Slick's finally found his old lady." Lynda had uncertainty on her face, as if she was afraid of putting her foot in it.

"Oh, we've been dating."

"Well, Wild is hunting Slick down. He'll be here soon. Nobody should sit here alone," Lynda responded, patting my hand.

"Why are you calling Slick?"

"Because, honey, he'd want to know about this," Lynda answered, looking puzzled.

"Why?"

"Summer, you don't have a lot of support, do you?"

"Not really, just Uncle Brian."

"That's why. Rage MC is an enormous family. When one of us is hurt, or in trouble, we all gather round. Now, it might be overwhelming to have everyone descend on you, but Slick needs to know you're here and upset. Then he can provide comfort," Lynda explained. "And while we're waiting on Slick, I'll keep you company."

I considered Lynda's offer briefly.

“That would be nice,” I finally replied.



When Slick arrived an hour later, I was white as a ghost and holding on to Lynda tightly. A fireman had come, a man called Chief Hawthorne, and he was explaining about what they’d discovered at the garden centre so far.

Slick rushed over as I swayed in my chair. “Summer, are you okay?” he demanded, sitting down and wrapped an arm around my shoulders.

“Arson,” I muttered, staring at Chief Hawthorne.

“What was? Bill?” Slick asked the fireman.

“Sorry to see you under these circumstances. The fire is out. But it was arson; the evidence is already telling. There are four flashpoints and a heavy smell of gasoline. Someone wanted that centre to burn. From what we’re seeing, we think Brian Chambers interrupted the arsonist, which is why he got a beating,” Bill Hawthorne responded.

“Is there an update on Uncle Brian?” Slick questioned.

“Mr Chambers is stable. He’s undergoing some tests,” Lynda replied.

“Arson? Summer, do you have cameras?” Slick asked.

I nodded dumbly, trying to absorb everything. Uncle Brian was hurt. Tick. The garden centre was arson. Tick. But why had Slick taken so long to arrive? Surely, when he’d reached the garden centre, they’d have told Slick where I was?

“You don’t have to be here,” I mumbled to Slick numbly.

Slick frowned.

“Honey, I got your message tonight loud and clear, but even so, I wouldn’t leave anyone alone at a time like this,” Slick replied.

“What? I told Mom to tell you I was heading to the centre. I thought you’d meet me there,” I said plaintively.

“That is not the message I received,” Slick growled. “Your Mom claimed that you didn’t want to go out and that you’d

left the house so you didn't have to deal with the drama.”

“No!” I exclaimed, horrified. “That’s not true. Look, I was wearing a nice dress! I asked them to tell you to meet me at the centre. Initially, I wasn’t sure if the fire was there, although I knew it was coming from the same direction. And when I arrived and realised I could lose the greenhouses, I just snapped into surviving. Then I found Uncle Brian and…” My voice broke.

“Those damn bitches,” Slick muttered, drawing me closer. His hand rubbed my back in a soothing motion.

“Sorry to interrupt, but Summer, you never answered, and it could really help. Do you have cameras at the centre?” Bill Hawthorne asked.

“Yes, I do, and I have the greenhouses covered, too,” I responded, resting my head on Slick’s shoulder.

I couldn’t deal with the two wicked witches and their nasty plan to break my date. For now, I had to worry about Uncle Brian and the garden centre.

“I’ll call the officer on scene. I think it’s Detective Lucas,” Bill said, and I felt Slick’s body jolt.

“Can’t get used to Bobby being a detective,” he muttered.

“No, we’re all still missing Justin,” Bill responded softly.

“Yeah, we are, too,” Slick replied.

I wondered who Justin was. My brain was trying to tell me something as I recognised the name, but a doctor approached our small group.

“Family of Brian Chambers?” he announced.

“That’s me,” I answered, looking up.

“He’s stable for now. Mr Chambers has some broken ribs and several cuts and lacerations. His arm is also broken. The head wound is worrying, but there’s no swelling yet, although that may change. He’s unconscious, and we are keeping Mr Chambers sedated in case the brain does begin to swell. You can see him, but he won’t be able to respond. Mr Chambers is

also on a breathing machine as his lungs have taken in a lot of smoke, and we're monitoring for damage," the doctor explained.

I took it all in and nodded. "Uncle Brian is going to be okay?"

"Yeah, with time and rest," the doctor answered.

The tension I'd been feeling left my body in a rush, and I slumped against Slick. "That's a relief," I murmured. "When can I see him?"

"We're moving him to a ward now. A nurse shall fetch you," the doctor stated and, with a chin lift, left.

"Slick, why don't you go and see what's happening at the centre, and I'll stay with Summer, and then I can take her home," Lynda suggested.

"Nah, thanks, honey, you get off to Wild. I'll wait while Summer sees Brian and then take her home. I'll check in with the cops later." Slick squeezed my hand in reassurance, and I revelled in how nice it felt to have somebody present who only wanted to support me.



We were walking up the path when the front door flew open. It was the early hours of the morning, and dawn wasn't far away. The garden centre would be shut today, and I was grateful, as I was so tired. Slick had borrowed a car from someone to bring me home as I was dead on my feet. So clearly, Mom was expecting me to be alone.

"You little whore!" she hissed. "What time do you call this?"

"Not now, I just need sleep."

"How dare you come home at this disgusting hour? I suppose you were out whoring around, well, not under this roof!" she spat.

"Shut your fuckin' bitch mouth!" Slick snapped from behind me.

Mom obviously hadn't seen him approaching.

“What did you say?”

“Shut your bitch mouth,” Slick repeated as he placed a hand under my elbow. I was swaying slightly from being so tired.

“How dare you speak to me like that in my own home!” Mom exclaimed.

“But it’s not your home, it’s Summer’s. She owns this, not you, and you’ve no legal right to it. Summer’s activities are not your concern. You should be fuckin’ grateful she lets you stay here because I’d have kicked your skanky ass out ages ago,” Slick snarled, stepping forward.

Mom paled at the clear threat in Slick’s words. “You’ve no right to talk to me like this.”

“Summer has been up at the hospital all night and comes home to your shit attitude. Bitch, I got every right. You ain’t even asked whether the fire was the garden centre or if anyone was injured. Newsflash bitch, someone was seriously hurt. Brian was beaten, and the garden centre was set on fire. It looks like arson. Summer has been at the hospital waiting on news about Brian,” Slick growled out.

“Did the whole thing burn? Did we lose everything? What about the money? You have to get a job immediately. We won’t manage otherwise,” Marianne babbled from behind Mom.

“Marianne’s right. You need to tidy up and start walking the streets to find a job. Thank you,” Mom said, aimed at Slick, “we can take this from here. Marianne get a strong coffee on; this girl needs to get a job by the end of today.”

Mom reached out, and Slick snatched me back against him. The glare he sent over my head should have turned Mom into ashes.

“You can’t be that selfish you’re not gonna ask how Brian is?” Slick demanded in disbelief. I wasn’t surprised at all.

“Brian? Is he dead? Will Summer get his life insurance?” Mom asked, narrowing her eyes.

“Jesus Christ, you’re a piece of work,” Slick muttered.

“Do we need to call the lawyers?” Marianne demanded.

“Brian is alive, and you’re done talking to Summer,” Slick stated as I stumbled. He swept me up into his arms, and I couldn’t help burrowing into his warm body.

“What are you doing?” Mom gasped, horrified.

“Taking my girl to bed, and if you don’t get out of my way, then I’ll come through you,” Slick said and walked forward.

Mom held her ground until the final step and then, with a snort, stepped aside.

I was barely awake by the time Slick entered my room. I should have asked how he guessed where my bedroom was, but sleep beckoned.

The bed dipped beside me, and Slick hauled me into his arms. “Rest, Summer. There’s my good girl, just relax, everything will be better when you wake.”

Slick

Summer curled into his embrace like a trusting cat. Within seconds, she was sleeping soundly and oblivious to anything else. Slick pulled his phone from his jean pocket and dialled Drake.

“What’s the news, Pres?” he asked as soon as Drake answered.

Drake yawned loudly down the call. “Shit ain’t pretty. Cameras picked up four bikers approaching the centre. They caught them clearly; they were Venomous Fangs. Your girl was a target, and the cops also have the beating of her uncle on tape. The cameras recorded them pouring the gasoline and then attacking Brian. That’s the uncle, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Brian comes from the far end of the garden centre and tries to stop them. When they shove him off and start the fire, Brian heads for the closest greenhouse and gets jumped by three of them. Brother, he’s lucky to be alive with the kicking he took,” Drake said.

“Bad?”

“If the dude ain’t got brain damage, he’s gonna be lucky. Brian fought them, hurting two. But they all got away. We’ve got facials, but nobody recognises them. Hawthorne will run their images tomorrow. Mac’s covering you,” Drake stated.

“Call Mac back. If they’re targeting Summer, it’s too dangerous for her to be with me,” Slick replied and ignored his heart breaking.

“Don’t be a fool,” Drake snapped.

“Pres, this girl is more innocent than Sin and Carly ever were. I ain’t gonna open Summer’s life up to the shit the Fangs will rain down on her. The best thing for Summer isn’t to be seen with me until this is ended.”

“Summer your one?”

“Yes.”

“Then, brother, you are making a big fuckin’ mistake. Summer is going to need you, and you’re turning your back on her at her lowest point since her dad died. Do you think Summer will forgive you?” Drake pressed.

“No, I don’t. But she’ll live clean and free. Drake, I can’t give her what a normal man can. Letting Summer go is the best way to love her. Talk later,” Slick said and ended the call.

He couldn’t have spoken for much longer because of the tears in his throat. They were so thick he felt he was choking on them.

Slick stroked Summer’s hair, taking in her delicate features and memorising them. To save her, he’d destroy himself. Slick knew Summer had feelings for him, but they weren’t loved. Without question, Slick loved her, but Summer wasn’t all the way yet. And that would be her saving grace. It would give her a chance to move on. To find happiness with a better man. Because she deserved it.

For now, he would hold her for the last time and let the memories wash over him of their breakfast and lunch dates. Of

Summer's smiles and laughter. Slick should have known he wouldn't get his happily ever after.

Bitterness rose as he studied Summer's face, searing it into his memory. Less than a fortnight's worth of dates. That's all he had to keep himself going for the rest of his life.

Slick could be the bigger man. He'd suck up her pain and recrimination, but Summer and her uncle wouldn't be threatened again. Slick would let her go because she belonged in the sunshine, not residing in the darkness swirling around Rage. He loved Summer enough to want her happy, no matter how his own heart broke.

Summer

When I woke, Slick was still holding me, but he seemed off. I'd expected a smile or hug, but as soon as my eyes popped open, Slick's arms released me. A little confused and embarrassed, I scurried to the bathroom, brushed my teeth, and used the toilet before hurrying back to my bedroom. When I got there, Slick was sitting on the edge of the bed, and I went to join him. No sooner had my ass sat than Slick jumped up and ran a hand through his hair.

"I called the hospital. Brian is stable and awake. You can see him anytime you wish," Slick said, and happiness rushed through me.

"His speech is slightly slurred, and he has some memory loss, but he'll be fine," Slick continued.

"That's great news!" I gasped with joy.

"Yeah."

A cold feeling began growing in my stomach as I realised Slick didn't seem to be happy.

"What aren't you telling me?" I whispered.

The look that Slick shot me was bad. I sensed the world crumbling beneath me.

"Culprits were caught on camera. They were members of the Venomous Fangs. The garden centre was targeted because of your link to me," Slick said abruptly.

“No!” I exclaimed.

“Yes. Brian got a beating, and you lost a greenhouse because you were seen with me.”

“So what do we do? Do I increase security?” I asked.

“You can do until the message gets around,” Slick replied coldly.

“What?” I whispered, frightened suddenly.

“Summer, this was supposed to be fun and happiness. Instead, it’s ended with shit. I do not want you involved in this crap. You’re a good woman, but you are not equipped to deal with this. And I don’t have time to run around protecting you and your uncle. You were a distraction, but one that’s gotta end,” Slick said, and I flinched at his words.

“A distraction?”

“Yeah, I thought we could have been something, but last night made me realise we can’t. Our worlds don’t mesh. And I don’t want to be constantly watching over someone.”

Tears formed, but I was fucked if I’d let him see me cry.

“You just wanted some fun?” I questioned. “Guess I’m not like the usual women that hang around a MC.”

“No, you’re not. And you’ll never be.”

“Get out. Now!” I said, trying to hold my voice steady.

For a moment, I thought I saw pain in Slick’s eyes, and then they went blank.

“If you come across any trouble after I’ve gone—”

“It’s nothing to do with you. I get it. Leave,” I replied bitterly.

Again, I saw regret in his eyes, but it was fleeting. Slick didn’t say another word but spun on his heel and left.

“I’d fallen in love with you,” I mumbled as he shut the door. “What an idiot I was to believe someone like you would ever love me.”

And with those words, I curled into a ball and wept bitterly.

Slick

Slick stiffened as he caught Summer's whispered words, and it took everything in his power not to turn around and beg. He had to let her go. Summer deserved better.

Movement caught his eye, and he saw Summer's mom ducking behind a door. His keen ears heard whispering, and he guessed the two bitches were preparing their claws.

Slick slammed his hand against the door, and Summer's mother flew backwards.

"What do you think—" she began, and Slick made a slashing motion with his hand.

"I've no doubt that you two were listening, but I bet you didn't hear shit. Keep this in mind: I may be walking away from Summer, but it's protecting her. I love her. I will always love her. But she deserves better than the crap I'm bringing with me," Slick said in a low voice.

"How—"

"Shut the hell up. I'll be watching, and if Summer looks sad, or pained, or anything but fuckin' happy, you'll be dealing with me. Do you get me? Summer deserves to live the life she was meant to, not be a slave to you two cunts. If I hear anything about Summer being miserable, I'll make your lives hell, and so will my club. You may think you're above shit, but you haven't met Rage or its old ladies. Don't fuck with Summer, and I won't fuck with you," Slick warned and then left.

The hate Slick felt towards them barely had a lid on it. And while he didn't approve whatsoever of hitting a woman, he'd love to smash the two of them into little pieces.

Slick left the house raging, and he knew why.

Upstairs in that miserable home was his girl, and she was crying her eyes out.

Slick's threat wouldn't stop those bitches for long, and they'd try to tear her down again. He made a mental note to get Casey

and Aurora Victoria to watch over Summer. Those two women would bolster her and give her a much-needed friendship.

For now, he needed to get drunk and forget this shit ever happened. Not that he would, because Slick knew Summer held his heart and would forever.

CHAPTER TEN.

Summer

It was three days since Slick had dumped me so unexpectedly. And they'd been a nightmare ever since. That first night, neither Mom nor Marianne came near me. I'd guessed they had known, and I'd been prepared for them to pull me down. But they said nothing. The next day, however, was a different story. Smug, knowing looks were aimed in my direction, and they both looked like the cats who'd got the cream. I listened to their lists of demands and then listlessly ignored them and headed out to see Uncle Brian.

He was still out of it, and his words were most certainly slurring, and I was worried. The doctors told me it was normal with head trauma, but it didn't stop me from fussing. Uncle Brian's hand and eye co-ordination had also been affected, which upset him greatly. After seeing him, I made my way to the garden centre, which remained shut by the police and fire department.

A kind officer, Detective Lucas, met me there and asked several questions, which ended up with me in tears when he questioned my relationship with Slick. The poor man obviously felt guilty. He patted my shoulder and inquired about insurance. Something I most certainly did have. In a business this size, I'd have been foolish not to.

Detective Lucas was nice enough to hang around and help me when I called the provider. At one point, he even took the phone and spoke to them.

When Detective Lucas left, he gave me his card and told me if there were any problems, then to give him a call. He was such a good man.

After tidying up some stuff and checking the damage to the other greenhouses, which, luckily, they'd escaped free and clear, I returned home.

No sooner had I walked through the door than Mom had dumped a basket of clothes at my feet and told me to wash them. I didn't have the energy to argue and silently bent down to grab them.

"Did you really think a man like that would hang around?" Mom taunted.

"I don't want to talk," I whispered and tried to sidestep her.

"That's just it, Summer. You've no backbone, no strength; you're a weak little mouse who obeys those above her. He had no respect for you because you garner none," Mom continued.

I didn't say a word but kept my head down and tried to move again.

"A man like that needs fire, passion. He was checking me out," Mom said and plumped up her breasts.

Oh God, she was so full of herself it was ridiculous, but I couldn't muster the energy to argue. I was hurting too badly from last night, and all I wanted to do was lick my wounds in peace. Mom wasn't exactly saying anything new. I was okay looking, nothing stunning, and I didn't have a forceful personality. That was fine with me. I did not like confrontations. There was nothing wrong with wanting a quiet life.

"Did you think he was Prince Charming to your Cinderella?" Marianna sneered from behind me. Great, now there were both of them. "Did you believe he was gonna rescue you? Pathetic. I bet he had a wager going with his friends in that gang. See who could make the idiot village girl fall for him?"

That stung. But I knew it wasn't true. Slick might have hurt me, but he was not like that.

"You don't know what you're talking about," I whispered and tried to move a third time.

A shove in my back made me stumble as Marianne pushed me hard.

"Do not back chat to me!" she hissed.

Without warning, my temper flared as my pain turned into a ball of burning fury. I snarled in return and threw Mom's basket at her, hitting her in her stomach.

Mom gasped as I spun on Marianne, who was reaching to hit me. I caught her hand and instead slapped her face with myself.

Marianne looked horrified and stunned as my anger lent me strength I didn't realise I had. I shoved her against the wall and used my body to trap her there.

"I am no longer that terrified thirteen-year-old you can slap about. Like it or not, I am an adult, and I am sick to death of you two. Either of you touch me again, I shall smack you back. Between you both, you have made my life a living misery. You haven't once asked about Uncle Brian or how bad the damage was, and *I am done*. So totally over you both. From now on in, you are both on your own. You're fucking adults, not children. I'm giving you one month, and then I want you out of my house. And yes, Mom, I'll make sure I get that put in writing from my lawyer because I know what you are like."

Mom and Marianne looked shocked as I shoved away from Marianne and stormed upstairs.

"Start looking for somewhere else to live. You're done here," I threw over my shoulder.

I slapped the door open to my room and kicked it shut before throwing myself on the bed and breaking down into tears. Wasn't it typical? I'd stood up for myself finally, but only when I had been dumped by the man of my dreams. Maybe if Slick had seen that, he wouldn't have broken up with me.

Christ, love hurt so badly when it wasn't returned.

Irish

Fuck, he was a mess. I watched Slick from across the dive bar where he'd been for the last four nights. Whatever had happened was destroying him. He sloppily slammed his empty beer glass down and motioned for another. Rage had been

looking for him for three nights, and I doubted they'd ever check there.

An informant had told me that Slick's woman had been targeted and a family member hurt. That did not explain Slick's isolation or why he was drinking alone.

I'd watched Summer for two days as she worked at the garden centre. It'd now reopened, and she looked as miserable as Slick. Something didn't make sense.

Slick bellowed at the bartender for another drink, so I decided to move.

"Belay that. He's coming with me," I stated to the guy behind the bar.

He nodded at me. "That's a man in pain, love, not looking for a pickup," he replied.

"Yeah. Good job I know the asshole, isn't it? I'll take him home," I said as I approached Slick.

Slick looked up at me blearily and offered a sloppy smile. "Well, now, it's Biker Bitch," he cried, throwing an arm out and nearly hitting someone.

"Sorry, dude, I'm taking him home," I exclaimed as the guy turned.

He sent Slick a dark look and nodded.

"Ain't got no home, Irish," Slick said as he peered at his empty glass. "Fuck, did I drink that already?"

"Well, you are a sloppy drunk," I mumbled, positioning myself beside him. I threw his arm over my shoulder, and Slick hauled me in close.

"Ya pretty baby, but not tonight. I'm in recovery from love," Slick muttered.

"Yeah, you're coming home with me and sobering up," I replied.

Slick began to struggle, and I caught his chin in my fingers. "Don't start shit you can't handle. I will put you on

your ass and make you cry like a baby. Now follow me out of here, and I'll find you a bed for the night."

"Ain't going," Slick snarled.

I jabbed a thumb into a nerve, which would cause him a fuck load of pain. Slick gasped and paled.

"Move, or the next thing I do is far worse."

Slick staggered to his feet, giving me a dirty look. That was fine. I could handle nasty stares and glares.

I led Slick from the bar, staggering under his weight, but I got him to my SUV without much issue.

