



# RIGGER'S MISTAKE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
MISTY WALKER



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*Rigger's Mistake*

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## Acknowledgments

*This book is dedicated to all the makers of alien sex toys. If it weren't for you,  
I wouldn't know about ovipositors. And that feels important.*

# PLAYLIST

[Listen on Spotify](#)

“Bad Things” by Summer Kennedy  
“Wrong” by MAX, Lil Uzi Vert  
“STFD” by TeZATalks  
“Monsters” by Ruelle  
“Lurk” by The Neighbourhood  
“Mount Everest” by Labrinth  
“Streets” by Doja Cat  
“I See Red” by Everybody Loves an Outlaw  
“The Hills” by The Weeknd, Nicki Minaj  
“Ferrari Portofino” by Reyn Hartley  
“6 Inch” by Beyoncé, The Weeknd  
“Escapism x The Hills” Xanemusic  
“Don’t Hurt Yourself” by Beyoncé, Jack White  
“Tired of California” by Nessa Barrett  
“Do It Like A Girl” by Morgan St. Jean  
“Don’t Blame Me” by Taylor Swift  
“Death of Us” by Elsie Bay  
“Break My Heart Myself” by Bebe Rexha, Travis Barker  
“Daylight” by David Kushner  
“Down” by Simon (feat Trella)  
“Daylight” by David Kushner

## A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

Rigger's Mistake is a dark romance that covers many topics I've only eluded to in previous books. Because my goal is never to cause harm, I've listed all content warnings [here](#).

A book is never worth risking your mental health. I love you.

XOXO,

*Misty Walker*  
ROMANCE AUTHOR



# PROLOGUE

## RIGGER

The hot July sun stings the back of my neck, but I don't dare move into the shade. Anything more than breathing will set off my piece-of-shit father. His hand clamps onto my shoulder, as if he could make us look like a unified family, but his punishing grip says otherwise.

A beat-up red sedan comes into view and parks in the driveway, a bottle-blonde in the driver's seat, her smile painted Barbie pink, with a smaller replica of her in the back. The little girl looks about as happy about this union as I am, her head bowed and her arms wrapped tightly around a book.

"You better not embarrass me, you dumb fuck," Dad grits out.

His sneer morphs into a genuine smile when he turns his attention back to the car. At least, I think it's genuine since I've never seen that look before. Ray Brown is not a friendly or welcoming man, at least not with me.

"Ray!" the woman shouts as she jumps out of the car, tits bouncing in her low-cut shirt. "You look just like your pictures!"

Dad releases me with one last threatening squeeze before approaching her. She jumps into his waiting arms, and they kiss longer than appropriate with two kids hanging around.

I shift my gaze down, not wanting to witness their disgusting display. Since I'm busy studying my feet, I don't notice the girl from the backseat draw near until she speaks.

"You're my new brother?" she asks, her voice timid and mousy.

I glance up, just enough to meet her gaze. As far as little kids go, she's cute, with stringy blonde hair and big hazel eyes, her head tilted in question.

"Guess so."

She nods, a look of resignation falling over her features.

Ever since Dad discovered the world of chat rooms, I've known this day would come. His violent tendencies, gambling addiction, and hatred of his own blood—me—scared away any local women he dated. So, he took to the internet, where it's easier to trick women with hours-long phone calls and late-night chat sessions.

He's been "seeing" this woman, Laura, for six months. Why he proposed to her when they hadn't even met in person is beyond me, but here she is, daughter in tow, with all their worldly possessions—which doesn't look like much—moving into our double-wide trailer.

The girl moves to my side and sighs as she takes in our parents, still making out. "So gross."

"Agreed."

Laura finally breaks away, noticing us standing there waiting. Her smile turns sheepish as she wipes lipstick from Dad's lips. "Why don't we get the kids settled so we can *catch up*?"

The little girl might not understand, but I'm sixteen and know exactly what that means. The thought sours my stomach.

I wonder if she knows about Dad's mood swings and violent methods of relieving stress. My guess would be no. Either that or her self-esteem is in the toilet and this is the best she thinks she can do.

"Laura, this is my boy, Colin," Dad says.

"Nice to meet you." She holds out her hand, and I shake it.

Should I tell her she has lipstick all over her face? Probably not.

"You too," I mutter, feeling the weight of Dad's scrutiny.

Laura draws the girl to her side proudly. "And this little mouse is Vivi."

"Hey, Vivi." I shake her hand too.

"Come on inside. I'll show you around." Dad motions for them to enter, and I follow behind.

The house smells like lemons and stale cigarettes, mainly because of the cleaner I used to scrub every surface after Dad woke me up at the butt crack of dawn and threatened me with a beating. The cigarettes are because Dad is a chain-smoker. Apparently, Laura isn't, so he's promised to smoke outside, something he never did for me, even though I'm allergic.

*Thank God for antihistamines.*

"It's so strange seeing your place in person," Laura says, running a hand across the sofa. "This is where my favorite picture of you was taken." She strolls into the kitchen. "And this is where you'd make coffee and talk to me

each morning.”

“Yup.” Dad’s chest puffs out like this house is something to be proud of.

The gray carpet is nearly black from dirt and tobacco, the linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom is pulling up, our furniture is whatever we found for free on trash day, and there aren’t any decorations on the walls, unlike my friends’ houses.

Laura must see something different, though, because she oohs and aahs over everything she passes. Finally, he leads her down the hallway to the bedrooms.

“This is little Vivi’s room.” He opens the door for the mother and daughter.

The rest of the house might be full of secondhand crap, but the second Laura agreed to move from Colorado to Reno, he opened up a new credit card and spent a mint on all new shit for his and Vivi’s rooms.

Never mind that I sleep on an old mattress on the floor.

“Oh, Ray. This is so sweet.” Laura takes in the princess room, complete with a white vanity and canopy bed.

“Gotta make my girls comfortable,” Dad says, bending down to Vivi’s level. “What do you think? Do you like it?”

“I hate pink.”

“Vivi,” Laura admonishes. “That wasn’t polite. Ray went to all this trouble for you.”

The girl sulks. “Sorry. It’s a nice room.”

I prepare for a violent storm as the wind in Dad’s sail deflates, but it never comes. He takes the insult in stride, standing to his full height and running his hands down the suspenders that keep his jeans from falling due to his flat ass and huge beer gut. Maybe if he wore his jeans backward, they’d fit right.

I almost smile at that image.

Almost.

“It was wrong of me to assume. Why don’t you try it for a few days, and if you still hate it, we’ll trade it all in for something different?”

*What the hell is going on?* If I complained about something Dad spent his “hard-earned money” on, he’d slam my head through a wall. Matter of fact, last weekend he made me patch all the holes from him doing just that.

Laura swoons, kissing Dad on the cheek. “You are the best man I’ve ever met, Ray Brown. Why don’t you show me your room while the kids get

acquainted?”

Get acquainted? I'm sixteen. What do I have in common with a six-year-old? Then, it hits me: I just graduated from Dad's punching bag to the built-in babysitter of a stepsister I didn't ask for. Fucking perfect.

“*Our* room,” Dad corrects, his hand returning to my shoulder with a threat I feel but Laura doesn't see. “Colin would love to hang out with Vivi. Right, son?”

“Yeah. Sure,” I say with zero enthusiasm.

Laura giggles as Dad drags her to his room at the end of the hall and shuts the door behind them. These old houses have thin walls, so when we hear the dramatic moan Laura lets out, I know I gotta get this kid out of here before she's scarred for life. Living in this house will ruin her soon enough, but it doesn't have to start on day one.

“You wanna walk to the gas station and get some candy?” I ask her.

“I don't have any money.”

“It's cool. I got you.”

Once outside, she slips her hand into mine and beams up at me. I don't know if that's normal for kids to do since I've never spent time with any, but I'm surprised at how good it makes me feel. This tiny thing I just barely met is trusting me, counting on me to keep her safe in a place she doesn't know anything about.

I don't know if Dad and Laura will work out, but I know, in this moment, that I'll always be there for Vivi. Someone's got to look out for her, and it sure as shit ain't her mom. That bitch moved her child in with a man she'd never even met in real life. How fucking stupid can you get?

“Were you sad to leave your old house?” I ask.

“I was sad to leave my friends.”

“I get that. It'd suck if I had to move away from mine.” I think about the crew I've grown up with since I can remember—Aiden, Jackson, and Wilder. I can't imagine moving away from them. “I'm sure you'll make new ones. Your new school is just over there.” I point to the top of the hill. “That's where I went when I was a kid. Pretty good teachers and a wicked cool playground.”

She looks up at me in wonder. I realize I've never had anyone look up to me before, and I don't mean because of our height difference. She thinks I'm worth something, which feels damn good.

“Really? You did?”

“Yeah. What grade are you in?” I ask.

“First.”

“I had Mr. Sweltzer in first grade. He might still be there, and if he is, maybe he’ll be your teacher.”

She nods. “That would be cool.”

We walk into the convenience store, and I spot Wilder at the slushy station. It’s not a surprise; the guy has a sugar addiction like no other. The only time I ever see him without a Twizzler hanging out the side of his mouth is when we’re at school, but the second the last bell rings, one of those red ropes appears out of thin air.

“Let’s go say hi to my friend,” I say as I lead her to the back of the store. “Hey, man.”

Wilder turns to face us, his eyes wide when he sees me holding hands with a little girl. “Oh, hey. Who’s the kid?”

“This is my soon-to-be stepsister, Vivi.”

“I forgot they were coming today.” Wilder crouches down to her level. “Hey, little dude.”

She looks down, a blush creeping over her cheeks. “Hi.”

He stands, pushing his chin-length, frizzy hair from his face. “She’s cute. How was it meeting the step-beast?”

I scowl at him, not knowing if Vivi will understand he’s talking about her mom. “Don’t say crap like that in front of her.”

“Oh. Sorry.”

“It was fine. They’re ‘getting acquainted’ right now, so I thought it was better to bring her here for a while.”

Wilder elbows me. “I guarantee your dad is a two-pump chump. You could’ve just walked around the block, and they’d be done.”

“Jesus Christ.” I tug Vivi in the opposite direction. “I’m getting her away from you.”

He laughs. “See ya later.”

I wave and take Vivi to the candy aisle, telling her to pick whatever she wants. She takes her time, touching each package while she carefully considers. After five minutes, I grow impatient, ready to buy one of everything if she’ll just hurry the hell up.

I can afford it now that I’m working at The Garage. It’s part-time, but the owner, Cyrus, pays me ten bucks an hour to clean up at the end of the day. The guys are dirty as fuck, but it keeps me away from home, and Cyrus says

if I keep up the good work, he'll let me apprentice after graduation.

"Just pick one," I urge.

She twists from side to side, still weighing her options.

I walk over to the Skittles. "Here. These are my favorite."

Her tiny hands grip the plastic. "Okay. We can share."

God. This kid is too sweet. Makes me sick to my stomach to think about how Dad'll knock that right out of her. Not physically; I'd never allow that. No, seeing violence is nearly as bad as experiencing it. I should know since my first memories are of him roughing up Mom. At least she was smart enough to leave him.

We make it home, and after double-checking no obscene sounds are coming from the hallway, I take Vivi back to her room. Maybe Wilder was right about Dad's abilities.

"So, if you don't like pink, what color do you like?" I ask, sitting on her bed covered in the offending color.

"Green!" She points to her green pants. "It's the color of grass and trees and frogs."

"You like frogs?" I chuckle. "I don't know any girls who like frogs."

"I love them." She twirls in a circle. "Someday, I want a pet frog."

"Colin! Get out here!" Dad shouts, and I jump to my feet, hating myself for my quick response.

"Stay here, okay? I'll let you know when you can come out." Call it instinct or experience, but Dad can't go long without being an asshole if I'm around, and Vivi doesn't need to get involved.

"Okay." She picks up the book she left on the dresser and climbs onto her bed.

I close her door before finding Dad in the living room. "Yeah?"

"Put your worthless ass to work and unload Laura's car."

"He doesn't have to do that." A flushed Laura wraps an arm around Dad's waist. "I can get it."

"Baby, you're too pretty for manual labor. Go sit your sweet ass on the couch, and I'll bring you a beer."

She grins sweetly up at him. "Such a good man."

"Yeah, he's a real winner," I say under my breath as I walk outside. I'm pushing my luck, but I'm hoping he's too wrapped up in Laura to hear.

"What's that?" he asks, and I wince.

"Nothing."

“Your attitude fuckin’ sucks, kid.” He’s hot on my heels as I walk outside to Laura’s piece of shit car. I open the trunk to find black garbage bags full of clothes, and I heft one over my shoulder. “I’ll kick you out of the house before I let you rub your stink off on that little girl in there.”

I wish I could say it hurts that he’s already choosing her over me, but I like the kid. She’s adorable and innocent while I’m . . . nothing. I hope he always chooses her over me because that means she’s safe.

“Sorry.” I almost make it past him unharmed, but I should’ve known better. He kicks his foot out to trip me, and as I’m falling, he shoves me from behind, making sure I hit the ground hard.

“Get their shit inside, and then I don’t want to see you for the rest of the night. Laura and Vivi don’t deserve to be near your pathetic ass.”

My shoulder smarts as I push myself up to stand, violent images playing in my mind: strangling him with my bare hands, stabbing him through the eye with a screwdriver, stomping on his stupid face until all I see is red. . . I won’t do any of it—not because I can’t—but because I only have two years until I’m eighteen, and I don’t want to spend that time in juvie or prison.

Two years to save all the money I can to get away from him. Two years of having a roof over my head while I try to make something of myself. Now that Vivi is here, I have two years to make sure he has no intention of directing his anger toward the little girl who’s peering out the window at me, wide-eyed and frightened.

If he even looks at her sideways, I’ll kill him. Fuck the consequences. It’d be worth spending my life in prison knowing she won’t suffer the same fate I have.

Two years.



# CHAPTER ONE

## RIGGER

**F**ifteen years later...

“Church!” Cyrus shouts.

I sigh and grip Christy’s hips, pushing her off my lap where she was grinding herself all over my semi-hard cock. “I’ll come find you when I’m done.”

You can always tell how the public views your club by the caliber of patch pussy that shows up at your door. Last year, when everything went to shit for the Sons of Erebus, it was slim pickings, but now that things are turned around, the club sluts are choice. Feels fucking awesome to be winning again.

“Promise, baby?” She juts her cherry-red lower lip out at me.

“Yeah.” I stand and adjust myself before grabbing my beer from the bar and making my way to the one room in the clubhouse only ranking members can enter. I sit next to Lucky and set my bottle on the copper-top table that has our Sons of Erebus logo welded on top.

“You ready for this?” Lucky asks around the Twizzler dangling from his lips. You’d think the guy would’ve grown out of his sugar addiction now that he’s old enough for cigs and alcohol, but this motherfucker would pick a lollipop over a beer any day.

“Yup,” I say.

My brothers file in, grumbling about the girls they had to leave to be here. It’s not often Church is called when we have a house full of outsiders, but with the opening of the Honey Pot Ranch coming up, it’s unavoidable.

Cyrus lights up a fat cigar while we all settle. Once he gets it going, he bangs the gavel. “Rigger, what do you have for us?”

“The Honey Pot Ranch is officially ready for business,” I say with a smirk. Everyone cheers, pounding on the table with wide smiles. For most, the praise would feel good. For a man like me, who grew up without a kind word ever spoken about him, it’s fucking priceless.

“That’s good to hear. Since you’ve been in charge of this whole project, fill us in on the details.” Cyrus sits back and blows smoke rings into the air.

“I’ll start at the beginning since I don’t remember who I’ve told what.” I pull the folded stack of papers out of my back pocket and spread out the mockups our architect created. Never thought I’d be coordinating with a fucking architect, but here we are. “These will give you an idea of the layout. As you know, we bought an abandoned motel twenty miles out of town in Storey County. After stripping it to the studs and reworking the layout, we now have twenty-two suites with attached baths where the girls will stay for their tours, twenty themed rooms where they’ll see clients, a laundry room, kitchen, dining room, parlor, massage room, beauty room, a pool and spa, security room, gym, and a clinic.”

“So the girls don’t see clients in their rooms?” Golden, the treasurer, asks.

“No. That’ll be their space to decompress and shit since they’ll be living there for up to a month per tour. It’ll make it easier for housekeeping too.”

“How come we didn’t get a say in hiring the sluts?” Dutch, the enforcer, asks.

“First of all, they’re not sluts, they’re courtesans. Second, you weren’t part of the hiring process because you’re a dirty bastard.” The guys laugh at Dutch’s expense. “But for real, we have a madam who did all the hiring. There’s more to it than finding a girl who’ll spread her legs. They gotta pass background checks, STI tests, and get licensed through the county. This isn’t some back-alley glory hole or happy-ending massage joint. We’re a legit business, boys; it’s time we start acting like businessmen.”

Until last year, we had three main sources of revenue: contract killing, drug manufacturing, and our legal weed shop, Dope. After some shit went down in the club and the Royal Bastards MC blew up our warehouse, we had to make a choice. Ultimately, we let go of the manufacturing. It was too risky and left us vulnerable to the cops and our enemies.

That’s when I brought the Honey Pot to the table. We needed a legal venture to take some pressure off Dope to clean our cash and make everyone think we’ve gone legit.

Yeah, it’s dealing in pussy, but we’re still an MC. No one expects us to

become lawyers or doctors. Looking over at Bones, who *is* a doctor, I take that back. He's just never used the degree for anything except patching our asses back together.

"I'm gonna ask what we're all thinking. Are we allowed to partake?" Riot, our road captain, asks.

"Absolutely not, and you bastards can't hook up with any of the girls outside of the brothel, either. It's against the law, and if we want to keep this thing runnin', we gotta do everything by the book."

My brothers nearly cry at the news. Minus Mustang, our secretary, who doesn't fuck pussy and is in a serious relationship with a man named Jenson. I sigh in agreement because that shit's unfair. We'll have some of the most beautiful women from around the world there, whose only job is to get people off, and we can't touch them.

"You fuckers have more cunt than you can handle, and most of it is sitting right outside those doors," Cy scolds. He's become a father figure to the younger generation and a stand-up leader to all of us, but he sure as hell wasn't set up for success when he took over last year.

After losing two presidents within nine months, we were fractured. If it weren't for him, our club wouldn't have survived.

"What else you got for us?" Cy asks, turning his attention back to me.

"Employment. I'm sticking a sign-up sheet at the bar. Three of us have to be at the Honey Pot twenty-four hours a day. Each room has a panic button, and if that alarm goes off, you need to get to the girl in thirty seconds or less. Not to mention, I expect the occasional unruly clients, scorned boyfriends, pissed-off wives of clients, and others who don't appreciate what we're building. If I don't get enough volunteers, I'll assign you assholes to pick up shifts."

"That understood?" Cy narrows his eyes and is met with a room of nodding heads. "Good."

"We open the day after tomorrow, but I'm inviting all of you to check out the place and meet the girls tomorrow night." That perks my brothers back up.

"All right, if that's it, y'all have a party going on out there, and my woman is waiting for me at home." Cy bangs the gavel, and we file out to the main space.

The clubhouse is an old manufacturing warehouse. From the outside, it looks like a rusty metal building, with a row of windows around the top

perimeter and double garage doors on one end. On the inside, though, it's a work of art.

Although it's two-stories tall, we took the second floor out, opting for high ceilings with exposed pipes and wooden beams. It's one large, open space, save for the kitchen, Church, and bathrooms. The flooring is polished cement, painted in brown and copper tones, giving it a marble effect.

The main space is sectioned into three zones: the bar, the party area, and the dining room. The bar is twenty-five feet long with a green patina copper top, and behind it are rows and rows of back-lit glass shelves lined with liquor. We don't stock any of that foo-foo liqueur shit, either. I'm talking Johnnie Black, Johnnie Red, Jack, Jose, Crown, and Tito's. That's it.

The party area has two pool tables, a slightly raised stage with a stripper pole, and a few bar-height tables. There's also a TV big enough to see players' nose hairs watching a Raider's game.

On the other side of the bar is an industrial kitchen that Mustang's mom, Sugar, keeps sparkling clean. She moved in after the club saved her from her abusive as fuck boyfriend years ago and never left. Now, she's a mom to us all, kicking our asses when we need it and showing us love when we need that, too. She's also the unofficial wrangler of the patch pussy, putting them to work and making sure they don't step out of line.

"Rigger," Cy calls out, waving me over.

I walk over to the front door. "Yeah?"

He claps a hand on my shoulder. "I can't tell you how important this brothel is for us. Without it, we got nothing, no back-up plan. I don't know how many of these guys will stick around if it fails. Could mean the end of the Sons."

I straighten my posture, not showing an ounce of doubt. "It'll work, Prez. Trust me."

"I *am* trusting you." He moves his hand to open the front door. "Keep these assholes out of trouble tonight."

I nod. "I will."

I'm about to resume activities with Christy when I hear Cy mutter an "oh shit." Looking past him outside, I see a sheriff's car parked out front, Deputy Clancy leaning against the hood, arms folded across his chest.

"Clancy. Nice of you to stop by." I stride over and take Cy's side like the supportive VP I am. "You're a little out of your jurisdiction, though."

While the brothel is in Storey County, an area covered by the Sheriff's

Department, our clubhouse is in Reno. Makes me wonder why he's here.

"I heard your *establishment* is opening the day after tomorrow, so I wanted to stop by and welcome you to the neighborhood."

"You came all the way here for that?" Cy widens his stance.

Clancy pushes off the hood toward us. "I don't know what kind of arrangement you have with local law enforcement here in Reno to get away with all the shit you pull, but that same courtesy won't be extended to you in my county."

Little does he know, his uncle, the *actual* Sheriff, has already visited and assured us that as long we keep his dick wet with top-tier pussy, the department will turn a blind eye to minor matters. Clancy's threats are useless.

"Don't need to worry about us, Clancy. Maybe you didn't hear, but the Sons are on the up and up now. We've gone legit," I say with a smug grin that only infuriates the deputy.

"We'll see about that."

I scratch my head. "Might want to have a chat with your uncle. He's already been in touch and said we won't have any problems."

His demeanor falters for only a split-second, but I see it. He didn't know about Vance's visit, so obviously, they're not on the same page. That can't be good for either of us. I'll have to talk to Vance and ensure his nephew won't be a problem.

"My uncle is getting old and nearing retirement, so he's not on top of things the way he used to be. Don't you worry, though; he's handed a lot of duties off to me. Come election time, I'll be the one taking over for him." He strolls confidently to his driver's side door. "Nice talking to you, gentlemen. I'm sure we'll be meeting again real soon."

Cy and I stand silently until the car is outside the open gate. It's typically closed off to outsiders, but we leave it open on party nights so people can come and go as they please. Might be a good idea to buckle down on that until things get going with the ranch so we can avoid any more surprise visitors.

"Still sticking to your story about everything running smoothly?" Cy asks.

"Yep. He's all bark. Vance will keep him in his pocket."

"Sure hope so." Cy mounts his Harley and starts the engine. The sound spreads uncontrollable excitement through me like it always has, making me

itch to ride. But not tonight. Tonight, I want to drink and forget all the stress of opening a new business.

After watching him speed off, I go back inside. My shoulders are stiff, and I need to relieve some tension. The best way to do that is to get my dick sucked, so I weave through the crowd until I find Christy chatting with some of the other bitches.

She sees me and rushes over, jumping into my arms. Out of reflex, I catch her, and before I realize what's happening, her lips are on mine. She's taking liberties she doesn't deserve, but it's my own damn fault. I've heard the gossip she's spread about wanting to be my ol' lady, and I've ignored it until now, but it's clear I need to nip it in the bud. I release her legs, unceremoniously dropping her to the ground. She recovers and plasters a smile on her face.

"What's wrong, Rigger?" she asks with a pout.

"What's wrong is you thinking you mean more to me than you do."

She scrambles to her feet with narrowed eyes and flattened lips. She's finally getting it through her thick skull: we had fun while it lasted, but I'm *not* her man. We're *not* in a relationship.

"We've been sleeping together for six months," she whines.

"No, we've been fucking for six months." I shrug. "You were a good lay, but honestly, it's getting stale."

"You're an asshole." Her hand flies up to slap me, but I catch it midair and hold it inches from my cheek. Giving her a look of warning, she cowers. I'd never hit a woman, but I'll sure as hell kick her out of the clubhouse without an invitation to come back, which would hurt more than an asswhooping to a girl like her.

"You." I point to one of the women watching the scene unfold. "Let's go."

I don't look back, but I hear the woman apologizing to Christy as she takes my hand. There's no need to because it's no secret why we keep them around, and it ain't in hopes of finding an ol' lady. Their one job is to keep my brothers and me happy. If they don't like it, the door's open. No one's holding a gun to their head.

Once outside, I release her hand but keep walking to my cabin. All the Sons' ranking members have a studio cabin on the property, even Cy, though he keeps a place nearby with his ol' lady.

After stepping through the door, I take off my cut, hang it on a hook on

the wall, and remove my boots. Seconds later, the woman sheepishly follows me inside.

I wouldn't have cared if she didn't. After dealing with Clancy and that scene with Christy, I'm not in the mood to fuck anymore. I'm more irritated than anything.

"I'm Lisa," she says, looking around. "I like your place."

It's nothing special, but it's the nicest home I've had. The walls are paneled in light wood, while the floors are stained dark. A king-sized bed is in the middle of the back wall next to a leather chair and a wood-burning fireplace, with a large screen TV mounted on the opposite wall. I don't have a kitchen; it'd be pointless since Sugar makes all our meals in the clubhouse, but I have a cupboard for snacks. And there's a full bath on the other side of the room.

I flop onto the bed. "Just somewhere to sleep."

"It's kind of spooky."

Taking in the artwork hanging on the walls, I see where she's coming from. My tattoo artist is also an amazing painter. The pieces I've purchased all depict a woman in a sheer white robe, walking through a forest, a dark demon lurking in the shadows. To some, it might seem like he's stalking her, but I see it differently. I think he's protecting her, keeping her safe, even though she's creeping through the forest alone.

"I guess," I say.

"So, what do you want? A blow job"—she slides the strap of her black dress off her shoulder—"or more?"

I reach for the remote off the mini-fridge that doubles as a nightstand and toss it to her. Surprisingly, she catches it. "Don't want shit from you. Take a seat and turn on a show. After about an hour, you can go, but don't say anything about this."

"Really?" Her brows lift, and she smiles.

"Yeah, really. You're just here to make a point." I produce two bottles of Bud Light from the fridge and offer her one. She takes it and curls up on the recliner, flipping on the TV. After scrolling through the channels, she chooses some stupid reality show that I find myself enjoying, though I'd never admit it.

Not the evening I wanted, but maybe it's the evening I needed. Opening a brothel sounded as easy as finding a building, hiring some bitches, and sitting back while the money pours in. I didn't even think about the building needing



massive renovations or the permits and licenses being next to impossible to secure.

I went from being a mechanic at The Garage to Vice President of the club to an entrepreneur, all in a matter of months and without any kind of education or training. I'm a high school drop-out with a GED, for fuck's sake. There's no reason I should be where I am.

The only thing I have is Cyrus' belief in me. My life changed for the better the day I left home and showed up on his porch, asking for more hours so I could survive. He did that and more. He made me part of a family and convinced me I'm capable of great things. I owe him my life, and I'll do whatever it takes to protect what we've built.

If I had any regret, it'd be for the little girl with stringy blonde hair and hazel eyes who has probably forgotten about me by now. How old is she now? Twenty-one? Shit. I can't imagine my sister as an adult.

Leaving her was the hardest thing I've ever done, and I think about her every day.

CHAPTER TWO

## NAVY

**M**ost landlords require first and last, plus a deposit.  
*I wonder how much the average rent is for a place in Henderson.  
I'll look it up later today so I have a goal.*

*Henderson is a good choice. Far enough away from here that I'll be safe,  
but close enough that my car will make the drive. Plus, Mom always said she  
loved Vegas, and Henderson is only a hop, skip, and a jump away.*

*It'll require a lot of money, though. I'll need to find a new job since my  
pay at the diner sucks, but that's doable.*

*Where can I work that doesn't require a degree but pays a lot?*

Ray grunts, and I feel him flood my insides with his vile seed. He didn't bother with lube, and I sure as hell wasn't wet, so it stings, and I know I'll be sore later, not that he cares.

I purse my lips tight as I'm hit with a wave of nausea. Good thing I'm flat on my stomach because if I had to look at him right now, I'm certain I'd puke.

“You dirty fucking slut!” He releases his tight grip on my ponytail and roughly shoves my head into the pillow before pulling out. You'd think he'd be in a good mood after getting off, but each time ends with an insult. Too bad his words have lost their meaning. He needs new material.