"What brought this on?" I asked as he struggled to open the door. Jesus, how drunk was he?

"I lost Summer," Slick almost wailed.

I finally opened the door.

He stared at the inside, and I ended up giving him a shove.

"How did you lose her?" I questioned as he sorted himself out on the seat.

Maybe that was a question I shouldn't have asked. As I climbed into the driver's seat, Slick let the whole story spill. And boy, was he hurting. Even though I wasn't one to believe in love and all the HEA shit, I could feel for Slick's pain because he was suffering. And I had to admire his strength in setting her free.

Slick was right, Summer was not built for this life.

By the time I got him to the motel I was staying at, Slick was staring out the window silently with agony radiating off him.

"Come on," I said and climbed out to open his door.

Slick quietly staggered, and I led him to my room.

When I'd booked the motel, I'd just wanted a double or king-size bed. The only room that had one also had a single. That was handy tonight as I dumped Slick's ass on it. Within seconds, he'd curled into the foetal position and was asleep.

I shook my head and grabbed a bottle of water and some painkillers, then I put them on the bedside table next to him. Slick thought he was in a world of pain now. Wait till he sobered up.

Slick

Slick wrapped the towel around his waist and peered into the mirror. Holy shit did he look rough. His eyes were red from the drinking, and his skin looked sallow. This was not him.

Slick had woken an hour ago and wondered where the fuck he was. Then memories flooded back, and he groaned.

Irish wasn't around when he'd woken up, so he could only assume she was working or something. Or whatever she did. That was a question he wanted answered.

He ran a hand through his still-wet hair and picked up his tee. A quick sniff informed him that there was no way he was putting that back on his body. With only one option, Slick left the bathroom to call a brother and was shocked to find Irish in the room.

“Didn't hear you come in.”

“Not surprised, considering how long you were under that shower. I brought you some clothes. I had to guess your size, but I think they'll fit. You can dress in there,” Irish ordered as she studied something on her mobile.

A frown crossed her face, and then she shoved it away in a pocket.

“All okay?” Slick asked, tilting his head towards the now invisible phone.

“Yup. Get dressed. I don't like half-naked men in my room,” Irish said bluntly.

Slick bit his tongue. He nearly asked her if she liked naked men, but that was too close to flirting. And while she was beautiful, he wanted the entire package. Not a quick fuck. Irish wasn't his perfect woman. Even though, before Summer, he'd have put moves on her. She was most certainly attractive.

Shaking his head free of those thoughts, they went to places he didn't want to go.

Slick grabbed the bag on his bed and walked back to the bathroom. For guesses, Irish hadn't done bad as the tee, jeans, and boxers fit. She'd included some socks, a sweater, and a toothbrush.

"Thank you for last night," he said when he entered the room again.

"You were an idiot. Fangs could have picked you up, and you were in no condition to fight. Rage could have lost a brother," Irish shot his thanks down.

"Shit happens. Might have been a blessing," Slick retorted, sitting on his bed.

"Think that girl would think so?"

"Probably... after I shattered her heart," Slick said as his gut clenched and he felt sick.

"Broke your own, too," Irish stated.

"Yeah."

Silence, but it wasn't an awkward one. Irish seemed to be thinking, and Slick wanted to know what. But he guessed pushing her would lead to a fight.

"Sure, something isn't wrong?" he finally asked gently.

"Shit's perfect as usual. I'll take you to the bar, and you can collect your bike. The bartender offered to put it in the shed they had there to keep it safe."

"Decent of him."

"I paid him fifty bucks. Pay me back later," Irish said shortly.

"Will do," he promised.

The silence fell again, and then Irish looked at him.

"Isn't it time to leave?" she asked.

"Sorry. I'm taking advantage of you," he muttered.

“Yes, and I have stuff to do. Come on,” she ordered, getting to her feet and walking out the door. Slick shoved his filthy clothes in the bag, grabbed his keys from the side, and followed.



Luckily for him, his bike was still there. Irish dropped him off and disappeared without a word. Slick scowled after her, but there was a lot of gratitude in him. She’d taken care of him when she didn’t have to and made sure his ride was safe. Slick now owed her—again.

He was dragging when he entered the Rage forecourt half an hour later and saw Apache and Ace sending scowls in his direction.

Drake came out of a bay, and Slick raised a hand and vanished through the gates that led to the compound.

Without a word to Savage, who was on the gate, Slick headed for the clubhouse. Not many were present, although those that were sent him worried looks as he stormed through it, heading for his room. Once inside, Slick closed the door and tuned out the world. He wasn’t surprised when, ten minutes later, Drake burst through and kicked the door shut.

“Where have you been?” Drake demanded.

“A dive bar, drinking the world away.”

“And you couldn’t answer your phone or messages?” Drake snarled.

“I replied to you. Told you I needed a few days,” Slick answered.

“And that was the last we heard. Fangs might have had hold of you,” Drake growled out.

“Don’t give me shit. You knew where I was. The moment I said I wanted to be alone, you had Mac track my phone and watch me for movement. I bet you even sent someone past the motel,” Slick replied calmly as he laid back on his bed.

“Slick, you’re such a fuckin’ smart ass,” Drake snapped and sat down on a chair.

“Yeah. Not smart enough to keep my woman, though. I led the Fangs straight to her and her family.”

“That was something none of us expected. Fuck, you’ve barely begun to see her,” Drake said and lent his elbows on his knees.

“Yet it was plenty of time for a Fang to recognise she meant something to me. I nearly fucked Summer’s life up.”

“You love her,” Drake stated.

“Yup. And save your words. I love her enough to know she’d be miserable. That the trouble we would bring to her doorstep would eventually wear her down and break her. I love her so much; I’m setting her free to fly.”

“And when she finds a boring asshole to marry?”

“Then I will make sure she stays happy, and he never raises a hand to her. I’ll love her from a distance.”

“Slick, it’s not often I say this, but you are a fuckin’ tool. You’ve literally decided for Summer the life she leads, whether she wants it or not. And what if that girl spends the rest of her life alone, grieving the man she loved and lost?”

“She won’t; Summer is far too special,” Slick denied, shaking his head.

“And you’re letting her slip through your fingers,” Drake said as he got to his feet. He didn’t say another word. His point had been made. Slick watched his pres shut the door behind him and leave. Just as Slick wanted.

Irish

It had been two more days since I’d dropped Slick off, and here I was, watching him again. I swear to God the man had a death wish. Drake had given orders that nobody go out alone, yet here he was, all on his lonesome. For some reason, I always ended up watching Slick. I wasn’t a lovely dovey person. I didn’t believe in true love and all that bullshit. Sexual attraction is what I believed in, and I was attracted to Slick. I had an itch and wanted him to scratch it. That was the simple facts.

Even so, I couldn't in all conscience allow Slick to roam about with a death wish. I watched as he came out of the tattoo shop that Rage co-owned with Hellfire MC. I saw Cowboy run after him, and there was a brief conversation before Slick took off.

With a sigh, I was about to follow when a bike flew from an alley behind the store, and a member of Rage raced after Slick.

Well, now, that freed me up to keep the plans I'd already made.

Slick

He didn't know why he was here, but something had drawn him back. Something was bothering him in relation to Irish. And it was his attraction to her, which was purely sexual. Slick was able to admit he wouldn't mind fucking her, but she wasn't Summer or what his heart wanted.

Even so, Slick was here, watching her room. That, too, did not make sense.

Artemis insisted she must have a base somewhere, but Irish was living out of a motel.

That was a conundrum, and he demanded answers. It was bothering him how Irish knew when attacks were going to happen, and he wanted to know how she got her information. So here he was, lurking in the shadows like some damn pervert, watching Irish. Slick knew she was inside; he'd seen movement, but she wasn't alone. There was a taller, bulkier figure with her. Which meant, for now, Slick watched and waited.

It was an hour later that Irish's door opened, and he sat up as she poked her head out and glanced around. Slick shrank into the shadows, knowing she wouldn't be able to see him. His eyes widened as a tall man, about thirty, stepped past her and gave her a chin lift before moving towards a Harley that Slick had already spotted.

Slick's gaze narrowed when he saw the patch on the guy's back, and his temper flared. He was simply furious. The biker

threw his leg over the bike and took off after a cautious look around. Slick waited ten minutes to ensure the guy didn't double back and then swung off his own bike and stormed towards the motel room.

He was going to get his answers tonight.

He banged on the door, and as soon as Irish opened it, Slick forced his way in.

Irish put up a brief fight before realising it was him. "What the fuck, Slick?" she demanded furiously.

"Yeah, Irish. What the hell. Wanna tell me why a fuckin' Fang just left your room?" Slick spat.

"You're spying on me?" Irish nearly shrieked.

"Seems I got reason to."

"You lowlife!"

Slick crowded Irish against a wall, alert to any defensive moves she might make. He wanted answers and wasn't going to leave without them, and Irish's smart mouth was not getting her out of shit.

"I've every reason to be suspicious. You turn up whenever Rage is attacked, which means inside knowledge. Your weak assed excuse that you offered at the café isn't gonna cut it this time. I want answers," Slick growled out.

Her body was flush against his, and Slick was having trouble controlling his dick. And from the look in Irish's eyes, she was turned on by his actions.

"You have answers. I'm on Rage's side, and you know why," she hissed.

"And I just watched a Fang walk out of here. Who is he? What is he to you?" Slick snarled.

"What he is to me is my secret. It's got fuck all to do with you," Irish retorted.

Slick growled and, without a second thought, slammed his lips down on hers. Irish responded immediately. Her mouth

fused to his, and her hands clenched in his hair. Slick used his body to keep her in place as he plundered her mouth.

“Tell me,” Slick demanded, breaking the kiss.

“The fuck I will,” Irish spat in return.

Slick bent his head angrily and leaned into her body, kissing her again. Irish kissed him back with as much anger.

Slick groaned and, swept her up into his arms, and carried her to the bed. Without preamble, he threw her on it and kicked off his boots before covering her body with his. He kissed her, his hands holding her head still.

“Tell me.”

“Fuck you,” Irish panted.

Slick growled and tore her tee open. His hands shunted under her back, and he lifted her up to straddle his thighs.

His cock dug into her as he rained kisses down upon her exposed neck and breasts.

Irish’s fingers clutched his shoulders as she leaned to allow for his ministrations. Her pelvis ground against his. She used the friction of her jeans to ease the heat between her legs.

Slick’s fingers deftly undid her bra, and he tossed it onto the floor.

“Tell me!” he ordered again as he swooped on her breasts. They were perfect and fit just right into his hands. Her nipples were a dusky pink and hard little bullets demanding his attention. Slick was only too happy to play. One hand slid down her back, cupping her ass and forcing her pelvis even closer to his. “Feel that heat? That’s me and you. Now tell me.” Slick wasn’t giving up.

“Fuck you, asshole,” Irish retorted.

Slick grunted and shoved her on the bed. His hands went to her jeans, undid them, and slid them down her legs.

Irish wore nothing but a pair of plain cotton white panties. On anyone else, they were boring, but on Irish, they were

strangely arousing. Irish forced herself onto her elbows as Slick settled between her thighs and sank his mouth into her.

Her panties were soaked, and he growled at the sweet smell. She was like nothing he'd ever experienced. All fire and passion wrapped up in one angry, sexy package. And he wanted to break her open, discover her secrets, make her trust him. He moved her underwear as his mouth sought her opening. His finger rubbed against her nub, the cotton adding to the friction. Slick's tongue teased as little cries erupted from Irish. He knew a woman's body, and he sensed when she was about to erupt and pulled away.

A cry of denial left her lips as her angry gaze latched onto his.

“Tell me!” Slick ordered.

Fire burst into Irish's eyes, and in one movement, she had him on his back. Her deft fingers released his belt and yanked his jeans halfway down his thighs. Without a word, Irish settled herself over his exposed cock and smirked at him. She slid a condom on and positioned herself.

Irish was so wet that Slick entered easily and with a groan. Her walls pulsed around him, tight and tense, as Irish began fucking his brains out.

“This is me in control, bitch,” Irish moaned as she slammed her hands onto his chest and set a pace that almost made Slick's eyes cross. Her pussy banged against his groin as she rubbed herself against him.

Slick was big and usually took time to prepare a woman, but he saw the awareness of the pain his size caused and knew Irish got off on that. He reached up and twisted her nipples, squeezing them a little, and Irish responded with a pelvic slam that would have made any other woman cry out.

Instead, he noticed the fire stoking and pinched her nipples harder, and Irish screamed her release into the room. Slick fought to get control of himself. He wanted the truth and wanted to punish her. If he came, she'd win.

As Irish rode out her orgasm, he waited and then gripped her hips and slammed her onto her hands and knees.

Irish mewed at the loss of his dick and yelped as he landed two hard slaps on her butt.

“Give me your cock,” she demanded.

She lowered her shoulders to the bed and arched her back. Her ass was presented to him, and Slick groaned. He rubbed his dick along her folds, revelling in her wetness. He slapped her ass again before shoving deep inside her. At this angle, she was under his control, and he knew it.

“Tell me,” He demanded.

“Fuck me! I want all eleven inches of you!” Irish retorted as she clenched around him, squeezing him tightly. Slick was kind of impressed. She’d guessed his size correctly.

Slick thrust again. “Tell me!”

“No!” Irish snarled.

Slick slammed into her and slapped her ass at the same time.

Irish let out a sharp cry as wetness gushed around his cock.

Oh, his little bitch liked that.

He lent forward as he began fucking her with abandon. One hand slid and cupped her breast, and he squeezed it tightly.

Irish responded with a cry of pleasure, and Slick pinched her nipple hard. She became wetter, and Slick could not stop himself. His hands gripped her hips, and he started hammering into her.

Her cries turned him on even more. Irish fucked as wild as she lived, and he loved it. His sole focus was on her and her enjoyment.

“Tell me,” he roared and gave her ass an almighty crack.

Irish jumped in his arms as she came hard at the same time he did. Her walls convulsed, and he spilled inside of her. Slick

kept coming, roaring his pleasure as Irish screamed hers. They were loud and did not care.

Slick finally thrust once more. Then she wrung the last drop from him, and he sagged against her ass. His hands rubbed the redness there, soothing it, but the marks delighted Slick.

“Next time, I’m doing you,” Irish declared, sounding sated.

“Tell me.”

“Okay.”

Slick didn’t preen as he pulled away from her and dumped the condom in the trash can. Irish leapt from the bed and strolled her red, naked ass over to the tiny bathroom. A few minutes later, she returned and threw him some tissue to clean himself off.

Sheepishly, Slick slid his jeans off fully and lay down in bed as Irish sat next to him. Slick tried to pull her down for a cuddle, but she resisted.

“I don’t do that shit,” she snapped, and Slick felt something snap inside. No, Irish would never hug or want closeness after sex. That wasn’t her way. But Slick knew one thing: he cared for her almost as much as he did for Summer.

Only, Irish was not his ideal lady. She could not give him the love he craved. And his heart broke. Once for a woman he wanted and couldn’t have and twice for a woman he could have but wouldn’t offer him love.

What a fuckin’ shitshow.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

Slick

“Well?” he asked as he laid back on the bed with his arms folded under his head.

“That is my contact. His name is Grunt, but before he became Grunt, he was a college student and getting good grades. He had a mom and sister, someone in Florida took a liking to both. Grunt came home one day to find his mom and sister both raped and dead. When the police investigated, they found a lead and buried it. A neighbour had seen a load of bikes outside their house.

“Basically, Grunt tracked the bikers and discovered that Venomous Fangs had raped his mom and sister as a train. The cops were either too shit-scared to do anything or bought off. Grunt disappeared from college, built himself up, and infiltrated them to bring them down. We’re working together.”

“How do you know he can be trusted?” Slick asked.

“Because his sister was twelve and had been assaulted by multiple men. And no, they didn’t give a fuck which hole they banged. Those cunts literally fucked a child to death. And Fury’s asshole nephew was behind it.” The bitterness in Irish’s voice showed.

Bile settled in Slick’s gut. What type of evil raped a twelve-year-old girl and set a train on her?

“How many?” Slick bit out.

“Twenty-four men.”

“Fuck me! Those motherfuckin’ assholes,” Slick erupted. He closed his eyes, unable to imagine the fear the poor kid must have gone through.

“They did the same as my family. They did the mother and daughter in the same room, where they could both see each other’s pain. It seems to be a thing with the Florida chapter,” Irish stated.

Irish may have appeared calm, but Slick could sense the rage and heat inside of her.

“What is it with Fangs and this train raping?” Slick spat.

“You tell me. But it is a common thread in the Florida chapter. You got your answers. It’s time to leave,” Irish said, and Slick’s eyebrows rose.

“Wow, that’s it?” he asked, shocked.

“We fucked; we scratched an itch, but let’s not make this something it’s not. Slick, I’m well aware you’re in love with Summer, and good for you. I ain’t no substitute for her. But we both needed to bone each other, and we’ve done so. It’s time to go.” Irish sounded almost dismissive.

Wow, didn’t Slick feel like a bitch?

“I have got feelings for you, Irish,” he admitted.

She shook her head. “It’s called transference. You’re moving your feelings for Summer onto me because you can’t have her. But from what I’ve seen of her, she’s broken hearted. She’ll take you back.”

“Don’t have to tell me. Summer is my ideal woman, but she can not cope in my world. You, however, I am heavily attracted to, and I care deeply for you. You can cope in this life.”

“And wake up every day knowing that you love another woman? Yeah, not my cup of tea, thanks. Face the facts, I’ll never be that woman’s stand-in. Ain’t denying that we’re not attracted to each other, and we had an itch we wanted to scratch. And you certainly satiated me. I haven’t felt so good for ages. But it’s sex, nothing else. You are feeling so guilty over Summer. You’re mistaking your feelings for something else.”

“Fuck me. So glad you’re inside my heart and head and can tell me what I feel.”

Slick shot up and grabbed his jeans. He dragged them up, refusing to look at Irish. She’d hurt him with her assumptions. He did love Summer, but he also cared deeply for her.

Though, if Irish wanted to be a bitch, then so be it. Slick did not need her. Not like he needed Summer.

“If you need to scratch that itch again, let me know. It was worth the effort,” Irish said.

Her words slammed into Slick like bullets, and biting his tongue so he didn't lash out, he stormed out to his motorbike without a backward glance.

Irish

Damnit, I was such a bitch. As soon as I heard Slick's bike roar out, I collapsed against the bed. Slick had done more than rock my world last night. He'd managed to stay the night, something I never let happen. And then I had trusted him with Grunt's story. Slick was breaking my walls down, and I didn't know how to shore them back up. Since my mother and grandfather's deaths, I'd not allowed myself to have feelings for anyone.

Yet Slick touched me on a level I did not realise existed anymore. I'd carved out all softness from myself and lived for vengeance only.

Slick was making me feel things I didn't want to. It was beyond attraction with him, but if he knew it, he'd push for more. And I didn't know if I could give him more. The one thing that was true was that I couldn't give him what Summer could. There'd be no children from me, no cuddling, no dinners on the table or a happy wife waiting for him to come home.

I was moulded in steel and wouldn't break for anything. As soon as Fury was brought down, I knew I'd have to recoup because there was no plan for me afterwards. I had never even considered surviving past that. It was hard to admit I didn't want to be alone for the rest of my life, and yet letting someone in, a man especially, was foreign to me.

If I let Slick in, I wouldn't be doing him justice. Slick would probably be content but never happy. Summer was the one who could make him happy, and it was something I

bitterly accepted. Nobody could ever say I was cut out to fulfil a man's hopes and dreams.

So, I'd keep shoving these feelings deep inside me—and I'd bury them. It didn't matter what I felt for Slick. At the end of the day, he'd be miserable with me.

Summer

It had been two weeks now since I'd last seen Slick, and the pain was just as bad. I'd retreated into myself, ignoring Mom and Marianne despite the nasty comments. They never stopped. The continuous insults and put-downs were aimed at keeping me low and making me forget what I'd said. But I hadn't.

Uncle Brian had been released from hospital and was back at home. He had not asked about Slick, nor had I offered anything. Instead, I visited him and made sure he had everything he needed and was fed. In return, he sat with me and reminisced about the happy days with Dad.

I'd kept my word and seen a lawyer who'd gone through Dad's will again and ensured me I could indeed throw the witches out. When I told Uncle Brian, he'd laughed and offered to help me evict them as he said they wouldn't go quietly. In the end, the lawyer had told me to give them two months, as that was fair. I wanted them out tomorrow, but it wasn't feasible. The lawyer pointed out they needed to find jobs and somewhere to live, so I had to be seen as being considerate in case they took me to court.

The letter had landed a week ago, and they had both gone crazy. For the next two nights, I'd stayed with Uncle Brian so I didn't have to deal with their screeching. They'd blown my phone up, and each message grew nastier. Uncle Brian had said to keep them as they'd be able to be used as evidence of verbal assault in court.

Work was busy, and repairs had begun on the greenhouse that had been burned. Every so often, I heard bike pipes roaring past, but I refused to look. If it was Rage, I didn't want to know, and if it was Slick, well, that would have broken me.

My phone ringing jolted me from my thoughts of Slick, and, seeing Uncle Brian's name, I answered.

"Hey, baby girl, can I be a pest?"

"What do you want?" I teased.

"That Greek deli in town, could we get lunch from there?" Uncle Brian asked in a mock begging tone.

"What's it worth?"

"My girl is bribing me? No, that never happens. But I might have some iced tea waiting to be drunk."

"I'll be there soon. Text me what you want," I said, getting up from where I'd been kneeling on the floor.

"Use my card," Uncle Brian demanded.

"Uh, huh." I didn't agree or disagree. We'd come to blows this week over who was paying for lunch. As Uncle Brian couldn't get up and order lunch himself, I'd been paying. Two nights ago, he'd forced his card on me so he could pay, but I had not used it yet.

"I can afford to buy my favourite niece food," Uncle Brian snapped.

Oh, I'd insulted his ego. Ouch.

"Okay, but I also want pastries, so you can pay for them, too," I said.

"Done." Uncle Brian hung up without another word.

I looked at my phone and laughed.

Slick

He was coming out of The Reading Nook, joking with Sin as he left, when he saw Irish sitting on her bike outside, waiting. Slick's eyebrows rose, and he stood and stared. Irish removed her helmet and met his stare before jerking her chin for him to approach.

Slick folded his arms, planted his legs, and held her gaze.

"We need to talk," Irish said when she realised he wasn't going to move.

“What about?”

“I got some info.” Irish crossed her own arms.

Fine. Whatever information she had, Slick wanted. Especially if it protected his family or friends. He crossed the short distance and stood by her bike. Slick hid a smirk as he studied her body language. Everything screamed not to touch her, but her eyes had given him the once over, lingering on his crotch. Yeah, she might give off back-away signals, but she was affected by him like he was her.

“Fury has recalled all outside chapters to their homes other than Florida. He has half his men here, and they’re planning something,” Irish said in a low voice.

Slick straightened. “Any idea what?” he demanded.

“Nope. Grunt says it is big, and only a selected few are involved. He’s not one of them, which means he can’t get me info. Keep your eyes open and warn your allies.”

“When is it?”

“Within the next week. I’ve a bad feeling about this, Slick. It’s not like Fury to close down the information pipeline. The asshole likes to brag. The fact he ain’t now means he suspects a spy, or it’s huge what he’s planning,” Irish said.

“Okay. Thanks for the warning. Is that it?” Slick asked, watching her eyes.

“Yup.”

“Why ya come in person? This shit you could have given me over the phone. You wanted to see me, didn’t you?” Slick taunted.

Anger flashed on Irish’s face. And Slick grew hard. He loved that temper of hers. He reached forward, grabbed a handful of her jacket, and yanked her towards him. Slick didn’t give her a chance to argue as his mouth descended, and he kissed the fuck out of her.

Irish responded with her usual abandon. Inside, Slick smirked. Irish wanted him, despite her denials.

His skin prickled as if someone were watching him, and Slick broke the kiss off.

Standing on the corner where the Greek deli stood was Summer. She carried a bag in one hand, and her other covered her mouth. The look on Summer's face slayed him. She looked betrayed. Tears formed in her eyes as he held her gaze, and then she spun on the spot and raced off.

"Summer!" Slick bellowed, taking two steps, and then he remembered Irish. He turned back to her and found her watching, expressionless.

"That is why we aren't gonna happen. You're totally in love with her, and I ain't no fucker's replacement."

Before Slick could reply, Irish revved her bike and sped off.

Summer

The tears kept falling even as I dashed them away. I couldn't believe what I had seen. Slick had been kissing that girl, and it was clear they had history by the way their bodies had pressed together. Horror and resignation had hit me. What the two witches had been saying was the truth. I wasn't enough for a man like Slick, and it hurt. Shit, we'd split up two weeks ago, and he had already moved on. Meanwhile, I was a total sap, grieving what I'd lost in bed and crying.

What a sheer idiot I'd been. Too innocent, too nice, too naïve. Yeah, I bet the two witches had been laughing the entire time I'd been with him. It stung so badly to think he had been playing a different game to me. I was such a damn pushover and fool. Mom had been right. I was boring and destined to be with a fat, ugly, roly-poly guy like Denton Smithers down the road from us. He was as unattractive as they came, but he'd made it clear he was interested in me. That was the type of man I should be with, not someone like Slick.

I kept wiping tears from my eyes as I drove to Uncle Brians and tried to calm myself down. If he saw me like this, he would blow a fuse. After several deep, calming breaths, I

finally got control back and stopped crying. The pain was a solid lump in my gut, but I could ignore it for now.

The manager was at the garden centre, so I could send them a text after lunch, telling them I'd had an emergency appointment come through. Then I could go home and cry.

On second thoughts, the two witches would be there. I'd visit Dad and talk shit out with him. There would be nobody to judge my tears then. If anyone saw me, they'd think I was grieving. And being around Dad's grave, while upsetting, was comforting. It was all I had left of him. And right now, I needed my dad.

Slick

He ran across the street for his bike. Drake lifted an eyebrow from where he stood and had clearly seen everything.

“Damn fool!” Drake bellowed as Slick swung a leg over and chased after Summer. There was only one place Summer would be heading: the garden centre. Slick raced through the streets, a sense of urgency driving him. He needed to explain, although what he was explaining, Slick didn't know.

Without a doubt, he loved Summer, but he also loved Irish. And today, he had hurt both ladies. Slick could not stand the thought of Summer believing he was cheating on her. Slick was in a position he never thought he'd find himself in. Loving two women and not sure who to choose. He couldn't see life without Summer, even though he'd been trying to force that on himself. But he needed Irish's fire and darkness. What a fuckin' mess.

Slick pulled up at the garden centre and searched for Summer's beat-up car. It wasn't there. But that did not mean she hadn't parked it elsewhere. He marched in and found a member of staff who informed him she wasn't there. That didn't soothe him at all. When he asked where Summer was, he got a blank look and was told her whereabouts due to company policy were private.

Slick left with a growl and stormed back to his bike. He dialled Mac.

“Track me Summer’s phone,” Slick demanded as soon as Mac answered.

“Good afternoon, too, asshole,” Mac snorted.

Slick went to reply, but he heard Mac’s fingers on his keyboard. He bit his tongue as Mac searched for Summer.

“She’s at this address,” Mac replied, rattling it off.

“Who lives there?” Slick snapped. That wasn’t her home address.

“A Brian Chambers.”

“Summer’s uncle. Thanks, brother,” Slick said and cut the call.

No doubt Mac would wait for him later and give payback for his rudeness. Slick felt like a noose was tightening around his throat. He had to speak to Summer, and now.



As he arrived at the property, Slick caught sight of Summer getting into her car. She drove out of the driveway and moved away. Slick throttled his motorbike and pulled up alongside her. The look on her face nearly killed him as he waved for her to pull over.

Summer shook her head, but Slick followed her for a few more minutes, and finally, Summer came to a stop.

Slick was off his bike and racing toward her the second he was able to.

His hand hit the door handle, and he found it was locked. Slick’s eyes met hers through the window, and the pain and humiliation in them slayed him again.

She wound down the window a little bit.

“Open the door, baby.”

“We’ve nothing to say.”

“Please, open the door,” Slick begged.

“Slick, you’ve moved on. I don’t know what this is about, but leave me alone. I thought there was more to us than what

there was. That was my mistake. Please, I am not going to harass you or anything.”

“Summer, God damn it, I love you.” The words burst free from Slick as the panic rose in his gut.

“No, you do not. I’m a mouse, nothing like the women in your past. Slick, I read more into it than I should have. It’s okay, I should have realised I was just a diversion to you,” Summer whispered brokenly.

Slick cursed as her eyes filled with tears.

“For those two weeks, you were my world. I didn’t break it off with you because of anything you did. It was me. Brian was attacked by Venomous Fangs. Your greenhouse was burnt because we’re at war with them. Summer, I was trying to protect you. You’re not used to the ugliness of my life. To expose you to that would have scarred you, Fangs have already hit out at you. So, protecting you and give you a beautiful life, I broke up with you because it’s what I thought was best. I love you. I fell in love with you the first time we met.”

“But you kissed that woman,” Summer argued.

Slick heard the pain in her voice, and he wanted to hold her and soothe it away. But Summer was not opening that fuckin’ door and was using it as a shield between them.

“I did kiss her, baby. The one thing I promised you is I would never lie. I love you with everything I have. With you, I see my future, and it’s perfect. But that’s selfish of me because I’ve got darkness inside me, and I don’t want it to affect you.

“Irish, she is dark, too. She understands my cruel side, as she has one of her own. I’m very attracted to her and have feelings for her as well. But it’s you I love, and I tried to stay away. I did, baby, but it’s killing me. Each day, I wake up, and your smile is the first thing I see before I even open my eyes. Laughing on the picnic blanket with you is the last thing I see when I go to sleep.”

“How sweet,” Summer murmured, not bothering to hide her bitterness.

“Summer, I tried to stay away and keep you safe. I’d burn the world if something happened to you. And I honestly didn’t want you exposed to this dark side of my life and rage. You are sunshine and beauty, and I am a fuckin’ greedy asshole who wants to lap that up and keep it to myself.

“I’ve been going out of my damn mind thinking of you moving on and finding somebody else. Oh, I’d still watch over you. You’re like ambrosia to me. The forbidden fruit. I told myself that I would hide in the shadows, ensure you were safe and happy. If the man you eventually chose hurt you, I’d bury him. It’s been driving me to drink to think of you having the future I want with you, but with someone else.”

Slick let everything out and hoped he’d reach her. He knew she was hurting and in pain, and he wanted nothing more than to wrap his arms around her and promise her forever.

“You kissed that woman, Irish, wasn’t it? And it wasn’t the first time,” Summer accused.

Slick sensed the blood drain from his face.

“Said I wouldn’t lie. I slept with Irish after we broke up. I was angry and hurting, and she gave me what I wanted.”

Summer flinched at his words. Slick knew he was losing her. The self-doubts were written all over her beautiful face.

“Irish likes kinky stuff, doesn’t she? Punishment like that BDSM book. I’ve read it. I know what goes on. You enjoy that type of sex, don’t you?” Summer pushed.

“Yes, but I want to love a woman. I’d never do that shit with you. I’d worship you from head to toe.”

“But you also need that.”

“I can ignore it for a lifetime with you.”

“Slick, you have feelings for Irish,” Summer whispered, studying his face. “You might not be voicing them, but she’s in your heart, too. And I don’t do threesomes. I’m selfish enough to want to be the only woman in my husband’s life. You may possibly be able to deny her, but it would eat you up inside.”

“All I ever dreamed of is you.” Slick broke a second time.

“And your kinky sex with Irish? I won’t be the fool waiting once or twice a week for you to scratch your itch while I wait at home like the good little woman. I fell in love with you, too, and you’re killing me with this. It was bad enough believing I wasn’t good enough for you, but now I am fighting against a woman who already owns half your heart. An open relationship has never appealed to me.

“What if Irish ups and leaves? Do you find a replacement for her? Would that be our life together, me having to ignore the jealousy and cheating because you needed your kink? I am sorry, Slick, but please, if you love me, let me go.” Summer wiped tears from her eyes as she silently pleaded with him.

Slick wanted to rip the door separating them off and hold her and talk her round, but Summer was right. He did have feelings for Irish.

“I’d never cheat on you.”

“You already did. Please let me go. You’re breaking me,” Summer begged now.

“Remember this, I love you. If you need me, call, I’ll be waiting for you,” Slick promised as tears formed in his own eyes.

Summer nodded and then drove away.

Slick watched her go as his heart shattered. And he didn’t think it would ever be put back together again.

CHAPTER TWELVE.

Summer

“‘**Y**ou need to stop moping,” Marianne sneered at me three days later.

“Get a job. You’ve got six weeks before you have to leave,” I retorted from where I lay curled in my bed.

“Yeah, I think you might be surprised at what is going to happen.”

“No, you know what surprises me? The fact that Dad, who was so clever and loving, ever fell for a bitch like you. You did a good job at snowing him, Marianne, but he was figuring it out. He’d filed for divorce when he died. Dad had finally seen the evilness inside you and was going to get shot,” I hissed, leaping to my feet.

“That’s a damn lie!” Marianne shrieked.

“No, it’s not. I was with him.”

“You’re lying. He loved me, and you’re just being a spiteful brat.”

“I have the paperwork if you want to see it. Dad signed his signature, and you were gonna be served,” I said calmly. “Why do you think you were left nothing in the will? It was because Dad had already seen the writing on the wall. Dad knew how nasty you were to me. He’d heard it. He even had video footage from a baby cam recording you being cruel. Don’t worry, Marianne, karma is a bitch, and I’m going to make sure you get what you deserve.”

Marianne shrieked and aimed a slap at my face.

I caught her wrist and held it tightly.

“I am no longer the girl you can push around, Marianne. Both you and Mom need to learn a very hard lesson. You have six weeks to find a job and get the hell out of my house. You’ve been served with papers, and I will take you to court to

have you evicted. I owe you nothing. Not anymore. You and mom have preyed on me for years. And enough is enough.”

“You’re overly distraught. Perhaps you need to take some time to think about what you’re doing.” Mum’s voice came from outside my door.

Still holding Marianne’s wrist, I twisted my head to face Mum. There was a hint of fear in her eyes that I’d never seen before.

“Say what you want, Mother Dearest. But I am over the abuse that you and Marianne dish out constantly. You had a chance to be a decent human being when Dad died, and you ignored it. Hell, you disregarded the chance to be a decent parent when you and Dad split up, and you spat on it. You’ve always been jealous of me, and I’m not sure why. Maybe it’s because dad loved me with everything he had, but that’s what a parent should do with a child. The two of you are narcissistic, and I have no energy left in my life to pander to you.

“You may think humiliating me and revelling in my pain over what happened between me and Slick is fun. What does that say about you taking enjoyment from someone’s pain? Eventually, even a wounded animal turns. Every chance you’ve had, you have put me down; you have humiliated, embarrassed, and made fun of me. I no longer wish for either of you to be in my life. And I won’t be paying your bills or giving you money for shit anymore. You bled Dad dry, and you’ve tried the same with me. So make the most of your last six weeks with me because once you are gone, you will never see me again. Now get out of my bedroom!” I screeched the last sentence and shoved Marianne away.

She stumbled backwards, and then when she faced me, her eyes were full of hate. “You’ll regret this bitch,” she hissed before turning on her heel and leaving.

“I’m so disappointed in you, Summer,” Mom said. “All the stuff I did for you, and you spit in my face. Whatever you think you’re doing is so wrong. I’m your mother. The very least I deserve is respect.”

“Respect goes two ways, and you’ve never offered me any. In fact, most of what I remember is snide remarks and insults. You undermined my confidence any way you could and then played mother of the year when we had company. Do you honestly think I don’t remember my childhood? How you claimed I was a burden, but you suffered for me? How many people bought that shit from you? You’re toxic, Mom. Dad saw it, and so do I. But you’ll be free of me soon, so just keep plodding along, and you better hurry at finding another schmuck to look after you. It’s what you’re good at.”

And on that, I slammed the door in her face. I really didn’t want to deal with her shit tonight. After I locked the door from the inside, I curled back on my bed and let the pain wash over me. No matter what I did, someone always wanted to hurt me.



I was in greenhouse five, moving pots and some stores around the next day, and I thought over the last painful meeting with Slick. The conversation wouldn’t leave me alone. I kept chewing over it like a dog with a bone. Uncle Brian had returned to work today. He was still sore but enjoyed sitting at the front doing his usual job of meet and greet. His smiles made my heart heal a little, and I was thankful he was getting better.

Uncle Brian had guessed things had gone wrong between me and Slick, but he held his own counsel. All he’d said was that when I needed an ear, I knew where he was. That unquestionable support meant the world to me.

I was moving some water fountains towards the front. I planned on putting them on display when I thought I saw a shadow behind some of the racking.

“Hello?” I called out. “Uncle Brian?”

Nobody answered.

With a shake of my head, I continued to move the fountains. They were heavy buggers, and I could only lift one at a time.

A sudden creaking noise from behind me made me jump.

I turned and had a mere second of horror before the racking fell and buried me under heavy bags of compost.



“Summer, can you hear me?” a voice said as I battled the darkness. Someone had been calling my name, and they were getting annoyed.

“Summer, come on, baby girl, open those eyes for Uncle Brian,” he said, but he sounded upset. That wasn’t right. Nobody upset my uncle.

“What?” I asked, drawing the word out.

There were flashes of light, and I realised I was blinking.

“That’s it, baby, open those beautiful eyes,” Uncle Brian urged.

“Hi,” I whispered through cracked lips.

“Nice to see those beautiful peepers open. You scared the shit out of me, girl,” Uncle Brian chided.

“Where am I?” I asked as Uncle Brian held a glass to my lips. There was a straw in it, and I latched on and drank.

“Hospital. You were found under some racking and compost bags. The racking had collapsed and buried you,” Uncle Brian said.

“No. There had been somebody there,” I said, remembering the shadow.

“Are you saying it wasn’t an accident?” a man asked, stepping forward. “I’m Doc Paul. I’m just going to check you over.”

“Okay, and I’m not sure. Remember someone being there, but they didn’t answer when I called out. I was moving water fountains?” I asked, frowning.

“Yeah.”

“There was a shadow. But they didn’t reply. Did they hurt me?” I asked plaintively.

“Are you sure? You did hit your head, and you do have concussion,” Doc Paul interrupted.

“I’m sure there was someone,” I insisted.

“That will be easy enough to check. That racking is only a few years old and is bolted to the ground. It is checked every quarter for safety reasons. I’ll get someone out,” Uncle Brian said as he pulled his phone out.

“Good idea. Now, Summer, you might not be feeling pain yet as we’ve given you some strong medication. But you will soon press the button, and that will give you pain relief,” Doc Paul said, holding up a remote. He placed it next to my hand.

“How bad was I hurt?” I finally asked.

“You hit your head and needed stitched, and you’ll be covered in bumps and bruises from the racking and equipment landing on you. But luckily, nothing was broken. Your ankle took a very bad whack and will be painful to walk on, but apart from that, you’re going to be just fine,” Doc Paul said with a wink.

Slick

Slick raced to the hospital, panic-stricken. He’d received a call from Lynda, who’d seen Summer brought in. Despite Lynda owning and operating South Dakota’s premier burns and scars units, she still saw a couple of private patients at the hospital. When they’d tried to burn her, Phoe had stepped in and built Lynda a state-of-the-art facility with a reputation for first class care that kept growing. In the first year, Lynda had already repaid half the money Phoe had invested.

He was sickened of himself because when Summer had been injured, he’d been holed up in a hotel room fucking the life out of Irish. For three days, he’d avoided everyone and then stumbled across Irish in the same dive bar she’d found him in initially. Their eyes had met, and neither of them had said a word, but he’d followed her out and back to her motel. Slick thought he could fuck her out of his system and had been doing just that when the call came in that Summer had been hurt.

He'd fucked Irish all through the night and day, and he still craved her. But when the call came, he'd dropped Irish and raced off. He'd seen the hurt and betrayal in her face even as she hid it. It made Slick feel like a class one asshole. Slick had never played two women off against each other. It was a vile thing to do, and yet here he was, torn between two.

His mind was a fuckin' mess, and Slick couldn't get it straight. Axel had tried sitting him down to talk, but Slick blew him off and disappeared. He didn't want to talk shit out. No, what Slick wanted was impossible. As much as he didn't want to accept him, Slick knew he wanted both women. And couldn't have either.

Slick parked at the hospital, raced in, and asked at reception for Summer. The receptionist took his details and told him to take a seat and she'd call him when she had information. Slick wanted to shout and scream at her but knew that wouldn't get him anywhere. Instead, he texted Lynda, who replied immediately that she'd already left the hospital.