I don't move until I hear him zip up his pants and leave my room, slamming the door behind him. Only then do I feel safe enough to roll over, squeezing my thighs shut and clenching my inner muscles so I don't have to change my sheets again. I don't have the time or energy for that.

Carefully, I slide off the bed, throw on a robe, and grab a change of clothes before dashing across the hall to the bathroom and locking the door

behind me.

I avoid my reflection in the mirror as I turn the water on in the shower and sit on the toilet to expel him from my body. I can't look at myself like this, or I might start to believe I'm weak and pathetic like Ray says I am. This is the part I hate the most: when I can still smell and feel him all over me. Once I cleanse him from my body, I'll be born again, and only then can I look myself in the eyes.

Steam billows out of the glass enclosure, fogging the mirror. It's my cue that it's safe to get off the pot and into the shower. My skin crawls as I dump an insane amount of body wash into my palm and begin the arduous task of scrubbing him off me.

I don't cry. Not anymore. I'm numb and have been for years. The only thing that seems to bring any emotion out of me are thoughts of my escape. At first, planning a life outside of this doublewide was just a mental diversion for when Ray came calling. Now, though, I've spent hours working to build a new life for myself, and somewhere along the way, I started to believe I could do this. I can get away.

I give myself one final wash before rinsing and shutting off the water. Stepping out of the shower, a brief sense of relief comes over me. Ray only comes for me roughly once a week, so right now, at this moment, I'm as far away from next time as I'm going to get, which makes me almost giddy.

I blow dry my hair, swipe on mascara, and get dressed, all while watching the time on my phone until it reads six forty-five, and I know Ray has left for work. My tense shoulders fall, and I'm safe to leave the bathroom.

"Good morning," I chirp as I walk into the kitchen to pour a cup of coffee.

"Hey, honey." Mom sits at the dining room table, eyes locked on the window to the backyard. There's nothing out there but dirt and weeds, so she's not doing it for the view. She's checked out, ignoring what she knows is going on so we both can survive this hellscape.

"What are you up to today?" I ask. Pleasantries and routines are key to keeping our secrets in the dark. Bringing them to the light would be messy, and Mom can't handle messy.

"Ray wants a roast for dinner, so I need to run to the store. What about you?" She shifts in her seat to face me, giving me a full view of what used to be my vibrant mother. Ghostly would describe her best, with dulled eyes, a sallow complexion, and dark circles. Though the circles might be from

bruising in different stages of healing.

I do what I can to be home when he is so I can protect her, but I have to take at least three night shifts a week since day shifts at the diner are slow and tips are shit. We both need to make sacrifices if we're going to get out of here. I only hope he doesn't kill her before that happens.

"I'm meeting Olivia in a bit, and then I start work at noon." I take a healthy sip of my scorching hot coffee, savoring the burn.

"Oh." Mom turns her attention back out the window. My shift means I won't be home until nine or ten tonight.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath, choosing my words carefully. "It might be a bad night. I'm sorry."

The abuse is always the worst on the days Ray comes for me. I wish I understood why. If he hates himself for doing it, why does he punish Mom? Why doesn't he stop? I shake those questions from my mind. Trying to make sense of what a psychopath does is pointless.

"Oh," she mutters. "Okay."

My heart picks up as rationalization leaves and unwanted anger floods me. I've mostly talked myself into the fact that we're both victims here, but sometimes, I want to shake her and scream in her face. Why isn't she the one protecting me? Why didn't she get us out of this house when he first came to my room at fourteen?

I slow my breath and remind myself of her reasons. She was broke, and my bio-dad was a bigger piece of shit than Ray if you can believe it. After he kicked us out, we had nowhere to go. It's not right or fair, but who said life was fair?

Mom is a victim, and so am I. Soon, though, I'll get us both out of here, and we'll be survivors.

I dump the rest of my coffee into the sink and kiss Mom on the cheek. "I love you."

"Love you too."

"Hang in there for a little longer, okay?"

"Life feels too long sometimes."

"I know, but it's about to get better." The words sound like a promise when they're really only a dream, but I have to keep the hope alive or else, what's the point?

Her eyes meet mine, losing their vacant look and becoming sharp with fear. "Why? What are you planning?"

“You don’t need to worry. I promise.”  
Her eyes go wide. “He won’t let us go.”  
“If things go how I want, he won’t have a choice.”  
She shakes her head. “I don’t like this.”  
“Do you trust me?” I ask.  
After a pregnant pause, she whispers, “Yes.”  
“Good. See you tonight.”



Olivia Marie Diorio and I have been inseparable since high school, and though we’re on different paths—she’s a junior at UNR—we make time to catch up once a week.

“Hey,” I say, plopping into the chair across from her at the diner.

“You’re late,” she scolds, but there’s a smile on her round, beautiful face.

No two friends could be more opposite. I’m “white trash chic” without the chic. My stringy, dirty-blond hair, thin frame from not eating well, and second-hand clothes scream social reject, while Olivia is the picture of health and vitality with her blue-black hair, glowing light brown skin, and voluptuous curves. She’s everyone’s type, whether you’re gay, straight, or anything in-between. My best friend is a full-on smoke show.

“I’m always late.” I hook my bag on the back of my chair and settle in.

“This is true, but I keep thinking that someday you’ll surprise me.”

“Don’t hold your breath.” I grin.

Picking up the menu on the table, I peruse my options. My eyes immediately jump to my usual choice of eggs, wheat toast, and black coffee. Cheap and relatively nutritious are my criteria when I eat out.

“What’s with you this morning?”

When I look up, her attention isn’t on the menu like mine was. It’s focused solely on me and has me shifting in my seat. I’m closer to Olivia than anyone else, but that doesn’t mean she knows all my secrets. No one does, and I plan on keeping it that way. However, she knows Ray’s a bad dude. That fact is hard to miss, and so are the bruises he leaves when forcing sex on me isn’t enough to satisfy his demons.

“What do you mean?”

“You seem antsy.” She rests her hand on mine, and her face falls. “Is it

Ray?”

“No, he’s the same old prick as always.”

Olivia sighs. “You have to get out of that house.”

“I’m trying. I’m looking for a new job that’ll pay enough to get Mom and me to Henderson.”

“I don’t want you to leave Reno, but I understand.” She gives me a soft smile. “Find anything yet?”

“Not yet, but one of my regulars at the diner said his assistant is going on maternity leave and that I should apply for the temp position.”

“That’s great! Do you know what the pay is?”

I shake my head. “No, but it’s gotta be better than minimum wage plus the measly tips I’m earning now.”

“You should really think about college,” she says.

“I’m trying to make money, not go into debt.”

“You can get grants and scholarships. I know it’ll take time to earn a degree, but it’ll set you up for a higher-paying job.”

I don’t argue with her. There’s no point because Olivia can’t know what she hasn’t lived. She grew up in a two-parent household where her mom and dad both went to college, worked good jobs, and saved for Olivia to attend university. She doesn’t even keep a job while she’s in school. Her parents pay for everything. My reality is unfathomable for people like her.

“Yeah, maybe. I just need to save some money first.”

I’m grateful when this tired discussion is interrupted by the waiter approaching for our order.

“I’ll have a scrambled egg, a piece of wheat toast, and a cup of black coffee.” I turn over the coffee cup on the table, and he fills my cup while Olivia orders.

“And I’ll have the ham croissant and a mango smoothie.”

“Great. I’ll put that in now.” As he walks away, Olivia giggles.

“What are you laughing at?” I ask.

“When you said you needed to earn money, it made me think about how this girl I know is applying at a new brothel opening up in Sparks.”

I quirk a brow. “Seriously?”

“Yes. Can you imagine sleeping with nasty men for money?” She scoffs.

*No, but I can imagine sleeping with a nasty man to keep Mom safe and a roof over my head, which is way worse.*

Fucking strangers for cash would be easy for me, and it’s got to pay much

more than being a waitress. It would get Mom and me that much closer to getting the hell out of Reno.

I try to stay focused while Olivia and I chat over breakfast, but I'm only partially paying attention, my mind racing from all the possibilities.

Would they even hire someone who looks like me? I mean, I'm no Olivia, but when I put effort into my appearance, I get my fair share of looks from men. Surely, someone would pay me to do what I'm already doing with Ray, and, as a bonus, I wouldn't get the shit kicked out of me for doing it.

I don't see a downside. I pray they're still hiring.

"I'm sorry to cut this short, but I have to work in an hour, and I have a couple errands to run before then," I say, placing eight dollars on the table to cover my portion.

Olivia pushes the cash back my way. "I got it this time."

"No. Absolutely not." I stand, throwing my purse over my shoulder.

She stands, too, thrusting the money at me. "Yes. You need every dollar to get out of this place."

It's a kind gesture, but I can't accept it. When people do nice things, you start to believe they care and would never wrong you. Olivia's a great friend, the best I could hope for, but I'd never be stupid enough to rely on her.

That lesson was taught to me by my stepbrother, Colin. He was kind, protected me from Ray, and promised to always be there for me. Then one day, I woke up, and he was gone. No note. No explanation. Just gone.

He left me alone, knowing full well what a piece of shit Ray is. The sting of that betrayal grows worse each time Ray sneaks into my room and each time I get backhanded or punched in the gut.

"Thank you, but it's not necessary. Besides, eight bucks is nothing in the grand scheme of things."

She sighs. "Fine. Give me a hug."

"I'll text you later," I say, releasing her.

"I hope you make lots of tips tonight."

"Thanks." I leave her to settle the bill since she was paying with a card and hop in my car.

I don't actually need to be anywhere before my shift starts, but after hearing about the brothel, I decide to use the hour to do some research.

It's quiet when I walk into the library. The air smells distinctly of dust and that delicious scent of old books. I sit at the computer tucked in the corner so no one can see what I'm doing. Starting with a basic search, I learn



the new brothel is called the Honey Pot Ranch. Clicking through their website, I take notes as I find out everything I can about the place.

They tout a spa-like atmosphere, with kink-themed rooms to fulfill any desire, and in case you need inspiration, there's an actual menu for you to choose from. My cheeks heat as I read a list that includes everything from a personal vibrator show to a dream experience where the man can be pleased by multiple women at once.

Taking a calming breath, I scroll through pictures of the property. I'm impressed at how every detail seems to be well thought out, with no expense spared. My confidence grows as I imagine myself in each of these rooms and don't feel an ounce of panic. Unease? Yes. But not panic.

To me, sex is the same as a chore, a job. One I'm already doing but not getting paid for. Sometimes Olivia talks about guys she's with and how they make her feel, and I've never related to anything less. That feels like an advantage when it comes to this job.

Browsing through the employment application, I note the information they need. Most of it is what I'd expect: name, address, hair and eye color, height, weight, and a full body picture in my underwear. I debate asking Olivia to take the photo since she has the latest iPhone, but if she found out what I was doing, she'd flip, and I don't have the energy to deal with that. I'll have to take it with my own piece of shit phone and hope it's good enough.

The final page of the application is a questionnaire. My lips part as my breaths speed up. They want to know—in detail—what I will and won't do with clients.

Will I perform oral? Will I allow my clients to perform oral on me? Will I allow ass play? What about bondage? Age play? Spanking? Cuddling? Foot fetish?

My eyes widen, and my heart pounds in my chest. All of those things are *my* choice? It specifically says that declining any of these things won't determine employment. Is that true? Because damn, it would feel good to be the one with all the power for a change.

I close out of the computer, more determined than ever to make this work.

## CHAPTER THREE

## RIGGER

“This is the most genius idea you’ve ever had.” Lucky points to the building of our newest business venture, then at the sign showing a pin-up style woman sitting on top of a barrel. She has a wooden honey dipper in her hand, dripping honey onto her ample cleavage. Under her legs and across the barrel is a sign that reads *The Honey Pot Ranch*. “The Honey Pot Ranch? Brilliant.”

“Doesn’t look like much from the outside, but just you wait until you see the inside.” I take the keys out of my pocket and open the parlor door. “This is where the guests can have a drink, watch a girl dance, and where they’ll pick their date for the night.”

All nine ranking members of the Sons of Erebus file into the parlor. None of them have seen the place until now, and I watch them closely for their reactions. Since I’m the one who convinced the club to dump a bunch of cash into this brothel, it’s my ass on the line.

There’s a seating area right when you walk in, with a large gold chandelier hanging from the ceiling and two tufted leather sofas with a coffee table separating them where menus are stacked. And I’m not talking a food menu. This one is a laundry list of sex and kink for clients to order from.

The walls are painted a deep green, and framed paintings of nude women are hung in groupings. Beyond that is a black walnut bar lined with tall barstools in front of illuminated liquor shelves, with a stripper pole and a small dance stage in the corner.

“This is where the girls will line up when we have a guest. They’ll pick their date and what kind of experience they want, and then the lady will escort them to their party,” I say.

“How many women will work at a time?” Cyrus asks.

“We can accommodate twenty-two at a time, but we’re starting out with eighteen.”

He whistles. “And how much are they charging?”

“They’re independent contractors, so they set their own price, but generally, they can bring in anywhere from a grand to twenty Gs per party, depending on what the guest wants.”

“So, like, a blowjob costs a thousand, and crazy monkey sex with five girls costs twenty?” Riot asks.

“No. A massage will cost a grand, and a night of BDSM will cost twenty. Give or take.” I shrug. “Crazy monkey sex with five girls would be more like fifty.”

“No shit?” Riot tucks his hands in his pockets.

“No shit,” I agree, pleased that even our resident insufferable asshole is impressed.

“What happens after they pick their girl?” Cyrus asks.

“They choose their room from the list of themes.”

“Themes?” Mustang asks.

“There’s a nature room with a hot tub that looks like a pond with plants everywhere. It’s also for voyeurs because two walls are glass, and anyone can look in.”

Lucky pounds on his chest like a gorilla. “That’s where the crazy monkey sex with five girls will happen.”

“There’s a classroom for naughty schoolgirl fantasies, an office with a built-in cam under the desk plugged into a TV on the wall so the girl can diddle herself while she ‘works’ and the guest watches.” I tick the rest on my fingers. “A galaxy room for guests with an alien fetish, a regular bedroom for guests who just want to pretend they have a girlfriend for the night, a BDSM room, a room with a functioning kitchen for a little food play, and even one with a pedicure station for those foot fetish weirdos.”

“I like feet,” Dutch says with a shrug.

I smirk. “Well, none of the rooms are for you, so don’t get excited.”

“Can we see?” Lucky asks.

“Explore away. The residential suites are on the east side, and the experience rooms are on the west. Between the two are the kitchen, dining room, spa, workout room, and clinic.” I point in all directions. “Oh, and outside, there’s the pool and hot tub.”

“Can I move in?” Lucky asks.

“In your fuckin’ dreams.” I laugh at the puppy dog eyes he sends me.

The door to the dining room opens, and Mary, the ranch’s Madam, walks in. The older woman is wrinkled with thinning, short gray hair that she teases into a helmet on her head. She’s never without a full face of makeup, and I’ve never seen her in anything but a pantsuit with a tight, lacy top.

“Do you have a minute before my girls arrive, Rigger?” she asks.

“Of course.”

While the guys are busy looking around, I sit at the bar and handle some last-minute business with Mary. Before I presented the idea of a brothel to the club, I did a shit ton of research. Part of that was visiting every brothel in the state, which is how I met Mary. I didn’t make any friends by stealing her from one of our competitors, but she’s the best in the industry, so we had to have her.

She’s been involved in sex work since she was sixteen, got kicked out of her house, and was forced to become a prostitute. She hightailed it to Nevada in the seventies when brothels were made legal and worked until she was forty-two. Then, she took over as Madam of the place she was working previously. I’d never ask her age, but if I had to guess, I’d say she’s nearing seventy but with the energy of someone in their twenties.

An hour later, my eyes are nearly crossed with how much paperwork Mary set in front of me, and the guys have returned to the parlor.

“You did good, kid.” Cyrus claps a hand on my shoulder, a look of pride in his eyes.

“Thanks.”

“Did you say the girls were coming tonight?” Golden asks.

I nod. “Yeah, I thought it’d be good to have a meet and greet their first night on the property. Tomorrow morning, they’ll move in, and by tomorrow night, we’ll be open for business.”

Lucky grips my biceps. “Please say we can stay and party.”

“Considering we’ll all be taking security shifts, it’s probably smart to let them get to know you guys.”

His eyes light up like a child on Christmas morning. “Fuck yeah.”

The guys hoot and holler, a buzz of excitement filling the air. The club has been through a lot of shit, and this is the first slice of good we’ve had in a long time.

“Can we fuck ’em?” Riot asks.

I grin and sit back, knowing Mary will take this one. She doesn't disappoint.

She takes a breath before looking each man directly in the eyes. "I know all of you oversized children think this place is your new playground. It isn't. These women are here to work, just like any other job, and they deserve your respect. That said, they aren't on the clock tonight, and I can't stop consensual activities from happening." A roar of excitement echoes through the space, but Mary holds up her hands, silencing them again. "But—and this is a big but—after tonight, we will be open for business, and your only role here is as security. No exceptions."

There are a few grumbles, but we're not Neanderthals. We may be bikers, but we're evolved enough to separate business from pleasure.

I hope.

"One more thing. If I get wind of you dangling your position with the club over any of my girls, you *will* be banned. I was very clear with Mr. Rigger when I took this job that I will not tolerate any funny business. My girls work too damn hard to put up with your bullshit. Can I get a 'yes, Madam' so I know you all understand?"

One by one, they acknowledge her, looking like scolded puppies when I know they're more viper than canine. It's laughable, but I'm glad they're taking it seriously. The regulations and government involvement in opening a brothel are mind-blowing, and I'd kill the brother who fucks this up for us. We've put too much money and effort into it.

The door creaks open, and a brunette pops in, assessing the place before smiling and throwing the door wide so women of all types can join us. We'll have a revolving lineup of ladies, so most aren't local and only here for a two-week tour. We have big names in the industry who do tours worldwide and are highly sought after, but a few are transitioning from illegal sex work to the brothel.

"How much are you expecting this place to make?" Cy sidles up to my spot at the bar, ignoring the bikers and industry workers mingling in the parlor. He's one of the few who is happily monogamous.

More accurately, he's fucking obsessed with his woman, Char.

"My conservative estimate is in the upper seven figures. After operating costs and taxes, maybe take home three mil."

"And your liberal estimate?"

I shrug. "Most of the other joints around here are rundown. They haven't

been updated since the seventies, and because of that, they don't attract the right clientele or lineup. With what we built here, I expect to triple that figure."

"Holy shit, son." Cy runs a hand down his gray beard. "And it's all legal?"

"Every penny."

Our chapter of the Sons was founded in the sixties, and it carried on the National SOE's tradition of earning through murder and weed. Back then, bud was still illegal, and the club made decent money selling it until the two-thousands when suddenly there was a weed shop on every corner. Our Prez at the time, Wrecker, was smart enough to get a license. We opened our first shop, Dope, selling the shit we were growing anyway and giving us a way to funnel our cash when the IRS started sniffing around.

It was good enough to keep the club running, but Wrecker got greedy. He set up a warehouse to lace our weed with PCP and connected us with cartels to buy it wholesale. We made bank for a long while, but everything changed last year when Wrecker was killed by another member, Crash. We didn't know it at the time, and Crash was elected Prez.

Everything went to shit after that. Crash pissed off another local biker club, the Royal Bastards, who blew up our warehouse. Shortly after that, we discovered what a piece of shit Crash was, and, oddly enough, with help from the Royal Bastards, we took him out.

No one was upset about losing the warehouse, but the missed income hurt and put a lot of brothers out of work. The Garage, Dope, and contract killing weren't enough to keep us going. Especially since only a few members take contracts. Personally, I'd kill a motherfucker without blinking an eye, but I don't get a thrill from it like Riot, Dutch, or some of the others do, so I leave it to them.

That's when I came up with the Honey Pot.

"I'm so fucking proud of you."

I look down, uncomfortable with his praise. After being physically and emotionally beat to shreds the first eighteen years of my life, it's hard to believe I deserve it. To most, I come off as an arrogant fucker who cowers to no one, but it's all bravado. Inside, I'm still an eight-year-old desperate for my dad's attention. That'll never heal, but Cy's been slowly getting me through all that childhood trauma bullshit.

"Thanks," I mutter.

“Well, I’m outta here. Char’ll put my nuts in a vice if I stick around for the party.” He stands and gives me a hug. “Make sure these assholes don’t embarrass me.”

“Will do.”

Without Prez here to distract me, my focus turns to the party. Liquor is flowing, and my brothers have quickly gotten friendly with the ladies. Mary was in charge of hiring and scheduling, so this is the first time I’m getting a look at the talent. There’s literally someone for everyone. It’s fucking impressive.

I spot Lucky with a beautiful, curvy redhead on his lap. She’s lost the clothes she came in with, leaving her in a lacy bodysuit that’s completely see-through. He gives me a chin lift with a shit-eating grin. I knew pussy was the best way to get my brothers invested.

My gaze catches on a little thing chatting Dutch up. She’s fucking stunning in a brown faux-leather crop top and matching booty shorts. Her hair is in two French braids with ends that brush the top of her tits that are spilling out of her shirt. She’s balancing on sky-high stilettos, making her long legs appear even longer. The lighting is dim, but I can make out her plump, shiny lips and cute button nose.

None of that is why she has my attention, though. There’s something about her eyes. I know this girl from somewhere. Racking my brain, I try to think from where, but I’m drawing a blank. I’ve met a lot of women in my days, fucked a lot too, sometimes two or three at a time; maybe she’s one of them.

That doesn’t feel right.

“Hey, Mary,” I call over to where she’s still fretting with paperwork at the end of the bar. She moves next to me so we don’t have to shout over the music.

“Yeah?”

“Who’s that?” I jerk my chin to the corner where the girl sits on Dutch’s lap. I get the urge to rip her off him, but that’s jacked. Neither of them is doing anything wrong.

“Who?” She follows my gaze. “Oh, that’s Navy. She’s the only one I was a little uneasy hiring because she seems so innocent and sweet—too sweet.”

Navy. That’s a unique name, one I would’ve recalled had I fucked her. Then I remember that I’m a bastard and don’t always ask for names. I’m usually more worried about how hard she can suck my cock.



“She’s never fucked for money?”

“I didn’t say that. She said she’s been hooking privately for years. Hard to believe.” She takes Navy in, deep in thought for a second before straightening her posture. “But that’s also why I think she’ll be a big earner.”

Navy twirls a finger in Dutch’s unruly black hair. His gaze is fixed on her lips as she says something to him he must like because his hand grips her hip and pulls her even closer. My hands tighten to fists, but I keep myself in check.

“We need girls who know what they’re doing.”

“She does.” Mary scoffs. “Like I’d ever expose a virgin to this world.”

“What’s she offering?” I ask out of curiosity. All the girls have a menu of things they will and will not perform. Since they’re independent contractors, we have no say in it.

“Let me see.” Mary walks over to the coffee table and picks up the laminated card with the girl’s picture. She blows out a breath as she returns to her stool. “Everything except the Dungeon. That one’s a hard limit.” She looks up and assesses Navy. “Makes sense. She’s so skinny, she’s probably worried about injury.”

“There are implements in the Classroom.”

“Yeah, but she was okay with that one.”

The image of her in a schoolgirl uniform, bent over a desk and being swatted with a ruler pops into my mind and turns my cock to stone. Then I remember I won’t be the one doing the swatting. It’ll be a stranger—many strangers—and an irrational bubble of anger works its way through my body.

“You sure she’s old enough to be here?” I ask, searching for any reason to kick her to the curb so I don’t have to feel this keyed up any longer.

“Rigger,” she says in a scolding tone. “I know you’re not questioning my ethics and morals.”

I shrug. “Just asking.”

“Each girl has to be fingerprinted, undergo a background check, and be approved for a license with the county. Yes. I’m certain she is who she says she is.”

“Okay, okay. Don’t get your panties in a twist.”

“Anything else? I’d like to get out of here so I don’t have to witness all this.”

I shoo her away. “Go on, then.”

“Thank you.” She hops off the stool, scoops up her paperwork, and

disappears to the back exit in the kitchen.

I try not to look over at Navy and Dutch. I even consider getting my ass out of here too, but it's as though this girl has a chain tied around my ankle, shackling me to her. I can't move.

Dutch runs a thumb over her lips, then cups her cheek, preparing to move in for a kiss. Not fucking happening. Before I can talk myself out of it, I'm off the stool and yanking Navy from his lap. Both of them look shocked as shit, but when that fades, Dutch jumps to his feet and gets in my face.

I tug Navy behind me and square my shoulders. Dutch has been one of my best friends since I patched in, so it's not the first time we've come to blows, but it's the first time since I was made VP. I outrank him, and he knows it. If he throws a punch, there'll be issues, and I plan to use it to my advantage. Not because I need to, but because I fucking can.

"What's your problem, bro?" He's inches from me, his heated breath landing on my face since we're nearly the same height.

"I'm taking this one," I grit out.

His eyes narrow. "I see the power has gone to your fuckin' head."

I smile, knowing it'll only infuriate him more. "Maybe it has. Either way, she's mine."

"Excuse me!" Navy shouts, ripping her arm from my hold but staying behind me. "I'm not doing shit with either of you."

"Oh yeah, darlin'? You know who I am?" I say over my shoulder, smirking at Dutch.

"I don't give a fuck who you are."

"Really?" I turn to face her.

She gets her first look at me, and her reaction is not what I expected. The color drains from her face as her lips part and her eyes widen.

"That's what I thought." I'm a cocky asshole, but I've got the looks to back that shit up.

"Colin?" My name, my real name, drops from her lips like a bomb.

"How do you know my name?" I demand. Now I'm pulling from earlier memories, back when I was just a pathetic kid working for The Garage and saving every penny to get out of Dad's house.

Do I know her from high school? No, that's impossible. I have to be at least ten years older than her. Her lips purse as she waits for me to connect the dots that aren't in a straight line.

"Of course you don't remember. Why would you? You had no problem

leaving me in that house and never talking to me again like I fucking meant nothing to you.”

It all clicks into place. She’s the only sunshine I ever had in my teens, the only reason I’m still alive today.

“Vivi?”

Before I get confirmation, she’s darting out the door, running as though she isn’t wearing seven-inch heels.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## NAVY

I have the worst luck. *Honestly*. The very worst. If you look up unlucky in the dictionary, there's a picture of my face in full color and a list of examples proving my unluckiness.

Getting claimed by my stepbrother at a brothel now tops that list.

I run as fast as I can through the gravel lot, but it's not easy in these godforsaken heels. The universe gives me a small mercy when I make it to my car without falling flat on my face. That'd really mess up my first shift tomorrow. No one wants to fuck the girl with oozing scabs on her forehead.

Not that it matters; I probably don't have a job after all this. Colin didn't want anything to do with me fifteen years ago, so why would he want me around now?

My fingers shake as I scramble to get the key in the lock. I wish I had a newer car with keyless entry. Glancing back at the Honey Pot, I don't see anyone bursting out of the door to chase me, so I take a calming breath and try again. I line it up right this time and open the driver's door.

I toss my purse in the backseat, thankful I had the wherewithal to grab it on my way out. It would've been embarrassing to have to go back inside. Maybe my luck *is* changing.

Except no, because as I turn the key to start the car, the engine grinds but doesn't turn over.

*Shit.*

"No, no, no, no, no." I try again, but it won't start.

A knock on my window startles me, and I jump. I don't bother looking. I know who it is. A realization hits me, and a split second before my hand reaches the lock button, the door opens.

Definitely unlucky.

“Get out. We need to talk,” he orders, but I’m not a kid anymore and don’t have to listen to him, so I keep working on starting my car. Of course, it only has a problem when I need it the most.

When Ray orders me to the store to get some beer or a pack of smokes? It starts right up. But when I’m trying to escape a very uncomfortable and embarrassing situation? Nope.

“Vivi, I swear to God, if you don’t get your ass out of this car, I’ll drag you out.”

Who is this guy? He’s definitely not the tender-hearted, loving stepbrother I remember. He doesn’t look much like him, either. He used to be scrawny, all limbs with a bad haircut and ill-fitting clothes. Now he has lean muscle, a shaved head, and the beginnings of wrinkles on his forehead. It’s hard to reconcile the boy I knew with the man standing outside my car.

But his unusual eyes are the same. That’s how I knew it was him. The dark green halo around light green irises is unmistakable. I’ve never seen anyone with eyes like that before. Only him. Except now, there’s a darkness behind them, an intensity he never had before.

“Go away, Colin.” Turning the key again, I’m even more let down when I’m met with a faint click, and that’s it.

*Fuck my life.*

“You’re twenty miles from town with a broken car. I think you’re out of options.”

I scowl, not needing him to remind me of my situation. With no other choice, I reach into the back, grab my purse, and get out of the car. Not to talk to Colin. No, I’ll go inside and ask one of the other girls to give me a ride home. Lisa interviewed on the same day I did, and she seemed nice. I’ll just find her and beg.