For five minutes, Slick sat there twiddling his thumbs, worrying that Summer was seriously injured. He was staring at the doors when a shadow fell over him, and he looked up into the angry gaze of Summer's uncle.

"How is she?" he demanded, leaping to his feet.

"You've got a fucking cheek coming here after what you did to her," Brian growled out.

"I love her," Slick objected.

Brian leant forward and sniffed, and disgust crossed his face.

"You love her so much, son. You came to the hospital smelling of sex," Brian accused.

Shame flooded Slick, and he couldn't deny it.

"I was trying to fuck Irish out of my system," he admitted.

"Well, good luck with that shit. Summer doesn't want to see you. I told her you were here, and she told me to send you

away. Leave her alone. My girl is done with the games you're playing, son."

"Ain't playing no games. I love Summer, but I got feelings for Irish. I'm torn between them, Brian. It's not a fuckin' position I ever wanted to be in. All I dreamed of was someone like Summer, and then I found her. I had the world in my hands for two weeks, and then shit got complicated."

"Complicated ain't fucking two women at the same time. Summer gave you a chance, and you cheated on her."

"We weren't together when I slept with Irish."

"Oh, that shit about being on a break. Don't give me that. Your cock doesn't control you; you control it. You cheated, plain and simple, and I'm done arguing. Summer said to leave her alone. I'm telling you, leave her the fuck alone. Otherwise, shit will get bad when I bring in the police for harassment and stalking. I'll do anything to protect her, you hear me?"

"Tell her I love her," Slick insisted.

His whole world was spiralling. Nothing made sense anymore.

"Leave her alone," Brian hissed and stormed off.

Slick stared after him, looking for a break, a sign, just anything to give him hope. But the set shoulders of the man killed any spark inside him. Summer was done with him. And even if she weren't, Brian would make sure Slick didn't get close.

Morosely, he left the hospital and made his way back to the motel room. When he entered, he was shocked to find it empty. On the bed was a note.

His gut twisted, and he knew what it would say when he picked it up.

'I'm not a substitute, and I have feelings, too. Every time you fuck me, you cut and run after her. I won't be the mistress, Slick. Stay away from me, and I'll do the same for you. I'm not a fuck toy and won't be used like one. Drake will be my point of contact from now on in.'

Slick sank down onto the bed. Yup, he could feel much worse than the lowlife scumbag he was already feeling like. He sank his head into his hands and wondered what the hell to do.

Artemis

I gazed at the man sitting on the bed. Slick hadn't moved for two hours, and it was time to interfere. All of us knew what was going on with him, and at first, nobody had approved of his cheating on Summer. Except now I understood it wasn't cheating. Slick truly loved them both. I just didn't think he realised it.

Slick's head shot up, and his reddened eyes took me in as I entered.

I sat down opposite him as anger and then hate crossed his face.

"Yeah, I earned that," I agreed.

"What?"

"That hate, I deserve it. But I'm the one who's here for you. And I'm going to beat some sense into your thick skull."

"Really, Artemis? Are you planning to drug me again?" Slick taunted, and the blow landed.

Again, I deserved that.

"Nope. But I'm going to tell you something you won't like."

"Oh yeah? Well, I'm not interested in fucking you," Slick sneered.

Without meaning to, my hand shot out, and I slapped him.

Slick rocked back with the blow, and when he turned back to me, he was furious.

"Not interested in screwing you, either. But what I am concerned about is you lying to yourself. You're in love with both women. The more you deny loving Irish, the harder it gets."

"I love Summer!" Slick blew up. That was expected.

“Slick, I loved you as a kid. You were my brother. Then I hated you as an adult. After that, I tortured you before realising you were innocent. You and I know each other better than we should do. And I’m telling you this: you love them both equally but in different ways. If you could merge them together, they’d make the perfect woman.

“But you got darkness that Summer doesn’t. You also have a gentle heart and loving nature that Irish doesn’t. Neither woman would make you happy alone, but put them together, and you’re in heaven,” I said bluntly.

Slick shook his head.

“Summer is my perfect woman. Irish is a drug.”

“Look deep inside, Slick, you’ve never lied to yourself before. Search your heart. You love Irish,” I insisted.

Slick fell quiet, and I knew he was doing what I told him. Minutes ticked past as we sat quietly together. When he raised his head, there was awareness in his eyes.

“Shit.”

“Yup, exactly. Those two women together make up your ideal woman. But apart, neither of them is your ideal. Despite what you might trick yourself into believing. I hurt for you, brother, because whichever of them you choose, a part of you will be denied forever. Of course, the perfect dream is they both accept their places in your heart and learn to live together. But that will not happen. Neither of them is bisexual, and they certainly aren’t into the multiple-wife thing. It sucks, and I wish I could take your pain away, Slick. But only you can find the answer to this mess.”

“Why’d you come, Artemis?”

“Because your brothers won’t beat sense into you. Can you see Drake or Ace getting down with your feelings? Yeah, that shit ain’t happening. But me, whether you like it or not, you’ll still listen, which is why you avoid me so much. No, don’t deny it. You do everything possible to keep away from me. That hurts, but I accept it because I earned it. However, today, you needed me, and I wasn’t walking away. I love you, Slick,

as a sister, and we're family. Families make mistakes, but we forgive and move on. One day you'll forgive me and let me offer the friendship again that we once had. Until then, I'll wait for you."

"Thanks."

"Now you know how you feel about them both, you'll be able to think clearer and make some decisions instead of running around like a blue-assed fly. Take the time, Slick, and make the right decision, not just for you but for those two women as well," I said, getting to my feet.

As I opened the door, Slick called out my name.

"I meant what I said. Thanks for today," he said.

"You're welcome."

Irish

I closed down the listening device. Of course, I'd bugged the room, but I hadn't expected to hear that. Slick admitting he loved me rocked me. And I honestly didn't know how to feel about that. A part of me wanted to revel in his love, and the other part wanted to run for the hills. But even knowing how he felt, it didn't mean that I would be his dirty secret for life. I deserved better than that.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

Drake

Slick was spiralling, and Drake was worried. It didn't help that one of the freaking prospects had also found his woman and was being given the run-around. Between Slick's mess and his prospects, Drake was ready to tear his hair out. It also didn't help that things remained icy at home.

Phoe had kept her word and made him sleep at the clubhouse for four days, but whenever he arrived home, Carmelle and the girls made themselves scarce. There was an atmosphere in his home, and Drake was prepared to tackle it tonight. He parked his bike in one of the garages in his usual spot, walked into the Hall, and wondered what the hell was going on.

Eddie and Tony were shrieking at the top of their lungs as they sat on a tray at the top of each staircase, their brothers, sister, and cousins behind them. Eddie, aged twelve now, was certainly the bolder of the twins. But Tony held his own in a much quieter way. Behind Eddie stood Timmy, now aged eight, with his twin, Scout, behind Tony.

Hanging for dear life to the smooth wooden bannisters with a leg swung over either side were Garrett and Jake, both of them also now eight. They were level with Eddie and Tony, and Drake frowned.

He hugged the shadows as he watched his sets of twins. Timmy was taller than Scout, and they'd both overcome their addiction they were born with. It had been a long, hard slog, but they'd made it, him and Phoe, together. He was proud of what his boys had overcome. But Scout was smaller than most eight-year-olds, and Drake had no doubt the reason was the illness he'd been born with. In the winter, Drake and Phoe both watched Scout closely because he was prone to cold and flu.

Garrett still had issues but was no longer in the danger zone and hadn't been for years. He had asthma, and if there

was an illness going around, Garrett picked it up. Jake was small like Scout but had the health of a horse. But Jake was the quietest child they had, and Drake often had to make sure he got attention.

Drake suddenly realised what both pairs of twins were about to do, and he stepped forward just as Garrett completed a countdown.

“No!” Drake roared as Timmy and Scout both pushed Eddie and Tony. At the same time, Garrett and Jake began sliding down the banister. Eddie was shrieking at the top of her lungs and waved her hands in the air.

Drake dashed to the middle of the entrance hall, unsure which child to aim for. Even as he dithered, Eddie slammed to the floor with a grunt, leapt up on her tray, and waved her hands around. On the opposite side, Jake slid off the end of the bannister, giggling all the way as he landed in a heap on the floor. Seconds later, Garrett landed on his feet next to Eddie while Tony slammed into last place.

“We won!” Eddie crowed, high fiving Garrett.

“Are you insane?” Drake bellowed.

Four pairs of innocent eyes turned towards him, and Drake inwardly groaned.

He and Phoe had encouraged all the kids to be close, not just the sets of twins, and they often ganged up on him and Phoe together. On the mezzanine level, which was set between the two sets of stairs, several sets of eyes peeked through the spindles at him. Drake sent them all a dark stare.

“Don’t any of you dare move! That includes you, Shannon and Sadie!” Drake shouted as the two girls went to sneak off.

“What would you have done if one of you fell?” Drake addressed Eddie.

She shrugged and pointed to the stairs.

“We brought our mattresses down,” she replied casually.

Drake thought his head was going to pop off. Okay, he might have missed seeing them, but that wasn’t the point.

“You did what?”

“Oh, come on, Dad, we’re only having fun!” Eddie retorted.

Drake idolised his fiery daughter, but sometimes he wanted to throttle her. This was one of those times. He ran a hand through his hair as Carmelle and Phoe appeared from the rear of the house.

“What’s going on?” Phoe asked, her brow furrowed as she studied the mattresses.

“Our kids thought it would be fun to ride trays down the stairs while their brothers slid down the banisters. If they’d fallen from that height...” Drake broke off and made a strangled noise.

“What on earth did you think you were doing?” Phoe demanded.

“We all did it, Mama,” Drake’s six-year-old daughter, Payton, admitted, standing up. “Me, Shannon, Sadie, and Dante went first.”

That was his little princess. Honest to a fault. Meanwhile, seven-year-old Dante frowned in disgust. Dante was Drake’s mini-me, from his looks down to his damn attitude. Phoe refused point blank to get involved in their father-son fights anymore. As much as Drake loved Dante, he knew the kid was going to grow up to be a little shithead. It was the curse of the Michaelson’s, and Drake dreaded the day the kid got his keys to his first car.

“Thank you for being honest,” Phoe said, “but that doesn’t change the fact. You’ve all been told how dangerous this is.”

“Oh boy,” Carmelle muttered, looking up at Shannon and Sadie. “Admit it.”

“I wanted to do it, the twins,” Shannon spoke, pointing to Timmy and Scout and Garrett and Jake, “said we weren’t allowed to. But we really wanted to try.”

“I see. And did I not tell you how dangerous it would be?” Carmelle demanded.

“Yes, Mom,” Shannon said, toeing the ground and looking down.

“Pick your punishment,” Carmelle said, and Drake’s head snapped towards her. That was an unusual stance.

“Mom!” Sadie wailed, and Drake grinned. His four-year-old niece had come out of her shell the last few weeks. And it appeared she was as much as a drama queen as Eddie, Davy, and the others.

“Pick your punishment.”

“Oh man,” Shannon whined, but when her mother didn’t give in, she glowered before speaking. “I guess we’ll have to miss movie night. And Aunt Phoe was getting hotdogs and everything!”

“Yes, and ice-cream. After dinner, you may go to our room and read a book. No movie night,” Carmelle said. “Now go and wash up.”

Drake hid a grin as the two girls trudged away, looking forlorn. Then he gazed at his brood.

“I like that idea. Pick a punishment, kids, and if you try to wriggle out and pick an easy one, I’ll make you do two!” Drake stated with a wicked grin.



“This is for you,” Drake said, cornering Carmelle as she headed upstairs.

His sister eyed him suspiciously. “What is it?”

“A gift for you and the girls,” Drake replied. He continued to hold out the envelope in his hand. Carmelle took it reluctantly and opened it. Her mouth dropped open as she looked at the brochure in her hands.

“What is this?” she asked, confused.

“I bought it for you and the girls. It’s not far from here, a five-minute drive, but it’s in a nice area and good schools. Although the girls will probably end up going to the school that the other Rage kids do.”

“You bought me a house?” Carmelle asked in disbelief.

“I’ve been a shit brother. Want to be better. I want you to stick around. Carmelle, I want our kids to know each other and not just be a name from an old memory.”

“You bought me the perfect house.”

“Ain’t good with feelings, Carmelle, never have been. But I want you here, and I want to see all three of you. If you don’t like the house or don’t want to stick in RC, sell it and invest the money in the girls. But I ain’t letting you walk away from this family,” Drake said with finality in his voice.

Carmelle stared at him. “We’ll see if actions match words, Drake,” she replied before disappearing up the stairs.

Slick

He walked into the garage to find Drake. He’d made a decision, and it was one that Drake wouldn’t like, but Slick needed. After admitting to himself that he was in love with both women, Slick had thought long and hard. In the end, Slick had decided he needed to take a break for a few months. Maybe that would help the two women he’d hurt heal. If he disappeared from RC, neither of them would be on edge looking for him.

Also, Slick admitted he needed time to lick his own wounds. He’d always been a man who despised cheaters—and those who had a wife and kept a mistress on the side. Now, he was no better than them, and that stung. Slick wasn’t impressed with his actions and could easily see how bad it looked. He had enough self-loathing to last a lifetime.

Slick headed for Drake, who was talking to Slate, when his phone rang. He looked confused as he saw the name on the screen but answered it.

“Ramirez?”

“Slick, the garden centre, you’re dating the woman who owns it?” Ramirez asked without a greeting.

“What’s happened?” Slick demanded as he stopped walking. His tone caught the attention of Drake and Slate, and they

moved in his direction.

“There’s been an incident, a witness called it in. Six men approached the greenhouses and shot the man who works here before taking Summer.”

Slick’s gut twisted, and he couldn’t breathe or speak. Drake took one look at his face and snatched the phone.

“You got Drake, tell me.”

Slick heard Ramirez talking but couldn’t concentrate. He saw Summer’s beautiful face and then saw it twisted in terror and grief.

“Shit!” Drake exclaimed. “Rage will ride.” He cut the call and stared into Slick’s eyes.

“Tell me,” Slick whispered.

“Six Fangs took her. They killed her uncle with a head shot. He’s gone. Summer fought them, and witnesses saw it. They identified the Fangs because the assholes spray painted their patch on a greenhouse, and someone saw their cuts.”

“Not her uncle,” Slick said, feeling sick and latching onto that fact.

“The man’s gone, Slick. We gotta get Summer back,” Drake said.

Slick tried to move, but he was numb. His fear had come true. The Fangs had taken the only family member who gave a fuck about Summer, and now she was in trouble. He knew what they’d do to her.

Drake’s phone rang, and he answered it. Slick noted how Drake’s body language changed, and he murmured into the phone before hanging up.

“Now what?” Slick demanded.

“Irish was ambushed and taken. Fangs have made a two-pronged strike against Rage.”

“You gotta be fuckin’ kidding me!” Slick roared.

“No. Hawthorne got wind of it and sent his men out looking for her. They just missed them at the motel. And there’d been a hell of a fight. Irish dropped two bodies in her wake.”

“Who do we go after?” Slick asked, torn. Both the women he loved had been taken, and he wasn’t sure what to do.

“We go after Summer. Irish can take care of herself. Summer can’t,” Drake stated.

“And we leave Irish in their hands. If they realise who she is, you know what they’ll do to her.”

“What choice do we have? Out of the two women, Irish has more chance to survive. Summer will be broken and will never recover if we even find her alive in time. I’m putting everything into finding Summer,” Drake stated.

“But we can’t leave Irish hanging. I agree we need to chase Summer, but Irish has saved our lives several times,” Slick argued.

“Hawthorne is chasing after Irish. He’ll track her down. We have to concentrate on Summer.”

Slick felt like he was being torn in two.

Drake left him standing on the forecourt as he began sending messages and making calls. Slick was neutralised. Both women needed saving, but because Summer was the innocent, they had to go after her. Only, he hated the thought of not going after Irish.

Minutes ticked past as brothers arrived, each on their phones, making their own calls.

Slick stood like an isolated mountain in the midst of a storm. He only moved when Hunter called out to Drake about a lead.

“Where?” Drake demanded.

Hunter looked uncomfortable.

“The old wet room,” Hunter said, and Slick felt his skin chill. They’d abandoned it when it had become too well known amongst their allies. Their old place had seen plenty of

death, and the thought of Summer being there nearly made his heart stop.

“Clever fucker,” Drake murmured.

Slick didn't agree. Before he could move towards his bike, Drake's fist swung out and caught him by his collar.

“Think, Slick. They'll hear our bikes coming from miles out. We've got to be cleverer than he is.”

Slick didn't think Fury was a clever bastard whatsoever, but he agreed with Drake. Their bikes would be heard coming.

“If we park away from the wet room, we'll have to hike in,” Hunter confirmed.

“Gather everyone together. We'll pick a spot and move from there. Make sure everyone is armed to the teeth. Ramirez said only six took her, but we could be walking into a trap,” Drake said.

Slick wanted to rail at him, but he knew Drake made sense. This wasn't the first, nor would it be the last time they had to go after a woman belonging to Rage. He followed Drake, and his fingers itched to kill someone. He was ready to unleash his dark side and make Fangs drown in blood, their own blood.

Summer

I heard voices but kept my eyes shut. The visions behind them didn't make me feel any easier. I kept remembering and hearing Uncle Brian yell and then a bang, and then something was placed over my mouth. Chloroform, I think. Whatever it was had made me drowsy, but I'd come to roughly twenty minutes ago and had enough self-awareness to keep my body relaxed and my eyes closed.

The voices were so close that they could be in the same room as me.

“How easy a snatch was that?” a guy I knew to be called Snatch crowed. He clearly thought he was witty in his choice of words.

“She's a fuckin' beauty. Can't wait to grab me a piece,” the one named Cherry said. He had a nasal voice as if his nose had

been broken.

“The other team got the other bitch too, although she put up a fight. Fury ain’t gonna be happy she killed Tiger and Whine.”

“Damn, really?” Cherry snorted.

“Yeah, broke the neck of them both. They had to tranq her or something,” Snatch informed him.

“You really think Rage will come for her?” the third guy asked. His name was Wiley.

“Yeah, we know how Rage treats their women. Like they’re gold. We need to be ready to move out and quick,” Cherry replied.

“Rage will be tearing RC apart. They’ll never think to search here. Gotta wonder, though, how many men did Rage kill in this place? And now we got one of their women here. That’s karma for ya,” Snatch said and laughed.

“Don’t under-estimate Rage. How many Fangs have fallen to them and their allies?” a fourth guy asked, coming closer to me.

It took every ounce of self-control not to flinch when his hand touched me.

“Damn, how much did you give her Snatch? The bitch is still out of it.” He was called Tomcat, I was sure of it.

“She should wake soon. Let her sleep. It will be the last restful nap she ever gets. Fury wants her bad, think he’s planning to keep her for the club. She’ll last about six months before dropping,” Wiley said.

Dropping? Did they mean dead? And keeping me for the club, were they planning to make me a whore or something? Oh hell, I was neck-deep in shit and drowning quickly. I’d slit my own throat before I allowed anyone to rape me and make me a whore.

“Cain and Abel are still outside?” Tomcat asked.

“Yeah, they checked in five minutes ago.”

“Got ten more minutes before they check in again,” Snatch said, and he sounded damn close. “I know Fury said we couldn’t fuck her, but damn, look at those titties.”

A cruel hand grasped my breast, shocking me enough that I jerked backwards. Foul breath wafted onto my face, and my eyes flew open.

“Fuckin’ knew it!” Snatch crowed.

“Don’t touch me!” I cried, trying to move away.

Snatch grabbed me by the shoulder as I wrenched backwards, and a tearing pain shot through my shoulder.

“Come here, bitch, I wanna see what you got under those rags. Fury said we couldn’t fuck ya, but I’m sure as hell gonna touch ya,” Snatch snarled.

His fist slammed into my face, and then my shoulder, and I dropped back with a cry of pain. Cruel hands tore at my clothes, and I fought with everything I had. But my shoulder was in agony, and my fight was pathetic.

A loud bang sounded close by, and Snatch fell on top of me. Shouts rang out, and then I heard loud thumps.

Terrified, I closed my eyes tight and refused to look.

“Summer!” a voice I knew bellowed. Something splattered across my face, and then gentle hands swept me up. I couldn’t stop the cry of pain as my shoulder burned.

“It’s me, baby. Slick. We’ve got you,” Slick murmured as he held me tight.

“I did something to my shoulder. You’re hurting me,” I gasped as I felt myself go lightheaded. Slick relaxed his grip on me as his eyes searched my face.