“Where are you going?” Colin chases after me, but I keep walking. At least, I *was*, until he grabs my arm for the second time today and jerks me back. “I’m talking to you.”

“Don’t touch me.” Once again, I tug my arm out of his hold.

His hands go up. “I just want to talk. That’s all.”

“Why? You didn’t want to talk fifteen years ago. Matter of fact, you disappeared in the middle of the night without a word.”

“I had to.” His brow furrows, explaining his wrinkles. This must be a common look for him.

“No, Colin. You didn’t. I remember you putting me to bed, promising to take me to dinner and a movie the next night; when I woke up, you were gone. I was so excited that my big brother was going to spend a whole evening with me, and you were nowhere to be found. You didn’t even leave a note.” The bitter sting of betrayal I thought was buried resurfaces.

His eyes jump between mine, those unique orbs searching for what, I don’t know. He opens his mouth to say something but immediately snaps it shut. Is it because he has no defense or because he’s hiding something from me? I’ve often wondered what was going through his head that day, why he thought leaving was a good idea, but I’d resigned myself to the fact that I’ll never know.

“Wait here a second. I need to tell my brothers I’m out.”

I scrunch my brows together in confusion. “What?”

“You need a ride home, and that car ain’t gonna get you there.”

“I’ll be fine. I’ll call an Uber or something.” It’s a lie. I can’t afford it after draining my bank account on beauty treatments and clothes to prepare for this job, but I’m nothing if not resourceful, so I’ll figure it out all on my own.

“Goddamn it, Vivi. This whole situation is fucked, and I don’t know what to do, but I know I can’t let you walk away when you’re out in the middle of nowhere, barely dressed, in those damn shoes.”

I suddenly feel very naked. The last time I saw Colin, I was eight. He hasn’t seen my progression into womanhood, which is now on full display.

“Fine,” I mutter, wrapping my arms around myself.

“Okay. Good. Be right back.”

While I wait, I glance up at the sky full of stars, wondering where I went wrong in this life and why the universe hates me so much. This job was supposed to be my way out, my chance at freedom. Now that I know Colin is part of the motorcycle club that owns the Honey Pot, I’m sure that’s off the table. Or maybe it isn’t. Maybe he doesn’t care if I have sex with men for money. He sure didn’t care what happened to me when he left.

I’ll hold on to that hope. It’ll get me through this ride home.

A minute later, he reappears. God, he’s aged well. I’ll only admit it to myself because who thinks their brother is good-looking? We might not be related by blood, but we were as close as any siblings could get. He took care of me, helped me with my homework, walked me home from school, and took beatings from Ray that he didn’t deserve, just like I do for Mom now.

“Let’s go.” He repeatedly clicks a button on the fob in his hand while looking around to see which car it belongs to.

“Are you stealing a car right now?” I ask.

He pins me with a look. “No. The bartender is letting me borrow his cage.”

“You don’t have a car?”

“I have a bike, but there’s no way I’m taking you home on that.”

I conjure up all the biker knowledge I gained from watching *Sons of Anarchy*. “Because only your ol’ lady is allowed on the back of your bike?”

He stills, giving me his attention. “No. Because if you get on my bike wearing that, you’ll show your ass to everyone on the road.”

“Oh.” I wasn’t embarrassed when I put the leather skirt and matching cropped tank on earlier; I even thought I looked hot. But I am now.

“Yeah,” he scoffs. “‘Oh’ is right. Now help me look for this car.”

Looking around the parking lot, I point out a black sedan with its flashers blinking. “It’s over there.”

“Fucking finally. Let’s go.”

I follow him to the car and am surprised when he opens the door for me, then waits for me to buckle in before closing it. I shouldn’t be. He was always protective and put my needs above his own.

Still, that was before. Before he ruined my life and made certain I’d spend the next fifteen years held hostage by his dad. Because of him, my innocence was stripped away from me way too early in life. I don’t know who he is anymore, and it’d be best to remember that.

“Where are you living?” he asks, starting the car and throwing it in reverse. I spit out the same address that was once his own. “You’re still there?”

“Had nowhere else to go.”

His eyes close, and his chest rises and falls twice before they reopen. “Ray still there?”

“Yes.”

“Your mom?”

“Yes.”

He sighs and pulls out of the parking lot. An uncomfortable silence fills the car. It’s pitch black outside—not even streetlamps light the road—so I focus on his hands gripping the steering wheel. They’re the only thing illuminated, thanks to the huge screen on the dash that shows us moving



along on a detailed map.

His hands are rough and dry, the skin cracking around his knuckles, and he has several silver rings on his tattooed fingers. On his left hand is a ring carved with the image of a skull with fangs and ram horns on either side. On his right middle, ring, and pinkie fingers are flat circular rings, each with a different letter. The S, O, and E are backward and upside down from his grip on the top of the steering wheel, but if his fist was flying in your direction, you'd see their meaning. . .

“Sons of Erebus,” I whisper.

“What?”

“You're in a motorcycle club,” I say. “When did that happen?”

He shrugs. “Not long after I left home. Do you remember Cyrus?”

I flip through my memories and recall his boss at the auto body shop. “Yeah.”

“He vouched for me way back when, but now he's the president, and I'm the VP.”

I don't know what else to say, so I say nothing. There have been so many times I imagined what it would be like to run into him. I even rehearsed all the nasty things I'd scream at him to make him realize what his leaving did to me, how it ruined my life. Now that it's happened, though, I'm at a loss. It's not because I don't want to tell him those things. I just didn't plan on our reunion happening while I was half-dressed at a brothel. It puts a wrench in things.

“How have you been?” he asks, sneaking a glance at me.

“Oh, you know. Fine.”

He snorts. “Explain fine.”

“I just got a job at a brothel. Does that clue you in at all?” I bite out.

He huffs. “That's not happening anymore.”

Hearing him tell me what I'd already guessed reaffirms how dire my situation is. I quit the diner. I spent every last penny getting waxed, tanned, plucked, and primped. I put everything into being successful at this job. If he doesn't let me continue, I have to start all over again. It'll be years before I can leave.

No. Absolutely not. I won't let him do this to me.

“You can't do that.”

He snorts again like I'm an idiot. “Yes. I can. I'm part owner, so if I say you're out, you're out.”

“I *need* this job, Colin.”

“Find another one, preferably where you’re keeping your clothes on.”

I squeeze my eyes shut as panic claws its way up my throat until I can’t swallow. Or breathe. I can’t even think. The feeling I get when Ray’s nasty, sweaty, smelly body is on top of me consumes my senses, and I can’t take it. I can’t. I won’t. I refuse. I was too close to getting out of there.

Everything about this job was perfect. Mary, the madam of the Honey Pot, said after the house takes its fifty percent cut, I could make upwards of two grand a night if I try hard enough. Courtesans are only allowed two-week tours each month, but still, that’s at least twenty-eight thousand dollars a month.

You have to live in-house during a tour, which would leave Mom unprotected, but it was a sacrifice I had to make. I also had to lie to Ray and say I got a job in pharmaceutical sales that took me out of town. All he heard was that I had a better job and would make more money.

I told him my pay was four grand a month, a huge step up from what I had been making. He demanded half like I knew he would, but that still left me with twenty-four thousand dollars a month. With that kind of money, I could leave Reno much sooner than planned.

I should’ve known my bad luck would catch up with me.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” Colin shouts, jerking the steering wheel to the right and pulling off the highway.

I open my eyes slowly, only to find my vision has narrowed to pinpricks and my chest is heaving. I hadn’t realized I was hyperventilating or that my hands were clasped together so hard my new acrylic nails were digging into my skin, drawing blood.

“Vivi!” He undoes his seatbelt and reaches over the console, gripping me by the shoulders and turning me to face him. “Snap the hell out of it.”

I focus on him, tears springing from my eyes and the saliva in my mouth becoming thick, making it hard to speak.

“You c-can’t do this to m-me,” I stutter.

“Do what?” He shakes me with each word.

“I n-need this job.”

“The hell you do,” he snarls.

“You don’t understand.”

“Then explain it to me.”

My pinch together. “I can’t. Just please.”

“This is bullshit. I don’t know what’s going on, but I’m gonna find out.” He pushes me back into the seat and throws the car into drive. Each movement is harsh and aggressive as he slams down on the gas pedal, and we take off down the road.

I say nothing. The only sounds I make are sniffles and quiet sobs. Ten minutes go by before I realize he didn’t take the turn to my house.

“Where are you taking me?”

“Don’t worry about it.”

It hits me that I don’t know who this man is. He’s in a motorcycle club that’s constantly under suspicion for drugs and murder. They’ve avoided jail time, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t guilty. If Colin has any of his father in him, then he could be every bit the devil I know.

“Take me home, Colin.”

He doesn’t look at me. “I’m not Colin anymore. I go by Rigger now.”

“I don’t care what you go by. I want to go home.”

“I’m not taking you back there until we get a few things straight, so sit back and shut up, Vivi.”

I settle back, all the surging adrenaline from minutes ago rushing away and leaving me defeated and drained. I’m so tired of fighting to survive. Life shouldn’t be this hard for anyone. If he’s taking me somewhere to kill me, so be it. I don’t have it in me to care anymore.

“I’m not Vivi anymore. That nickname was another person. My real name is Navy,” I whisper into the night.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## RIGGER

My mind is racing as fast as the car. The only time I've ever seen someone freak out like this is when we have men in our kill shed. Vivi was breathing like she had a hundred-pound weight on her chest and shivering like she was sitting in a snowstorm. She panicked, and I'm pretty sure I know why.

Fucking Ray. He has to be the reason behind this.

I was shocked as shit to learn she's still living with him. I thought she'd take after me and leave the day she turned eighteen, but I had hoped her mom would come to her senses and leave him long before that. I should've known better, though. Ray has a way of making you believe you'd never make it without him. I saw him do it firsthand with my mom, so why wouldn't he do it with hers?

Anger pulses through me as I remember all the times he told Mom she'd be living on the streets or dead without him. He called her ugly, stupid, boring, and every other negative thing in the book, projections of what he thought about himself. He knew he wasn't shit, and the only way he could make someone stay was by making them believe they weren't shit, either.

I did everything I could to make sure Vivi was safe. When I was living at home, I kept her as far away from Ray as possible. I took her to the shop with me when I worked, and let her hang out with my friends and me on days I didn't. That all ended the night Ray and I came to blows. Even then, I did what I could to make sure he didn't go near her.

My blood boils as I wonder if Ray went back on that deal.

"Where are we?" Vivi asks as I pull into the clubhouse.

"My home."

She looks questioningly out the window. "It looks like a warehouse."

"It is." I park and undo my seatbelt. "Of sorts."

"Am I safe here?"

"This is the only place in the world I can guarantee nothing bad'll happen to you."

She nods subtly and unbuckles her seatbelt, trusting me completely. "Okay."

The rush of pride I felt the first day I met Vivi floods back in, and suddenly, she's six and I'm sixteen, and she's putting her hand in mine, looking at me like I hung the moon. I fucking missed her, and I suddenly wish I could hold her hand again. It's been a long damn time since I've felt the love we shared.

Yeah, my brothers love me, but in the way brothers do, hard and deep. Mom and Vivi loved me differently. They were caring and gentle. I'd never admit to missing something like that, but I do.

"This is my place," I say, typing in the code to unlock the door.

"You live here?" she asks as she looks around.

"Yeah." I hold the door open, motioning for her to go in first.

"This is where you went when you left me?"

I don't miss her emphasis on leaving her, but I take her question at face value and answer as simply as I can. "Not right away. These cabins are for ranking members only, so I couch-surfed for a while. You remember my friend Wilder?"

"Yeah."

"He's the club secretary and goes by Lucky now, but I stayed with his family the longest. When we had enough money to get our own place, we moved in together while we prospected for the club."

She takes a slow walk around the cabin, studying everything as if it'll give her all the answers she wants.

"Prospected?" she asks.

"It's kind of like hazing to see if we have what it takes to be a member."

Her eyes dart in my direction. "Why would you do that?"

"Because this is what I want. The club is like a family."

Her nose wrinkles, like the word "family" personally offends her. And maybe it does. We didn't have the best example of what it means to belong.

I sit on the edge of my bed, leaving my recliner open for her. "Not like our family. Like a real family. People who care about you and would go to

war over you.”

“Would you say you’d kill for them?”

“W-what?” I stammer, unsure why she would say that.

“Everyone in Reno knows about the biker clubs around here.”

I scowl. “I’m not going to pretend we’re Mother fuckin’ Teresa, but everything we do is for a reason.”

“Like becoming pimps?” she asks.

I’m getting angry now. “What the hell is wrong with you? We’re not pimps. We own an establishment where women can do what they were already going to do. Only at the Honey Pot, they get security and know that the person they’re having sex with is free from STIs. Even more than that, they get free rein of a beautiful property, massages, beauty treatments, a fuckin’ chef to cook them whatever they want,” I say, then decide to take it further. “By the way, you wanted to work there, so what does that say about you?”

She sits in the recliner and leans over, her hands crusted with dry blood and clasped together. “It says I’m desperate for money.”

“Lots of people are desperate for money, yet very few turn to prostitution.”

She shrugs. “Then it says I’m doing something that utilizes my specific skill set.”

“What?” Mary already told me this. I didn’t believe it then, and I don’t believe it now.

*There’s no way my little sister is a whore.*

I berate myself for that thought, but everything May has taught me about sex positivity and empowerment goes out the fucking window when it’s my sister.

“You heard me.” She sits up, straightening her posture.

“You’re lying.” There’s no way. None. The girl I remember was innocent and naive. She saw magic in the world.

But I’ve been gone a long time. Maybe she lost that over the years.

“No, I’m not. Which is why you should butt out of my business and let me work for the Honey Pot.”

I need to find another way. “You said you needed money. How much? I’ll give it to you.”

“No. I don’t take charity. Not even from you.”

“What do you mean, ‘not even from me’? Who better than your brother?”

She sucks in her top lip, chewing on it as she thinks. There's so much she's not telling me. I want to shake it out of her so I can solve all her problems. I did it once before; I can do it again.

Her face screws up, and she shakes her head. "You're not my brother."

"The hell I'm not."

She jumps to her feet, the anger that's been building inside her finally letting loose. "You lost the right to call yourself that the day you walked out on me."

"You think I wanted to do that?" I run a hand over my shaved head. "Fuck, Vivi, that's the last thing I wanted to do. I had no choice; don't you get that?"

This conversation is all over the place and going nowhere. She has secrets she isn't telling me, that's obvious, but any trust we had is gone, and I can't demand that she open up. It won't work, and I can't blame her when I'm not telling her the truth, either.

"Why, then? Why did you have to leave?"

The day I left, I swore I wouldn't bring her into my shit, and it's a promise that I have to keep. So instead of the answer she wants, I give her the one I need her to believe. It's still the truth, just not all of it.

"Because I would've killed him. I couldn't take any more from him, and you know it."

"You're right." Her eyes soften for a split second before narrowing back on me. "But it doesn't change the fact that it happened, and we're strangers now."

"Yeah, we are."

"So pretend I'm any of those other girls and let me do what I have to do."

I sigh. "I need to think about it."

"Well, think fast because if you turn me away, I swear to God, I'll go down the road to one of those other joints."

"Fine." I stand and pull the fob out of my pocket. "Let's get you home."

Muscle memory activates as I drive to my childhood home. I haven't been back here since the day I left, and I swore to God I'd never return. This is different, though. I'm not coming to beg Ray to take me back because I couldn't make it like I was worried I'd have to. I made it. I left without a goddamn penny to my name, and now I have a fat bank account, a family of brothers who'd die for me, and somewhere to call my own.

He's got nothing on me.



Except for Vivi. He's got her.

I park in the driveway, not at all shocked that the doublewide trailer looks shittier than it did fifteen years ago. I guess without me around to be his whipping boy, nothing gets done anymore. The salmon-colored vinyl siding is faded, cracked, and warped, the asphalt shingles peeling and missing in a few places, and the yard is overgrown and infested with weeds. I can't imagine the interior is any better.

"Jesus," I mutter.

"I know. I offered to mow or paint, but he said he'd hire someone. He never did."

I snort. "Sounds about right."

She picks her purse up off the floorboard and sets it in her lap before digging inside and producing a set of keys. I expect her to dart out of the car and run from me, but she seems to be stalling. Why?

"Are you gonna be okay?" I ask when it's obvious she's not getting out.

"Yeah. Fine. I'm still trying to wrap my head around seeing you again, and of course, it had to be at a brothel."

I scratch the back of my neck. "Yeah, gotta admit, I didn't expect that one."

"I'll figure out how to get my car towed, but it might take a few days. So, if you could tell them not to tow it to whatever place you're contracted with at the Honey Pot, that'd be great."

"I'll take care of it and get it back to you."

She shakes her head. "That's not necessary."

I sigh. "Jesus Christ, Vivi. Let me do this one thing. The club owns a garage. If it makes you feel any better, I'll work on it myself, so I won't have to pay someone else to do it."

She thinks on it, sucking her cheek in to chew on the inside of her mouth. "Fine."

"Thank you," I say, as if I'm doing her a favor.

"Anyway, I better go." She opens the car door.

"Wait. Give me your phone."

She furrows her brows in confusion. "Why?"

"Because after I get this mess sorted out, I need to get ahold of you."

"Oh, right." She digs around in her bag and produces an old, off-brand phone with a cracked screen. "There's no password to get in."

I sigh and fumble my way through her old as fuck apps. "There. You

have my number. Call or text if you need anything, Vivi. I mean it.”

“Right. Because you’re so reliable.” She steps out of the car but ducks back in to deliver a final blow. “I’ve made it this long without you; why would I need you for anything now?”

She slams the door shut and stomps to the front door. Once she’s safely inside, I throw the car in reverse and make my way back to work, my thoughts jumbled inside my head. Having Vivi show up tonight wasn’t even on my fucking radar. With opening this business, I’ve spent a lot of time thinking of different scenarios and how to get out of them, and this was so far out of leftfield it’s almost laughable.

That’s the thing about growing up dirt fucking poor and without any support; I’m not only self-reliant to a fault, I’m also ingenious. No matter the situation, I can find my way out, and there’s no doubt I’ll figure my way out of this too. I just need to think it through.

The party is still in full swing when I walk back inside the Honey Pot. One of our courtesans is in a thong and pasties, swinging on a pole, a few of my brothers as her audience. Each of them has a woman on their lap and a drink in hand. I find a few in the lounge, still chatting, but I can’t seem to find Lucky. Knowing his freaky ass, he talked one of the women into exploring the Galaxy Room. The dude has been obsessed with aliens since we were kids.

I don’t want to kill anyone’s vibe, so I walk to the bar, where Mustang is nursing a beer while he and the bartender watch the debauchery around them. I give my brother credit for sticking around, even though women aren’t his thing.

“Here are your keys back.” I slide the fob over the bar to the bartender. “Thanks for letting me borrow it.”

“No problem.”

“What’s your name?”

“Paxson.”

“Paxson?” I ask because the music is loud, and I’ve never heard that name before.

“Yeah. You want anything from the bar?”

I nod. “Gimme a whiskey on the rocks.”

“On it.”

While he pours my drink, I shift my attention to Mustang. “Having fun?”

He grins. “It’s adorable how a nice ass and a pair of perky tits make them

so happy.”

“Be thankful they do nothing for you. A pair of tits and a nice ass mean nothing but trouble.”

He laughs. “Speaking of tits, ass, and trouble, I saw you leave with all three in tow. Who is she? You looked like you knew her.”

“She’s my sister, but I don’t know her,” I admit. Paxson sets my drink in front of me, and I slide him a twenty. “Keep the change.”

“Thanks, man.”

“Sister?” Mustang asks incredulously. “I thought you were an only child.”

“I am. When I was sixteen, my dad married some broad who had a kid. I was only around her for two years before I split.”

He looks at me even more confused. “How come you’re just now mentioning this?”

“I left all that shit behind. I hadn’t even talked to her since I left. Then she shows up here expecting to work.”

“Damn.” He takes a swig of her beer. “What are you gonna do?”

“I don’t fucking know. She says if I don’t let her work here, she’s gonna go down the road and work at one of our competitors.”

“So? Let her. Then you won’t be profiting off your sister getting her back blown out.”

“Seriously?” I set my whiskey down, my stomach suddenly sour. And not just because I can’t think about someone nailing my sister. Vivi and I may be strangers, but this deep-rooted desire to protect her hasn’t changed.

“Okay, then. What’s your hang-up? Because from everything I’ve seen, she’d be a good earner. She’s got that whole ‘doe-eyed innocent’ thing going for her.”

“Watch it.” There’s a warning in my tone that he doesn’t miss.

He holds up his hands. “Just sayin’.”

I sigh. “I don’t want this life for her. I did some things to ensure she’d have better odds of making something of herself. I need to know what happened. But then, I’d need to revisit my past, which I don’t want to do.”

“You don’t want to?” he repeats dumbly. “For fuck’s sake, you sound like a whiny toddler.”

I narrow my eyes at him. “Excuse me?”

“Put away your VP hat; there’s no rank in this conversation.” I scowl but say nothing as he continues. “Be a fucking man and deal with your demons.

No one can hurt you anymore.” He motions around the lounge. “They don’t look like much right now, drooling all over tits and shit, but take away the girls, and your brothers are pretty good at backing you up.”

All the shit Ray put me through fucked me up, but I thought I’d made peace with it and moved on. But maybe I haven’t, and Mustang’s right. It’s time to handle Ray. After that’s settled, I’ll know what to do about Vivi.

I nod along. “Yeah, okay.”

“Good man.” Mustang claps me on the shoulder. “Now, let’s go get you laid. Maybe that’ll restore your manhood.”

I should punch him in the balls for saying shit like that, but I let it slide and join the party.

“There he is! Our lord and savior, Rigger!” Dutch shouts, holding his beer in the air. “Best idea ever.”

“Let’s see what you say tomorrow when the ‘hands off’ policy kicks in.”

“I don’t deal in tomorrows, brother. There’s only tonight.” He smirks and runs his hands down the thighs of the beautiful Black woman in his lap. “And tonight, this sexy woman is mine.”

She shifts to straddle him and weaves her fingers through his jet-black hair. “Let’s go find somewhere private, baby.”

He stands, taking her with him, fist-bumping me on his way out. “Tonight is fucking good.”

Mustang and I fill the newly vacated chairs as a bombshell blonde takes the stage and begins her dance. It’s slow and seductive as she teases the crowd. She has on a nude, lacy bra sheer enough to see her tightly budded nipples and matching panties showing the outline of her pussy.

I fucking love women. *Love them.* For some reason, though, this little striptease is doing nothing for me. All I can think about is how my pipsqueak stepsister turned into a beautiful woman. . . and how she wants to fuck strangers for money.

## CHAPTER SIX

## NAVY

“Why aren’t you working? It’s been almost a week,” Ray barks as he pops the top of his first evening beer.

I exchange a look with Mom across the dining room table. We knew this was coming. I tried to stay out at night so he wouldn’t catch on, but it’s hard when you’re broke and only have one friend with a busy social life. I’ve texted Colin over and over, asking if he’s decided, only to be left on read. Ray noticing I haven’t been working is the last straw. I need to find work somewhere else.

I don’t want to work for any of the other brothels, but I’m out of options. I have too much invested to give up now, and I’ll be damned if Colin ruins my chance to get us out of this house.

Ray storms over and fists my hair, jerking me back hard enough so I’m forced to look at him. Even though he must get haircuts, his hair looks perpetually overgrown. His leathery skin is wrinkled and has an unnatural gray tone like the smoke from his cigarettes. His teeth are crooked and yellow, matching the foul odor of his breath.

“I ain’t runnin’ no charity, girl. You owe me rent and utilities.”

Under the guise of contributing to the household, Ray makes me pay him half my wages each month. Ray doesn’t have a mortgage because his dad left him this shitty trailer, and the money I give him more than pays all the utilities. Any money Ray makes goes right to the casinos, and even that’s not enough for him anymore.

I hold my breath and focus on the hair growing from his ear. “The new job got postponed for two weeks.”

His grip tightens, no doubt pulling strands of my hair from my scalp.

“You’re a fucking liar. Did you get fired before you even started? Wouldn’t surprise me, you worthless piece of shit.”

A knock on the door stops his assault. He shoves my head away before walking over to see who it is, chugging his beer as he goes. I exhale slowly as I wrap my arms around my middle, holding on tight to stop the uncontrollable shaking.

“Is it them?” Mom whispers. She can’t see the front door from her vantage point, but I can. When Ray sidesteps to grab his wallet and keys, I get a good look at the two large men in all-black suits standing on the other side of the doorway.

“Yeah.”

As if in sync, they both look through the house, catching my gaze. I quickly turn away. Ray is a scary bastard, but these men? They terrify me to my core. I don’t know who they are or why they occasionally come for him. All I know is that Ray is a disrespectful son of a bitch to everyone except them.

Each time he leaves, he’s gone until just before the sun comes up. And when he returns, he’s covered in blood that didn’t come from him.

Without a word, Ray walks out, slamming the door behind him. In his absence, there’s a sudden return of air to the house, and Mom and I breathe deeply for the first time since he got home from work.

“Who do you think they are? Does Ray ever say anything?” I take a bite of my now cold macaroni and cheese. I don’t mind. I actually prefer it after it’s been sitting in the fridge all night.

“I don’t know, and no, I’ve never asked. The less we know about it, the better.”

“Whoever they are, I’m glad when they show up.”

“Me too.” Mom pulls her blonde hair up into a ponytail. Ray demands she keeps her hair down, but Mom hates it. If it were up to her, she’d cut it all off. The first thing we’ll do when we get to Henderson is visit a salon where she can get the cute pixie cut she’s always wanted.

“I have to leave for a bit, but when I get back, let’s make some popcorn and watch a movie. Sound good?” I stand, picking up my bowl.

“Leave it,” she says. “It’ll give me something to do while you’re gone.”

Guilt and depression ooze from every fiber of her being. It would be easy to say she deserves it, to remind her of all the bad choices she’s made, but I know she did the best with what she had. She had fuck all to work with, same

as me. The only villains in our story are my father and Ray.

I set the bowl back down. “Are you okay?”

She smiles, but it doesn’t reach her eyes. “I’m fine, honey.”

“Okay. I’ll be back soon.”

I make a pit stop in the bathroom to run a flat iron through my hair, touch up my makeup, and change my clothes. I opted for one of the corset tops I bought for work. It’s black and strapless and pushes what little boobs I have up, giving me a surprising amount of cleavage. Below my tits, sexy mesh fabric with exposed boning curves in toward my middle, running down my torso to my belly button, cinching my waist and giving the illusion of curves. After that’s in place, I pull up a pair of black pleather shorts over a black thong that matches the corset and pair the outfit with cobalt blue high heels for a pop of color.

*Here goes nothing.*

It’s the second time I’ve worn some of my new digs, and still, I don’t recognize myself. I’m used to oversized T-shirts, jeans, or my diner uniform of a polo and slacks. It’s not just what I see on the outside, though. Something about this sexed-up version of myself transforms me on the inside too. I feel braver and bolder.

I’m not Vivi. I’m Navy.

I slip outside, not wanting to show Mom this new version of me, and I do a happy dance when my car roars to life. Just as promised, Rigger returned it fixed. No one knocked to let me know; I just stepped outside the next day, and there it was, keys tucked under the visor. Hopefully this means Colin is more reliable these days.

After a ten-minute drive, I’m happy to see the steel gates of the Sons of Erebus clubhouse wide open. It’s much busier than when Colin brought me here before. At least fifty motorcycles line the entrance, and almost as many cars are parked in the lot. I pull into a spot closest to the gate in case I have to make a speedy exit.

Colin has ignored my calls and texts, so let’s see how easy it is to ignore me face-to-face. If he’s even here, that is.

My knees shake as I walk, but it’s because heels and gravel don’t mix, not because I’m scared—*Navy* doesn’t frighten easily. At least, that’s a personality trait I’ve assigned her. Whether or not it’s true has yet to be proven.

As I pass a group of men dressed in leather and black, smoking and



drinking near the entrance, their conversations quiet as their gazes land on me. They must sense I'm an outsider and don't belong. With my head held high, I ignore them and keep walking.

"Hey, baby. Let's play carpenter. First, we'll get hammered, then I'll nail ya!" one of them shouts. He's the biggest of the group, and instead of a cig hanging from his lips like the others, there's a rope of red licorice. Something about that stirs a memory I can't quite grab hold of.

I push it away and embrace the badass personality of Navy by furrowing my brows and cocking my head. "I highly doubt you have enough wood to handle a woman like me."

In a split second, the group is silenced, and I worry I fucked up. Maybe guys with egos big enough to throw out a corny pickup line don't enjoy a witty comeback. But then he takes the licorice out of his mouth and points it at me, grinning, while his friends cut up and prod at him.

"Name's Lucky." He points to his vest.

"Navy." I smile and wave.

"Hey, weren't you at the Honey Pot the other night?" another of the group asks.

Worried about giving too much away, I pretend to not have heard the question and continue through the front door, wholly unprepared for what I walk into. My eyes go wide as I take in the beautiful space. It's industrial and masculine, but the warm colors and textures make it feel cozy. It's a stark contrast to the people inside.

Even from where I'm frozen at the door, I can see to the back, where a woman, dressed only in a thong, dances on a pole to the blaring rock music playing from what must be an expensive sound system. Men and women are crowded around the slightly elevated stage, tossing cash at her, while others dance in the open space behind.

Across from them is a long bar where people are gathered, boozing it up, as two frazzled bartenders attempt to serve the crowd. Near the bar, some shoot pool at tables illuminated by hanging stained glass lights. The air smells of cigarettes, weed, and alcohol, the same bitter, pungent scent of Ray's house, though they must have better ventilation. It's lacking the staleness of what I breathe in daily.

It's loud and chaotic, but everyone seems to be having a good time, so caught up in what they're doing that they don't notice as I meander through the space, looking for Colin. It's easy to rule out the men dressed in street

clothes, but not as easy to pick him out of the dozens wearing the same black leather cut with the Sons of Erebus logo embroidered across the back. The lighting is dim, and everyone is tall and muscled, just like Colin.

A hand lands on my shoulder, and I look back at the guy from out front, licorice in his mouth bouncing as he chews. I attempt to shrug him off, but his hand remains clamped.

“Let go,” I demand.

He bites down on the red rope, then yanks it out of his mouth. “You’re Rigger’s girl, huh?”

The context is wrong, but the little girl still living inside me loves the way that sounds. I loved having a big brother for the two years Colin was in my life. Before him, I never had anyone who looked out for me, and I worshipped the ground he walked on.

“I’m not his anything, but I *am* looking for him. Do you know where he is?”

He nods. “Honey Pot, but should be here soon. Why don’t you sit down and have a drink with me?”

“Because I have no idea who you are.” I attempt to shake him off again, but he just laughs.

His eyes sparkle with amusement. “Girlie, if I set you free in this place, you’ll be eaten alive in seconds and Rigger’ll hang me.”

“How do I know you won’t do the same?”

“I’ve been Rigger’s friend since we were kids, and maybe you don’t remember me, but I remember you.” He guides me toward the bar. “Took me a minute to place ya. You’ve, uh, grown up a bit.”

Memories flood back to me, and I wonder how I missed it.

“Wilder?” I ask in disbelief, but there’s no mistaking him now. He’s obviously older—a full-grown man now. His hair is longer, with a scruffy beard, and his lanky body has filled in, but his eyes are the same: deep-set, dark as night, and full of mischief.

“You *do* remember.” He motions for me to take a seat on a barstool.

“I can’t believe I forgot. The licorice should’ve been a dead giveaway.”

“What can I say? I have an oral fixation.” He grins wolfishly.

I suppress an eye roll. “You said Colin will be back soon?”

“Yeah.” He looks over my head. “There he is now.”

I swivel on my stool and spot him walking through the door. He gives chin lifts as he’s greeted by other vest wearers with an air of calm, cool, and

collected surrounding him. It's hard to believe he used to be a boy with so much worry on his shoulders that he was always slumped forward from the weight of it all. Now his posture is straight, and he oozes confidence.

*And palpable sex appeal.*

I quickly dismiss that thought, feeling sick and twisted for even thinking it. For all intents and purposes, Colin is my brother.

Two women sidle up to him, dipping their chins and pushing their tits out. He grins like he's hot shit, wrapping an arm around each. I don't doubt he's had more than his fair share of the opposite sex in the years he's been gone.

He had an occasional girl sniffing around when we were younger, but he always sent them away if I was with him. When I asked why, he told me I was the only girl who mattered.

"Rig!" Wilder calls out.

Colin's ears perk up as he scans the crowd. Eventually, his eyes land on Lucky, then shift down to me. His easy smile falls flat, and he releases the two women, who pout pathetically. Losing all his swagger, he takes on a severe expression, pushing through the throngs of people to reach us.

"What the fuck is she doing here?" He points a finger at Lucky's chest.

"Don't look at me, man." Lucky smirks. "I just found her and kept her safe 'til you got back."

"*She*"—I start with more confidence than I'm feeling—"is here because you won't answer my calls or texts."

As though I said nothing at all, he grips my upper arm and tugs me off the stool before pulling me toward the door. I try to jerk away, but his vice-like hold is impossibly strong.

"Let go!" I demand, but he continues to ignore me, and so does everyone else. Apparently, men can rough women up around here, and no one will say shit. Good to know the company he keeps.

Seeing no other option, I kick the back of his knee, making it buckle. He drops his hold on me as he stumbles, throwing his arms out to catch himself.

Once stabilized, he spins around. "Seriously?"

"Huh." I shrug with mock curiosity. "That move still works on you."

"And you're still a pain in the ass. Come on." This time, he takes my hand. "It's too loud in here to talk."

I don't miss the glares from the previous two women as we pass by, heading outside. I should explain that he's my brother, but I liked how it felt when he chose me over girls back when I was eight, and I sure as shit like it

now too.

Once again, he takes me to his cute little studio cabin. He's lucky to have found somewhere to land post-Ray. It might not be anything special, but people who grow up like us don't need special. We just need it to be ours. I hope Mom and I get that someday.

He closes the door behind us and sits on his bed, same as last time, so I follow suit and take the recliner.

"So?" he asks, those green eyes boring into me.

"So, are you going to give me an answer?"

I hold my breath as he stares at me, his jaw ticking and his fists balled in his lap. It's not the end of the world if he says no, but I toured two other brothels in my area over the last week, and I don't want to work at either place. The properties are old and don't have the amenities the Honey Pot does. It's the difference between working at a five-star hotel or a two-star motel.

"Why do you want it this bad?"

"I need the money."

"Why can't you do"—he tries to think of jobs that don't require me spreading my legs but make a similar wage—"literally anything else."

*Because I need to get as far away from your rapist dad in the shortest amount of time possible.*

"I was doing something else. I was waitressing at a diner where I made little more than ten dollars an hour plus tips. When people see 'diner,' they assume two bucks is a good tip. That meant after taxes, I made around four hundred dollars a week."

"But you're living at home and drive a piece of shit car."

I stand, my frustration building. It's none of his goddamn business why I need more money, but if anyone were to understand, it should be him. He knows what that house is like. He knows what his dad is like. Take away Ray's late night/early morning visits that Colin didn't have to endure, and he still knows that Ray is an abusive asshole.

"Don't pretend you have any clue what my life is like. If you did, you might not be such a judgmental prick about this," I say.

"I'm not trying to be a prick. I'm just trying to understand."

My nose stings and my eyes water because I hear his impending rejection. He's not gonna let me work for him, which means I'll end up at the Chicken Scratch Club, where the sheets are stained, the rooms are dank, and there's no

security.

“Please, Colin,” I plead, hating that I’m exposing myself to him.

“I’m sorry, Vivi. The answer is no. And I put in a call to the other brothels, so they won’t hire you either.”

*He did what?*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## RIGGER

One lone tear rolls down her cheek before she falls to her knees, rocking back and forth as she rubs her bare thighs. A pained expression washes over her face as her chin quivers, and she lets out a strangled cry of frustration.

*What the fuck?*

“Jesus Christ, Vivi.” I’m at her side in a flash, bending over to rest a hand on her shoulder.

She slaps my hand away. “Don’t fucking touch me.”

I take a step back. “Okay. All right.”

With no other choice, I stand there awkwardly while she cries. I knew she was going to be pissed, but I didn’t expect. . . whatever the hell this is.

*Did I make the right choice?*

I dismiss that thought immediately. Of course, I did. What kind of brother—stepbrother—would I be if I let her sell her body? Mary’s voice takes up residence in my head again, spouting sexual empowerment and taking back the control that men have exerted over women’s bodies.

But that’s not what this is for Vivi. She’s never once told me that was her reason. The only thing she wants is fast money at any expense. That’s the real reason I’m saying no. Or at least, the rational reason, the valid reason.

Vivi stands, sniffing and wiping her tears away, leaving dark streaks behind from her makeup. “I gotta go.”

“Not a chance.” I block the door with my body.

“Colin, I swear to God, you let me leave, or I will scream.”

“Go ahead. Scream. You think any of my brothers are gonna save you from me? I’m the Vice President of this club.” I smirk. “You forget where

you are, sweetheart.”

“I’m serious. Let me go.” She shoves me, but I don’t budge an inch.

Vivi might be tall, but she’s skinnier than a beanpole. Not that she doesn’t look good, because she does with her gentle curves, mile-long legs, and the perfect handful of tits. Maybe it’s wrong to notice, but I give myself grace since I didn’t know who she was when I first saw her at the brothel.

*What’s your excuse for checking her out now, asshole?*

“You’re not storming out of here this upset. Sit your ass down, and let’s talk about this,” I order, even though I have no idea what to say.

I hadn’t called her back yet because I didn’t have a solution. There are only two things I knew for certain: she wasn’t working for me, and she sure as shit wasn’t working for a different establishment. Thankfully, the other brothels are owned by old men who don’t want trouble and easily complied with my request.

“Talk about what? How you single-handedly crushed my plans? My dreams? No, thank you.” She shoves me again, and it’s so pathetic, it’s almost comical. Can’t deny the girl has some fight in her.

Time to think on the fly.

“I have another offer for you,” I say. *Liar.*

Her arms fall to her side, and she quiets. “What offer?”

“Sit the fuck down, and I’ll tell you.” *Think, asshole. Think. What other offer can I give her?*

“Fine.” She folds her arms and plops down on the chair, her lips pressed in a flat line and her jaw set. I don’t blame her for being skeptical. I’m skeptical of myself at this point.

“Being a courtesan isn’t the only job we have open, you know.”

“Will any other positions allow me to clear half a mil in a year?” she fires back.

I retake my position on the corner of my bed, facing her. “Well, no.”

“Then I don’t want it.” She pushes up from the chair.

Before she can fully stand, I stop her. “Wait. If it’s money you want, I have plenty. Let me give you some.”

She sneers at my offer. “I already told you; I don’t want your fucking handouts. I want to earn.”

“Why? You said you want to leave Reno, right?”

“I need to get my mom and myself out of this city as soon as possible.”

“Is it because of Ray?” I ask. Her sad eyes meet mine, and I know I hit



the nail on the head. Of course it's fucking Ray. "What did he do?"

"What hasn't he done, Colin? He's the devil."

"Can you be more specific?" I need to know the particulars because if he hurt her, that'll be the end of him.

"I don't even know you. Why should I tell you anything?"

I take a calming breath. This is yet another conversation that's going around in circles. We're both keeping so many secrets, and neither of us trusts the other. It's hypocritical of me, but I have to find a way to get through to her without exposing the things I'm hiding.

That's when it hits me. I need to get her close. Close enough she learns to trust me again, and the best way to do that is to hire her. Except she's not going to agree to anything without a decent paycheck.

Cy'll be pissed I'm taking from the bottom line, but even if I have to take her pay out of my cut, it'll be worth it.

"We need a second madam," I blurt.

"But Mary—"

"Is old and can't be there twenty-four seven." The spark of hope I see in her eyes has me feeling like I'm doing the right thing.

"What's the pay?"

*I have no idea because we don't really need another madam.*

"Fifty dollars an hour."

"That's not enough."

"If, after a month, you still want to be a courtesan, I won't stand in your way." I regret the words as soon as they're out, but when I see her perk up, I know it was the right thing to offer. It's a fucking lie, though, because I'll never agree to that. Still, it buys me the time to figure this whole thing out.

"Do you promise?"

"Yes." I'm going to hell, but that's nothing new, so I don't care.

"What does the job entail?"

I have no fucking clue because there is no job, but I can't tell her that. I'm in this too deep to turn back now.

"You'll move into one of the rooms and shadow Mary while she trains you. After that—"

"I can't move in for the entire month. No way."

She was so adamant about getting away from Ray that I thought that would be a perk of the job. It would allow me to keep tabs on her and know she's safe. There's no way I can budge on this.

“It’s part of the job,” I say.

“Mary lives on site?”

“Well, no, but that’s why we need you. Sometimes shit happens, and she’s not there.” Fuck me. I’m spewing so much bullshit that I can’t keep track of it all.

“I can’t leave my mom alone in that house,” she whispers.

Doesn’t take a genius to know what she means. It wasn’t longer than a month before Ray’s abuse extended to his new bride. At first, she fought back, but Ray did what he always did, making her feel like she’d be nowhere without him. The light slowly died from Laura’s eyes until she became a zombie. She was there but not *really* there.

I can’t imagine anything changed after I left.

Because I was so pissed that she brought her daughter into this situation, I didn’t include securing her safety in my deal with Ray. My guess would be it’s hard for Vivi to be a bystander to her mom’s mistreatment.

“You can leave to check on her whenever you want.” I don’t tell her that if she does, me or one of my brothers will be going with her. We’ll get to that part after I lock her in.

She stares at the wood floors while she thinks, chewing on the inside of her mouth and twirling a piece of her hair. I smile, remembering the same tells from when she was a little girl. I fucking missed her, and this might not be the best of circumstances, but I’m fucking glad she’s back in my life.

“Okay,” she finally says, and for the first time since I saw her at the Honey Pot, the weight on my chest lifts.

“Really?”

She stands. “Yes, but you better not break your promise because I’m telling you right now, I *will* take you up on your offer to be a courtesan.”

“Yeah, okay.” I feel so relieved that I wrap her in a hug, lifting her off her feet. Instinctually, her hands grip the back of my neck, and I bask in the feeling of her in my arms, breathing in her floral scent.

Then I notice other things, like the way her breasts are pressed against my chest and the slight bite of pain from her long nails pressing into my flesh. My cock thickens, and I quickly set her on her feet.

“Good. This is good,” I say.

If she noticed the bulge I’m sporting, she doesn’t show it. Which is good because nothing makes me feel more perverted than getting a hard-on for my stepsister.

“I should go.” She moves past me, stopping with her hand on the doorknob. “When do I start?”

“Tomorrow?”

She shakes her head. “That’s so soon. I don’t know if I can sort everything out.”

“What do you need to do? I can help.”

She thinks about it, but something tells me she’s trying to find an excuse, not how I can help. “No, I’m good. I’ll take care of it myself.”

“I’ll meet you at the Honey Pot at seven tomorrow night?” I ask.

“Okay.” She opens the door. “Thank you, Colin.”

“Anything for you, Vivi, and I fuckin’ mean that.”

She nods and walks out. Normally, I’d walk her to her car, but I think she needs as much time as possible to get things right in her head before tomorrow. The pathway to the parking lot is lit, and no one will bother her after they saw her with me in the clubhouse. Still, I open an app on my phone and track her location. When I put my number into her phone, I enabled her location services for this very reason.

It’s a dick move, but if she’s not going to be open with me about her life, I need to make sure she’s safe. At least that’s what I tell myself.



“You’re joking, right?” Mary stares me down in disbelief.

“I did this for you.” More lies, but who the fuck is counting anymore?

“I didn’t ask for help.” She sorts through a stack of mail on her desk while I keep a safe distance in the office doorway. Mary might be old, but she scares the shit out of me.

“What if you get sick or injured? We need a backup.”

“I don’t get sick, and I’m unusually spry for my age.” She folds her arms and rests them on her desk. “What’s this really about? I heard that girl is your stepsister. That true?”

“She is, but that has nothing to do with it.”

She scoffs. “So what? You can’t stand the thought of your precious sister doing the nasty with paying clients?”

A growl rumbles in my throat. The thought of her fucking two, three, or four guys in a night fills me with so much fucking rage.

“I’ll take that as a no.” She massages her forehead. “Did you clear this with Cy?”

The fact that she knows to ask when I’m the only club member she’s worked with means she’s a quick study. It shouldn’t surprise me. She’s entirely too observant for her own good.

“He gave me full reign with this place.”

She laughs bitterly. “Fine. Whatever. But if she gets in my way, she’s gone.”

“You’re a peach, Mary. Don’t ever let anyone tell you different.”

“Yeah, yeah. Now get the fuck out of my office.” She waves towards the door.

Before I can leave, I hear boots pounding down the hallway, getting louder and louder. I pop my head out to see Satyr, one of the club’s enforcers, running toward me.

“Got a problem, Rig. Need you. And bring Mary,” he grunts, turning on his heels and heading back from where he came.

Mary was right about being spry because she’s at my side in a heartbeat as we chase after Satyr. My mind goes a million miles a minute, wondering what went wrong. We’ve been open for over a week, and it’s been smooth sailing. The girls are booked solid, and the money is pouring in. It was only a matter of time before we ran into issues.

Satyr leads us to the east end of the property, where the residential suites are located. He stops in front of a room where a girl who goes by Lacy is staying. At first, I can’t tell what’s happened because the room is crowded with my brothers and some of the women.

“Everyone out,” I say and step to the side. After they’ve cleared the room, I see Lacy, shirtless and lying on her stomach. I suck in a sharp breath. Her exposed back is covered in long, thin open wounds and blood trickles down her sides, pooling at the base of her spine. Another of our girls, Ariel, sits next to her, dabbing at the angry flesh with a damp cloth. “What the fuck happened?”

Lacy squeezes her eyes shut, pushing out a stream of tears. “I couldn’t get to the panic button.”

“A client did this?” I roar, not even recognizing my own voice.

“She was in the BDSM room. He tied her up and wouldn’t let her go,” Ariel says, anguish in her tone.

“Shit, sweetie. I’m so sorry.” Mary takes the bloodied washcloth from

Ariel. "I'll take over from here."

"Okay." Ariel snuffles and walks out.

"How the fuck was this guy allowed in? Don't we have some kind of vetting process for that room?" I ask.

"He didn't have any violent priors," Satyr, also our club tech guy, chimes in from the doorway.

"Fuck me." I squat next to the bed and push a strand of hair off Lacy's face. "You okay, darlin'?"

Her eyes open, and she swallows. "I want to go home."

"Consider it done. Satyr here will arrange everything. All you gotta do is tell him what you need." She nods her reply, and I stand. "Where is he?"

"Basement." Satyr moves into the room as I leave.

Making my way to the kitchen, I pull my brass knuckles out of my pocket and slide them onto my fingers. You have to be a special kind of stupid to pull shit like this in a brothel owned by the Sons. We haven't kept that shit secret. The second you walk through the door, the Sons are present, doing our best to intimidate the fuck out of all the clients.

Once a party is booked, one of us goes over what's allowed and what's off-limits. By the time a client moves to a private area, there should be no question about what'll happen to you if you break one of our rules. And the motherfucker waiting in the basement is about to get first-hand experience.

In the kitchen, I nod to the chef before opening the door to the walk-in pantry. I flip the latch on the side of the back shelf and pull open the hidden door leading to a set of stairs. It wasn't cheap to have the twelve-by-twelve underground room installed, but it was important to have somewhere private to take care of issues. As far as the city or anyone else is concerned, it doesn't even exist. We didn't pull permits, and it'll never be added to the blueprints.

I make it halfway down when I'm met with the sound of pained whimpers that excite me and get my adrenaline pumping. I'm not a good guy. Never claimed to be one, either. I do the best I can for my family and destroy anyone who gets in my way. When Lacy agreed to work for us, she became part of that family, and this motherfucker hurt her. That means he has a lesson to learn.

"Look who's here," Lucky says in a chipper tone. He's leaning against the wall, gnawing on a piece of licorice, while a middle-aged man sits in the center of the room, hands bound behind his back. He moans pitifully while his head lolls forward, blood and spit dripping from the corners of his mouth.

“You got the party started without me,” I jokingly whine.

“I pre-funked a little.” Lucky pushes off the wall, tossing the rest of his candy into the corner.

I fist what little hair the man has and yank his head back. “You roughed up one of my girls pretty good.”

His bloodshot eyes meet mine. “I’m sorry, okay?”

“Why the hell would you damage something that belongs to the Sons?”

“I didn’t think it was a big deal. She’s just a whore, right? They’re a dime a doz—”

My fist slams into his mouth and cuts him short, making his eyes roll back in his head and blood dribble from his mouth, along with a few cracked teeth. I rear back and drive into him again, hitting him in the cheek and splitting it wide open.

“Don’t ever”—I punch him again, no doubt breaking his jaw this time —“fuck with the Sons. Do you understand me, motherfucker?”

The question isn’t answered because he’s lost consciousness. I release his head with a shove and walk over to the sink in the corner to wash his blood off my hands.

“You want me to get your ropes?” Lucky asks.

My road name comes from my preferred method of torture, ropes. The methodical tying and binding of body parts to cut off circulation is almost relaxing. For me, at least.

“Nah. We don’t need the heat that’d come from a customer disappearing.”

“We can’t just kick him out like this.”

“Where does he live?” I ask.

Lucky digs through his pockets until he finds a wallet. “He’s local.”

“Get his address off his license and drop him at his door.”

He laughs. “I’ll bet his wife and two point five kids will love hearing how he got messed up.”

I pour a bottle of rubbing alcohol over my knuckles before washing my hands. “He’ll probably lie and say he got mugged.”

Lucky flashes a sly grin. “Don’t we have some Honey Pot T-shirts in the gift shop?”

I chuckle and turn to face him. “We do. Let’s give him an outfit change before he goes home. That’ll be harder for him to talk his way out of.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## NAVY

I didn't have luggage when we moved into Ray's house, and I don't have any now, so I grab a black yard bag from under the kitchen sink. It's embarrassing but whatever. I have no other option.

"What are you doing?" Ray barks from where he's just sat down with a beer.

After I got home last night, Mom and I watched a movie in peace. She went to bed, but I stayed awake. It was four in the morning before he came home. From my spot in the window, I could see the front of his shirt was splattered with blood. Once he was inside, I waited until I heard the back door open and shut before I slipped out of my room to investigate. I found him in the backyard, standing in front of the fire pit. He was shirtless and spraying a pile of clothes with lighter fluid. Getting rid of the evidence, I supposed. Knowing it'd take at least ten minutes for them to burn, I snuck out the front door, stopping to grab his car keys.

As quietly as I could, I opened the car door and slipped into the driver's seat. After digging through the console and the random trash on the passenger seat and floor, I couldn't find anything telling me what he's been up to. I thought it was a dead end, but then I opened the glove box and froze. In it was a shiny, black gun.

That would explain the blood.

Not wanting to leave any fingerprints, I left it as is and went back to bed. I don't know what Ray has gotten himself into, but it has me feeling extra nervous about leaving Mom here alone.

"My job is finally starting, so I'll be gone for thirty days."

"You said two weeks," he bites out.



“This is for training. After that, it’ll be two weeks at a time.” It’s not a lie because I’m holding Colin to his promise.

“Don’t think just because you’re not here, you don’t have to pay me the money you promised.” Of course, it always comes back to money.

“Yeah, I know.”

“Don’t get sassy with me.” He sets his beer on the end table, and I know I need to shut up. I try to walk on eggshells around him, but my tolerance for bullshit has just about reached its limit. I’m tired, stressed, and worried. “I took you and your mom in when you had no one. You’d think that’d earn me some goddamn respect.”

“I pay you half my check every month, buy groceries when I can, and clean the house. What else could you want from me?” There’s more I could add to that list, but those words are never to be spoken. Not ever. Because once they are, I have to admit what’s happened to me since I was just a child, and that’s not going to happen.

Ray stands, the look on his face telling me I’ve gone too far.

“I just meant that I have every intention of paying you.” My words come out shaky, and I hate that I’m so afraid of him.

“You’re a spoiled little bitch. Same as your mother. I should’ve kicked both of you out a long time ago.” He stalks toward me, a lion ready to pounce on a sheep. “You’ve done nothing but bring me headaches since you moved in.”

“I’m sorry, okay? You’ll have your money as soon as I get my first check.” I didn’t even ask Colin when that would be.

“Dinner’s ready, Ray. Why don’t you sit down, and I’ll bring you a plate?” Mom pops her head out of the kitchen, directly between where Ray and I are standing. She means well, but fuck, I wish she wouldn’t do that. Now I don’t have just myself to worry about.

“Stay out of this!” He stops walking long enough to backhand her, sending her crashing into the wall.

I rush over, crouching next to her. “Are you okay?”

“Fine, honey. I’m fine,” she whispers as she tries to right herself.

I stand, blocking her with my body. “That’s enough!”

“I’ll say when it’s enough!” He throws a punch that I attempt to block, but it still connects with my jaw. “Apparently, you haven’t learned your place.”

Pain shoots through my face. I need to find a way to diffuse this. I can’t

show up tomorrow black and blue. “I do. I know my place, and I’m so sorry. I spoke out of turn.”

“Damn right you did,” he spits out. “Call this new job and tell them you quit. Then go back to the diner and see if you can get your old job back. You can’t be gone for a month.”

All the air leaves my lungs, and I panic. “I can’t. They’ve already filled my position.”

“Then find another one.”

“It’s just a month, Ray. And I’ll be making more money. That’s good, right?”

He takes a threatening step closer, his tone mocking. “You’re gonna leave your mama here to fend for herself? I’d hate for something bad to happen while you’re away.”

This can’t be happening. It feels like someone is trying to stop me from every direction, first with Colin and now Ray. Maybe it was dumb to think I could get away. There’s no such thing as a better life for girls like me. We’re doomed from the start. God, I was so naïve.

I fold my arms and straighten my spine. “I can pay you three thousand a month instead of two.”

“I don’t need your money. The only reason I make you pay is to teach you responsibility.”

*Yeah, right. It’s so you can spend all your money at the casinos and still have a home.*

“This is a good job, Ray. Please.”

He grips my upper arms in a punishing hold and shakes me until my teeth rattle. “You deaf, cunt? I said no.” He shoves me backward, making me trip over Mom, huddled in a ball at my feet. I hit the wall, my head slamming into it with a thud before I land on top of her. “I’m going out.”

We stay tangled until we hear the front door slam.

“Oh my God, Vivi. I’m so sorry,” Mom cries, shifting to the side and wrapping me in her arms.

“I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not, and I’m not, either. This isn’t okay. None of it.” It’s the first time I’ve heard some fight in her voice. Normally, after Ray throws one of his fits, she tries to defend him, to make it make sense.

She grips the wall to help her to her feet. She’s skin and bones, the depression stopping her from eating and taking care of herself. If things

continue like this, she'll be dead within a year.

"No, it's not. That's why I need to get us out of here."

Mom shakes her head. "You heard him. You can't go."

"I can't, but we can."

She furrows her brows in question. "What do you mean?"

"You're coming with me."



We pulled up to the Honey Pot two hours early because we had to leave before Ray got home. It was a mad rush to get packed, especially because Mom basically stared at a wall, soothing herself by rocking side-to-side while I gathered everything of importance or value.

Staring at the property, I chew the inside of my mouth until I taste blood. This plan is barely thought out, and I have no idea if Colin will take Mom in too, or if there's even room. We can share if needed, and maybe there's a job for Mom. She's a decent cook and can clean, assuming I can get her out of the trance she's in.

"Mom?" I unclip my seatbelt and turn to face her. Her face is void of all emotion. "I know this is scary, but we have no choice. Colin can help us."

"We have to go back," she mutters.

"No. If we go back there, we'll both end up dead. Ray is unhinged."

She looks at me and grabs my hands. "We can apologize. You can do whatever you do that puts him in a decent mood. It might take a little time, but he'll forgive us."

I lean back, ripping my hands from her grasp. "What?"

"It'll be okay. He might be mad for a while, but—"

My eyes prick with tears and my nose stings. "You know what I do to keep him 'in a decent mood,' right?"

"Yes, just do that. It's worked before when we've made him mad. It'll work again." She tucks her hands between her knees. "Come on. Let's go."

"No, Mom. I will not let him fuck me in exchange for living in a house where we're emotionally and physically abused," I say through gritted teeth. "It's disgusting you're even asking that of me."

"It's not that bad, and Ray's done a lot for us. We shouldn't be so selfish. Don't you remember what our life was like before?"

I have few memories of that time, but from what I remember, we were in a similar situation with my sperm donor. He beat up on Mom a lot, but he mostly left me alone. I don't know which is worse, getting too much attention from the man in Mom's life or being completely ignored by my own father. Both were awful.

Swallowing the lump in my throat, I open the driver's door and step out. "Do whatever you want, Mom, but I'm staying here."

"Vivi!" she calls out, but I ignore her. I've given her too many passes because I know she's traumatized. She probably has a whole host of mental disorders ranging from depression to PTSD, but none of that gives her a pass to suggest I allowed any of this.