“She needs a hospital,” a man said as he checked me over visually. His cut said Drake.

“Can you call an ambulance to the garden centre? They shot my uncle,” I begged, more concerned about Uncle Brian.

The men wearing Rage cuts all swapped worried glances. Slick’s face filled with sympathy, and it was a look I

recognised.

“No! He’s not dead!” I cried as darkness swirled.

“Baby, I’m so sorry,” Slick replied.

“No, no!”

“Slick, Dana’s called in. She’s following Irish,” Drake said.

Slick looked torn, and I swallowed bitterness. Uncle Brian was dead because of his club, and he was worried about his side piece.

Slick got to his feet as I allowed the encroaching darkness to take me. That way, I didn’t have to deal with the pain I was feeling. I happily tumbled headfirst into oblivion.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

Dana

It was raining heavily as I drove towards my home. But luckily, this late in the evening, the roads were clear. I hated driving in the rain, mainly because other drivers were assholes. And speaking of assholes, I glanced up as a black van approached and flashed its lights for me to get out of the way. They could go to hell; I was doing the speed limit, and that was final. The driver clearly got fed up after a while, and it swerved out into the opposite lane and sped past me.

My eyes nearly popped out of my head as the back doors flew open, and I blinked in disbelief. Irish was being held in the back by what looked like four men. She was fighting with them and winning until one smashed her over the head with a gun. She went limp, and the doors flew shut again.

My instincts told me to drop back, and I hit Dylan on speed dial.

“Dana?” his voice asked, sounding confused and concerned.

“Dylan, I’m driving home, and this van just cut in front of me,” I said.

“Okay,” he drawled.

“Irish, that woman we’ve been investigating was in the back, and she was fighting with four men,” I replied.

“Stay on their tail, keep back and let me call Rage,” Dylan said, and I made a noise of agreement.

Dylan cut the line, and I gazed out of the window. I was at least three car lengths back from the van now, and the rain was making seeing ahead hard. But I stayed on their tail and, at the same time, activated my tracking beacon.

Dylan insisted all the cars had them that belonged to people who worked for him. I was damn glad I had it now.

They'd be able to find me if something happened. I watched as the van took the turn for the I-90 and chased after them. They were heading east towards Box Elder.

The phone rang, and I hit the button to answer it.

"Dana, Irish has been kidnapped. Stay back, but follow that van. Rage is already rescuing someone else but is sending people your way. London and Max are also coming. Turn your tracker on, honey," Dylan said.

"It's already on. Nigel should have me," I replied, trying to stay calm.

"Are you okay?" Dylan asked.

"Not really. I'm a receptionist, not a PI, Dylan. I'm scared," I admitted.

"And that's cool to be scared, honey. Just don't leave your car for anything. Max, London, and Rage will be with you soon."

"I'm going to hang up. The rain is so bad I need to concentrate," I said and cut the call.

My shoulders were already tense, and my neck felt stiff. I glanced across at my passenger seat and saw my handbag there, which gave me some reassurance. Inside it was my gun. It had never been fired, but I knew how to shoot. Even a receptionist had to learn how to handle weapons; it was for my own safety.

The van kept going past Box Elder, and I briefly hoped to see some bikes join the road, but none did. I guessed the Fallen Warriors hadn't been alerted. We continued past, and I wondered where we were heading when suddenly the van pulled off at New Underwood. It was a small town, but there were still plenty of places to hide.

The rain was falling heavier now. I wasn't worried about being seen as much as I was before.

But even so, I kept back as they turned onto N A Ave. The sat nav showed me that this was a road that looped around on itself. Taking a chance, I went the opposite way rather than

alert them by following. And luckily for me, I passed them, pulling into a deserted building.

I parked down the road and slunk down in my car as I watched them carry Irish into the building. She was still unconscious, and that worried me.

Without a second thought, I punched Dylan's number.

"Dana, you've stopped moving," he said, worried.

"I'm at this weird building. I think it's a deserted office block. They carried Irish in. She's unconscious. I saw cuts, Dylan, but I couldn't see who they belonged to."

"Dana, stay in the car. Don't get out, and if it looks like you're being approached, get the fuck out of there," Dylan ordered.

I bit my lip. "They might be hurting Irish," I whispered.

"Dana, someone will be there in twenty minutes. People are coming; just stay put. No, in fact, get the hell out of there now. We know where she is," Dylan said, changing his mind.

"If I leave and then they do, we won't know where Irish is," I argued.

"Dana. This is an order," Dylan replied firmly.

"Okay," I agreed.

Who did he think he was giving orders to? I wasn't one of his men! I was his receptionist. And no, I wasn't brave, but I wasn't a coward either. There was no way I could leave Irish alone in that building. Who knows what they were doing to her? Hanging up on Dylan, I grabbed my bag and pulled out my gun. Everyone who worked for Hawthornes knew how to handle a weapon, even me. It was part of my mandatory training.

I pulled a free clip from my purse and a second from my glove box.

My hands were shaking slightly as I slid a silencer onto my gun. This was a scary situation and not one I usually ended up

in. I was the receptionist for Hawthornes, but I never got involved in their roles or jobs.

Still, I knew full well what the Venomous Fangs were capable of. Dylan had sat me down at the start of this war and offered me full pay but would allow me to take a break while this shit went down. I'd refused. I wasn't one to sit at home, being paid for doing nothing.

And, plus, Dylan was going to yell at me. I hated being shouted at. Of course, Dylan yelled a lot in the offices, but it wasn't ever aimed at me.

Only this time, it would be.

I'd have to suck it up.

Pulling my coat hood up over my head, I stepped out into the pouring rain. The good thing was, it was so heavy that it would obscure my body from any cameras operating outside the building. With an audible gulp and on high alert, I crept towards the building, staying in the shadows cast by the high walls and the surrounding buildings.

Cautiously, I peered around the entrance to the building where the van was parked and saw five bikes plus the van. Now, that could mean there were five plus the men in the van, which, if I went for a maximum of six, four in the back and two in the front, meant there were eleven men present. And one of me. Those weren't good odds.

A sick feeling rose in my throat, and I swallowed bile before I heaved. Somewhere in there, a woman needed my help, and I couldn't let her be beaten or raped.

Although I believed that the minute Irish got a hand free, she'd go on the attack, first she had to get a hand free. Hopefully, I could help her get that hand.

The doors to the building didn't look like they were being watched, but I didn't head for them straight away. That was clearly a trap, so I hugged the surrounding wall and began walking around the building, looking for another entrance.

There was another door, but again, I thought that was too obvious an entrance. However, I did spot a tiny window that

was slightly ajar next to the ground.

I watched it for a few minutes before deciding I could just about fit through. I wasn't a big person, being on the tiny side, so it shouldn't be a struggle for me.

Quietly approaching, I found I was right. I wriggled through and found myself in a dark basement. Luckily, I'd gone legs first; otherwise, I'd probably have hit my head as I entered. I landed softly on my feet and took a few moments to let my eyes adjust to the darkness.

Finally, I spotted some stairs and crept towards them. Just in the nick of time, I remembered to turn my phone to silent and hide it in my pocket. The last thing I needed was Dylan ringing to bawl me out when I was trying to be sneaky.

The stairs were metal, which made creeping up them a lot easier than I imagined. Wooden ones would have creaked and given away that someone was down here. There was a door at the top, and I felt a moment's fear that it would be locked.

The handle turned easily, though, and the door opened with a groan. I stiffened, frightened that someone might have heard, but there were no pounding footsteps or alarmed shouts. This led me to what was clearly offices. There was a wide-open space in the middle, with offices jotted all around the walls. I crept forward, hiding in the kitchenette the door had opened into.

Slowly, I moved forward, keeping a sharp eye out for anyone lurking or approaching. As I moved towards a doorway, which I assumed led to the entrance, I heard two voices talking.

I ducked into an office and hid behind the desk there.

"The bitch is still out of it. I think they might have hit her too hard. Fury isn't going to be happy if she doesn't wake up."

"She'll wake, don't worry. It's only been an hour since she got knocked out. Let her sleep. It's the last peaceful one she'll ever have."

"I heard Fury is planning to put her to the train."

“Fury promised us all a turn. Who gives a shit what condition she’s in? She’ll probably have a nice, tight pussy. Bitches like her often do. Mind you, by the time she’s taken all of us, her ass and pussy won’t be so tight.” The guy laughed, making me mad.

They were talking about raping Irish, all of them. I understood what a train was. It was where men lined up to fuck a woman one after another. And they planned to rape Irish that way. Fury welled inside me. Why did assholes think it was okay to rape someone? It was just a power thing, and I knew they’d really get off on it. They’d like nothing more than to make a powerful woman helpless and rape her as punishment.

Seriously, I’d like to cut all their dicks off and rape them with them. See how they liked it.

“When’s Fury arriving?”

“He’s messing with someone else before coming here. We head home soon; he doesn’t want us to be found in South Dakota. And it’s fuckin’ boring here.”

“Well, let’s hope he lets us fuck her before leaving. Because I think taking her with us is a mistake, it would give her a chance to get free. And we know she’s a killer.”

“Scared of a piece of pussy?”

I could hear the jeer in the guy’s voice.

“Not usually, but that one? Yeah. She fuckin’ terrifies me. If she gets free, it will be a bloodbath in here.”

“Who’s the fuckin’ pussy, her or you?” the second guy taunted.

“Takes a man to admit he knows when he can’t handle a bitch.”

“Stay on guard. Someone will check back in twenty minutes.”

“Fine. I need a smoke anyway.” The first guy’s footsteps moved away.

Well, that hadn't been helpful. I had no idea where she was being held captive, and I'd hoped they would have given something away.

As quietly as I could, I moved forward. I spotted the entrance, and a big guy was standing there smoking. If I'd come through those doors, I wouldn't have stood a chance. I pulled my gun and aimed and hesitated.

No lie, I wasn't a killer, and this was murder in cold blood. Then I remembered what they had said they planned to do to Irish and the fact I had twenty minutes before someone came back to check. Closing my eyes and praying for forgiveness, I took aim just as the guy opened the door to let the smoke out, and I fired. The bullet hit his head, and it exploded, to my horror. Blood splatter went everywhere, and I nearly heaved.

I breathed through my mouth as I tried to control the urge to vomit. He'd fallen outside, and slowly, the door closed, hiding his body from me.

With my cheeks still puffing in and out, I moved towards the stairs. The hallway clearly didn't have any further offices, so I crept upwards, trying to remain quiet. Between looking down to make sure I didn't kick anything and looking up to check nobody was there, I was a wreck. As I popped my head up, I heard laughter coming from a room near me. A second quick check clued me into three men sitting around a table playing cards.

They were between me and the rest of the floor, including the dead man, that counted for four of the possible eleven men. Only one in the room was facing me. I had a choice. I could shoot them or try to get past them.

I considered the shadows, and if I stayed low, I should be able to make it without being spotted.

I waited until the guy facing me ducked his head to check his cards, and I tiptoed past the door. I was as stiff as a board, waiting for a shout or someone's hand to land on my shoulder, but I made it to the next room and then the third before slipping inside and sinking to my ass.

I was shaking heavily, but I'd got this far. My breathing was shaky, so I allowed myself a few minutes to calm down and listen for activity.

I placed the gun down on the floor, stretched out my shaking fingers, and clenched them again to try to get some steadiness. Finally, realising this wasn't going to work, I closed my eyes and did some quiet, deep breathing exercises. The minutes ticked by, and I knew someone should be here soon. That thought comforted me.

Briefly, I considered taking my shoes off and searching in my stockinged feet, but if I stepped on something, I could leave a blood trail. The fact was, I would just have to be super quiet. I rose to my feet again and peeked out of the door. The game a couple of doors down was getting rowdy, but nobody seemed aware of my presence.

With one deep breath and ignoring the fear that could paralyse me, I moved out, keeping my gun loose at my side. I noticed bootprints in the thick dust and debris and made sure to step within them. They would hide my own prints. It was rather clever of me, I thought.

I checked the offices and found nothing, and I was about to begin to panic when I spied another set of stairs. As I approached, I heard the clump of heavy boots above me, and I moved swiftly into an office and searched for a hiding space. The good and bad thing about the offices on this floor was they had low brick walls, and the rest of the office was made of glass. It meant I could see straight across to the opposite side, but it also left me wide open. I moved through into another office and ducked behind the wall, curling into a ball.

Several male voices caught my attention, and I guessed at least four men were walking towards me. I held my gun at the entrance, but the men kept going, arguing amongst themselves. It made me sick beyond belief to hear they were fighting over who'd get to rape Irish first. Bastards. With those four and the four already accounted for, that meant roughly three men were upstairs.

I was nearly out of time. My gut told me so. Without a second thought and not letting doubts or fear stop me, I moved forward. Keeping my back to the wall and my gun out in front, I tiptoed up the stairs. I could hear voices now; there were at least two men.

“Sooner or later, that bitch is going to scream,” one said.

“Yeah, she’ll fuckin’ cry when she sees my cock.”

“Dude, she won’t know what hit her,” the first said, chortling.

Just as I reached the top of the stairs, movement made me jump, and I came face to face with a wild-eyed man. He stared at me, surprised, and then a wicked glint lit his eyes.

He grinned and reached for me just as he opened his mouth to call out.

On instinct, I raised my gun, took an approximate aim, and fired, thanking God I’d used the silencer. Even so, there was still a soft ‘whuff’ noise, and my bullet took him straight through his mouth.

His eyes met mine as he fell backwards, and I couldn’t stop myself from heaving.

“What was that?” one of the guys demanded.

Tears threatened to spill as I tried not to puke everywhere.

“Probably Scarface, he’s patrolling,” the other replied.

“He’s such a sour prick.”

“Yeah, I get that. Hey, bitch, not looking so confident now, are you?”

I lifted my head. Irish was close. This wasn’t the time to falter.

Before I could let my doubts cripple me, I stepped over the body and headed in the direction of the voice.

As I approached an office on the far side, I saw the silhouettes of two men, and I crouched low and scurried along.

As I dropped, I caught the sharp gaze of Irish, who didn't give me away. I bet she wondered what the hell I was doing there.

I reached the doorway, took several calming breaths, and then popped up. I fired four times, twice into each man. They fell with a crash.

"Get me free now. That would have alerted the others. He has a knife on him," Irish spoke urgently. She nodded towards one of the men.

"Dana, they are dead. Move your ass," Irish urged, and I shook myself and moved forward. Distastefully, I searched the man she'd nodded to, and I discovered a knife in his waistband. I turned to Irish and saw my dilemma. She was hanging from an overhead pipe, and her legs were swinging free. Irish had to be in pain, as all the weight was on her arms. The problem was that meant I couldn't reach her wrists, which had been tied.

"There's a table there. Drag it over and climb on it. They'll be here within moments," Irish said.

Panic welling, I dragged the table a couple of inches and, ignoring the filth, climbed up and began sawing at the ropes that bound her hands together. It felt like minutes sped by, but in reality, it was only one or two.

The knife wasn't exactly super sharp, but the ropes began to part. I kept sawing back and forth as I glanced over my shoulder, waiting for footsteps.

I'd just cut through when we finally heard them coming.

"Oh God," I whispered.

"Give me your gun," Irish demanded. She was rolling her shoulders and arms back and forth, driving the blood back into them. Damn, Irish had to be suffering from bad pins and needles, but her face was blank.

"Titus, you asshole. The bitch is off limits until Fury gets here," the guy called from the bottom of the stairs.

"Get down, over there, you'll be safe," Irish whispered as she ducked behind the wall opposite to where she'd pointed

me.

“Titus, answer me, you prick. If you’re fuckin’ that bitch before Fury gets here, he’s gonna fuck you up,” the guy called.

When nobody answered, curses came from below, followed by a stamp of boots on the metal stairs. Irish aimed at the top stair, waiting for his head to appear, and without warning, the moment he did, she fired. His body toppled backwards, no doubt alerting everyone that something was now most certainly wrong.

“Do you have extra clips?” Irish asked. She was searching the bodies of the two men in the room and had pulled five guns from them and three clips.

“Yes.” I fumbled at my pockets and threw them at her.

“Stay behind me. If I shout, run, move, and don’t look back... What the hell are you doing here, anyway?” Irish grumbled as she checked the clip in the gun, ejected it, and inserted a new one.

“I saw you fighting them in the van and followed. Dylan and Rage should be here soon. I called it in,” I replied.

“Rage may take a while. They took Summer at the same time as me,” Irish stated.

I jolted in horror. That poor girl was more innocent than me. Rage had clearly made a choice to chase after her.

“Dylan will still come,” I insisted.

“Yeah, Hawthorne will because you’re here,” Irish agreed.

“They’d have come anyway!” I snapped.

Irish caught my indignation and waved a hand. “Honey, I ain’t arguing. Your boss would most certainly have come for me; I don’t doubt it. But I also expect he’s called in every man he employs because he knows you’re here. I bet you my firstborn. He’s called you at least ten times, and you’ve missed his calls. Which means Hawthorne knows you’ve come in after me, and he’ll rally every single person he has. You’re somewhat special to Hawthorne’s, and he’s going to be pissed

as fuck at you. Now it's my job to ensure you get back to him alive and well," Irish stated.

I couldn't disagree with her words. Once I ignored his first two calls, Dylan would have sent out an SOS. All of Hawthorne's were heading in my direction.

"Stay behind me," Irish commanded.

"No probs," I replied. It most certainly wasn't.

The men downstairs weren't freaking quiet when it came to approaching us. Irish took a stance at the top of the stairs and took three men down before the rest realised what was happening.

"No wonder they can't win a fuckin' war. Not a brain cell between them," Irish muttered.

"How did they get the drop on you?" I asked, just wanting to be perverse.

"Fucking desired me," Irish snarled, and I shut up. She clearly didn't appreciate being reminded of it.

"The bitch is free," someone interrupted us, and Irish let loose a laugh.

"Come and get me face to face, you motherfuckers," she taunted.

"Give it up, bitch, you ain't got nowhere to go," the guy shouted from down below.

Irish snapped back in return, "I'll shoot you face to face. Not in the back like you did me."

"Oh, that's how they got you," I murmured and shut up at Irish's dark look.

"How many of them were there?" Irish asked.

"Eleven. I shot one at the door. Then took out those three."

"So, they're seven down. Four left. Okay, stay here until I call," Irish said, pulling a second weapon from her waist.

I barely had time to nod when Irish slid down the stairs, laying down covering fire. She'd moved that quick, I'd not

even had time to ask for a weapon to protect myself. With the intent of providing as small a target as possible, I curled into a ball as a furious firefght erupted from downstairs.

I remained where I was with my eyes closed and my hands over my ears until someone touched me on the shoulder. Frightened, I lashed out with a cry and met the calm eyes of Irish.

“Shit’s done. Let’s get out of here,” she said softly. There was sympathy in her eyes as she reached down and helped me up.

“They’re all dead?” I asked.

“Yeah, and I owe you, Dana. You came for me. I won’t ever forget that.”

“Neither will Dylan. I might not have a job after he finishes yelling at me.”

“You’ll have a job. Hawthorne won’t be without the woman who manages his life. None of them will,” Irish said with a grin.

I didn’t disagree or agree but followed her as she stomped down the two flights of stairs. As we approached the doors, we heard bike pipes, and Irish shoved me back behind the door that led to the offices. She crept up to the door and hissed.

“More Fangs, another six,” she informed me.

Irish checked her weapons and ensured she had enough bullets. Moments later, I watched in disbelief as she stepped through the doors, firing rapidly. I couldn’t tell if there were return shots or not, but I did hear the squeal of a vehicle’s brakes and then silence.

“Where’s Dana?” Dylan’s furious voice shouted.

“She’s safe inside. That’s some receptionist you have,” Irish called out.

The sound of running footsteps met my ears, and the door burst open.

Max was the first one through.

I launched myself into his arms as London came after him. The drama left me in a flood, and I burst into sobs as Max folded me into his arms. I was safe. Irish was safe. Now, I could break down, and I did exactly that.



Ten minutes later, Max and London led me outside to Dylan's car. There had been a full-scale shouting match between Dylan, Irish, and Rage, who'd arrived a few minutes ago. To say Dylan was pissed I'd been involved was an understatement.

Dylan was quite happy blaming Rage and Irish for my actions, while Drake was content bellowing they'd been rescuing Summer because they knew Irish would survive. Irish herself was shouting that she didn't need rescuing.