It's one thing when we both pretend it doesn't happen. It's a whole other when the words are said aloud.

I pop the trunk and begin unloading my garbage bags when I hear, "You're early."

I look over and spot Colin standing by the side entrance to the living quarters. "Sorry. I didn't have much choice."

"It's cool." He walks down the steps, his eyes narrowing on Mom in the passenger seat. I can't get over how much he's changed. The boy I knew is barely visible under the rough exterior of the biker he's become. "And you brought your mom."

I don't miss the bite of disgust in his tone. He never cared much for my mom. When I was a girl, I didn't understand why. She was beautiful, kind, and took care of both of us. Now, I get it. She brought a little girl into an unspeakable situation, and even after Ray exposed his true colors, she stayed. A man like Colin can't respect that.

"Is that going to be a problem?" I stand confidently, hiding my doubt.

"Nope."

"Good, because we're a package deal. She has nowhere else to go."

He nods and picks up two of the garbage bags. "I'm not sure if she agrees."

I shake my head. "She doesn't, not yet, but I'm hoping that'll change."

"A little heads up would've been nice."

"We're not asking for a handout. She can stay with me and work. There has to be something she can do around here."

"I'm sure there is. I'll talk to Mary." He motions for me to follow him. "And we have a couple extra rooms right now. It can't be permanent, but

we'll figure that out later.”

I have no right to let his use of “we” mean as much as it does. It's probably a passing phrase to be polite, but I've had no one to rely on for such a long time, I pretend he means it. I pretend this is his way of being back in my life and taking on the role of protector again. Even if all I'm doing is setting myself up to be let down, I need to believe it for now. Otherwise, this would be too overwhelming to handle.

“Thank you,” I say.

“It's not a problem.” He holds the door open for me. “Want me to talk to her?”

I glance at the car where Mom still sits, staring into the void. “No. Give her some time.”

“All right, then. Your room is the third door on the right.”

The hallway has the same feel as a hotel, with warm taupe-colored walls and cream carpet with gold geometric patterns scattered throughout. Modern gold sconces hang on either side, illuminating the space and giving it a classy feel. That's where the similarities to a hotel end, though, because large paintings of couples having sex are hung on the walls between each room. Still, they feel more artistic than pornographic.

I stop at the door with a gold six affixed below a peephole. Colin snakes an arm around me and swipes a keycard over the lock.

“If you lose your card, tell Mary, and she'll get you a new one. You'll also need to renew it each week when the locks automatically reset.” He hands me the card and pushes the door open.

“Okay.” I step inside, and if I thought I would make it through the day in one piece, I was wrong. What I see has me losing any grasp on reality I had.

“I did a little remodeling based on what I remembered you liked,” he says sheepishly.

“Green,” I whisper, taking in the sage-painted room.

There's a window directly in front of me with layered sheer cream curtains, making them opaque. To my left is a bed with a cream-colored headboard and bedding in a deeper shade of sage than the walls. On it sits decorative throw pillows and a cuddly frog stuffy. To my right is a desk with a vanity where a fish tank sits. I move closer, only to realize it's not a fish tank. It's a frog tank. Little green frogs swim about, pushing off the rocks and plants inside.

My hand shoots up to cover my mouth as any thoughts and words leave

me completely. I used to dream of having a tank just like this when I was a little girl, back when my biggest problem was living in a Pepto Bismol pink room that Mom's new boyfriend decorated.

"I can't believe you remembered," I say incredulously, bending over to watch the adorable little amphibians.

"It's not a big deal."

I straighten. "It *is* a big deal."

He shrugs. "Just wanted you to be comfortable."

Without thinking, I slam my body into his, hugging him tight. At first, he stands there with his arms frozen at his sides, but after a second or two, they envelop me right back, and he rests his cheek on my head. I don't ever remember feeling better than I do in this moment. Colin doesn't owe me anything. I'm nothing to him, not anymore, but he still took the time and energy to do this for me. I'll never be able to repay him.

"Thank you," I murmur into his chest.

"You're welcome. Why don't you get settled while I deal with your mom?"

I pull away, wiping at the dampness on my cheeks. He's seen me cry twice now, and I don't want him to think I'm an emotional wreck, even if that's exactly what I am.

"I can't ask you to do that. Just tell me where she'll be, and I'll get her sorted."

"No," he says with finality. "There are some things I want to discuss with her, and it's best we do it alone."

I shake my head. "She's barely hanging on right now. If you bring up shit from our past, there's no telling where she'll go in her head."

"She's a big girl. I don't pretend to know everything that's happened since I left, but I've gotten pretty good at reading between the lines. From what you've told me and what I saw outside, it's time she faced some truths."

My chest constricts. "She's not strong enough for that. Let me come with you."

He stops me from pushing past him. "I'm assuming you're both running from Ray?" I nod and shift my gaze to the floor. He was going to find out at some point anyway. "If she wants to use me for protection and get on her feet, she needs to hear me out. Period."

"Can't you wait a little? Just until she gets settled?"

"Not happening. This is a deal breaker, Vivi."

There's no plan B. We have to make this work so that at some point, Mom and I can live a happy, Ray-free life. If I'm being honest with myself, I've been treating her with kid gloves for years. Maybe she needs to be confronted so she can own her mistakes and take charge of her life.

At least that's what I tell myself as Colin leaves the room.

"I'll bring the rest of your stuff soon. There should be hangers in the closet, and you have a private bathroom through the door next to the bed," he says before disappearing down the hall.

Instead of dwelling on what's happening outside, I pull out my phone and shoot a quick text to Olivia. She's not happy I'll miss this week's get-together but is beyond thrilled I'm getting us out of that house. I don't go into the specifics of where I am, but I mention that Colin's back in my life and helping me. In her eyes, that makes him a saint. I wonder if she'll still feel that way when she finds out I'm living at the brothel his motorcycle club owns.

That's another problem for another day. After letting her know I'm safe, I sit on the edge of the bed, tuck my hands between my knees, and take what feels like my first calming breath.

It'll be okay. Everything will be okay.

## CHAPTER NINE



## RIGGER

I head toward Vivi's piece of shit car to find Laura still sitting there, spaced out.

Not until I see the state she's in do I understand how bad things have gotten. She's more of a vegetable than a zombie now. That doesn't change the fact that my rage for the woman hasn't diminished. The first time Ray raised a hand to her, she should've picked up and left with Vivi.

She didn't. She stuck around, defended him, blamed his anger on Vivi being too loud or not cleaning up after herself. I'm not perfect and made my own mistakes, but I was a teenager. I did all I could to keep Ray in check after I left, but the more I see of Vivi's life, the more I realize I was the only one who held up my end of the deal.

I don't know what's happened, but I'll find out, and Ray better start praying to whatever god he believes in because his death is coming sooner than he knows. I don't give a fuck that he's my dad.

"Laura," I say in greeting after opening the car door.

"Good to see you, Colin," she says, keeping her eyes trained on the desert surrounding the Honey Pot.

"You stayin'?"

She doesn't move. "I don't think I should."

"Why not?"

She ignores the question. "It looks like you've done well for yourself. Even if you're running a whorehouse."

"We don't say shit like that around here. This is a brothel."

"You're right. I have no room to judge. You left home with nothing, and from what Vivi's told me, you've come a long way."

“And you’re still nothing but a pathetic waste of space.” I don’t react to her sharp intake of breath. It was harsh, but she needs some tough love right now. “Tell me I’m lying,” I say.

She weaves her fingers together. “You’re not.”

“I know I’m not. So, what are you gonna do about it?”

She doesn’t look me in the eye when she answers. “I’m worried what both of us leaving will do to your dad.”

“Don’t call him that. He’s never been a dad to me, not for one second.”

“Maybe not, but he is my husband.”

I scoff. “I don’t know if you noticed, but I’m VP of the Sons of Erebus. Ray doesn’t scare me anymore.”

“I get that. I think everyone around here knows what you boys get into,” she says. “But he scares me.”

“If you’re staying here, you’ve got protection. We won’t let anything happen to you, but it comes with a price.”

“What’s new? Everything a man does for me comes with a price.”

I shake my head, saddened that she really believes that. “Not the price you’re talking about.”

“Then what?” She finally looks at me, and I get the full picture of what she’s become. She looks older than her age and skinnier than Vivi, which says something. Her cheeks are sunken, and her skin looks paper thin. She’s also got a fresh bruise on her cheek.

“You didn’t do the right thing fifteen years ago, but you’re gonna do it now. I’m giving Vivi an opportunity, and you’re not gonna fuck that up for her. You’ll take whatever job we give you, and you’ll do it with a fuckin’ smile. If you have an issue, you bring it to me and leave Vivi out of it.”

Finally, her eyes meet mine. “Why are you doing this?”

“Because she’s family.”

“You only knew her for two years.” She scoffs. I have no rebuttal, so I remain quiet until she says, “You and I aren’t all that different, you know.”

“What are you yappin’ about?”

“We both failed her.” She steps out of the car and walks to the back. I watch as she unloads a few more sacks of shit and follow as she moves to the driver’s side and gets in. “And now we’re both doing what we should’ve done a long time ago to make things right.”

“You’re going back?”

She nods. “Tell her I’ll be okay.”

“You don’t have to do this. I’ll take care of Ray.” *By putting him six feet under.* Obviously, I don’t tell her that.

“You just focus on making her happy. No one deserves it more than her.” She slams the door shut and starts the engine but rolls down the window before pulling away. “Promise me that if she ever tells you her truth, you’ll make it quick for me. I don’t deserve it, but I’d be dumb not to ask.”

What the fuck is she talking about? Unease fills my soul. I know Vivi’s not telling me things, but I thought I’d put enough of the pieces together to have a clear picture. Now I’m thinking I haven’t even begun to scratch the surface.

I nod and watch as she drives away.

Today hasn’t gone as planned, but I still have time to get it back on track, so I pick up the rest of Vivi’s bags and head inside to knock on her door.

“Come in,” she calls out, not realizing I can’t get in. Well, that’s not exactly true. I have a master card that’ll unlock any room in this place, but it’s only for emergencies, and I want her to believe she’s safe. I knock again and smile when I hear, “Shit. I forgot. Hold on.”

“Hey,” I say when the door opens. “You didn’t really get a tour like everyone else at the meet and greet. You want one now?”

“Sure.” She glances down her body. “Should I change?”

She has on a brown cropped fleece crewneck and matching shorts. It’s still early, so there probably aren’t many guests walking around, but at least three of my brothers are here running security, and I know they’ll find her casual fit sexy as fuck.

“Maybe something with a little more coverage?” I suggest.

“More coverage?” she asks slowly. “I’m wearing sweats, and this is a brothel. I’m more covered than probably every other girl in this place.”

I shrug. “But you’re my sister.”

“You’re saying that like I’m still eight years old.” She gives me a playful shove that makes me think we’ll be okay. “I meant, should I be dressed up or something?”

“No. You’re fine.”

“Good. Let me grab my keycard. You can leave those bags wherever.”

I set the heavy yard bags inside, still fucking pissed off that all her possessions fit into half a dozen bags. I’ve been around enough girls her age to know they like having shit, and a lot of it. I make a mental note to have one of the girls find out what she needs since I know she won’t tell me.

“Okay, let’s go.” She smiles like this is the happiest she’s ever been. Like she’s free. And fuck if it doesn’t look good on her.

“These are all residential rooms where the girls stay while they’re on tour.” We walk side by side, her absorbing every detail and me looking at her. It’s crazy that the little pigtailed girl I knew has grown into a woman. Obviously, I knew she would, but in my head, time stopped for her the day I left.

“Which one did you put my mom in?”

I stop short. “About that. . .”

Her face falls. “She went back, didn’t she?”

“Yeah. She said to tell you she’d be okay.”

She shakes her head and laughs humorlessly. “I tried. I really did.”

“Tried what?”

“To save her, but over and over again, she chooses him, and for what?” Her pale face reddens, and her jaw ticks.

“I’m sorry.”

She whirls around, walking back to her room. “I gotta go back.”

“What?”

“This was a bad idea. I should’ve stuck to the plan, earned the money we needed, and driven her far away.”

I catch up to her. “No.”

“No, what?” She fumbles with her keycard.

“You aren’t going back there.”

“You say that like you have any authority over what I do.”

I rip the card from her hand, hiding it behind my back. “I don’t know what happened while I was gone, but like it or not, I’m in your life, and you’re not going back there.”

“You don’t understand.” She makes a grab for the card, but she’s no match for me.

“You’re right, I don’t. Why don’t you explain it to me?”

She practically growls at me in anger. “I don’t have to tell you shit, Colin. Let me in the room so I can get my stuff.”

“And do what? Carry six heavy bags the ten miles back to Ray’s shitty house?”

Her eyes widen, realizing her mom took her car. “Someone here can drive me, or I’ll call a ride share.”

“Swear to Christ. If I have to lock you in that room, I’ll do it to save you

from yourself. It was her stupid-ass decision to go back; you're not going to make the same mistake." I widen my stance and cock my head.

"That's as good as giving her a death sentence. You know that, right?"

"Better her than you."

She sucks in a shuddering breath. "She's all I have."

"You're better alone than latched onto her." It's a painful truth, one she needs to hear. But when she angrily wipes away a tear that's fallen down her cheek, I can't help but feel bad saying it. Every time I'm around her, I make her cry. I get a feeling she doesn't do it often, and when she does, she doesn't do it in front of others. "Besides, you're not alone anymore. You have me, and I come with about twenty others who'll lay down their life for you."

She looks up at me with glassy eyes. "The last time I trusted you, you left in the middle of the night, so forgive me if I don't jump up and down with excitement."

"Listen, let me deal with Ray. I'll make sure your mom is safe, okay?"

"If anything happens to her—"

"It won't." I hold out her key. "I'll send one of the girls to give you a tour. I have some shit to do."

"Whatever." She snags it from my hand.

"Don't even think about trying to leave. I'll have one of the prospects watching."

She quirks a brow with more attitude than I expect. "So what? You're holding me prisoner?"

"Not a prisoner. More like a seventy-two-hour psych hold until you get your head on straight and realize staying here is for your own good."

Her response is a loud slam of the door. I grunt in frustration and dig my phone out of my pocket, hitting the contact for Golden. Of all my brothers, he understands how shitty moms can be since the cunt who birthed his little boy dropped him on the clubhouse's doorstep with nothing but a note.

"Yeah," he answers.

"Need some backup."

"Shit. You at Honey?"

"Just leaving. I'll text you the address."

"See you soon."

I hop on my bike and take off, not looking forward to the family reunion that's about to happen. I wish I could say I've kept tabs on Ray, but I haven't. Year after year, I told myself to check in and make sure everything was as it

should be, but I'm a fucking coward when it comes to him. The second I got free, I didn't look back.

I'm glad to see Ray's piece of shit truck parked in his driveway when I pull up. I figured it would be since I asked Satyr to do some digging when Vivi popped up. The bastard is still working for the same auto body shop. No clue how he holds a job down with his temper, but somehow, he has. He also hasn't taken out any major loans, and his bills are paid on time. From the outside, everything's on the up and up.

Seconds after I park, Golden pulls up behind me on his Fat Boy.

"What's the story?" he asks, pulling off his helmet and hanging it on a handlebar.

"Just need someone here in case shit goes sideways."

He just nods, and I'm thankful he doesn't ask for more. He knows how I grew up, so any questions he has will be answered momentarily. My gut twists as we walk up the cement path. Old memories of black eyes, broken arms, and bruised ribs resurface, along with resentment, rage, and fear. I swallow it down, reminding myself I'm not a kid anymore, and there's jack shit Ray can do to hurt me.

Now I'm the one doing the hurting.

I pound on the door and listen for any sign of distress. I hear nothing, so I pound again.

The door opens, and I'm met with the face of a man I hardly recognize. Every day of the last fifteen years is worn on his wrinkled and ugly face. Not for the first time, I'm glad I look like my momma.

"What?" he barks, not recognizing me in the least.

"Your boy's home. No welcome home party?" I ask, sarcasm lacing my tone.

His beady eyes narrow, and it takes him a minute, but I see the moment he realizes it's me. "Well, ain't this some shit. What the hell do you want?"

"You're not going to invite me in?"

He eyes Golden behind me. I understand why he thinks my brother is a bigger threat than me. He's taller and broader, but what he doesn't know is that he's the softest out of all of us. Having a kid'll do that to you. Plus, Ray's not considering the lifetime of pent-up fury I have boiling just under the surface.

"Say what you gotta say and get the fuck off my property."

"Laura here?" I ask, peering over his shoulder.

“She’s none of your business.”

I take a step closer. “That’s where you’re wrong. Vivi showed up a week or so ago, and I get the feeling things haven’t gone down the way we agreed.”

He huffs. “You gonna believe a word that slut says?”

My fist drives into his gut without a second thought, making him double over. “Mind rephrasing that?”

“She’s a liar,” he wheezes, righting himself.

“I don’t think she is.” I drive a finger into his shoulder. “You better start praying because if I find out you went back on our little arrangement, it won’t just be me hunting you down.”

“You think I’m afraid of your little club? A lot has changed, and I have some new friends who make your brotherhood look like the fuckin’ Boy Scouts.”

This surprises me, but I don’t let it show. Whatever he’s talking about is most likely just that. . . talk. But I make a mental note to have Satyr dig a little deeper.

“Yeah, we’ll see about that.”

“Where is that little whore, anyway? She come cryin’ to you?”

This time, my fist connects with his jaw, sending his head flying to the side. “You just don’t learn, old man.”

“Fuck you,” he spits out, bracing himself on the doorframe.

“Vivi’s no longer your concern, but I’ll tell you what is.” I lift my chin to the woman who stepped into view behind him. “I better not hear about you laying a finger on Laura.”

He laughs maniacally. “Get the hell outta here and do your research. I’m untouchable.”

I get in his face, ready to end him right here on his porch, but Golden tugs me back. “Not here, brother. We’ve got eyes.”

Glancing around, I see a few neighbors taking notice of the commotion. He’s right. If I’m going to take him out, I can’t do it in front of an audience.

“That’s what I thought,” Ray says, looking way too pleased. “It’s almost the fifteenth. My payment better not be late.”

Golden’s at my side as we walk away, his questioning eyes on me.

“Not here,” I mutter.

My brothers might know how I grew up, but I haven’t told them about the deal I made with the devil in the form of monthly payments for Vivi’s safety. In the fifteen years I’ve been gone, I’ve paid that man over fifty grand, and

from the sound of it, I deserve a refund.



## CHAPTER TEN

## NAVY

I pace the length of the room, making myself dizzy because the room is nice but not all that big. I'm floundering, not sure what to do. I could unpack, but if I find out Mom's in trouble, there's no way I'm staying here, even if I have to fight a pack of bikers to leave.

She hasn't responded to my texts, which makes me nervous. I still can't believe she left after everything I did to get us out. The irrational, petty side of me wants to write her off and tell her she deserves whatever happens, but no. I can't judge how she's dealing with her trauma.

My phone vibrates in my palm, and I hold it up, seeing Mom's name. Finally.

"Mom? Are you okay?"

Her soft voice filters through the receiver. "I'm fine."

"Why, Mom? Why did you leave?"

She sighs heavily. "You've spent too much time protecting me, giving away parts of yourself you'll never get back, and I let it happen. Now it's time for me to protect you."

Tears fill my eyes, and it only makes me angrier. I'm so sick of crying and feeling like I can never win. Like this world is out to get me. I want to just exist for once. It shouldn't be too much to ask.

"How? How are you going to do that?"

She pauses before taking a deep breath. "All I know is that if we both left, Ray would rain hellfire on us. At least if I'm here. . ."

She doesn't finish, and I don't make her. "Promise me you'll call if things get too bad. The Sons can protect you."

"Oh, I know," she says knowingly.

“Has he already been there?”

“Just left. They argued something fierce. After Colin left, Ray stormed out of the house.”

I stop my pacing. “What did they argue about?”

“I don’t know. He said something about being untouchable because he knows people now.”

“Do you think he’s talking about those guys who have been coming by?”

“Can’t say for sure, but I think so.”

A knock sounds at my door, startling me. “Mom, I have to go. I’ll text you later to check in.”

“Don’t worry about me. Whatever happens, I deserve it.”

I close my eyes, biting down on the inside of my mouth until the metallic taste of blood hits my tongue. “Don’t say that. We’ve been in impossible situations since the day we were born.”

“Love you.”

“Love you too.”

I set my phone down and open the door to find a curvaceous woman in a short silk robe. She’s stunning, with short and curly blue-black hair, tattoos covering nearly every inch of skin, lips stained a shiny red, and crystal blue eyes.

“Hi,” I say, combing my fingers through my hair self-consciously.

She smiles. “Hey, honey. Rigger told me you needed a tour.”

“Only if you have time.”

“I’m morning shift, so I’ve got nothing better to do. Plus, that man could get me to do anything. Have you seen those eyes?” She fans herself.

My stomach hardens, and I fold my arms across my chest as an unfamiliar feeling takes root. Protectiveness, maybe? All I know is I don’t like the idea of these girls fawning over Colin.

Noticing my reaction, she smiles big and rests a hand on my forearm. “Oh, I’d never act on it. I shouldn’t have said anything since you’re Mary’s number two now, but you can’t blame me for looking, right?”

She’s so sincere and kind that my walls come down, and I respond with a hesitant smile. “No, I can’t.”

For some reason, I don’t tell her Colin is my stepbrother. It would easily explain my reaction, but I keep it to myself. As we walk down the long hallway, I realize I don’t even know this woman’s name.

“I’m Navy,” I say. Since I’m stepping into a new life, I don’t want

anything from my past touching it, including my nickname.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Brynlee, but around here, I go by Betty.”

I cock my head to the side. “Betty?”

“Most of us choose nicknames to preserve our anonymity. Mary thinks I look like a pin-up doll, so she started calling me Betty, and it stuck. Anyway, the guests seem to like the name.” She shrugs.

We get to the end of the hall where the lounge, bar, and stage are. It’s different this time because only two men are sitting on one of the sofas, with Mary standing by, directing the girls one at a time as they walk through the lounge.

“Let’s wait here for a minute,” Brynlee says in a hushed voice. “After line-up, they’ll go to the med room, and we can pass.”

It’s one thing to hear about the process and another to witness it. The women are dressed in practically nothing, but the scraps of fabric they *are* wearing accentuate their assets in the sexiest way. As they parade in front of the men, they flirt and tease, trying their hardest to catch their eyes. They’re absolutely beautiful, and even I’m turned on by the time the last girl passes.

The men make their picks, and the women who weren’t chosen walk our way, stopping when they see us hiding in the corner.

“Who you got there, Betty?” a stunning Black woman wearing intricate lingerie asks.

“This is Navy.”

“The other Mary?”

“Yep.”

She turns to me. “I’m Alexis.”

“Nice to meet you,” I say, holding my hand out. She ignores it and pulls me into a hug, her large breasts pressing against my much smaller pair.

“I’m a hugger.” Her breath tickles along my neck, adding to the pulsing between my legs from watching the line-up.

“Okay,” I squeak, returning her embrace.

“You’re cute,” a redhead says, then adds, “I’m Ariel.”

“Because of the red hair?” I ask.

“You got it.” She hugs me too.

After a round of introductions, my lady boner is gone, and I feel like I’ve made fifteen new friends. I wasn’t expecting them to be so friendly and welcoming. The way things are set up, the women are pitted against each other, competing for parties. I assumed that meant there would be friction,

but it doesn't feel like that at all.

"I'm going to finish her tour and then head to bed," Betty says. "I had three parties today."

My eyes widen. "Three separate parties?"

"Yeah, it was a good morning." She hooks her arm with mine. "Let's go."

The first room she takes me to is painted like a galaxy, with neon colors glowing under a black light. The frame around the bed looks like a crater, and paintings on the wall depict an alien with large tentacles penetrating blissed-out women. I walk over to a display case on the far wall and gawk at the brightly colored silicone appendages lining the shelves. They sit next to a mini fridge with an egg crate, shiny, yellow-tinged eggs nestled inside.

"What is this?" I ask.

"The top row is cock sleeves with little suckers going down the shaft to mimic an alien dick. The second is just dildos made to look like alien parts, and the third is hollow dildos that can deposit jelly eggs or Ben Wa balls inside your hoo-haw or your butt." She's so matter-of-fact that it barely strikes me as odd.

"Huh." I briefly imagine what it would feel like to have one of the eggs inserted inside me. Consider me intrigued.

"We're so close to Area 51, you'd be surprised how many requests we get for this room."

"Have you. . ."

"Once." She grins. "Surprising amount of fun."

I smile, my cheeks heating. Every experience I've had with sex has been tainted by force and violence. It turned me off of sex completely, but the second I thought about working here and what that would be like, it made me reevaluate. The women are the ones who decide who, when, where, and how without any question or judgment. If I ever want to take my power back, it'd have to be the same way.

I've never had a chance to explore or learn about my body—to feel good when it comes to sex—and I want that. I'm twenty-one years old, and I should be having orgasms by now. Instead, I feel dirty and used. Maybe now that I'm free from Ray, I can take back what was stolen.

The only thing standing in my way is Colin.

Betty takes me through the rest of the unoccupied rooms, promising to show me the rest when they're available. We tour the gym with shiny new exercise equipment that I can't wait to test. I've never been to a gym and

don't have any athletic ability to speak of, but I've also never tried. I'd like to feel strong for once.

"You can order food twenty-four seven, and it's all made fresh," Betty says, walking me into a large kitchen with a long stainless-steel counter and gleaming appliances.

"Everything is so new and nice."

"Yeah, Rigger wanted us to be an exclusive establishment, so he made sure no corners were cut. Having a former chef from a Michelin Star restaurant means we get filthy rich people through the doors to dine, but nine times out of ten, the curiosity gets to them, and they come next door." She winks.

"I can't believe he's responsible for all this."

Her brow quirks. "Why?"

I'm not ready to give up my secret, so I lie. "It's just that I've heard so many bad things about the club."

"I'm sure everything you've heard is true, but from what I've seen, they're good guys who sometimes do bad things."

I shrug. "Yeah, I guess so."

We round out the tour by stopping in the beauty room, the massage room, and housekeeping, ending at the pool. Everything is so nice; it reminds me of day spas I've seen in movies. Except for the alien room—that one is in a world of its own.

"Do you want me to show you back to your room, or can you find your way?" Betty asks.

"I'm good."

She smiles and brings me in for a hug. "I'm glad you're here. It'll be good to have you looking out for us."

Her kind words nearly bring me to tears. When was the last time anyone wanted me around? When I was eight? Before Colin left? He never said it out loud, but a day never went by where he didn't make me feel wanted.

"I'm glad I'm here too. Thanks for showing me around."

"See you around," she says through a yawn as she disappears inside.

Her yawn is contagious, and it hits me how tired I am. It's been a long day, but I want to see Colin before going to bed, so instead of finding my room, I slip off my shoes and sit on the edge of the pool, dipping my feet into the cool water.

It's dark out, and though I can hear the steady thumping of music from

inside, it's otherwise quiet. Peaceful. I breathe in the warm desert air mixed with chlorine, and for the first time since I can remember, I feel relaxed. My worry for Mom still sits heavy in the corner of my mind, but I remind myself that I tried. I did everything a good daughter should.

"Navy?" a woman calls out, and I look over my shoulder to see Mary dressed in a black pantsuit with a hot pink corset.

I pull my feet up and stand. "Hi, Mary."

Her smile is tight. "I hear you're going to be my second."

"If it's okay with you. I know that's not what I was hired for."

"It's fine by me. Besides, I won't live forever, and I'd feel better if I had a legacy."

"I'm honored," I say, but a twinge of guilt burdens me. I can't be her legacy since I'm leaving the second I have enough money banked. Starting over is my goal, and there's no way I can do that in Reno, not with Ray living in the same city.

"Do you have a minute? We can go over a few procedural things you need to know."

"Sure." I slip my feet back into my flip-flops.

"Follow me. I had Satyr set up a desk for you in my office." As she guides me through the halls, she continues to rattle off things I'll need to know when I'm shadowing her. Even with my long legs, I have a hard time keeping up with the fast-paced woman. I wish I had a notepad because so much more goes into a brothel than selling sex.

We round the corner to her office, only to find Colin sitting across from one of the two desks in the room.

He stands. "There you are."

"Me or her?" Mary asks.

"As much as I love seeing your smiling face," he says, making Mary scowl harder. "I was looking for this one." He lifts his chin in my direction.

"You need her? Because we were just going over a few things."

"I think Vivi has had a busy enough day, don't you? You guys can pick back up tomorrow."

Mary huffs. "Why not? It's not like I asked for this in the first place."

I pin Colin with a look. He made it sound like this was an open position they were looking to fill, not one he forced on her.

I open my mouth to speak, but Colin interrupts, probably seeing my expression and knowing what I'll say. "You can't work around the clock,

Mary. We talked about this.”

She mutters something I don't hear as Colin places a hand on the small of my back and guides me out of the room. He doesn't drop his hand as we walk down the hall, and since my shirt is cropped, he's touching skin, not fabric. I remember all the times he held my hand when we walked to the gas station or when he walked me to school, but this doesn't feel like that. It doesn't feel like him. I shouldn't be surprised since he's a whole new person now, but I grieve a little for the big brother of my memories.

His thumb strokes up and down my spine as he leads me toward my room, and it doesn't feel like brotherly love at all. He burns me with his touch in a way I've never experienced before, confusing me. I shouldn't like the way it feels, not in the way I do. Regardless of who we are now, he's still my stepbrother.

“Did you get a tour?” he asks when we reach my door, his hand slowly dropping to his side.

I open my door, surprised when he follows me in. “I did. Betty is really nice. All the girls are really nice, actually.”

“They're a good group.” He looks around at the bags still waiting to be unpacked. “Grab some hangers.”

I look at him confused. “You don't need to help me.”

“I need to talk to you, and I'd feel better if I was doing something while we chat.”

There it is. A small glimpse of who he used to be. I remember he could never sit still, not ever. He was always moving, even if it was just his foot tapping while he sat.

“Okay.” I pull a stack of hangers down and toss them on the bed.

We work together in silence for a long time, him pulling clothes out and putting them on a hanger, me organizing them in the closet. I don't push him to talk because I can practically see the wheels in his head turning, and I know he'll speak once he works whatever it is out.

“I haven't earned the right to know what's happened since I left, and you've made it clear you're not ready to tell me.”

My gut twists painfully. “Okay.”

“I went to see Ray, and he said something about him being connected now. You don't have to tell me personal shit, but I need to know what he's talking about.”

I sit on the edge of the bed, the heavy weight of anxiety pushing me



down. “I don’t know what he’s gotten himself into.”

“You lived with the guy. You really have no idea?”

“A few months ago, some guys started coming around, usually on the weekends.” I twist the metal top of the velvet hanger around and around. “Ray would leave with them for a few hours, then come home. One night I got curious and snuck out of my room and saw him splattered with blood. Before he went to bed, he took the clothes outside and burned them. I looked in his car and found a gun in his glove box.”

“Has he been gambling still?”

I nod. “I’m assuming that’s where his money goes. I’ve been paying most of the bills since I turned eighteen, but he’s always broke and asking for more.”

The mood in the room turns hostile as Colin’s hands clench into fists, the veins in his neck popping.

“You’ve been paying the bills?” he asks through gritted teeth.

“Yeah. It was cheaper than finding our own place, and I couldn’t afford one anyway.”

“Fuck!” He shoves the bag of clothes away and runs a hand over his head.

His violent outburst sends a bolt of fear through me, and I scoot back to the headboard, drawing my knees to my chest. The Colin I knew would never lash out like this. Though I could see the rage behind his eyes, he had enough to control to keep it reined in, at least around me.

This is yet another reminder that I don’t know who this man is.

And right now, I don’t want to.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## RIGGER

I've been paying Ray's bills.  
Me.

That was the deal I made with him the day I turned eighteen. He wouldn't so much as look Vivi's way as long as I paid him what he thought he was owed. For most of those early months, before I prospected for the club and was hired on as a mechanic at Cy's shop, I lived off of ramen because I couldn't afford anything else after handing over nearly all my paycheck.

It was worth it knowing Vivi was safe.

Except she wasn't safe, and he conned her into paying him too. I regret not blowing his fucking brains out on his front porch earlier, witnesses be damned. Actually, that'd be too kind for what he deserves. My knuckles itch with the desire to pummel his ugly fucking face in.

Movement pulls me from my rage as Vivi pushes away from me on the bed, a look of fear in her eyes that I put there. Jesus Christ. I need to calm down. She comes across as strong and brave—which she is—but also traumatized beyond what I know. I've seen it multiple times now.

"I'm sorry," I say softly, using every ounce of will I possess to calm my tone and relax my body. "I'm not mad at you."

Those big hazel eyes peer up at me. "This was a mistake."

"Don't say that. You're safe here. I'm just pissed my piece of shit father took advantage of you."

She sits up, crossing her legs, looking almost incensed. "No, he didn't. What are you even talking about?"

Her reaction gives me pause, and again, I feel like I'm missing

something. Even without telling me, I know Ray didn't leave her alone like he was supposed to. Why is she trying to protect him? I told myself I'd wait until she was ready—give her time to learn to trust me—but I'm losing patience. Ray's already dead in my book; I just need to find out each reason he deserves to be there before I strike.

"I was paying his bills, or at least I thought I was. After hearing this, I think I was paying for his gambling addiction."

She looks at me, shocked. "Why were you paying him?"

I sit on the edge of the bed. If I want her to open up, I need to do the same. Time to tell the truth. "I never wanted to leave you, Vivi. If I had it my way, I wouldn't have. I would've stayed until you turned eighteen to make sure he couldn't come near you—even if it meant getting the shit kicked out of me every day. The night I left, shit went south." I run a hand down my face. "For years, I held it all in. I took whatever he gave me because I knew if I fought back, he'd kick me out. I don't know what was different about that night."

"You fought back?"

"Yeah, and it must've scared him because I was finally bigger and stronger than him. There was a shift in power we both felt, and it terrified him. I saw it in his eyes. When he told me to leave or he'd call the cops, I panicked. I even offered to take you with me since he always complained about the drain you and Laura were. He wouldn't let me, so I did the only thing I could and offered to pay him off if he left you the hell alone."

Even though this information means Ray was fucking us both over, she looks almost relieved. "Oh."

"Oh?"

She shrugs. "I mean, are you all that surprised?"

"No. I guess I'm not." I look down at my scarred hands, wondering how to get her to spill everything that happened to her. "Look, I understand if you don't want to rehash the past, but before I handle Ray, I need to know. What have the last fifteen years been like for you?"

She says nothing as she climbs off the bed and walks to the bathroom, closing the door behind her. I guess that's my answer. She doesn't trust me, and can I blame her? All these years, I didn't so much as look her up on social media. I guess, deep down, I knew Ray would go back on his word, and I also knew if I knew that truth, I'd kill him. It felt like an unnecessary risk that could get the club in trouble.

I buried my head in the sand. I relished my freedom and the happiness of being away from that house. I took the coward's way out. I'll never forgive myself, and apparently, Vivi won't either.

Standing, I walk toward the door, thinking it's best to give her more time. She deserves more than that, but it's all I've got for now. I pause when the bathroom door opens, and Vivi comes out, posture stooped and face rosy from washing. There's also bruising along her cheek and jaw, deep purple and black that she had been hiding under makeup.

I see fucking red.

"He did that to you?"

"And more. After you left, Mom became his punching bag. At one point, I knew he was going to kill her if something didn't give. I was young; I could take more than she could. So, I started stepping in between them, and his anger flipped to me," she says, her chin wobbling.

I carefully inch my way forward as though approaching a wounded animal. With a finger gently pressed under her chin, I rotate her wounded face side-to-side. It fucking destroys me to witness her pain, knowing what it feels like to be on the receiving end of Ray's fist, but I force myself to look. I deserve it.

Once I've memorized the shape, size, and color of each bruise, I tilt her head up, meeting her pained eyes. "I'm so fuckin' sorry. I let this happen to you, and I wouldn't blame you if you hate me. Just know, Ray is a dead man walking. I swear to Christ, he won't live to see another day."

"No."

My eyes go wide with a confused expression. "What do you mean, 'no'?" She can't really want him alive, not after years of abuse.

"You'll get caught, and I can't be responsible for you going to jail. Besides, killing people is wrong."

I chuckle humorously, dropping her chin and taking her hands in mine. They're warm and feel good wrapped in my own. "That's just some bullshit societal morality you've been taught. It's not real."

"It has nothing to do with that. I'm a firm believer that you get what you put out in this world. Killing will take a part of your humanity you can't get back."

I smirk. "Hate to break it to you, but there's not much humanity left in this body."

She looks deep into my eyes, so deep that it makes me uncomfortable.

What does she think she'll find? Compassion? Goodness? It's not there. I learned early on that kindness is weakness, and in my world, that'll only get you killed.

"Yes, there is. I see it. Maybe you've stuffed it down, but it's still there."

I fight the urge to roll my eyes. "Only for my club."

"And me," she says.

"How can you say that? I left you with *him*."

She shakes her head. "You thought I was being taken care of. You thought you were protecting me."

I sigh. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

"That's not what this is."

"Why are you trying to comfort me? I'm not the one with a battered face."

She squeezes my hands. "Because I need you to understand that what's been happening to me isn't your fault, and it's not your battle to fight. You're doing everything you can now. You gave me a good-paying job, and after a month or two, I'll have enough to convince Mom we don't need him. We'll move to Henderson, and Ray will be left alone to suffer the consequences of his own karma."

She's right, but not in the way she thinks. Ray's karma is coming for him, but it's coming by way of my ropes. Maybe then she won't have to leave. She can stay here and. . . and what? Be a family? No, I already have a family in my club. I don't know what I want from her. I just know I don't want her to leave.

And I *really* fucking want Ray to pay. My hands itch to feel the burn of my ropes scratching my palms as I wrap them around his fucking throat.

My ringing cell pulls me from my fantasy. I take it out of my back pocket and glance at the screen. Cy wants me at the clubhouse.

"Gotta run." I open my arms, and without question, she falls into me.

I hug her close, thankful that all the animosity between us feels like it's been squashed. If I'm smart about it, she'll never have to know I'm responsible for Ray's death. It sounds like he's gotten himself involved with enough dirty dealings that there'll always be probable deniability on my end.

"You okay staying here alone?"

"Yeah. I'm good."

I give a curt nod. "There's a panic button on the underside of the window ledge. You press it, and someone will be here within thirty seconds."

She pulls away, glancing at the window. “Good to know.”

“I’ll come by tomorrow morning to help get you going with Mary.”

“You don’t need to do that. I think Mary would respect me more if you weren’t constantly stepping in.”

I nod, impressed at how seriously she’s taking this job. “Okay, but I’m still stopping in to check on things at some point.”

“I’d like that.” She plops down on her bed, looking exhausted.

“Get some rest.” I don’t know why I do, but I bend to kiss the top of her head. It would’ve been normal fifteen years ago, but now, I don’t know. The sentiment is different.

Before I think too long about it, I walk out of the room, making sure the door is secure before stepping out into the night.



“Cy’s waiting for you in the chapel,” Lucky says the second I enter the clubhouse.

The mood in here is off. The brothers sitting at the bar aren’t making eye contact with me, and even Lucky avoids my gaze. What the fuck is going on?

“Okay.” Feeling uneasy, I open the door to find Cy sitting in his normal place at the head of the table. But he’s not alone. Sitting on either side of him are two men I don’t recognize. One is a thin, older gentleman with graying temples and deep lines engraved on his face from age. The other is younger and bulkier, but there’s no denying his relation to the older man. They share a Roman nose, prominent cheekbones, and dark eyes.

“Rig, thanks for coming in.” Cy motions to the chair at the opposite end of the table. “Close the door behind you and have a seat.”

I try to read the room, but it’s impossible. While the two men have a threatening air about them, I don’t feel danger to myself or Cy. All three men are relaxed in their chairs, each enjoying one of Cy’s fat cigars he imports from Cuba. The smoke makes my nose itch and my eyes water. I must’ve forgotten to take my allergy pills this morning.

“What’s going on?” I do as Cy says, closing the door and sitting down, a little irritated that the younger man is in my spot to Cy’s right. There’s a lot of symbolism in club life, including where we sit in this room or our placement when we ride out. I’m always to Cy’s right or directly behind him.

Fucking always.

“This is Leo Costa and his father, Robert. They own three of the casinos downtown.”

I’ve heard of the Costa family. Everyone in Reno has, but the public sees them as philanthropists, using the fortune they’ve amassed to do a lot of good around Reno. When you deal in the dark, you get the real scoop on people. I know who these men actually are: loan sharks, thieves, and killers.

I scratch my temple. “Yeah, I’ve heard the name once or twice.”

Leo remains flat-lipped, but Robert chuckles, reaching over the table to ash his cigar into the glass ashtray.

“So our reputation proceeds us,” he says.

“As does ours, I’m sure,” I return.

Cy pins me with a look. “Calm down, son. This is a meeting between friends.”

“I could relax if you’d tell me why I’m here.”

“We have a mutual acquaintance,” Leo says. “Ray Brown?”

*Fuuuuuuck.* Everything clicks into place. The man Ray disappears with? Most likely part of the Costa family. This complicates things.

“Why would you have anything to do with that piece of shit?” I ask.

“I won’t argue with you about his character. Ray has been more hinder than help. Through the years, his luck at the tables has kept him out of trouble, but he’s had a losing streak recently, and his luck seems to have run out. He has a number of markers come due and no way to pay. Naturally, we cut him off, but he still owes,” Robert says.

“How much?”

“Around a mil.” Robert gestures with his cigar. “We thought about handling him how we usually handle transgressions against us, but that wouldn’t put that money back in our accounts. So now he’s doing some of the dirtier work that would tarnish our family name if it got out. You get what I’m saying.”

Yeah, I do. Ray kills people who get in the Costa’s way. That way, if law enforcement catches on, they’ll have a scapegoat. Ray.

“What does that have to do with me?”

“Ray said you’ve made some threats against him.”

“You’re not the only one he fucked over. Why should you get payback and not me?” I ask because there’s no hierarchy among criminals here, and the Sons don’t bow down to anyone.



“Because Ray isn’t the only one in debt to us.” Robert glances over at Cy, whose jaw is ticking.

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“He doesn’t know?” Leo, who has been stoic this whole time, perks up.

“Look, Rig,” Cy starts. “The point is, until Ray has paid his debt, you’re not to touch him. That’s an order.”

“Yeah, *Rig*. Stand down.” Leo smirks.

I jump to my feet, eating the distance between us. Leo casually stands, tucking his hand in his suit jacket where I’m sure there’s a gun. Well, guess what motherfucker? I have one too. Pulling my Glock from where I keep it tucked in the back of my pants, I hold it at my side, ready to blow this condescending prick’s brains out.

“Rigger,” Cy barks, putting himself between us. “That enough.”

Leo crowds Cy’s back while I press myself against his front. We glare daggers at each other, neither willing to back down.

“I can see we’ve struck a nerve,” Robert says, rising to his feet and buttoning his black suit coat. “Cy, I trust you can keep your boys under control?”

Cy shoves me in the chest before drilling his fat finger into my shoulder. “Back off, son. We’ll talk about this later.”

His eyes plead with me, and because I owe this man my life, I tuck my gun back where it belongs and storm out of the room, not looking back. If I see that asshole’s smug face one more time, there’ll be no stopping me.

“Give me a shot of tequila and a beer,” I snarl at the prospect behind the bar. Once I’ve shot back the liquor and taken a swig of beer, Lucky and Satyr sidle up at my sides, itching for the gossip.

“Who are they?” Lucky asks.

“Robert and Leo Costa,” I mutter around the rim of my beer.

“No shit.” Satyr glances over his shoulder, where Cy is walking the two men out.

Lucky bites off a piece of licorice. “What did they want?”

“Rigger!” The place is nearly empty since it’s late, and there’s no party going on, so his booming voice echoes through the room.

“Uh oh. Riggy’s getting called to the principal’s office,” Satyr singsongs.

“Shut the fuck up.” I slide off the stool, taking my beer with me, and follow Cy back into Church.

“Before you say anything—”

“Before *you* say anything,” Cy interrupts, plopping down in his chair and rubbing his temples. “If anyone understands your beef with that man, it’s me. Don’t forget you worked for me while you lived under his roof. But I still can’t have you fuck with them.”

“Since when do you let people tell you what to do? What the hell kind of club are we if we just allow this shit to fly?”

“Shut your fucking mouth before I shut it for you.” He slams his palm on the table. “I’m the president of this club, not you.”

I close my eyes and take a breath. When I’ve calmed my shit, I open them and try again. “What do they have on us?”

“You had a fuckin’ grandiose vision with this brothel, and I saw it. If we wanted to earn big and do it legit, we needed to think big.”

“Yeah, I know, and we’re already breaking my projections. What does that have to do with the Costas?”

“How do you think we funded that big, beautiful building full of all the luxury someone could want?” he asks.

I internally groan. “I never thought about it. I know we had money from selling the dusted weed, and we have other businesses that earn.”

“Even if we used everything the club owns as collateral, we couldn’t get that kind of money. What bank wants to loan an MC money to open a brothel?” Cy’s lips disappear beneath his gray mustache and beard.

I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. Honestly, I never thought about it. Each time I went over budget or asked for more money, Cy gave it to me.

“I guess I thought the club had reserves.”

Cy looks at me like I’m stupid. “We’re talking millions of dollars. You thought the club was sitting on that kind of coin?”

I rest my elbows on the table and cradle my head in my hands. “I’m an idiot.”

“No, you’re creative and a visionary.” He squeezes my shoulder twice. “I bet on you, and to do that, the club took out a loan with the Costas. Looks like I was right because we’ll double our payment on our first month. If that keeps up, we’ll be in the clear in half the time I thought. But that means—”

“Ray lives.”

He nods. “For now.”

## CHAPTER TWELVE

## NAVY

A knock sounds on the door to the office, pulling my attention away from the paperwork I've been consumed with. Mary might not have wanted me to work here, but she had no problem dumping every tedious part of her job on me.

Glancing up, I see Rigger walk in, looking every bit the badass biker he is. His worn jeans hang low on his hips, a plain white tee conforming to every muscle, his scuffed-up leather boots for function over form, and of course, his cut is decorated in all sorts of patches, frayed around the edges from years of wear and tear. All that would be enough for anyone to stay away, but add the chunky silver rings on his fingers, the hefty belt buckle peeking from under his cut, and the heavy metal chain connecting his front belt loop to his wallet, and the bad boy image is complete.

"You free for lunch?" He grins.

"Sure." I stack the paperwork. "My eyes could use a break from this anyway."

We walk to the restaurant, where we'll undoubtedly have one of the best meals I've ever eaten. That isn't saying much, though, since my idea of a good meal is day-old mac and cheese straight from the fridge.

"How's your day been?" he asks.

"Long but quiet."

Mary has me working from five in the morning until two in the afternoon when she comes in. Usually when I tag Mary out, our guests are clearing out and things remain relatively peaceful until she returns, which I'm sure is intentional. She leaves me a laundry list of things to do and always seems surprised when she returns to find everything finished.

The work is tedious, but I enjoy it. I feel productive, like I'm actually contributing to something. Working at the diner was hard on my body but easy on my mind. I was bored and felt replaceable. While I wouldn't say I'm invaluable to the brothel, I use my brain, and people rely on me. I'm proud of myself.

"In this line of work, quiet is a good thing."

He's right about that. Nothing crazy has happened while I've been on duty, but I've heard enough stories to know that's not always the case.

"Very true."

The waitress seats us at the booth in the corner that's become our table. We've shared at least one meal a day every day this week, all at Rigger's request. Colin sticks to his usual prime rib burger with steak fries, but I'm on a mission to try each item on the menu, and today, it's the steak tartare.

Colin gapes at me after the waitress leaves to put in our order. "Do you know what steak tartare is?"

My cheeks heat. "No."

"It's raw ground beef."

Too stubborn to admit that it doesn't sound appetizing to me at all, I just smile. "Yum."

"You're something else." He shakes his head.

"I'll never get the chance to eat all this fancy food again."

All humor disappears as he leans into me. "You can have it for the rest of your life if you want. This job isn't temporary."

This is a common fight we have. He desperately tries to create a future for me at the brothel, and I remind him I'm out the door as soon as possible.

"I really don't want to argue about this again. Can't we just enjoy our meal?"

"Fine," he says, though he's not happy about it.

We're interrupted when Lucky approaches our table.

"Scooch over, fucker." He shoves Colin, who slides into the corner of the booth. His knees touch mine, and I get a jolt of something I don't recognize. It happens each time we come into contact. I try to convince myself it's forbidden and wrong, but if I'm honest, I like it.

"Shit, man. This is a private lunch," Colin says.

"Ignore him. He's cranky today." I throw him a side-eye.

"He's always a little bitch when it comes to you." Lucky grins.

"Watch it, fucker, or I'll make you help the maids clean rooms today."

Lucky's eyes widen with excitement. "Speaking of rooms, Betty is in the Nature Room right now with this huge ass motherfucker who's wearing a legit animal skin jumpsuit thing. You know, like the Flintstones?"

"The brothel isn't your personal porn," Colin reminds him.

"Dude, there's a window for a reason. Those guests want to be watched. Matter of fact, he paid extra for an audience, so a few of the girls are getting tossed some cash to stand there and touch each other while they watch." He tosses his arms along the back of the bench. "This place is fuckin' amazing."

"They really want that?" I shouldn't be surprised by anything I hear around here, but somehow, I always am.

"Yeah, you wanna go check it out? I'll go with—"

"No," Colin says as I say, "Yes."

Lucky smiles conspiratorially at me. "What'll it be, sugar?"

I plant my hands on the table. "Let's go."

"Vivi," Colin says in a tone that brooks no argument. I'm on a mission to relearn what sex means to me, though I usually wait until Colin isn't around to explore the rooms and talk to the women who work here. Retraining my brain is hard work, but there's no better place to do it than here.

"Tell the waitress to box up my lunch, please." I push out of the booth.

Lucky and I dash out of the restaurant, giggling like schoolgirls, Colin shouting after us. This place is an adult playground, and it brings playfulness out of everyone who walks through its doors. Where else are you encouraged to play out your wildest fantasies with no judgment?

We quiet down as we get closer, not wanting to spoil the mood for those deep in the scene. I spot four women in slinky lingerie standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Nature Room and slow my pace as I'm hit with a sensual awareness. The four have paired off, their fronts pressed together as they slowly graze fingertips up and down each other's bodies, their attention fixed on the couple on the other side of the window.

Lucky grabs me by the waist and turns me to face them. He keeps his hands on my hips, standing behind me as we take in the scene. The room is made to feel like a real forest. In the center are big rocks stacked together around a low and steady gas campfire. In the left corner is a hot tub that looks like a real pond, sunken into the floor with realistic-looking rocks and foliage. Trees are scattered throughout with low-hanging branches, and a swing hangs from one. The bed is elevated and appears to be built with tree stumps. You have to use a ladder to get up, giving it a bit of a treehouse vibe.

I can't tell what's real and what's fake; that's how good of a job the builders and decorators did. It's truly beautiful. But I've seen all that before, so my eyes are drawn to the two people in the room. Betty sits on the edge of the tub, looking around the room and pretending not to see the man hiding behind one of the trees. Feeling confident she's alone, she unties the top of her zebra print bikini and tosses it to the side, letting her large, natural breasts hang free. She slides her fingertips over them, stopping at her erect nipples and giving them a tug.

My clit throbs, and my mouth goes dry as I watch the erotic scene unfold.

Betty's left hand stays on her breast while her right goes lower, tickling down her abdomen before reaching her center. She pulls each string of her bikini bottoms, exposing her bare pussy. I glance at the man whose chest is heaving, the animal skin covering his dick tenting. Lucky was right about the man being mammoth. He fits the part of this Tarzan experience well, with his huge muscles, long hair, and bushy beard.

While Betty masturbates, he creeps closer, moving like a predator hunting his prey. She's just pushed a finger inside her core when the man pounces, growling as he climbs on top of a rock surrounding the tub. Betty shrieks in fear, jumping to her feet and covering her breasts with an arm and her center with the opposite hand.

He fists her hair at the nape of her neck and shoves her hands away, exposing her. Palming a breast, he yanks her head back to put her at a good angle for a kiss. She shoves at him, but I know it's all for show. The whole scene is, but it still turns me right the fuck on.

I jolt when Lucky's hands are ripped from my hips, and I no longer feel him at my back. Turning, Colin puts himself between Lucky and me, trying his best not to draw attention from what's happening around us. That's a huge no-no around here because our guests pay a lot of money to do what they do.

"What are you doing?" I mouth, lifting my brows in question.

His answer is a chin lift toward the Nature Room, silently telling me to go back to what I was doing. I shake my head and turn back, feeling awkward now that he's here. I doubt watching live porn is something siblings often do together, even if they're only bound by marriage.

Though he doesn't touch me, I feel his body heat across my back as I try to get back into the scene. Betty has made a run for it, darting around the room while the man slowly stalks her. He grips the scrap of fabric at his

shoulder and gives it a sharp tug. It splits at the seam, and he shoves it down his body, his cock springing free. I nearly gasp at the size. The man is big *everywhere*.

He finally corners her and pushes her to her knees. My breaths come in heavy pants as Betty pulls a condom out of nowhere. She makes a show of pushing it down his length before wrapping her lips around him and giving him a hell of a blowjob.

The behemoth of a man only lets her control the situation for a minute before taking over. His face hardens as he pumps into her mouth, thrusting his hips rapidly. Saliva drips around Betty's mouth and her eyes water, making her makeup run. But it only turns him on more.

I trace my lips with my tongue as he roars, so close to losing it that he grips Betty by the jaw and pulls her off his dick. I guess he's not ready for this to be over. Lifting her to her feet, he leans over to grab her, tossing her over his shoulder like she weighs nothing. He climbs the ladder to the bed and drops her onto it before ripping the condom off and tossing it to the side. Kissing down her body, he stops to give extra attention to her breasts.

My body heats to an unnatural level as I squeeze my thighs together for the smallest amount of relief. When I realize what I'm doing and that my stepbrother is standing inches away, I abruptly stop. I wish I could say it washes any arousal from my system, but instead, it has my nipples tightening and my clit pulsing with need.

I can't be attracted to Colin. It's wrong, and there's no way he feels the same. Over the last week, we've spent a lot of time together, and he has never made me feel like anything but his sister. He'd be disgusted if he knew that in my head, it's him and me in this scene. That it's *my* body he's ravaging like a starved animal.

A therapist would have a field day with me.

I shake those thoughts away and try to see this for what it is. This is a sexual situation, and Colin is the only person I've ever trusted. Of course my fucked up mind would attach this experience to him.

As Tarzan makes his way lower on Betty's body, she pulls another packet out of thin air and unwraps a thin sheet of latex. Spreading it over her labia, the man dives in, licking and sucking as Betty squirms in delight.

After asking a few of the Honey Pot employees if they actually enjoy the sex or if it's all an act, I was surprised to learn that, to some extent, they love it. No matter who the man is, they find some pleasure in the moment. I



wouldn't know what that feels like, but I'd like to.

Betty's thighs shake, and her back arches as she screams her release. Her budding nipples point to the ceiling, and her hands fist in Tarzan's hair. Could it be fake? Maybe, but no one, including him, would ever know, not with a performance like that. He lifts to his knees and peers over his shoulder, making sure we see what he did.

Oh boy, did we ever.

His eyes meet mine, and he flashes me a cocky grin. I bite my lower lip to make my returning smile seem less shy and more teasing. I've mostly acclimated to life at the brothel, but it'll take a little more time to stand here with the confidence the women to my right have.

"Come on." Colin tugs my arm.

I glare over at him, wordlessly communicating my desire to stay. We're getting to the main event, and I want to see it. Colin's lips purse, and his eyes narrow in a way that tells me I'm not going to get my way, so I might as well do what he says.

Reluctantly, I follow him down the hall, through the parlor, and back to the office.

"You're an ass," I say as soon as we're out of earshot of any guests.

"I didn't like the way that guy was looking at you."

I sit in my office chair, noticing a takeout box on my desk. "He wasn't looking at me any sort of way."

"You aren't on the menu."

"Obviously." I gesture down at my outfit of black slacks and a silk blouse.

The day after I arrived, Brynlee brought me four shopping bags full of clothes, toiletries, and makeup from Colin. She said he wanted me to be comfortable. The clothes were all professional attire, and though I was mad he didn't consult me, I was grateful to have something to wear other than T-shirts, jeans, and the fancy lingerie I had purchased.

"Not obviously. The guests who come here think everything has a price. Don't forget that." He leans his muscled frame against the doorjamb.

"In three weeks, I *will* be on the menu," I say, taking every chance I can to remind him of our deal.

"Aren't you happy doing what you're doing?"

"I am." I open the Styrofoam container and assess my raw meat lunch. It looks okay. Just a round patty of minced meat mixed with seasonings and

herbs, topped with a small raw egg, and served with crostini rounds.

“Then?”

“How many times do we have to have this conversation?” I scoop a bit of the tartare onto a piece of toasted bread and take a bite. The flavor bursts on my tongue. Brininess from capers, a faint onion taste, and something I can’t recognize. Maybe mustard? The texture is strange, but pairing it with the bread helps break up the mushiness.