And that set Dylan off again as he set eyes on me and the state I was in. Max and London tried to block the bodies lying on the ground from me, but I saw them. All of them were riddled with bullets, and several looked startled. They'd not expected Irish to greet them.

Max got me to Dylan's car, and I sat in the passenger seat as several of Rage and Hawthorne's also got involved in the fight.

Nobody seemed to be blaming me, and it was my fault, after all. I'd made the choice to go in. When I mentioned this to Max, he merely shook his head in amusement and said that Rage should have had Irish's back. But I could see why they'd chosen Summer to save. Even the short incarceration that Irish had suffered would have broken Summer. She'd have been terrified. Rage had made the right choice, even though Dylan didn't agree.

I was even more stunned when Slick arrived and checked Irish over before leaving again. The look on their faces spoke of feelings I'd not known about. And I wondered what the hell was going on. My understanding had been that Slick was involved with Summer, yet it was clear he and Irish had feelings for each other.

I was dozing when another vehicle pulled up, and I was shocked to see Chief Howser and Ramirez climb out. Sadly, I wasn't close enough to hear what they said, but I did see the reactions of those around them. It had begun to rain again, which didn't help matters, but I leaned out of the car and heard something that shocked me to my bones.

“Shove the bodies in the building. I don't give a fuck where. And then burn this shithole to the ground. There're no questions then,” Howser said grimly.

“And them being riddled with bullets?” Drake challenged.

“Make it a fuckin' hot fire,” Howser said. He exchanged a glance with Ramirez, who was stone-faced.

“Ramirez?” Drake asked.

“Burn them, Drake. I'm sick of cleaning up Fury's messes. Just burn this shit to the ground. We've got more important things to deal with,” Ramirez replied.

His gaze swept the ground until he caught mine. For a few seconds, we exchanged a wordless look, and then Ramirez nodded.

“Keep Dana safe. And ensure no mention of her presence here gets out,” Ramirez said and turned back towards his car. Howser glanced over at me, too, before offering a nod and following his detective.

“Never thought I'd hear that,” Drake muttered.

“Neither did I. Let's get this shit cleaned up and call Pyro. He'll blow this place to kingdom come,” Ace said.

“Get Dana home, Hawthorne. Rage will take care of this shit,” Drake said.

Dylan sent me a dark look, and I knew he was going to shout at me. I wondered how tears worked on him? I'd soon find out!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

Summer

Two weeks had passed since my kidnapping. My arm had healed, but my heart was broken. Uncle Brian was gone. His chair remained at the front of the garden centre, but it was empty, just like me. I'd buried him with full military honours in a small funeral. Rage had attended but stayed away in the background. I'd not been able to look at Slick.

I wanted to blame him but couldn't. It hadn't been Rage's fault for what happened to me. They hadn't started this war. Detective Ramirez had explained a lot of things to me while I lay in a hospital bed.

The fault belonged to the monsters who wanted to destroy what was good in this world. And they'd taken a man who was nothing but good. It was no surprise when his will was read that Uncle Brian had left everything to me. I'd spent the last two weeks at his house. The first week, I'd holed up and not spoken to anyone except to make funeral arrangements. The second week, I returned to work because being alone in his house was driving me crazy.

Both Marianne and Mom had thought they'd get away with staying in my house, but I'd had my lawyer send them a reminder notice to get the fuck out. No matter what happened, Uncle Brian's death had taught me to live for today and not put shit off.

I'd buried him next to Dad. Two best friends together.

I was destroyed inside, but I moved forward each day and imagined Uncle Brian being proud of each step I took. I'd not seen Slick since my rescue, and honestly, I didn't know if I wanted to. After saving me, he took off to find Irish.

That meant to me he still had feelings for her. And I wouldn't be the cuckquean for anyone. No more being a doormat and letting people walk all over me. It was time to be strong.

Irish

Slick was suffering. There was no doubt how torn he felt. There was also no doubt in the fact he needed both Summer and I. Slick was a complicated man. He had the hard, tough side, which reached out to me and the gentle, loving side, which craved Summer. He needed me for my toughness, but I couldn't give Slick the gentleness and love he craved. I also didn't want a freaking kid or family. I wasn't wired that way. Summer, on the other hand, was. And Slick needed her loving embrace and the family she could give him.

Which was why I was sat, staring at the fuckin' garden centre Summer owned, about to offer Summer something I thought I'd never do. I accepted that I loved Slick, the hard, tough side. That conversation with Artemis had forced me to study my own feelings, and I'd been brutally honest with myself. Slick filled up the empty space in my heart, but I didn't have a softer side. It just didn't exist. I'd beaten it out of me years ago when I walked into my mother's bedroom and found her spreadeagled naked and clearly raped and my grandfather tied to a chair and forced to watch. Whatever softness had been in me then had shrivelled up and died.

Slick understood my darkness, my need for vengeance. Despite all that, I was still capable of love. Did darkness not love the night, evil not love the devil? Which is what landed me here today, staring at a beautiful woman who was clearly in pain and suffering. Summer wasn't anything like me, which, in my warped mind, was a good thing. She was innocent, sweet, and everything decent about this world. Meanwhile, I walked in darkness, surrounded by shadows.

Warily, and guarding myself because I could still be hurt emotionally, I swung off my bike and approached Summer.

Summer

I heard footsteps as I busied myself with the front display. It was too early in the morning for shoppers, and with Brian gone, I flinched at that thought and swiftly moved past it. I expected nobody, so somebody approaching startled me.

I looked up into the green eyes of a woman with short silver hair so dark it almost looked black. And my gut clenched. There was no disguising who she was. This was her, Irish, the other woman. Had she come to gloat?

I'd not seen Slick since Brian's funeral two weeks ago, and he'd looked haunted and torn. All I wanted was to be hugged, and Slick hadn't provided that. Nobody had because no one fucking cared about me. The only person who did was now dead and in a cold grave. My mothers had been terrible since, trying to break down my resolve once again. They recognised there was nobody to fight my corner anymore.

Somehow, those two bitches had recognised that I'd completely broken up with Slick and were now doing everything possible to destroy me. Well, screw them. I wouldn't be their puppet any longer. The harder they tried, the more I clung to Brian's memory—and Dad's. They believed in me, and there had to be a reason why. I may dislike confrontation and hate fighting, but I needed to realise I had Dad's backbone. Quite frankly, I'd shamed him by how I'd let them treat me in the past, and I was even more determined to bring those two bitches to the knee.

"So you're her?" I asked when Irish stopped close to me and scuffed her boot on the gravel. It was a nervous reaction and somehow didn't sit right on her.

"I'm not here for a fight," Irish said in a rush of breath.

"Then why are you here? I thought you'd be warming Slick's bed," I snapped, hurt spiralling inside me.

"We need to talk," Irish stated, and I could see she was uncomfortable.

Well, tough, I didn't want her here.

"I don't need to do anything. I walked away from Slick; he's all yours. Irish, you won, now not being rude, but fuck off," I snapped.

For a brief instant, Irish looked amused. That rankled. This woman could snap me in two without breaking a sweat, I

knew that, but I wasn't taking shit anymore. My anger was welling, and I felt Dad and Uncle Brian nodding in approval.

"Slick needs us both. He's mourning," Irish said.

"*He's grieving?* Slick is? Seriously? Two weeks ago, Irish, I buried the last member of my family who gave a shit about me. I don't give a flying fuck if Slick is broken-hearted, fucking ten different women, or whatever. Because of the Venomous Fangs, I have no family left. So, let's see who's grieving. I watched my uncle take a bullet for me as he tried to save me because I was dragged into a war that had nothing to do with me!"

"I get that, Summer, and I'm sorry about your uncle's death. Slick would have given his own life to avoid that. You weren't the only one taken, Summer. I was, too. Rage came for you and left me because they knew whatever happened to me, I'd survive, but you wouldn't. I'm not bitter Rage chose you to save first. I'd have kicked their asses if they'd done anything different," Irish said.

"Well, good for you. How magnanimous. But you fucked up. If Rage had come for you, I'd have been dead, and you'd be free to give Slick all the comfort he needed," I snapped bitterly and bent to move a pot that was annoying me with its placement.

"And that's why I'm here. Because I can't give Slick that. Only you can," Irish said.

My head snapped up. Did that mean Irish was walking away?

"Can we grab a coffee or something and talk? Please, I have some stuff to say, and I think you should be sitting," Irish continued.

"The truth is, Irish, I don't want to be around you. I know you didn't deliberately go out of your way to snare Slick. But you're still the other woman in this mess. No, I don't want to sit down and get a coffee and gab with you. I just wish you would leave," I said honestly.

Irish nodded.

“Could you kill a man?” Irish asked.

I blinked at the strange question. Who was this woman?

“No. Not in cold blood,” I replied.

“I can and have. See, all I know is darkness. My dad was killed in a road accident, and I hunted down the guy who took his life, and I took his in revenge. I was recruited by a government agency and taught to hone that killing skill. Then, a few years ago, I was twenty-three when I came home and noticed bikes turning the corner. A gut feeling told me something bad had gone down.

“I discovered my mother, stripped naked, bruised, battered, and raped multiple times. She’d been sodomised, too, and her sightless eyes were staring at me as I stood in her bedroom doorway. Tied to a chair, his eyes glued open, beaten to a pulp, was my grandfather. He’d been tortured and forced to watch what was done to my mother. He wasn’t her father, but he loved her like he was.

“Those bikers were Venomous Fangs, and that day, I vowed to bring them down. When I buried them both next to my father, I also buried the part of me they’d loved. Summer, I have no softness left, no gentleness, no kindness. All I am is darkness, whereas you’re light, hope, and happiness. Everything you are, I am the opposite. We are two sides of the same coin. You don’t have the lack of emotions like I do.

“Slick is both dark and light. He needs you for the lightness you bring to his life, and he needs me to walk in the night at his side. This is what I want to talk about, please,” Irish said.

The please felt awkward coming from her mouth. I felt it wasn’t a word she often used.

“You love him,” I stated, confident I’d guessed right.

“As much as I’m capable of,” Irish admitted.

That stung deep. We both loved him. Any hope that Irish had just been the other woman was gone. Deep down, I’d known that Slick loved her, too, but I hadn’t wanted to admit it. It had been far easier to think she’d been playing with his

emotions and was the other woman. Some small part of me had hoped Slick would see that and return to me. But hope was an emotion that never played fair, and it was time to grow up.

“Come with me. I have a small area in a greenhouse. We can sit and have coffee,” I finally said.

Irish nodded and followed as I turned on my heel. This was going to be an uncomfortable conversation. It was one I didn't want to have but definitely needed for closure.

Irish

Summer was everything Slick had described and then some. In her, I saw the woman I should have been but wasn't. Any chance of that had died two years ago. On seeing my mother's and grandfather's bodies, I'd ruthlessly killed any gentle or soft emotion inside me. All that remained was killing and vengeance.

I envied Summer and had no qualms about admitting it. And the truth was, we were two sides of the same coin, and Slick did need both sides to live his life. He was a good man in his heart, but what he'd seen and witnessed had warped him like me. Artemis and how she handled her betrayal hadn't helped him at all. Instead, it had raised barriers that were hard to climb. Only with Summer and myself did I imagine that Slick could be fully himself. And even then, he split the two sides of him.

Greedily, I got his darkness, which fed mine, and Summer got his gentleness, which fed her. I hoped Summer would understand my proposal because it was going to be a blinder. This would come out of nowhere for her, and I sincerely hoped she would be open to it.

In fact, I was quite prepared to play on her love for Slick to get what I wanted, but if I did, some part of Summer would always hold back from Slick. And that would be damaging. Shoulders drawn back, determination running through my body, I followed the woman who held three people's futures in her gentle hands.

Summer

Making coffee took a few minutes and allowed me to gather my thoughts. Irish and her arrival had thrown me off stride, and I needed this brief time to breathe and steel myself for whatever announcement she had. When I turned back, I found her sitting calmly at my small table, arms resting on it as she leaned slightly forward.

The determination on her face gave me pause, and then I realised Irish couldn't control me or my feelings.

Regardless of *her* feelings, she was here for a reason, and she wanted me to hear it. So be it. Despite the fact I wanted to dislike her, I understood this wasn't her fault entirely. Yes, she'd known about me, but Slick loved her, and vice versa. He also loved me, and that was the conundrum.

"Talk," I said, sitting down and handing her a coffee.

Irish twisted the mug in her hands. Clearly, whatever she was about to say was going to be a bombshell.

"Slick needs you for his gentle side so he can nurture, love, and release that part of him. But you'll never understand his darkness, the monster he also has. For you, Slick will deny that side and cut a vital part of himself out. He'll stay true to you because he loves you, but he'll never be himself again. But he'd do it for you.

"If he chose me, he'd be the opposite. Slick would hide and smother that softer part of him because I only know darkness and the night. Again, he'd not be his true self. Whichever one of us he picks, Slick will lose a part of himself. The question is, how much do we love him to find a compromise?"

"I'm listening," I replied. I twisted my mug between my hands, mimicking Irish unconsciously.

"Why can't he have both of us?" Irish asked.

I stared at her, stunned, as seconds ticked past, wondering if I'd truly heard what she said.

"Sorry?" I finally stuttered.

“I said, why can’t he have both of us?” Irish repeated, and my eyes narrowed.

“Look, you’re attractive and all that, but I’m not into women. If you’re bisexual, great, but I’m not,” I replied.

My mind was stunned. Did Irish really think I’d go for a threesome?

“Well, that’s good to know. But I’m not bisexual, either. What I am saying is you aren’t capable of the darkness I am, and there is no way I could ever be you. So why don’t we both keep him? You provide the soft touch he needs, and I can be his nightmare,” Iris said.

My head shook of its own volition. What Irish was saying was crazy. I didn’t want to be the other woman or know that Slick kept Irish as a mistress on the side. I began to rise to my feet when Irish held a hand out.

“Please wait and listen to me,” she asked.

Irish

This was it, the crunch point. Almost everything depended on this moment, and only Summer could offer three people happiness.

“I don’t want a family or kids. In fact, I’m due for an operation to have my tubes tied. That’s how strongly I feel about it. On the other hand, I bet you’re desperate for children and a family. Either one of us could walk away with Slick, but we’d only get half the man we love. So, no, I don’t want to be sister wives with you. But why can’t you be wife to us both? You have children with Slick and raise them, and I can dote on them like a loving aunt. Slick would get the family and wife he needs and craves.

“At the same time, I would be his other woman, the one who can give him the dominant and kinky sex he likes with me. I can be his sidekick when his darkness rises, and he can be himself. Like Slick, I’d be happy to come home to a hot dinner and relax with good company. There’s no fooling myself. I’m not a homemaker, but you are Summer. And while you’re gorgeous, I don’t want to have sex with you. But if we

can figure out a way to exist with each other, we can make all three of us happy,” I said.

Disbelief was firmly etched on Summer’s face. I’d expected it.

“What are you suggesting?” Summer asked.

“I’m suggesting we set up a house together, a large house. One side yours, and one mine. And Slick chooses who he wants to be with each night. To be honest, I couldn’t handle more than two nights a week. I don’t like being smothered or felt I’m being spied upon. Other than my two nights, Slick stays with you for the other five.

“You have his children. I don’t want them. I’m happy to spoil your kids and be a great auntie, but nope, not raising them or giving birth. Honestly, I don’t want that responsibility. You give Slick and me a home. But again, I stress that I don’t want a wife. Just a friend who cares about me, I suppose, and will let me look after her too. I don’t have the gentleness you have, but I am protective. And you’d be someone I’d be quite happy over spoiling and protecting,” I said.

“But you don’t want a wife,” Summer stated dryly.

“No. I want to share in Slick’s life with you and provide the darkness he needs, but he needs you more. He’ll want to snuggle with someone, and I hate that. Slick will want to spoil his woman, and I’d like to spoil her, too. It would be nice to get up in the morning and have someone make breakfast. Then say goodbye and have a good day.

“I’d like to come home from work and know there’ll be a hot dinner and good conversation waiting for me. Then, while I take myself off to do what I want, I know the man I love is being spoiled and looked after. I’d like a couple of kids to spoil but not raise or have to be a major part of their life. A simple life is all I ask for, but I don’t think I’ll get it unless you agree.

“Honestly, Summer, I’m not the type of person to settle down in a house with a family. That doesn’t mean I don’t want one. I do, but I’m unwilling to sacrifice what I need for what I

want. Because that's denying who I am. And I like who and what I became. It may be a different path from what I envisioned, but that's cool. I can handle that. But if I let Slick go, I'll grow old alone because that is who I am. This is me being honest and open, and I know it's probably not what you want to hear.

“You wish to hear that I'm the other woman, the slut who broke up your relationship. That's a lie. We both fell in love with the same man, and Slick and I fought against our feelings because of you. Hurting you is something neither of us wanted. But you've got a big heart, and I think you can make this threesome work. Hell, I don't even want to marry Slick. Honestly, I'd like you to, and I'd love to stand by your side when you wed.

“Slick needs us both, and at the moment, he's tearing himself apart. Deep down, he knows he can't be with just one or the other of us. Slick's trying to reconcile losing a part of himself so he can be everything you need. And I don't doubt you'd win out because you can offer him more. You can give Slick the life he dreamed of, but you can't match my darkness, nor should you try. When he's beaten the shit out of someone for whatever crime they committed, he won't come and tell you about it.

“Slick won't want to dim the light and the love you have within you. So he'll swallow that up, and sooner or later, it will begin to eat him. The fact he would need to hide this from you would begin to turn into self-recrimination, and Slick would begin to hate himself. Because all he'd see is the beauty that you bring, and he's dwelling in ugliness. Turn that on its head, and with me, Slick would lose the joy in life he had and just become a soulless monster. Slick needs what we both bring to the table. If you can find a way, Summer, we could make a family,” I said and heaved a huge sigh.

I had got everything off my chest that I meant to, and now it depended on Summer. Could she share a life with another woman? Or was she too set in her ways, too good for both of us?

Summer

I listened with disbelief as Irish opened her heart to me. In the end, my heart was pained for her because she was lonely, and I understood loneliness. And I could understand and see what she meant about Slick. She and I both suited his personality in different ways, and neither of us was one hundred per cent compatible with him. Together, we could be, though.

I gave myself a mental shake. Was I really considering this? It would be crazy and certainly lead to gossip and judgment. Hadn't I had enough of that my entire life? There was no way I wanted to be the focus of pointing fingers and whispering behind hands. Then again, after my mothers, I could handle anything. And speaking of the devil, I looked up as the door opened and both of them walked in.

A groan left my mouth before I realised, and I glanced at Irish even as Marianne pranced forward.

"I need your credit card," she announced, ignoring Irish.

"Why?"

"There's a new pair of boots I want," she said.

"And I've seen a new handbag I must have," Mom added.

"And I told you two just before Uncle Brian died, I am cutting you off. If you want things like that, go and get a job," I stated and folded my arms.

Marianne's eyes narrowed as she glared at me.

"After everything we've done for you, listen here, you little bitch. I want those boots, and you're going to buy them for me. You've no need for money. What life do you have? Jeez, even that biker cheated on you, like we said. Just because you've got no hope and no life, that doesn't mean we have to suffer," Marianne snarled.

"Then get a job," I replied calmly, but inside I was shaking.

Mom and Marianne both knew I hated confrontations, especially with an audience. And they were both going to act up.

“Why? Good lord, child, why do you think I had you? Children are meant to look after their parents, and I want that handbag. So just give us the card. You know you’re going to anyway,” Mom said.

“No, I’m not. I told you two to get a job and that the free ride was over. I work hard for my money, and I have things I want to do. The two of you have dragged me down enough.” My voice shook as I spoke, and I knew they heard it.

“Like what? Pine in your bedroom for that biker? He was never going to hang around. Why would he want such a mouse as you? From what we’ve heard, the woman he cheated on you with is stunning. What on earth made you think you could keep a man like that interested in you? You’re boring, mousy, forgettable, and, quite frankly, I imagine you’re vanilla in bed. A man like Slick needs variety and danger; he doesn’t want you,” Marianne snarled.

Each word struck and jabbed deep into my heart. My fragile ego collapsed as it always did, and their words were poison to my self-confidence. But I still wouldn’t back down.

“I don’t care what you think of me—” I began, and Mom cut me off with a wave of her hand.

“Clearly. I’ve told you to dress up, and here you are in pants and a baggy top. No make-up, hair scraped back. You look homely. The only husband you’ll ever get is a fat dumpling who’s as desperate as you. Your sex will be as boring as your life, and you’ll produce two entirely forgettable children. I’ll never understand how I ended up with you as my daughter,” Mom snapped.