Not bad.

I’m so absorbed in eating my lunch that it takes me a minute to realize he hasn’t responded. I glance over to catch his eyes locked on my mouth, watching me eat. I grab a napkin and swipe at the corners of my lips.

“Where is it?” I ask.

He breaks from the trance, brows furrowing. “What?”

“Do I have food on my face or something?”

“What?” he asks again before shaking his head. “No.”

Then why was he staring at me like that? If I didn’t know better, I’d think he enjoyed watching me eat. That’s stupid, right? Of course it is. This place is so highly sexual that I’m making a big deal out of nothing.

He pushes off the door and walks across the room, sitting on the edge of my desk. “We’ll talk about this as many times as it takes for you to realize you don’t have to leave. You can work and live here for as long as you want.”

“No.” I toss the rest of the crostini into the container. “Mom is barely hanging on.”

“You talked to her?”

I nod. “Every day. And every day, she’s worse than she was the day before.”

“Fuck.” He rubs a hand over his face.

“Speaking of, I need to go home this weekend.”

“No.”

I look to the ceiling, praying to a god I don’t believe in to save me from another fight with this immovable man. Every single argument ends with him getting his way. Granted, everything he wants is for my benefit, but still, a little free agency would be nice.

“Yes. I’m not going to bend on this. I need to see Mom with my own eyes and spend time with her. Weekends are best since Ray is at the casino or doing whatever he does that gets him covered in blood.”

He's almost *growling* at this point. "It's not safe."

"Jesus Christ, Colin. You're not my babysitter or my parent. I'm going, like it or not."

"The hell you are." He storms out of the room before I can argue.

We'll see about that.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## RIGGER

As I ride to the Honey Pot, my mind replays the scene in front of the Nature Room like it has a million times over the last few days. Watching Betty do her thing was hot, but what had me going was the way Vivi was reacting. Her pale cheeks were flushed, her lips parted, and whether or not she realized she was doing it, she clenched her thighs together so tight, she could've made a diamond out of coal had one been between them.

I was captivated, and that was confusing as all hell. I should've been grossed out, but I wasn't, not even close. If that wasn't enough to fuck me up, the rage I felt when that Tarzan motherfucker eyed Vivi up threw me over the edge. Not because I wanted to protect her, but because I was. . . jealous. I was fucking jealous.

Ain't that some shit?

What's even bigger shit is that each night I go back to the clubhouse, full of hot chicks looking to suck my soul out of my dick, and I haven't touched one. Ever since Vivi came back into my life, my hand has been the only thing getting action from me. And even then, the only thoughts I have while I blow my load are of my stepsister.

The sound of someone laying on their horn brings me back to the here and now, and I shake my head to clear the memory when I realize I'm flying through traffic, weaving around cars, lost in thought. Easing back on the throttle, I force my attention back on the road.

As I ride through the iron gates, pride washes over me the same way it always does when I pull onto the property. My eyes catch on the marble fountain out front that features a naked woman, one hand cupping a breast,

the other cupping her cunt, a steady stream of water falling between her legs. Some might see it as crass, but I think it's goddamn beautiful.

Who else can say they took their love of women and turned it into a fucking Disneyland for adults?

I park and enter through the side of the building. It's Friday, and according to Vivi, she's going home. Unfortunately for her, I have different plans, because there's no way in hell I'm letting her anywhere near Ray. Until this order to stay away from him lifts, Ray can get away with murder. Now that he knows Vivi means something to me, I know he'll fuck with her just to fuck with me. I can't let that happen. She needs a distraction, and I have the perfect one to offer. I just hope her stubbornness doesn't stop her from joining me.

"Hey, Vivi," I yell as I knock.

"Hold your horses," she calls back. A couple seconds later, she swings the door open. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to take you to a party." I reach my arms overhead and grip the top of the doorframe.

"I told you, I'm going home."

I shake my head with a smile. "Not tonight. The Prez and VP of our founding chapter are in town, and there's a party at the clubhouse. Thought you might want to check it out."

Her head tilts. "I don't know what any of that means."

"The Sons of Erebus are nationwide, but the original club was started in Phoenix in 1978 by a guy named Tripod. Occasionally, he pops into the other chapters to check in and make sure everything's good. He's in Reno tonight, and that means a huge party."

She gives me an exasperated look. "You thought I'd want to go, why?"

"Because I want to introduce you to my family, and most of 'em will be there." I reach through the door and give her shoulder a little shove. "Come on. It'll be fun."

"I need to change," she says.

I look down, only now noticing that she's in a pair of holey cut-off jeans and a baggy tank top. My eyes catch on her tits. She's not wearing a bra, and her nipples are pebbled tight. Jesus fuck.

*She's your sister.*

*She's your sister.*

Not even chanting that over and over in my head stops me from noticing

how long her damn legs are and how creamy all that bare skin is. It can't be normal for me to think like this. If she could hear the thoughts running through my head, she'd take what little money she's earned and hightail it to Henderson as fast as she could.

"I'll wait out in the lot," I say, remembering I'm on my bike. "Wear jeans or something and some real shoes."

"Why?"

"We're taking my bike." I keep my eyes on the ground, not giving myself any more reasons to commit incest.

Though is it actually incest if you're not blood?

Her lips turn up as though she likes the idea. "Okay. I'll be fast."

"Take whatever time you need. I gotta stop in and check on things."

"Fifteen minutes?"

I nod. "Sure."

The second the door closes, I let out a deep breath. What the hell is happening to me? At least I talked her out of going to Ray's. I'll figure the other shit out later.

I take purposeful steps down the hall to the security room. My keycard buzzes me in, and I find Riot and Tobi sitting, watching the feeds. Tobi's our newest prospect, but he was a hang-around for two years before he leveled up, so I already know the dude.

"How's it going?" I sit down facing the wall of monitors. We have CCTV footage of every inch of this place, minus the experience rooms, at all times. If whoever's working a security shift isn't walking the property, they're in here monitoring things.

"Good. Had a little drunk and disorderly earlier. He tried to buy some time with Sasha, but she didn't feel comfortable, so I had one of the drivers take him back to the city," Tobi says.

We employ a rotating shift of drivers who do things like pick up VIP guests, shuttle the girls around on errands while they're on tour, or, like in this situation, give rides to those we don't want hanging around.

"Sasha okay?" I ask.

"Yeah, he never got in a room with her."

"Good." I swivel my chair to face Riot. "What's going on with you?"

"Fuck lot of nothing," he grumbles.

I laugh. "Hey, you signed up for this shift. I was ready to let the prospects handle it so we could all make an appearance for Tripod."

“Not what I meant. I hate those brown-nosing parties where everyone whips out their dicks to show Tripod whose is biggest. I meant it’s a boring fuckin’ day.”

I smile wider. “Aw, poor Riot doesn’t have an ass to kick.”

“Shut up, asshole.”

If I were to guess, I’d say Riot was born pissed off. I’ve known the man since I was sixteen, both of us working at Cy’s shop, and in all that time, I don’t think I’ve seen him break his ‘mad at the world’ persona once.

“Well, if you don’t need anything, I’m heading out.” I stand.

“She going with you?” Riot nodded to the monitor showing Vivi pacing around my bike.

“Uh, yeah. I guess.” I still haven’t told anyone who she really is. Lucky, Cy, and Mary are the only ones who know, and they’ve been asked to keep their traps shut. As far as anyone else is concerned, she’s just a girl I gave a job to. I’ve heard a few rumors from those at the meet and greet who think I took her off the roster because I want her for myself, but I haven’t given them any weight.

“She your bitch or somethin’?” Tobi asks.

I crowd his space, instantly irritated. “That’s none of your fuckin’ business, and while you’re on Honey Pot property, you call them women, not bitches. This isn’t the clubhouse.”

“Okay, okay. Sorry.” He backs down, whether because he knows his place as a prospect or because I could level him with one swing, I don’t know, and I don’t fucking care.

“Don’t ever let me hear that kind of shit talk again.” He lowers his head as I back away, returning to the door.

“Yet you didn’t answer the question,” Riot says, purposely stoking the fire.

“What she is or isn’t to me ain’t none of your concern,” I growl.

“That’s answer enough.”

Technically, I could put Riot in his place since I outrank him, but he’s such a volatile prick it would most likely escalate to a fistfight, and I don’t have time for that shit right now. So instead, I leave without saying another word.

When I get to the parking lot, I spot Vivi leaning against my bike, arms crossed. She has on a pair of well-worn, baggy black jeans, a T-shirt that’s been cropped to just under her tits, and a pair of cheap black boots. She



changed her hair, too, slicking it back into a ponytail. It shows off her high cheekbones and the long, sexy neck I want to nibble on.

“You ready?” I put my aviators on before I get close enough to her that she might read how she affects me.

“Guess so. I’ve never ridden on the back of a bike before.”

“It’s easy. Just keep your feet on the pegs and hold on.” I grab my helmet and rest it on her head before adjusting the straps so it’s snug under her chin. She looks cute with my matte black dome on.

“What about you?” she asks.

“What about me?”

“Isn’t this your helmet?”

“I’ll live.” I fasten the clip and tap her head. “There.”

“Tough guy doesn’t need a helmet, huh?” She waits for me to climb on the bike before taking my hand to get behind me. “Do you remember Wilder’s shitty dirt bike you two rode around on?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“You didn’t wear a helmet back then either and look what happened. You fell off that thing and split the back of your head open.” She pokes around my scalp until she finds the small scar. “I had to shave your head and put a butterfly bandage on you.”

“I do remember that. You must’ve been what? Seven-years-old?” I chuckle. “I was the one with the cut, but you were the one crying.”

She grimaces. “There was so much blood, I thought you were gonna die.”

“Head wounds bleed. I was fine.” I glance over my shoulder.

“Still scared me.”

It’s strange when someone who knew you so well when you were young knows nothing about you as an adult. If she did, she’d know I’ve been shot, I’ve wrecked out, and I’ve been in more fights than I can count. That tiny little flesh wound is nothing but a blip in my memory, yet it’s burned into hers.

“I promise not to crash,” I promise and face forward. “But you gotta hold on.”

I wait for long seconds until I feel her hands rest on my hips, but her grasp is loose and hesitant. That won’t do. Gripping her hands, I pull them around me and press them to my abdomen, showing where she should hold. Her touch is like fire, burning my skin through my shirt and leather cut. I don’t want to react this way to her, but my body seems to have a mind of its

own.

Not giving myself more time to analyze it, I start the bike and slowly accelerate so as not to jar her. Even being cautious, her grip tightens, and she scoots closer. I can't feel her tits through the layers of clothes, but just knowing they're pressed against me has my cock twitching in awareness.

It's wrong to feel this way, right? I mean, I haven't seen her in years, and we were only in each other's lives for a short time, so it's not like we grew up together. Except my dad is still married to her mom, so regardless of all that bullshit, she *is* my stepsister, no matter how I cut it.

She holds on like her life depends on it for ten miles before loosening up. As her body relaxes, she unlocks her hands, and I feel her energy change. The fear I sensed before is gone, and now she's buzzing with excitement. It's a relief since I plan to take her on many more rides.

Pulling into the gravel lot outside the clubhouse, I park my bike at the end of a long line of Harleys. The party is already in full swing, with people spilling outside, beer in hand. For a minute, I second-guess my decision to bring her here. Something has me holding back who she is, but I have to introduce her somehow, and I have to do it in a way that keeps her off-limits.

I throw down the kickstand and help Vivi off before climbing off myself.

"That was crazy," she says, unclipping the buckle on the helmet and handing it back to me. Her hair, which was so smooth before, is now all mussed up and wild.

"Good crazy or bad?" I set the helmet on my bike and turn back to her.

"At first, it was scary. Like legs shaking kind of fear. But then, I don't know. I felt free." She laughs, big and loud. Her joy is fucking beautiful. "It was like every single cliché I'd ever seen in ads was true. I just wanted to ride."

"Ride where?"

"Anywhere. Everywhere." She throws her hands to the side. The motion lifts her crop top high enough that the bottom of a lacy bra peeks out. Jesus. I need to make sure she keeps her arms down while we're here. That small touch of sex appeal will have all my brothers drooling after her.

"Yeah, that happens." I reach over and try my best to smooth her wayward hairs down.

"I must look a mess." She beams at me while I fail at setting her right.

"Nah. You look fine."

"Fine?" Her nose wrinkles.

“You know what I mean. You look beautiful.” My eyes meet hers, and the world around goes quiet. If she were any other girl, this would be the perfect moment to lean in for a kiss. She’s not, though, and she’s likely to run screaming, even if I could make it right in my head.

“You think I’m beautiful?” she asks, then shakes her head. “Sorry. That was me begging for a compliment. How pathetic.”

“You know you are.” I take a step back, needing to put more distance between us.

“That’s the thing. I never did until I moved into the Honey Pot. It’s only been a week, but that place has changed me.”

“Whatever, you’ve always been cute. Even when you were six years old with your nose in a book.”

“Oh, right.” She tucks her hands in her pockets, her smile falling.

“What did I say?”

“Nothing. Should we go inside so you can show off your little *sister*?”

“About that.” I lead her toward the entrance.

“What?”

I take a breath, readying myself for this. “I don’t think I’m gonna mention you’re my sister.”

“Why not?”

*Yeah, idiot. Why not?*

“I don’t like people in my business, and I never told most of the guys about how things were growing up. I’d rather not get into it with them.”

“Lucky, Cy, and Mary know.”

I nod. “Yeah, but they won’t say shit. I’d rather keep this on a need-to-know basis.”

“But you said you wanted to introduce me to everyone. So, how are you going to do that?”

“Just as Vivi,” I say.

“Navy,” she corrects.

“You’re pretty serious about that, huh?” I stop just outside so we can finish the conversation.

“Do you want me going around calling you Colin?”

“Point taken. Fine. I’ll introduce you as Navy.”

Her chin tips down, and her voice quiets. “You don’t think they’ll get the wrong idea?”

*I’m betting on it.*

“We’re not big into asking questions around here. Unless information is offered, we don’t ask.”

She laughs, that beautiful, tinkling laugh I’m beginning to love. “How very criminal of you.”

“We try.” I cup the back of her neck and give her a playful shake. “Come on.”

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## NAVY

“Bones, this is Navy. She’s helping Mary out at the Honey Pot,” Colin says.

I’ve already met a lot of the Sons because they all take security shifts at the brothel, but there are a few I haven’t yet, including the white Jesus-looking dude standing in front of me. He has long brown hair and a beard and is just as good-looking as all the other Sons I’ve met. Even Cy, who must be in his sixties, gives off big-time daddy vibes.

Bones brings me in for a hug and whispers, “You have good energy, little lady.”

“Um, thank you.”

He touches my forehead with his palm. “Bright pink.” His hand moves to my heart, and his brow furrows. “But there’s something else there. What’s what about?”

“Okay.” Colin separates us. “That’s enough aura reading.”

“You’re white today, Rig. Feeling a little nervous?”

He rolls his eyes. “I’m not fuckin’ nervous. You’re just high.”

Bones smiles big and broad, showing off front teeth that just barely overlap. It only adds to his unique appeal. I decide I like him and wouldn’t mind getting to know him better.

“Well, that’s a given.” He pulls out a vape and takes a puff, the skunky smell of weed filling the air.

“Come on.” Colin takes my hand and pulls me away. “Bones runs our weed shops and is always high. Don’t listen to him.”

“He seems like a good guy.”

He nods. “They’re all good guys. Some are just less annoying than

others.”

“You know, you should try yoga or something. You’re too high-strung.”

He glares at me as we stop in front of another Sons member. This one nearly takes my breath away with how attractive he is. His hair is styled short on the sides and longer on top, swooping to the side. He has a shadow of a beard that enhances his sharp jawline, looks fit but not overly muscular, and has kind blue eyes. My eyes travel lower and stop on the white tab on his collar, peeking out underneath his leather cut.

Is he some kind of priest? That doesn’t seem right for a motorcycle club.

“Judge, this is Navy,” Colin says.

“That’s a pretty name. Never heard it before.”

“Thank you.” I can’t stop the blush from creeping across my cheeks at the compliment.

“How do you two know each other?” He eyes Colin.

“She works at the Honey Pot.”

“I do administrative stuff and help with the courtesans. That kind of thing,” I say.

“Okay. Haven’t had a chance to get over there yet, but I’ve heard good things.” Judge smiles, and I nearly melt. Why are all the men in this club so damn sexy?

“I wouldn’t imagine it’s your scene.” I gesture to his collar.

“Oh, right.” Judge’s smile falls as he touches his neck, instantly making me regret my words.

“Anyway, we’re gonna go find a drink.” Colin takes my hand.

I wave and give Judge an apologetic smile as I’m pulled away.

“What was that about?” I ask.

“Judge has a difficult relationship with religion.”

“Is he a priest?”

“No. He used to be some kind of pastor at a non-denominational church.”

“What is he now?” I ask.

We stop at the bar, and Colin holds two fingers up to the red-headed bartender before turning back to me. “Things get tough around here sometimes. It’s quiet right now, but when shit goes down and stuff goes sideways, we need someone to. . . get us back to good. If that makes sense.”

I don’t have to read too much between the lines on that one. News headlines and rumors around town have told me enough about what goes down around here. It would do me well to remember who these men are, but

it's easy to forget when my daily interactions with them are nothing but pleasant.

“And he helps when things go sideways?”

“Yeah. He's very useful to have around,” he says cryptically.

“Like how?”

“Don't worry about it, but maybe don't bring up the collar again.”

“Yeah, okay.”

Two bottles of icy beer are set in front of us, and I'm quick to grab mine and take a drink. The ice-cold hoppy brew goes down easily and cools me off. There are a lot of people in here, more than I've ever been around at one time. The air is thick with cigarette and weed smoke, making it hard to breathe, but the energy is addictive. Everyone seems to be having a really good time.

“Rigger,” someone calls out, and I find an older man approaching who looks vaguely familiar. He's older than Cy, putting him in his early seventies, thin, wrinkled, and with hair so gray, it's snowy white.

“Tripod, good to see you, man.” Colin gives him the whole manly, backslap half-hug thing.

“You too. I visited your place out in Storey County last night. You did good, kid,” the man says, and it clicks where I've seen him.

I rarely walk around the Honey Pot at night since it tends to be busy, and I don't want to be in the way. Last night, though, I met up with Betty for a late-night swim, and this man was in the hot tub with one of the girls who goes by Aurora, a petite Japanese woman with boobs so big you'd think she'd topple forward. I haven't had many interactions with her, but from what I've heard, she's a little spicy. Betty said she enjoys stirring the pot and watching what happens.

“Thanks, brother. That means a lot coming from you. Did you have a good time?”

“Fuckin' right, I did.” He flashes a grin.

“I'm glad.” Colin gestures to me. “I'd like you to meet Navy.”

“I know you from somewhere,” he says, shaking my hand.

“I was out for a swim last night while you were hanging out with Aurora.”

“That's right.” He turns to Rigger. “You got yourself a sexy one.”

“Oh, she's not—”

“I know how it works. You forget I was your age once. Now I only get



young and beautiful women when I'm on the road and away from my ol' lady."

So, he's a pig *and* a cheater. Got it. I cover up my disgusted reaction by taking another swig of beer.

"Whatever. Carla is great," Colin says.

I don't miss that he didn't try to further clarify our relationship. Was that on purpose, or does he just not want to get into it? I want to slap myself. Of course it's the latter. *You're nothing more than his sister*. I'm still not sure I believe his reasoning for not wanting to tell people, though.

"Yeah, she is." He slaps Colin on the back. "You got a few minutes to sit down? I have a little business I want to get outta the way."

Colin glances over at me, and I nod my approval. By all means, I hope he takes this asshole far away before the alcohol gets to my head, and I tell Tripod exactly what I think of him.

"Sure. I'll call Church and meet you there."

He nods and smiles my way. "Sounds good. It was nice to meet you, Navy."

I hold up my beer. "You too."

"I'll be quick, okay? Five minutes, tops."

"I'm fine," I say.

"Tigg," he calls out, gaining the attention of the ginger. "Keep an eye on her. Anything happens, it's your ass."

"Gotcha."

After Colin leaves, Tigger leans over the bar. "Hey, Navy. You're looking good tonight."

I blush at the compliment. "Thank you, Tigger."

The ginger prospect is one of my favorite security guards at the brothel. While most stay in their lane and do their job, Tigger interacts with us, makes us laugh. He's lighthearted and fun.

"You need anything?"

"Another one of these?" I hold up my bottle.

"You got it." He turns and grabs another bottle from the fridge before popping the top and setting it in front of me.

"Thanks."

"No problem." He rests his hands on the bar. "Never seen Rigger bring a girl to a party. You must be special."

I shrug. "I think he just wanted to show me what the club is like."

“Or he could be lookin’ for an ol’ lady.”

I laugh at the absurdity. “Definitely not.”

He shrugs. “I don’t know. Ever since you came around, I haven’t seen him hook up with anyone. And that’s not like him.”

It shouldn’t please me as much as it does to hear that. “Really?”

“Really.” He seems to think better about telling me, though, because he clears his throat and stares me down. “Maybe don’t mention I said anything.”

“Don’t worry,” I reassure him. “My lips are sealed.”

His smile tells me he believes me. “If you need anything, just yell.”

While he gets back to work, I look out at the crowd. Now that I’m not being introduced to people, I have some time to take it in.

I’m horribly overdressed compared to the other women, who mostly sport some variation of leather and lace. Some didn’t bother wearing clothes at all and bravely walk around in their underwear. Most of the men have leather cuts, but some don’t, and I wonder what their association with the club is. Are they just here to party? Are they a different type of criminal?

The music amps up, and the lights go dim everywhere, except for a spotlight that shines on a raised stage with a stripper pole in the corner. A woman wearing only a skimpy thong struts out, thrusting her breasts forward. Nudity has lost any shock value for me, but I do admire her big tits. I don’t mind having a smaller chest, but I can appreciate the appeal of a bigger bust.

The crowd gathers, hooting and hollering as she performs. Dollars are tossed while she spins around the pole, then tucked into her panties when she drops to the ground and gyrates. It’s entertaining, but I see the same thing at work.

While Colin’s gone, I watch three different dancers perform and drink just as many beers. My brain feels loopy, and my body is comfortably numb. I’m not a seasoned drinker, but I’d say I’m drunk. I’m also *bored*. I scan the crowd, trying to find Colin but come up short. He said five minutes, but it’s been forty, and there’s still no sign of him.

“Tigger,” I call out, and he rushes over. “Do you know where Rigger went?” A thought hits me, and a giggle bubbles out. “Tigger and Rigger. You two rhyme.”

He eyes me speculatively and reaches for my beer. “I better take this one.”

I clutch it to my chest before he can steal it away. “Don’t you dare.”

Scanning the crowd, his face lights up. “Thank fuck. There he is.”

I spin to look, but the stool moves faster than I'm expecting, and I fall backward onto the man sitting next to me, my upper body landing in his lap. "Oops."

"Hey there, darlin'." The bearded man grins as he helps right me.

"Flint," Colin greets him. "I see you've met Navy."

"This one belong to you?" Flint asks, humor lacing his tone.

"Yup." He turns those mystical green orbs on me. "Having a good time?"

"I drank beer," I say dumbly.

"I see that." He takes the stool next to me.

"Are those women strippers?" I whisper, pointing to the stage.

"Not in an official capacity."

"Amateurs?"

He nods with an appreciative smirk. "I guess you could say that. Why?"

"Think they'd let me try?" I move to stand, suddenly feeling confident. I've never danced in public before, but I always see it at Honey Pot. It can't be that hard.

"Whoa there, tiger." He pushes me back down. "I don't think that's a good idea."

I place my elbow on the bar and rest my chin in my palm. "How am I going to reclaim my sexuality with you constantly getting in my way?"

He freezes in place. "Reclaim what now?"

"I applied at the Honey Pot because I needed the money, but then it turned into more, you know?"

"No, I don't know."

I roll my eyes. "Sex was always just something I *had* to do. Like a job, only worse. But I don't want it to be. I want to be like Betty and Ariel and the other girls. They love it. They want to do it."

"What do you mean, 'a job'? Who's making you have sex with them?"

I straighten my spine, sobering for a second when I realize what I almost said. "Never mind."

"No, tell me." There's a bite to his tone now, and I know I've said too much.

"It's nothing." I wave him off.

He sighs, realizing I'm not going to talk. "So you want to get up on stage and dance in front of a bunch of bikers so you can, what? Feel sexy or some shit?"

"Exactly." I boop his nose.

“Hate to break it to you, but these guys think anything with a pair of tits is sexy.”

I look down at my nearly non-existent boobs. “Oh.”

“That’s not what I meant.” He grips my knees and spins me to face him. Bold move considering Flint got a lap-full of me last time that happened, but I keep myself upright this time. “You know you’re gorgeous.”

I look down. “You have to say that. It’s part of the whole brother thing.”

“You and I both know I’m not your brother any more than Flint over there,” he says, and I bite into the side of my mouth because that’s how I feel, but I didn’t know that’s how he felt. “Not that I wouldn’t be proud to be your brother, and maybe had I stuck around, that’s how it would’ve been between us. But you and me? We’re more like friends who fell out of touch. And friends know when their friends are a smoke show.”

“I’m a smoke show?” Insecurity is literally seeping through my pores, and I hate it, but my kind of trauma isn’t something one walks away from. It follows me around like a shadow. I don’t always see it, but it’s always there.

“Yeah.” The word seems to drip from his lips.

If I were sober, I wouldn’t think this was anything more than a compliment, but I’m not, so I read too much into it. Maybe he’s feeling the same connection I am. Maybe he doesn’t want to tell people I’m his stepsister because he doesn’t want it to be weird when he makes a move. Maybe he wants to take me into the alien room and plant an egg in my ass.

I’m drunk. Far too drunk to be having this conversation.

“You’re zoning out. I think we better get you home.” He tugs me off the stool. “Come on.”

“But I wanted to dance,” I whine.

“Maybe next time,” he says, but something about how he says it makes me think he’s lying.

With a hand on my back, he leads me through the crowd, stopping now and then to say goodbye to his brothers. Because there are so many of them, it takes a half hour to make it outside. I don’t mind, though. I’m proud of Colin for everything he’s gained since leaving Ray’s house. I’m jealous, even. He’s done what I’m setting out to do. Someday, I want the same for Mom and me.

“You too drunk to ride?” he asks, handing me the helmet.

“No, I’m good now.” The last half hour did a lot to sober me up. I still don’t think I’d pass a sobriety test, but I’m pretty sure I can ride.

He straddles the bike, his jeans straining against his muscular thighs as he adjusts his position to allow room for me. I climb on behind him, not hesitating to wrap my arms around his middle, and as the engine roars to life, he pulls out onto the road.

Unlike the ride to the clubhouse, I settle into this one right away. It's invigorating and exciting. Colin must be more comfortable with me back here because he goes faster than before and glides around bends without slowing down.

I giggle and press my face into his back as he speeds down the highway, weaving through slower traffic. I'm glad he talked me out of going home this weekend. I needed tonight, whether or not I wanted to admit it. The last week has been amazing, and day by day, I feel myself emerging from the darkness I've been living in for years now. It took this seemingly normal Friday night in Colin's world to convince me that I really did it. I got away.

I won't be in the clear until I leave the city limits, but for now, I'm safe.

What's really shocking, though, is that I'm *happy*.

At some point, we reach an open stretch, and he rests a hand on my thigh. While I'm sure it's meant to be reassuring and friendly, I'm still tipsy from the beer and a little turned on from the show at the clubhouse, so my body reacts in an overly friendly way.

I'm suddenly aware of just how close we are. Every inch of my front, from my chest to my knees, is pressed firmly against him, including my pelvis. That, along with the vibrations of the bike, have my clit pulsing with awareness, desperate for attention. Slowly, so as not to alert him to my needy state, I tilt my hips up and squeeze my thighs against his, needing friction, even if it's the smallest amount.

If he notices, he doesn't show it, so I do it again. And again. Colin's speech from earlier replays in my mind, silencing the nagging voice in my head that tells me my attraction to this man is wrong.

The ride is over way too soon, and as he parks, I reluctantly loosen my hold. He walks me inside, and I'm disappointed the night is over. That he'll go back to the clubhouse alone. Or maybe Tigger was wrong and hasn't seen what Colin's been up to.

"Thanks for coming out tonight," he says as we stop in front of my door.

"Yeah, I had fun."

We stand there awkwardly for a long minute before his brows furrow. "Aren't you going to unlock your door?"

“Actually, I was thinking I might head down to the bar.”

While most people come here for an experience, some come to hang out. The bar and restaurant have a great vibe, and on any given night, customers are there to just eat, drink, and maybe watch a dance or two. The girls on shift are usually there, and I’ll meet up with them to shoot the shit. It’s relaxed and fun.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” he says.