Her disappointment slapped me in the face as it always did, but I was done with it. Uncle Brian’s death had rocked me and lowered my defences, but I still had that stubbornness I got from Dad, and it raised its head now.

“And considering what you think of me, why on earth should I give you any more money? Mom, I’m over and done trying to earn your love and approval. Uncle Brian died, and you didn’t even wait a day before demanding to see his will. Why you thought he might have left you anything is beyond me.

But I'm done, and I meant it four weeks ago. Go get a job and find somewhere else to live. I want you gone and out of my life. Don't force me to evict you because I will.

"As I said last time, all you've ever done is criticise and humiliate me for not being some airheaded brat. I'll never be as vain or as narcissistic as you, and I don't want to be. And as for you, Marianne, I told you, I owe you nothing. You're not even blood-related. And I'm done, honestly, done being your purse and slave. Get out of my life and stay the hell out," I snapped.

Mom stared at me in disbelief while Marianne smirked.

"Think the mouse is showing her claws. Well, I'm going to take your card. What are you doing to do to stop me?" Marianne said as she reached for my purse.

A hand snapped out and grabbed her wrist tightly.

Marianne's eyes widened as she gazed at Irish.

"Take your hand off me," she demanded.

"Then don't try to steal Summer's shit," Irish retorted. Her green eyes were aflame with anger, and I wondered how far Marianne would push her.

"And who are you?" Mom demanded, cocking a hip and examining her nails. Her entire stance made it clear she didn't really care.

"A friend of Summers. Brian may be gone, but Summer doesn't stand alone. Now I suggest you take your skanky asses out of here before I decide to start my cardio early and beat the crap out of you both."

Marianne and Mom blinked as they took in Irish's words. She'd spoken in a tone that was clearly unnegotiable. There was no doubt Irish meant every word she said.

Mom straightened. "This isn't over, Summer," she threatened, and Irish released Marianne's wrist.

"Oh, it's over," Irish promised as Marianna rubbed her wrist. Irish had clearly hurt her.

“Get out,” I said and pointed to the door.

Mom’s cheeks were red as she hurried out, but Marianne sauntered until Irish growled and then, head down, she scurried away.

“Yeah, you need to agree so I can beat those two bitches and have a reason to do so,” Irish said with a chuckle.

“Maybe,” I agreed.

Slick

Slick sat and watched the sun set over the Black Hills. It had been another day without either of his women, and Slick knew it was over. He couldn’t have either, and his heart was breaking. Why had he found the perfect woman, only she had to exist within two separate souls? Life wasn’t what he’d expected, and love hurt. Slick found it hard to accept that he’d finally found love, but it wasn’t as simple as his brothers had it. They fell in love with one woman, but Slick’s perfect woman didn’t exist as one woman.

Slick knew he couldn’t make a choice between Irish and Summer. His darkness yearned for Irish, but choosing her would then deny his gentle side. If he chose Summer, then he’d have to ignore his dark side. Whichever woman he chose, Slick would end up denying part of himself. No, there was only one option open to him. Slick fingered his patch. He looked down at the emblem that had ruled his world for decades and sighed.

Slick couldn’t choose either woman; he loved them both equally, and he couldn’t walk away from Rage.

But soon, there’d be another patch beside it. Nomad.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

Slick

He was packing a duffel when there was a knock. After his meeting with Drake, Slick wasn't in the mood for company. Drake had called for a vote, and it had gone Slick's way. Each of his brothers understood Slick's urge to flee from this mess. Slick needed to let Summer and Irish forget about him, and he wanted to lick his wounds in private. To Slick's annoyance, his door opened, and Texas stuck his head in.

"You got visitors," he rumbled.

To Slick's surprise, there was hope in Texas's eyes, and he also appeared amused. Slick was clueless about what Texas had to be happy about, except for the fact that Texas had the dream life Slick desired.

Texas stepped aside, and Irish stormed into the room with Summer behind. Both women looked determined, and Slick sat his ass down heavily on the bed. Texas shut the door, but Slick idly noted he didn't close it tightly.

"We need to talk," Irish announced by way of a greeting.

"Look, I know you both feel betrayed, and I apologise. I never intended to fall in love with you both, but it happened. To make things easier, so you don't have to see me around or worry about running into me, I'm leaving town. That will give us all a chance to heal. I'm so sorry I made such a mess of this," Slick said, allowing the pain to bleed into his voice.

He needed them to understand he genuinely hadn't meant to hurt either of them. Shit, Slick felt so bad he couldn't even glance at them.

"You know what pissed me off? Summer lost her uncle, and you left her to grieve alone. Two weeks, Slick, and you couldn't man up enough to help," Irish stated.

Slick's head popped up. He hadn't expected that.

“Summer didn’t wish to see me. Hell, I’m to blame for Brian’s death.”

“Who said that? I needed you to hold me and make everything better, but you weren’t there,” Summer challenged.

“Summer, Brian’s dead because those cunts were Fangs,” Slick replied.

“Uncle Brian died”—tears formed in Summer’s eyes —“because a maniac decided to start a war. That wasn’t Rage. Uncle Brian’s death is on Fury. Fangs had no reason to drag Brian and me into their fight. They did due to being bad men.”

“Slick, you need to get your act sorted. Summer and I have reached an agreement that we expect you to support. There’s a darkness in you that appeals to me, and that dark fell in love with me back. There’s also a lightness that attracted Summer and loves Summer. Summer and I are two sides of a coin, and put us together, and we’re your perfect match. But sadly, your ideal woman comes in two bodies. So, Summer and I spoke,” Irish said, folding her arms.

Slick wondered what the hell was happening.

“You’re going to build a big house that we design. One side will be Irish’s, and the other, mine. The three of us will live together. But no threesomes. Neither Irish nor I am attracted. You can spend the night with either Irish or me, but nobody else. We catch you with anyone else, Irish is cutting your cock off and shoving it up your ass,” Summer continued.

Slick blinked.

“Honestly, as much as I love sex with you, I don’t require you to be around a lot. Summer will create a home for us. I don’t want kids, but I am happy being their crazy aunt. You and Summer are going to give me what I want. A family I can be a part of but remain separate from. I don’t need the lovey-dovey shit. You will fuck me as and when I demand, but you will make a family with Summer,” Irish said.

“Don’t even consider the two wives crap. You’ll marry me, and Irish will be the woman I share your life with. Irish doesn’t want your name or anything else. I won’t give up the

garden centre, and Irish won't quit her work. Not until the Fangs are brought down. When I decide to get pregnant, I'll go part time, but you will be a full father to the kids," Summer insisted.

Slick's mouth opened and shut. He repeated this twice more as both women waited.

"Ain't gonna force you two into anything."

"You're not. You're going to do as you're told. I'll be your wife. Irish will be your woman. Should we decide this isn't working, then we'll sit down together and work stuff out. But make no mistake, Slick, Irish and I are your forever, and she will cut anyone else who tries to muscle in," Summer warned.

"I don't know what to say."

"Say yes, you dumb fuck!" Texas bellowed from the door.

"Fuck off, Texas!" Slick yelled in return.

"You say yes, admit you're pussy whipped and will break your back to make us happy. Because, Slick, while most men can barely handle one upset woman, you'll have two," Irish interrupted.

Slick studied them. Both of them were a wonder and miracle, and he wondered how the hell he got so lucky. His heart swelled with love for both of them and how amazing they were. Neither was going to try to tear him down or give Slick the guilt trip. Instead, these beautiful ladies were working together to make him happy. At that moment, Slick thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

"Yes," he said, and both of his girls lit in stunning smiles.

"Holy fuck, how do I get me two of them?" Savage asked from behind the door.

Summer frowned, turned quickly, and flung it open. Crowded around outside were all his brothers. Some appeared stunned, others looked jealous, and the rest were happy for him.

"You nosey bunch of bastards," Slick growled out.

“Welcome to the family!” Mac said with a grin, and Slick threw himself at the door. Holding it shut against the hammering his brothers began, Slick grew concerned.

“You sure about this?” he asked.

“Absolutely. None of those assholes can take me,” Irish replied in a loud voice. The banging stopped, and they heard the brothers whispering outside, and then it started again.

“Might ask Irish to make them toe the line,” Summer said with a cute smile.

Slick began to chuckle. His girls were going to rule the roost!



Slick watched as Summer’s mom, Carrie, and Marianne headed into her house. They’d not seen him lurking in the living room when they’d entered, and they both jumped as they finally spotted him.

“Sit your bitch asses down,” Slick snarled. He’d had Mac digging deep, and what he had found was disturbing.

“You can’t speak to me like that,” Marianne challenged.

“Bitch, if you walk out of here today, you’ll be fuckin’ lucky. You sit down, or we’ll make you,” he said as Ace appeared from behind them.

“We’ll scream,” Carrie threatened.

“Won’t be for long when I slit your throat,” Slick promised in return and was amused when Carrie sat her ass down.

“Summer served you papers to leave. Now I know you cunts had no plans to go peacefully, but you’re gonna. See, I found out some shit that I won’t hesitate to use, and I’ll destroy you both,” Slick stated.

He turned to Carrie.

“Porn star, stripper, and part-time whore. I got the photos, statements, and evidence. I’m also aware of the orgies you did in the past. Acting like butter wouldn’t fuckin’ melt, and you’re scum. All of that will come to light unless you leave

quietly. Discovered the two hundred and fifty thousand you had in the bank. I state had. I took two hundred back to give to Summer for all the shit you put her through. Take the fifty-k I left you with, get your ass up those stairs and pack because you fucked with the wrong girl.

“Warned you to lay off Summer, and you didn’t. Now it’s time to suck it up. You have two choices. Pack and leave today, and never contact Summer again. Or stay and fight a losing battle, and all that shit I have on you goes live on the internet and will be posted to the cops. Chose, or I’ll decide for you,” Slick drawled. It was obvious he couldn’t care less what Carrie did.

Within seconds, she was scurrying her skanky ass up the stairs.

“Do I get the same offer?” Marianne smirked.

“Nah, see, I’m aware you killed Summer’s dad. That you paid someone to make it look like an accident. You dumb fuckin’ bitch, there’s always a paper trail. And I know you were behind that racking falling on Summer. Like the thick twat you are, you used the same guy, and Rage caught him. He squealed like the rat he was before he died,” Slick said calmly.

“What do you want?” Marianne asked, paling. “Cash?”

“No. You made my girl’s life a misery for fuckin’ years. Tortured and taunted Summer, and when her daddy passed, you made Summer even more miserable. You tried to break her, but she survived. My woman has her daddy’s backbone of steel. I’m betting you believed you’d get the money from her daddy, but he saw through you and left everything to Summer.

“So you hitched your wagon to Carrie. And plotted how to kill Summer to get what you thought you deserved. Makes you lower than an animal in my eyes. And there’s only one way to deal with scum,” Slick snarled.

Ace stepped forward and jabbed a needle into Marianne’s neck, and her eyes began fluttering.

“What have you done?” she gasped.

“Killed a rat and a murdering bitch. I took justice for Summer’s dad.”

“You can’t just kill someone,” Marianne whispered as her eyes fluttered closed.

“Watch me,” Slick replied grimly. He turned to Ace. “You get what I wanted?”

“Yeah, but that’s a grim way to go,” Ace said, not that he appeared bothered.

“Something tells me the bitch deserves it.”

“Okay, I’ll take her. Hunter and Jett are here to remove every trace of her from the house,” Ace offered.

Scurrying footsteps echoed, and then Summer’s mom flew down the small drive. She didn’t even check on Marianne. Ace scooped Marianne up and carried her out back to where Apache waited with a van. Slick followed behind to make sure nobody spotted them.

“Let’s go, Dad,” Ace said, throwing Marianne in the rear and climbing in the front.

“Slick has a nasty sense of justice,” Apache commented as he waved at Slick.

Slick grinned as he heard Apache’s words. He saluted back and watched them disappear.

“Clear everything out in the two rooms I showed you. Don’t get rid of anything until I know they’ve not stolen something from Summer. Once I give you the okay, get the prospects to burn it,” Slick stated.

“Okay, brother, lucky asshole.” Hunter grinned.

“Says the one married to a movie star,” Slick taunted, and Hunter shook his head.

“Mina’s a best-selling author now. It’s like a war when she and Lyndsey have a book coming out together,” Hunter replied, rubbing his chin.

Luckily, that didn’t happen often as the two women scheduled their releases ahead. But the few times it had

happened, it had been a bitch fight to end all bitch fights.

“Going to get my sweet girl,” Slick said with a grin.

Summer loved the nickname he'd given her. Her days were still dark while she grieved Brian's death, but she was beginning to look forward to the future instead of dwelling on what might have been.

Irish refused any nickname but Irish, and the one time Jett tried a honey on her, she'd squeezed his balls until he'd cried. Slick now silently called her Ballbuster.

But both his girls were thriving, and that's what mattered. Irish and Summer had both finally agreed on a house design. Summer was going to rent out her dad's and uncle's houses when it was built. Slick had no say in the design, not that he cared, as long as Irish and Summer were happy.

For now, Summer lived in her dad's and Irish lived at her place, which was still a damn secret.

But they were getting along. There'd been a few disagreements, but they worked them out. Slick was finally content and happy, and he loved with his whole heart. He was the lucky bastard who'd found his woman. She just happened to be in two separate bodies.

Marianne

Her eyes flew open, and she drew in a shuddering gasp. She was surrounded by sheer blackness, but she was alive. That asshole hadn't killed her like she'd thought. Her hands shot out, and she touched the sides of something. What the fuck? Panic set in as she felt all around her and realised a terrible truth. Marianne was inside a coffin, and judging by the small speckles of dirt falling on her, she was buried alive.

It was true what they said: nobody can hear you scream in the woods.

EPILOGUE.

Dana

Fear rising, I kept a watch in the rear mirror as I jabbed Dylan's number. Dylan's line rang out, and I dialled again and still didn't receive an answer. Frantically, I hit the next number and didn't get Davies either.

Panicked now, I dialled the third and burst into tears as London answered.

"Dana, what the hell?" London sounded surprised.

"London, I'm being followed. There's six bikers, and I'm sure they're Fangs," I gasped as I wiped the tears from my eyes.

"Where are you?" London demanded, and I heard him running.

"Coming to work the usual way," I said with a sniff.

"Stick to that route, Dana. Do not let the Fangs force you off. If they get in front and try to divert you, ram the car into them," London ordered as he audibly slammed through a door.

"Okay," I sniffed, looking in the mirror again.

Had the Venomous Fangs discovered my part in freeing Irish? I was terrified they had. I didn't doubt that the Fangs would hurt me if they'd guessed.

The bikes moved closer, and I stepped on the gas. Hell, I didn't want to be a casualty of this war.

"Dana, honey, you still there?" London demanded.

A car revved loudly, and then there was a squeal of tyres.

"Yes, London, but they're moving closer."

"Run them over, baby, don't stray off course. We're coming."

"Okay," I said and put my foot down a little harder.

All I had to do was find London, and everything would be okay. I could do that.

CHARACTERS.

Drake Michaelson. DOB. 1975. Drake is third generation Rage; he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His father started Rage MC and died before Drake was old enough to become president. Drake became VP and, in a hostile takeover, became president. Phoenix thinks he looks like Tim McGraw with longer hair. Drake has a leanness to him but has well-defined muscles and broad shoulders. Drake sports dark brown eyes with laughter lines. He's six foot four. He adopted Phoe's 16 children, and they have two of their own.

Apache. DOB 1969. Apache is a second-gen Rage. He was in the second lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He is one of Drake's enforcers. He becomes Road Captain in 'A Renewed Rage.' Apache has bright green eyes and is six foot two. He is of Native American origin. Apache's described as absolutely stunning with high cheekbones and raven black hair that hangs past his shoulders. Apache's real name is Tyee (meaning Chief) Blackelk. He looks like Lou Diamond Philips. Apache is partnered with Rock in a construction company. He is married to Silvie and has two children with her.

Ace. DOB 1983. Ace is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Ace is Drake's VP. He's described as looking like a young Lou Diamond Philips. Like his father, he is Native American. Ace has bright green eyes and is six foot two. He is described much the same as his father, absolutely stunning with high cheekbones and raven black hair that hangs past his shoulders. Ace is no stranger to violence and will do whatever it takes to protect his club. He was shot five times, protecting Phoe from her ex. He is now married to Artemis and has several children with her.

Fish. DOB 1978. Fish's birth name is Justin Greenway. Fish is a third-generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Fish is Drake's sergeant at arms. He's been married to Marsha for many years and has three children. Fish runs the Rage garage. Fish has a bushy beard and

untamed hair, which he keeps in check with a bandana. He is tall and broadly built and has an innate kindness.

Texas. DOB 1965. Texas is a second-gen Rage. He was in the second lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Texas's full name is Blake Craven. Texas is an older man and is the MC's secretary and treasurer. He works on bike design and specialised paintwork. He has a robust moral code but is mindful of what the MC is capable of. He once alludes to cleaning up after their messes. Texas is tall, broad, with a goatee, dark salt and pepper hair slightly too long, and piercing brown eyes. He can also play the keyboards. Texas stands at six foot four. His old lady is Penny.

Axel. DOB 1951. Axel was one of the founders of the club, which makes him first generation Rage. He is the Chaplin of the MC. The Chaplin's role is to look after Rage's needs, spiritually. Axel makes sure they have their heads on straight and performs their marriages and death ceremonies. He has blue eyes and has a salt and pepper beard, and very loud. He's built like a mountain. Axel has wild hair which hangs to his shoulders. Axel is six foot six. Axel claims an old lady, a schoolteacher called Ellen and dotes on her.

Gunner. DOB 1976. Gunner is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Gunner is one of Drake's Enforcers at the MC. Gunner is described as having silver-grey eyes with thick lashes. His name is Cole Washington. James Washington is Gunner's brother, and they are estranged. Gunner's described as having long sandy brown hair, high cheekbones and firm, soft lips. Gunner owns four houses, three of which he rents out, he also works at Made by Rage carving wood with Manny. He pays fifty percent with Manny into the pot. His old lady is Autumn.

Rock. DOB 1985. Rock is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He becomes an enforcer in A Renewed Rage. Rock is six foot four and huge. He has a goatee and has a Dodge Charger he's very protective of. He runs the Blackrock construction company with Apache. Rock was disowned at eighteen, because he refused to go into law and follow in his father's footsteps. Rock has soft brown

eyes and dark brown hair. He is closest to Lex, out of the MC. Rock and Carly adopt three orphans that he and Drake saved in the floods.

Manny. DOB 1983. Manny is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He becomes Treasurer in A Renewed Rage. He's described as tall, sexy as in the cute boy next door way, tousled blond hair, and light amber-coloured eyes. Manny was beaten by Bulldog for failing to report a pregnant prostitute and then shot in the back by Bulldog's men. Manny is six foot four. He carves wood and works his own section of Made by Rage. He pays fifty percent with Gunner into the pot. Manny enjoys playing chess.

Slick. DOB 1978. Slick is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Slick loves books and is happy reading quietly. He has soft brown eyes and is heavily muscled. He has a tattoo of Kayleigh on his left pec of a circle of thorns with pink and blue and purple roses and an image of Kayleigh kneeling in the circle, with two hearts on chains threaded through her hands. One heart has Ace's name, the other has his, her name is threaded through the thorns. Slick runs a leasing company. He has over twenty properties he rents, and he pays fifty percent into the pot. He also plays chess. His old ladies are Summer and Irish.

Lowrider. DOB 1984. Lowrider is third generation Rage, he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He has ebony hair shaved short at the sides and longer on top. A roman nose and full lips, he has blue eyes. Lowrider has a tattoo of black flames that crawls up his throat. He's six foot three of lean, powerful muscle and tanned. (He looks like Colin Farrell.) Lowrider's actual name is Nathan Miller. Lowrider is a mechanic and makes builds from scratch. His old lady is Lindsey.

Ezra. DOB 1979. Ezra is third generation Rage, he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His parents died when he was sixteen in a house fire. His aunt and uncle didn't want him, and he ended up on the streets. He has a younger sister called Lindsey, who seeks him out. He has brown eyes, is tall and has shaggy dark hair. Ezra's a broad-shouldered man with

a deep, broad chest, beautiful bone structure and a neatly trimmed goatee. (Looks like Robert Downey Junior.) Ezra owns a landscaping company, which is in high demand.

Mac. DOB 1970. Mac is third generation Rage. He was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Mac's adept at playing the drums. Mac also hacked into Lindsey laptop to find out what she was hiding. He was shot protecting Lindsey from her ex-husband. Mac is responsible for running the bar. His real name is Callum Mackintosh. He has a McCaw called Pirate and Casey has Lazybones a big fluffy Persian who is lazy

Lex. DOB 1984. Lex is third generation Rage; he was in the third lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Lex was accused of being involved in Kayleigh's death. He runs the Rage shop. In the Protection of Rage, Lex is kicked out by a woman he was seeing, which led to the woman and Autumn fighting and rolling over Lex.

Lex has blue eyes framed by thick dark lashes. He has a dimple on his right cheek. Lex is tall with dark-haired hair past his shoulders. His legs are lean and long, and he has muscular arms. He has piercing, pale blue eyes. He was known as the man whore of Rage. His name is Alexander Miles Turner. When he marries Vivie, he takes on her surname.

Blaze. DOB 1992. Blaze is a fourth-generation Rage. He was in the fourth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He became a brother in 2016. Blaze runs the parts store but stopped when he opened a gym with Hunter. He's got green eyes. Blaze is close to Carly and thinks of her as a little sister. Slick is worried that Blaze has too much dark in him. Blaze owns a Harley Dyna Glide and a Military Enfield he restored.

Slate. DOB 1992. Slate is a fourth-generation Rage. He was in the fourth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Became a brother in 2016. Slate runs into Penny's burning house in Rage's Heat to save her and the children with Texas. He works with Ezra in a landscaping company.

Hunter. DOB 1991. Hunter is a fourth-generation Rage. He was in the fourth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Became a

brother in 2016. Hunter is also a designer for paintwork on bikes. He plays the bass guitar. Hunter opened a gym with Blaze. His old lady is Mina.

Jett. DOB. 1990. Jett is a fourth-generation Rage. He was in the fourth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Became a brother in 2015. His name is Alexander Cutter. He's described as having black hair, dark brown eyes, high cheekbones, a square jawline and firm, soft lips. He is tall and broad, lean-hipped, long-legged and tightly muscled. Jett is a mechanic, engine designer, and paintwork designer. Jett is estranged from his family after his brother, Martin, slept with Jett's fiancée, and everyone took Martin's side. His old lady is Sin.

Calamity. DOB 1996. Calamity is fifth generation Rage. He was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. His name is Billy Tomkins. Calamity becomes a prospect after only being on Rage for a month. He's a talented mechanic, body designer and spray painter. He interferes and stops Frenzy from harming Silvie. takes a bullet in the shoulder for Autumn.

Klutz. DOB 1989. Klutz is fifth generation Rage. He was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Klutz is a talented bartender and often pulls scenes similar to those in the film Cocktail. He's African American. Klutz's roommate was dealing drugs in college, and Klutz got swept up in the sting. The cops beat him, and then his innocence was proven, and he was freed. His real name is Jacon Edwards.

Prospects.

Savage. DOB 1983. Savage is a fifth-generation Rage. He was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. Savage is thirty-two years old and is a mechanic.

Gauntlet. DOB 1987. Gauntlet is fifth-generation Rage, he was in the fifth lot of brothers recruited into Rage. He works in the garage. His real name is Lucifer Jepson. Gauntlet has short brown hair, and green eyes.

Harley. (Phoe and Drake) DOB 1999. Harley's from Maine and was adopted in 2010. In November 2015, two seventeen-year-olds attack Harley from behind, cracking his skull and putting him into a coma. Harley was protecting Christian.

Harley remains in a coma. He has soft brown eyes and ash blond hair. Harley wakes up in Nov 2016 after the flooding of Rapid City. He joins Rage and opens a blacksmith shop.

Carmine. (Phoe and Drake) DOB 1996, half African American and half white. He plays for the Cubs. He's from Maine and was adopted in 2010. Carmine looked after Tye, Harley and Serenity on the streets. Phoe alludes to Carmine, sacrificing himself to protect Harley and Serenity. He joins Rage as a prospect but will do double the term because of his other commitments.

Tyelar. (Phoe and Drake) DOB 1996, Tye is half Mexican and half Caucasian and is from Maine. He was adopted in 2010. In the Hunter's Rage, Tyelar is playing for the Blackhawks. When Tye hears Harley was attacked, he went off the rails and got a three-match ban. Carmine had to fly out and sort his head out. Tye, like Carmine, looked after Harley and Serenity. Phoe alludes to Tye sacrificing himself to protect Harley and Serenity. He joins Rage as a prospect but will do double the term because of his other commitments.

Wild. DOB December 1999. He is known as Jonas Valden, and approached Rage to join the club when he was fifteen. His father is a well-known tattoo artist, Rio Valden. Wild takes his younger brother and runs away. They have been watching Hunter and Mina because while they were watching Rage one day, they saw someone chase after Hunter.

Wild sends Cowboy after Mina while he investigates what happened in the house. He finds Klutz wounded and Savage drugged next to the dogs. Wild drags Savage inside because of the dogs and calls Drake, informing him what happened. He chases after his hot-headed brother, who he tracks using the Find My iPhone app. They crash Cowboy's bike to stop Mina's car. By sending the bike under her wheels, it slows Mina down.

Cowboy. DOB 2002, Cowboy is hot-headed and apt to act before thinking. Wild is three years older than him and has taken care of him for several years. Cowboy is immensely loyal to his brother. He leaps from his bike to Wild's trusting his brother will catch him. His name is Zac Valden.

Rage Old Ladies.

Phoenix. DOB 1979. Drake's old lady. She is English and left England to escape an abusive relationship. She has six children she gave birth to and adopted eleven. Phoe is exceedingly well off and runs three National Charities. The Phoenix Trust, the Rebirth Trust and the Eternal Trust. On meeting Drake, Phoe had two more children with him.

She has been married twice, the first husband died, and her second was a bigamist. Phoe has long, blond hair and is green-eyed and five feet tall. She met Hellfire MC first and is loyal to them and a Hellfire sister. Her alternative guy is Ace.

Marsha Greenway. DOB 1978. Fish's old lady, and the only old lady the club has until Phoenix meets Drake. She's known to be kind and caring. Marsha discovers she's pregnant with twins in Rage's Terror after many years of not being able to have children. Axel is Marsha's alternative guy. Although the old ladies don't have a ranking, Marsha is Phoe's VP. Marsha has blue eyes and shoulder-length brown hair.

Silvie Stanton. DOB 1982. She's claimed by Apache. Silvie's kind and generous. The MC has a lot of respect for her. She has blond, curly hair and is close to Gunner. Silvie has soft brown eyes. She takes a job at the Made by Rage shop, working for Lindsey, first helping cut material and then as a receptionist. Finally, she becomes the shop manager. Although the old ladies don't have a ranking, Silvie is Phoe's Chaplin. She is now pregnant with twins. Her alternative guy is Gunner.

Artemis, aka Kayleigh Mitchell. DOB 1987. She has red curly hair, green eyes. She's small, dainty, and muscled. She has a heart-shaped pixie face with full lips. Kayleigh was taken in by Master Hoshi, and out of her alleged death, Artemis arose.

She was part of a group called Revenge before she left and formed the Artemis group. The Artemis Group became The Juno Group when she went legal with her efforts. She has combat skills and has killed many times. Artemis's alternative guy is Drake. She is Phoe's equivalent of an enforcer. Artemis now has a large team working for her on search and rescues

for child and women trafficking. She also provides protection, and James Washington makes use of her skills. She's extremely expensive.

Sinclair Montgomery. DOB 1993. Sin takes over her father's shop, the Reading Nook, when he dies, and with Reid, they turn it into something special. Sin was an only child, and Reid became her surrogate brother. She is socially awkward and inept and feels out of place in crowds. She's described as dainty with brown hair and big blue eyes. Sin doesn't think she's pretty, but people describe her as beautiful. She has low self-esteem created by attending college and university when she was fifteen. Manny is Sin's alternative guy.

Penny Nelson. DOB 1976. Penny is a cook and server at Reading Nook. She loves cooking and baking and makes everything from scratch. She has a warm and caring attitude. Penny has two children, a son, five, and a daughter, three. Her ex left her for his secretary. She's very close to her sister Carrie, who lives with them. Penny has short, dark hair cut into a bob and is a few pounds overweight, with blue eyes and freckles. Penny is five foot six. Her alternative guy is Fish.

Lindsey Miller nee Smithson. DOB 1989. She is ten years younger than Ezra and is his baby sister. She was married to a man called Thomas Masterson, who beat her. She has brown eyes with gold flecks and long, waist-length brown hair with red highlights. She undergoes surgery to correct her face after Thomas breaks her jaw, cheekbone and eye socket. Her face is a sweetheart shape, and she has plump lips and high cheekbones. Lindsey has her own business called Made by Rage, Designs by Lindsey. While Lindsey is wary around strangers, she has no worries about speaking her mind to the Rage brothers. She's kind and generous. Lindsey's books are published under the pen name of L. Smithson. Her alternative guy is Mac.

Autumn Rydell. DOB 1990. Autumn was in a relationship with Carter Rydell. He turned to drugs, and Autumn kicked him out of their home and broke up with him. Rydell kept stalking Autumn and lost her a lovely home and a good job. When Rage finds Autumn, she's on her knees, unable to cope

and has no money. She resists the relationship with Gunner at first. Autumn starts work at the Rage Garage as their office girl. Calamity is her alternative guy, and Autumn is also an enforcer for Phoe. Autumn is a brunette with dark brown eyes and a sweetheart-shaped face. She is about five foot six and is slender but has curves in the right place.

Carly Lennon. DOB 1997. She has dark long brown hair and enormous brown eyes. Carly arrived at Made by Rage, underweight, and Lindsey and Silvie decided to look after her. She had no clothes and was living in a homeless shelter. Carly moves in with Silvie. Her brothers kidnap her in April 2016, and she returns to Rage in Oct 2016. Her family was abusive, and she watched her father die. She flees from her brothers, and they follow. Rock protects Carly and although he's worried about the age gap, he loves her very much. Blaze is her alternative.

Ellen Keating. DOB 1961. Ellen works at the Black Oak Hills Academy. Ellen has rounded curves and chestnut hair with strands of grey. Ellen works long hours from seven in the morning till six at night usually. She drives a year-old Audi that she bought new. Ellen owns her own cottage and bought it when she was twenty-one and paid for it in full after fifteen years. She became the English Department Head when she was thirty-five and has held the job for twenty years.

Geneviève Angelique Blanchard. DOB 1994. Vivie is twenty-three when she meets Lex. She owns her own business Chocolates by Geneviève. She also owns Blanchards Creations and a vineyard, amongst several other things. Vivie is a billionaire but shies away from the public. She has brown hair and green eyes and loves reading. She inherited everything from both sets of grandparents. Vivie also holds the title Duchesse Toulouse, something Lex is slightly uncomfortable with. After her attack, Vivie stopped talking, and it takes an ex-girlfriend of Lex's being mean to make her talk.

Alison Jackson. DOB 1995. Ali runs the Jackson ranch and is well thought of in the local community. Her brother Ice Dawg moved into the farm with his biker gang when her parents

died. They sacked all her staff and isolated her. Ali saves Blaze from being killed by the gang and is tortured herself. Blaze protects her as he feels she suffered because of him. Ali is strong, mouthy, and is not frightened to use a gun if needed. She is loyal and dedicated to raising her younger siblings. Ali's alternative is Slick.

Thomasina Mae Blake. DOB 1990. She has one sister younger than her who died, and her parents are alive, but both have divorced and remarried. Her Godfather is Walter West. Mina has been a shut-in for three years after a stalker murdered three people close to her. He stalked her for the two previous years before turning to violence. Mina was a child actress who turned into a famous actress. Since she became a shut-in, she has begun writing books about a PI under the name A. Dudley. Her alt is Savage.

Casey Reeves. She was brought up by her father to be tough and look after those weaker than her. When the shops begin to get shaken down, Casey steps up to protect them. She attacks Mac thinking he's one of the gang attacking her people. Casey makes a judgement about Mac which is wrong and causes trouble. Her father has trained her to be as close to a Delta Force operative as possible.

When Casey, Mac and Aurora are kidnapped, it is Casey that frees them. Casey takes two bullets, saving them but blows the warehouse sky high. She then goes on a mission when fit to save the children who are being trafficked and helps take them out.

Rosie Craven. (Penny and Texas) DOB 1995. Rosie is now a qualified veterinarian, and she is Texas's daughter. She's a beautiful girl with long dark hair, Slender and tall and pretty, with piercing brown eyes. She is harassed by Brett, takes a civil suit against him, and quits work. When Calamity is kicked from Rage, she stands by his side and cuts Texas and Rage off. Rosie has opened her own clinic and, with Jon, a rescue centre. She also wants to open an animal sanctuary and a rehousing shelter. Rosie helps take down a dog fighting ring. Rosie's alt is Fanatic.

Aurora Victoria. She was Norfolk's granddaughter and was taken away for her protection when she was younger. Her grandmother is now dead, and Aurora has returned to Rapid City. Aurora opens a witch's shop and performs readings on people. She also has visions. Aurora's alt is Gauntlet. She knows Klutz is her soul mate straight away and marries him quickly.

Jemma Edwards. Jemma was married to Klutz's brother Daryl. The marriage was abusive, and she planned to escape when he died. She inherited everything and moved to Rapid City to be with Klutz and his sister, Lynda. Jemma struggles to come to terms with the abuse and falls in love with Cowboy. When she learns about his past, she's worried he might see her as an abuser too. She has two children. Suzie, six and Kendrick, four. She takes on Desmond's two girls, Ami and Bethany.

Andi Berryman. She has one brother who is older than her, Hilton and he's a doctor. Andi runs a brewery she inherited from her grandfather. She meets Manny when she's trying to reach her grandpa in a blizzard, and he saves her. Andi falls for Manny, but when he saves Isabelle, she runs off. Manny saves her from the sinkhole.

Lynda Edwards. DOB 1989. Lynda was the next youngest, after Klutz. She hated how her family treated him, and in the end, was the reason for their downfall. Lynda herself had low self-esteem and had issues relating to people. She is a doctor and gets picked to learn the RECELL technique. She falls in love with Wild, but they have a very bumpy courtship.

Summer Winters. Her mom and step-mom are abusive towards her. Summer's dad was in the army and left and was killed in a car accident. Her dad bought her a garden centre and she runs it successfully. Summer is sweet and has been grieving her dad's loss. This allowed her mom and stepmom to walk all over her. She finally has enough and kicks them out and then Brian dies. Slick makes sure they leave.

Siobhan O'Riley. Her grandfather was Irish from the 2nd gen recruited into Rage. He left before the war because Bulldog was trying to force his son to join Rage. Siobhan was recruited

by a government agency and is a skilled operator. She left when she discovered her grandfathers and mothers bodies, they'd been killed by Fury. She has been hunting ever since. She is cold and feels unable to show a softer side. Siobhan goes by the name Irish to honour her grandfather. She is twenty-five.

RCPD.

Antonio Ramirez. He is over six-foot-tall and has black wavy hair, olive tanned skin. He is Mexican and has brown soft, gentle eyes. Tonio is lean hipped and long-legged, and broad-shouldered. He is a good cop, and Drake thinks a lot of him. Ramirez brought down his previous chief who was taking bribes from Santos. He also quit his job when he was called out on being too close to Rage, which led to a walkout from RCPD. Tonio is involved in a fiery relationship with Sophia Hawthorne. Dylan is amused at how his cousin is running the cop ragged. Tonio is classed as one of Rage even though he's not a brother and Drake is extremely fond of Tonio.

Justin Goldberg. Nando's partner. He was murdered in an ambush by the Venomous Fangs. Axel had been shot and Goldberg answered the call and was killed.

Detective Bobby Lucas. An officer with RCPD who attended Rage to question Ace. He is on the search and rescue team. He attends Vivie's shooting and tries to calm her down. Bobby attends Mandy's beating by her father.

Officer Dan Horton. He attends Geneviève's shooting. Dan locks Mandy's father in the police car when he attacks her. Dan was paralysed from the waist down in the ambush on Axel. He was to be medically retired but now holds a desk job in the RCPD.

Chief Andrew Howser. Chief of police. Howser is also in charge of search and rescue operations.

Hawthorne's

Dylan Hawthorne. Owner of Hawthorne investigations. He is extremely intelligent and will bend and break the rules as he wants. He thinks of Drake as a close friend and takes Rage's

back during the Artemis war. Hawthorne is under attack from the Venomous Fangs because they see him as a threat.

Leila Gibson. She is Hawthorne's computer genius. She managed to get a trace on Artemis, which led Rage to Artemis's, Stacy Conway identity. She becomes part of Phoe's school board. Leila has helped the Hawthorne females cover up their revenge against those who scorned them.

Davies. Hawthorne investigator. He's Hawthorne's top security expert and also does undercover work. Davies is Hawthorne's second in command.

Dana Tyne. The Hawthorne receptionist, she's 28 years old. Dana is behind a van and sees Irish being kidnapped. She follows and helps free Irish.

Max. Hawthorne's Investigator. He followed Ace when Ace went to rescue Phoe in the Rage of the Phoenix. Max was also involved in looking after Sin's bookstore and in Rage's Heat finds out the information Texas wants. In the Sweetness of Rage Max is assigned to protect Vivie's shop and works behind the counter.

London. London was watching over Lindsey when Thomas was attacking her in the Crafting of Rage. London is asked by Lex to do a dive on Vivie and discovers her past.

Jase. Hawthorne's investigator. He is shot in the gut in Rage's Bounty in an ambush by the Venomous Fangs.

Arturo. Hawthorne's investigator. He is with Jace when he and Jace are ambushed in Black Hawk.

Black Hawk RCPD

Chief Anne Dyer. Anne is the Chief of Police in Black Hawk. She doesn't want the war to hit her town and is annoyed the Venomous Fangs attacked. She gives Drake and the others an out, when she claims they were deputised during the Hawthorne ambush.

Detective Williams. He arrives with the chief and backs up what she says. He doesn't want a war hitting Black Hawk.

The Lion Kings.

Barracuda. President.

Tech. He is their sniper and gets shot.

Snake.

Rain.

Satellite.

Tramp.

Ex-Rage.

Prof, Archer and Hammer, Prince, Sticks, Mad Dog, Skill, Mayhem, Buzz, Crow, Jiggy, Farmer, Smokey, Tank, Breaker and Iron.

Irish. He left before the split because Bulldog wanted his son to join, and his son wanted to join the army instead. He protected Siobhan and her mom when his son died abroad. He was tortured and murdered by Fury as was Siobhan's mom.

Unwanted Bastards.

Inglorious.

Bomber. He is an enforcer. He is shot when the Venomous Fangs attack the Unwanted Bastards compound.

Pink. He is killed by the Venomous Fangs when they attack the Unwanted Bastards compound.

Other Characters.

Jazzy. She was a whore who was around when Rage split.

Marianne. She was married to Summer's dad and was involved in killing him and trying to kill Summer. She is buried alive for her crimes.

Carrie. She is Summer's mom. It turns out Carrie was a porn star and stripper and is an escort. Carrie is lazy and expects Summer to wait on her hand and foot and spends all Summer's money. She constantly belittles Summer.

Brian Chambers. He was Summer's dad's best friend. He is killed protecting Summer from the Venomous Fangs.

Carmelle Travers. She is Fury's granddaughter; her mother was his daughter but they didn't know until Fury kidnapped Carmelle. Her father is Arrow, and she is Drake's half-sister. She was married to Beau Travers but when Fury came to kidnap her, he killed Beau with a headshot. She has been held hostage by Santos and Ghost got her and her children out.

Sadie and Shannon Travers. They are Carmelle and Beau's children. They are Drake's nieces.

Thank you for reading Rage's Bounty. Please take a gander at the Hellfire MC Series, starting with [Chance's Hell](#). For more Rage, check out Rage MC, book one [The Rage of the Phoenix](#) is the beginning of the Rage MC world. And recently released is [Calamity](#), book one of Rage MC-The Prospects. Or take a peek at Washingtons, starting with [James](#).

Also, take a gander at the Love Beyond Death series, book one of which, [Oakwood Manor](#), is out now. And the new series of Love Beyond Death-The Inns begins with [The Jekyll and Hyde](#). If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review at,

And the new series Legendary Shifters can be found here! Starting with [Bloodlust](#).

[Goodreads](#) and [Amazon](#).

Please remember your reviews are so important to me!

Thank you!

Elizabeth.