I tilt my head in question. “Why not?”

“It’s late, and our guests might get the wrong idea about why you’re there.”

“If they do, I’ll just tell them. It’s not a big deal.”

His voice is firmer now. “No, I’d feel better if you were in your room.”

“You’re not my dad.”

“But I am your boss, and I’m telling you I don’t want you out there.”

“Mary hangs out there every night,” I remind him.

He laughs darkly. “She’s old; there’s no question why she’s there.”

“Trust me, she gets her share of offers. Have you seen her?” The older woman is beautiful, and if she went back into sex work, I know for a fact she’d make more money than she does as a madam.

“Vivi,” he deadpans.

“Colin,” I return.

“Fine, but I’m going with you.”

“Why?” I ask, exasperated.

“I worry about you, is all.”

“Even with all your little vest buddies here, watching through the cameras and walking around?”

“Vest buddies?” His brows furrow until he gets my joke. “That was dumb.”

I roll my eyes. “My point is, why would you worry?”

“I just do, okay?”

The last of my buzz is still hanging on, but I’m not ready to go to bed or to the bar with him. I’m too keyed up. I just want to hang out with my friends, watch beautiful women dance, maybe take a walk past the Nature Room and see if anyone wants an audience, then go to my room and use one of the toys I bought from the gift shop to give me an orgasm. Only after all that do I want to go to bed. I just can’t do any of those things with him around.

“Listen, if you’re not ready to sleep, invite me in. We can watch a movie or something.”

Realizing I won’t get rid of him, I pull out my key and unlock the door. Movie night it is.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN



## RIGGER

This is a bad idea, but I seem to be full of those these days.  
“I’m going to change. Make yourself comfortable,” she says, grabbing clothes from a drawer and stepping into the bathroom.

I make a loop around her room, noticing she’s added her own touch to the decor. She has pictures with some of the girls from the Honey Pot pinned to a corkboard, all taken during the first week of her employment. I smile at how well she seems to be getting along with everyone.

“Your frogs seem happy,” I call out, crouching to see them swimming around.

She steps out wearing another loose-fitting tank, but instead of the jean shorts from earlier, she has on a tiny pair of black spandex bike shorts. I can practically see the shape of her pussy through the thin material. Suddenly, I’m thankful my stiff jeans hide the chub I’m sporting.

“I love them so much.” She bends over, allowing me to take a quick peek at her ass. Fucking hell. I’d kill to know what it feels like in my palm. Pointing to one of the frogs, she says, “That one is Sriracha. He’s my favorite.”

“How can you tell them apart?”

“His little hand has a black spot on it. See?” She glances up at me, and for a split second, I see a hint of the little girl I used to know. My chest tightens with an emotion I’m not used to feeling.

It fucks with my head whenever I have a flashback of a six-year-old Vivi. How can I have this affection for my little sister when I want to fuck the woman she grew up to be?

“Yeah,” I say, though I don’t see it. They all look the same to me.

“Let me find the remote, and we can pick a movie.” She spots the remote on the dresser.

There’s no seating in here other than the stool for her vanity, so I take a seat on the bed. Bending over, I remove my boots before scooting back against the headboard. I should head back to the clubhouse. Tripod wasn’t done updating us with news from the other charters, but I got nervous leaving Vivi at the bar alone, so I told them I’d be back later. That changed when she said she planned to hang out in the lounge. I don’t know what kind of assholes are out there, which would drive me insane. So, I’ll watch a damn movie, and hopefully, she’ll be tired enough to go to bed after.

“What do you think?” she asks, kneeling on the bed before lowering to all fours. Immediately, my dick thinks she’s crawling to me, that she has plans to unbutton my pants and suck me off.

“About?” I mumble, my eyes glued to the neckline of her tank where it gapes. She doesn’t have a bra on, and small as they are, her tits swing with each forward movement.

She plops down next to me, killing the fantasy and dropping me back into reality. Goddamn.

“The movie,” she says dumbly.

“Right.” I sigh. “I don’t care. Put on whatever you want.”

She starts some Netflix movie that I can’t focus on. Having her this close, where I can smell her floral scent and feel her body heat radiating down my side, is distracting, especially when she settles in, her shoulder pressing against mine.

This isn’t who I am. I’m not the dude who gets caught up in a girl and is satisfied just by having them close. I’m the guy who doesn’t ask for names, who fucks chicks anywhere but my cabin so I don’t have to worry about them staying the night. Yet here I am, like a punk ass bitch, getting hard over her fucking shoulder touching mine.

“I’m proud of you, you know?” she says out of nowhere.

I look over at her. “Oh yeah? For what?”

“You’ve made a great life for yourself.”

“I have,” I agree.

“I want what you have.” She tucks her hands between her knees. “A place of my own with friends who feel like family.”

“You will.”

“If you’d said that a month ago, I would’ve argued. But I can almost see

it now, and I have you to thank for that. So, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Something from our conversation pops back into my head. “What did you mean when you said you were reclaiming your sexuality?”

She goes still. “I was just babbling nonsense. I drank those beers too quickly.”

“You had to mean something by it, or you wouldn’t have said it.”

She thinks about that for a long while. I can’t tell whether she’s working out her wording or coming up with a lie. “I’ve only had one partner, and he wasn’t very good.”

“He didn’t get you off?”

She covers her face. “I can’t have this conversation with you.”

“Why not?”

She won’t make eye contact with me. “It’s embarrassing.”

“If you can’t talk to me, who can you?”

Her hands drop. “Literally *anyone* else.”

“I’m kind of an expert in this arena.” I’m joking, but also, I’m not. Club life isn’t just good for the brotherhood. I had club sluts dropping their pants the second I became a prospect, and they weren’t shy about teaching me how to please them.

“Gross.” She shoves me.

“I’m serious. Tell me about it.”

Her gaze shifts down. “I’ve never had an orgasm.”

“Not even. . . .”

“No.”

“What the hell kind of lazy asshole have you been fucking who didn’t make sure you got off before he did?”

Her cheek hollows, and I know she’s gnawing the inside of her mouth raw as she thinks about what to say. “Sex was more like a payment. I’ve never had a boyfriend.”

It’s then I remember Mary said she had experience in sex work. Jesus fuck. I had all but dismissed the idea before because Vivi isn’t like the other women at the Honey Pot. She’s shy and timid. When we stood outside the Nature Room that one time, her cheeks flamed red at what she was seeing. Those aren’t things that happen with any of the courtesans around here.

“You sold yourself?” I ask.

“Basically.”

“That’s not safe, Vivi.” My chest tightens at the idea of her approaching random men without protection.

“You have no idea,” she mutters.

“Don’t do that again.” I turn her to face me. “I’m fuckin’ serious. If you need money, I’ll help you figure it out.”

“I will never accept handouts. Ever. And you’re already helping me by giving me this job.”

I settle back against the headboard, feeling relieved she doesn’t have to sell herself anymore. She’s here. Safe. With me. I couldn’t ask for more. Well, maybe I could, but I won’t.

“Have you spoken to your mom?”

“Yeah, she texts me every day and says she’s fine.”

“But you don’t believe her,” I say.

“No. I don’t. That’s why I wanted to see her this weekend. I know you don’t want me to, but I promised to go next weekend. Just Saturday night, and I’ll be back Sunday morning.”

“I’m worried about Ray.”

“I’ll be okay.” Her voice goes quiet and deep. “I know how to handle him.”

“Can you go during the week? I have a charity run next weekend.”

Her brows furrow. “What’s a charity run?”

“The club picks an organization, and we travel around, raising money at each stop. It’s a win-win situation because the Sons get good press, and the organization gets a huge donation.”

“That’s amazing,” she says.

“You look surprised.”

“No, it’s not that. I’m just. . . impressed, I guess.” She smiles softly, and it hits me just how beautiful this woman is. It fucking hurts to look at her, knowing I can never have her, knowing she’d never return my affection.

“I’m glad something I do impresses you.”

Our eyes meet, and our gazes hold for a long moment. I stop breathing, held under a spell that’s been brewing since she walked back into my life. She bites her bottom lip, smiling softly, and if I didn’t know any better, I’d think she wanted me to kiss her. There’s no way that could be right.

Is it?

“There’s actually a lot about you that amazes me.” Her words come out slow and weighted. “Like the Honey Pot.”

Without realizing it, we're both leaning in, drawn together by an invisible pull. I should get up and walk away. She's drunk, or at least buzzed, and I don't know if this is real. I want to believe it is. I want to believe that everything that's been building in me has been building in her, too.

Is that wishful thinking?

"I don't think a brothel would impress many." More inches between us disappear until I can feel her warm breath on my face, smell her floral perfume, sense her need.

"Well, I think it's incredible," she whispers.

*Fuck it.*

Gripping her by the back of her neck, I yank her the rest of the way, pressing my lips against hers. She sucks in a sharp breath through her nose but doesn't pull away. Instead, her lips move with mine in a slow, fumbling kiss as we learn each other. I've never been much of a kisser, skipping it for the main event, but kissing Vivi is something I wouldn't give up for anything.

I lick the seam of her lips, hoping—no, praying—that she'll let me in. I'm rewarded when she parts them for me, and I slip my tongue in. At first, I wonder if I've gone too far since she isn't responding, but after a few seconds, she's hesitantly stroking her tongue with mine. It's a direct line to my cock that's now a steel rod in my too-tight pants.

And all we're doing is kissing.

I usually need much more than this to get to this point. Not a day goes by that I'm not exposed to beautiful, naked women at the clubhouse seeking my attention. At first, it was flattering, and I fucked every chick who even looked my way. Lately, though, it's gotten old. Maybe it's my age or the recent addition of Vivi to my life, but I haven't even been tempted to fuck anyone in weeks.

I release the back of her neck to grip the hemline of her shirt, desperate to get a better look at what she's hiding underneath her clothes, but it's the wrong move. Vivi pulls away, panting and wide-eyed.

"We can't do this," she says as though it's obvious.

"Why not?"

"Because you're my brother."

"Try again. We already decided I'm not," I say, reminding her of my speech that was more about easing my guilty conscious about being attracted to her than anything else.

"Even if that didn't matter, I'm leaving Reno the second I save enough

money.”

Frustration builds inside, threatening to break out. I’ve done everything I can to make her give up on the idea that she has to leave, and she still won’t drop it. I’ve effectively solved all the reasons she had to go. What else could she want?

“Why?” I ask.

“I can’t stay in the same city as Ray. You already know that.”

“He can’t touch you. Not with me around,” I growl.

“Just knowing he’s out there, that he could show up at any time, is too much for me. I need to put as many miles as I can between us.”

I weave my hand in her hair, cupping the side of her head. “You’re not listening. He won’t come near you. I promise.”

She slides off the bed to pace, wrapping her arms around herself. “It’s not just me. It’s Mom too. He’ll kill her.”

“I’m telling you he won’t be a problem soon,” I say.

She looks at me with worried eyes. “You don’t know that.”

“Do you trust me?”

“As much as I can.”

*That* spikes my anger. “What the hell does that mean?”

“It means I trusted you once, and you let me down.”

“I was a kid too, Vivi. But I’m not a kid anymore. I’m not going to let you down.”

“I need to protect myself and my mom,” she says, leaving no room for argument.

“What about me?” I ask, at the risk of sounding like a pussy.

Her pacing stops. “I don’t know, Colin. Your life was fine before I showed up. I’m sure it’ll be fine when I leave.”

I purse my lips and nod, stuffing my feet in my boots.

“Come on, don’t make me feel bad. I’ve had this plan for years, and we only reconnected a couple weeks ago. And this”—she motions between us—“I don’t even know what this is. Whether or not it feels like it, you’re my stepbrother and have a good thing going. Don’t let me get in the way of that.”

I’m such a fucking idiot. I should’ve known I wasn’t enough.

“You’re right. You’ve been telling me this whole time that this was temporary. I should’ve believed you. I’m sorry I even tried.”

“Colin,” she says, chasing after me as I sprint out of the room. “Colin, wait.”

It's too late. The door is closed, literally and figuratively. Did I really think I could build a life with my fucking stepsister? It would never work. We're both too fucked up over everything that's happened. That's clear as day to me now.

I hop on my bike and speed away into the night. The normal thrill of hearing my engine roar doesn't even register, and when I reach the turnoff to the clubhouse, I don't take it. Instead, I keep going.

For hours, I ride aimlessly around the city until the sun comes up, and I'm too tired to think.

Only then do I head home.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN



## NAVY

I wake up Saturday morning with puffy eyes and a heavy heart.

Colin kissing me was more than I expected. All the sexual build-up I'd been feeling came flooding out of me the second our tongues tangled together, and the bone-deep need to let him take it further was hard to control.

When he went to remove my shirt, I almost let him. I've never wanted anything more.

But it was wrong, and fear had me pulling away. At first, I told myself it was because I didn't trust him. He left me, after all. And yes, logically, I know he was barely eighteen when he left, still a kid himself. But I was too, and my young mind spent so much time berating him for leaving me that I don't know what it'll take to trust him fully again. Or if I even can.

That's not the real reason, though.

Neither is the fact that I refuse to stay in Reno. If I'm going to fumble through my first consensual sexual experience, it should be with someone I don't have a future with. That way, when I finally meet someone I can trust, I'll be more comfortable.

Those excuses are surface-level, though, because the real reason is that if Colin knew my darkest secret, there's no way he'd want me. How could he, after finding out his dad has been coming inside me since I was fourteen? Even though it was forced, I'd imagine fucking the same girl as your dad isn't a turn-on. He'd be disgusted if he knew.

So, I stopped it from going any further. It'll be easier for the both of us if I'm the one to walk away now. Starting over would be too challenging. There's too much to admit, to forgive, to deal with, and I'm so fucking

exhausted.

All I want is a fresh start with new people, a new city, and new problems.

Reaching onto my nightstand, I blindly feel around for my phone. When I have it, I tap the screen to find it's ten in the morning. I also find about ten missed calls and a couple of texts from Mom.

Something's wrong.

Sitting up, I click her contact and put it on speaker, wiping the sleep from my eyes.

"Vivi?" Mom cries.

"Yeah, I'm here, Mom. What's wrong?"

"Can you come home?"

My stomach sinks. "Why? What's going on?"

"I need you."

"Is Ray there?" It won't stop me from going; I just want to know what I'm walking into.

"No. He has a Saturday shift, and then he's going to the casino."

"Okay. Are you hurt?"

"Not enough to need a hospital."

I close my eyes, praying she's right. "I just have to shower and change. Then I'll be over, okay?"

"Yeah." She snuffles. "Thanks."

"Of course. Sit tight. See you soon."

I disconnect the call, jumping from my bed. Mary doesn't trust me enough to work weekends yet, so thankfully, I don't have to tell anyone I won't be around. If I did, one of the Sons would insist on coming with me. I found that out last week when I needed to pick up a few things from the store. Not thinking it was a big deal, I told Mary I'd be gone for a few hours, and before I knew it, Lucky was taking me.

I won't make that mistake today, so as soon as I'm clean and dressed in my comfy clothes of a T-shirt and baggy jeans, I call for an Uber, instructing them to come around the side of the building.

After feeding my frogs, making my bed, and grabbing my purse, I slip outside to wait for my ride. Thankfully, Colin's bike isn't here, so I know he won't come looking for me. The girls usually respect my privacy and never question it if I don't answer my door. With any luck, I can get home, deal with Mom, and be back before anyone even notices.

I only have to wait two minutes before a white Civic pulls up, and I slide

into the backseat.

“This the right address?” the young driver asks, pointing to the screen.

“Yep.”

I’m grateful when he doesn’t make small talk during the twenty-minute drive because I need all the time I can get to prepare myself for what I’ll most likely be walking into. Mom has made it a point to tell me she’s fine and doesn’t need me for more than a week now, so if she’s asking me to come home, it must be bad.

I hope she’s right about it not being too bad because each time Ray has beaten one of us to the point of needing the ER, it’s been an ordeal. The nurses and doctors ask a million questions, and even though we’re the victims, they still treat us like criminals. The stares and pathetic looks were embarrassing and degrading. After everything with Colin last night, I could use a few hours without judgment or having to explain myself.

“Thank you,” I say, getting out of the car in front of Ray’s house and saying a prayer of gratitude when Ray’s car is absent from the driveway.

Rushing up the walkway, I don’t knock, instead storming into the house. After being absent for a while, the odor of stale cigarettes I’d grown accustomed to hits me in the face, turning my stomach. How was this smell ever normal to me?

Mom obviously hasn’t been able to keep up with housework because the kitchen sink is full of dirty dishes, the counters are littered with mail, and beer cans overflow from the garbage. It’ll take me all day to get things back to how it was when I left.

That can wait until I find Mom, though. The living room is nearly as bad as the kitchen; Ray’s ashtray is overflowing with cigarette butts, beer bottles cover every surface, and he must’ve taken his anger out on Mom’s knickknacks because the little porcelain figurines she collects are on the carpet, shattered into pieces, small nicks in the walls where they must’ve hit.

My heart hurts for her. That woman doesn’t ask for anything. She buys her clothes at the thrift stores and shops at the local Dollar Outlet for groceries. The phone she uses is older than mine. The only thing she does for herself is look for these cheap little dollar-store figurines. Now she doesn’t even have that.

“Mom?” I call out.

“In the bedroom.” Her voice cracks.

Walking down the hallway, I pause in front of my room, pushing the

cracked door open to find it destroyed. My bed is overturned, the pictures I'd left hanging on the wall are torn and thrown on the ground, and my dresser is toppled over, the old and cheap wood broken in pieces.

I shake my head, not surprised. Closing the door, I venture further down the hall to the room Mom shares with Ray. The curtains are drawn, making it hard to see the human-shaped lump on the bed, but I know that's where I'll find her.

"Mom?"

"In here."

I flip on the light, eliciting a groan from her, but I need to see what state she's in, so I ignore it. Sitting on the edge of the bed, I peel back the covers. She's on her side, matted hair covering her face. I push it back while she rolls onto her back, and I gasp, unprepared for what I see.

"Mom!" I jerk my hand away because I barely recognize the woman. Her face is black and blue, swollen, and bloody. "Jesus Christ."

"It's not as bad as it looks. I just didn't have the energy to clean up just yet."

"Come on. I'll help you."

She moans in pain as I get her out of bed and to the bathroom, ignoring the disgusting state it's in. How did this happen in a little over a week?

I guide her to the closed lid of the toilet and start the shower, testing the water with my fingers until it's warm. Standing her up, I strip her of her worn Walmart pajama muumuu and look away to give her privacy as she removes her bra and underwear.

"I'll be in the bedroom cleaning up." I leave the bathroom and change her soiled, bloody bedding.

The second I hear the water shut off, I'm back in the bathroom, holding open a ratty towel and covering her as she steps out of the shower. We've been here before, so I don't say anything as I sit her back on the toilet and dig out the first aid kit.

She hisses as I clean the cut on her forehead and below her eye with an alcohol wipe, but I keep going. I bandage them before inspecting her arms and legs, finding so many bruises, I shudder. I gently rub some arnica cream on them and brush her hair. Once I've done all I can, I bring her some clean clothes and leave her again.

Ten minutes later, she comes out of the bathroom looking not good but better than before.

“Come here,” I say, holding open the clean comforter. She climbs in, her eyes closing the second her head hits the pillow. “What happened?”

“What always happens?” Her tone is clipped, not something I usually hear from her. “Ray lost at the casino last night and came home in a pissy mood.”

“And I wasn’t here,” I fill in.

“No.”

“I’m sorry,” I say, though I’m not sure I mean it. She didn’t have to be here; she could’ve been safe with me. She chose to come back.

“Thank you for getting me cleaned up. You can go now.”

“You said Ray wasn’t coming home?”

“No.”

“Okay, then I’ll stay.” I stand and cover her up. “Do you need anything?”

“No. I just need some rest.”

Even though she can’t see me, I nod. “I’ll be back with some painkillers and water.”

She reaches out, grabbing my hand. “You look good, Vivi. Healthy and happy.”

“I am.” I smile, but it’s small. I’m pissed at myself for choosing to believe she was okay while I was off enjoying my new life. I should’ve been checking on her. There’s no excuse.

“Good. That’s all I ever wanted for you.”

“I know, Mom. I’ll come check on you in a little while.”

As I clean, I refocus my mind. I’m glad I stopped things between Colin and me last night. He isn’t my priority. Getting Mom and me far away from here is, and had I gone further with him, it only would’ve made things more difficult. But goddamn, it was a good kiss.

I touch my mouth the same way I did last night, wishing I could still feel him. I’ve never experienced anything as powerful as the moment his lips met mine. It was as though the entire world fell away. A bomb could’ve gone off in the next room, and I’m not certain I would’ve noticed. It was perfect, and I’m so grateful I’ll have that moment to look back on when things get hard again because they will. For people like me, it’ll always be hard.

I scrub the dishes, tidy up the kitchen, and hand wash the floors before filling a glass with water and taking it to Mom, along with some aspirin. Since she’s asleep, I leave it on her nightstand and get back to cleaning.

It’s dark out by the time I finish, and I get Mom out of bed to join me for

a simple supper of canned soup and a cheese sandwich. Apparently, she hasn't kept up on shopping either, since the cupboards are nearly bare.

"What have you been doing while I've been gone?" I ask.

"I've just been so tired. I tried to keep up on things, but it just feels like too much right now."

"That's because you're depressed," I say.

"No," she scoffs.

"Have you been drinking?" I ask carefully because she's never been a big drinker. Still, she's gone through periods of overindulging, and there's no way the number of empty bottles I found is from Ray alone.

"A little." She squeezes my knee under the table. "I miss you. We've never been apart from each other, and maybe I got a little lonely."

I blow out a breath. Mom's good at using guilt to manipulate me, and I've always let her before. I've also never known what it's like to live away from this place, and now that I do, I'm finding it easier to recognize patterns. She's scared of the unknown, so she keeps us here, thinking there's nothing better. That's bullshit, though. There is better. I've seen it, and I want to stay there.

"A couple more weeks, and we can leave. Together."

She gives me a tight smile. "I hope so."

"You don't need to hope. Just trust me. It's happening."

"I trust you."

After we finish eating, we start a movie. Mom falls asleep a half hour in, and though it's not late, I doze off a few times before deciding we'll never make it to the end.

"Mom, wake up for a minute. Let's get you tucked into bed," I say, nudging her. She's stiff, a side effect of the beating she took, but I get her up and into her room. "I'll text you tomorrow, okay?"

"You're leaving?" She grips my hand with more strength than I thought her capable of right now.

"I can come back later this week," I say.

"Okay." Her eyes well with tears, tugging on my heartstrings.

"Do you want to come with me?"

"I can't. He'll find me. He told me the club can't touch him." I follow Mom to her room, sitting on the edge of the bed after she's climbed in.

"Why?" This is news to me.

"I don't know. I told him Colin would come after him if he hurt me, and he just laughed, saying something about being protected."

I never asked Colin about his visit with Ray. It's like once I stepped onto the Honey Pot property, my problems didn't exist anymore. That place is a wonderland for a lot of people, including me—though for many different reasons.

“I don't think anyone could stop Colin from protecting me against Ray, and we're a package deal, so I'm sure that extends to you.” I squeeze her hand. “Though I'd rather it not come to that.”

I don't even have to ask to know Colin's done things—bad things—since joining the club. I can see a darkness in him that was never there before, something festering under the surface. It's why I told him not to kill Ray. I might not have had the best role models growing up, but I've seen the progression of evil, and I don't want that for him. I'm worried that if he acts on his dark side too much, I'll lose him to it forever.

“It shouldn't,” she says.

This change in her worries me too. She went from ignoring what was happening to accepting all the blame overnight. Why?

“We've been over this, Mom.”

“I know, and I'll be okay.” She settles into bed and closes her eyes. “Get home safe, okay?”

I blow out a breath and leave the room, flipping the light off as I go. Something about this doesn't feel right. It's like she's given up, which can't happen.

This unsettling feeling has me deciding to stay for a while. She's right. Ray won't even know to look for me when he comes home, so I can slip out while he's asleep. And since I have tomorrow off, no one at the Honey Pot will find out as long as I make an appearance at some point in the morning.

After locking up the house, I crawl into my old bed, the wooden frame broken so it's just a mattress on the ground. I pull my phone from my pocket to make sure no one's looking for me, only to find the battery dead. A yawn escapes me, and I realize how utterly exhausted I am. Definitely too exhausted to get back up and search for a phone charger.

It's a mistake I'll regret for the rest of my life.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



## RIGGER

A pounding on the door wakens me, followed by Lucky's shouting. "Dude! Wake the fuck up!"

Something about his voice has me out of bed instantly, not bothering to pull on pants before yanking open the door. It's still dark out, but the porch light illuminates Lucky's wild eyes and heaving chest. He must've run here from the clubhouse.

"Is it Navy?" I ask, proving that my every thought lately is of her.

"What?" He shakes his head. "No. It's the Honey Pot. Deputy Dipshit tossed the place a couple hours ago."

My hands ball into fists, and not even the cool morning air can calm the rage spreading through me. I spoke with his uncle, the motherfucking sheriff, the day after Clancy stopped by the clubhouse, and he assured me he'd keep his nephew in check. In exchange, his ass has been sampling all our fruit at the Honey Pot for free.

"Why is this the first I'm hearing of it?" I demand.

"He had a whole team with him. They had everyone handcuffed and sitting outside on the curb for hours."

"Is everyone okay?"

He nods. "Yeah, the girls are shaken up, and the customers are obviously pissed, but no one was hurt or arrested."

"Did he have a warrant?"

Lucky rubs the back of his neck. "Yeah. They say they had intel about an underground drug ring or some shit."

"That lying motherfucker," I grit out.

"I'm gonna head over there now. Want me to wait for you?" He glances

down, and I realize I'm stark naked.

"Yeah. Lemme get dressed. Meet you out by the bikes." As I'm pulling on my pants, I hit the speed dial for the sheriff.

"Yeah," he answers sleepily.

"Wake up, asshole. We've got a problem," I say, throwing on a white tee shirt.

"Rigger?"

"Yeah, it's me. Get your ass up and meet me at the Honey Pot in fifteen."

"Why?"

I work to keep my anger from getting out of hand. "You really want me to get into that now while your wife is next to you and can probably hear me shouting into the fuckin' phone?"

He sighs. "I'll see you there."

"Damn right, you will." I hang up.



The energy is tense when Lucky and I walk into the brothel. The girls are together in the parlor and bar area, talking quietly. Though the lights are all on, there's no music playing. It's such a stark contrast to the usual atmosphere that it's jarring. Even more so when I see the only drink being served by Paxson is coffee.

Mary approaches, looking disheveled and pissed off. "What the fuck, Rig?"

"I don't know what happened."

"Well, you better find out because if this is how it's going to be—"

"Jesus Christ, Mary. I just walked through the goddamn door. Give me five fuckin' seconds to get on top of this before you start slingin' threats." My sudden outburst surprises me as much as Mary. I'm not quick to lose my temper, but after last night, I'm a hair-trigger away from losing my shit.

"Yeah, okay."

"Thank you," I say with little remorse. "Now tell me what happened."

"The Sheriff's Department pulled up around two in the morning, lights and sirens flashing. Before I could even lift the phone to make a call, they had everyone face down on the ground. Lacy, Aurora, Britney, Dieanna, and Fiona were all with guests, and those assholes didn't even let them cover up

before cuffin' them. They tossed every room, breaking shit as they went. There has to be at least five grand in damages."

"Motherfucker." I run a hand over my head, pissed as hell. "Did they find what they were looking for?"

I can't rule out the girls running their own hustle. We keep our eyes open, but we can't be everywhere all at once.

"No one got arrested, if that tells you anything," she says.

"What did you do about the guests?"

"What could I do? I comped their parties and offered a discount if they came back." She throws her arms up at her sides.

I nod. "Well, let's get everyone cleared out. The sheriff will be around any minute, and I don't want an audience for our conversation."

She nods and turns to the crowd. "We've closed the gates for now, so why don't you all go back to your rooms and start cleaning? We'll reopen at ten, and I expect the morning shift to be ready to work."

Slowly, they all disperse, leaving Mary, Lucky, Tigger, Tobi, and me. I turn to the prospects. "Why don't you two go help?"

"Okay." Tigger claps me on the shoulder.

As they leave the room, Sheriff Melville walks in. The man is tall, thin, and pushing sixty with stark white hair and hanging jowls, showing his age. He took time to dress in his tan polyester uniform before coming, so he's in all his gear, making this a professional visit.

"What the fuck, Melville?" I stand from my spot at the bar.

He holds up his hands, turning his head to the side. "Don't start with me. I didn't even know Clancy was executing a warrant until I called to find out why you were pissed."

"How can the fuckin' *sheriff* not know what's going on in his own damn department?"

He shrugs. "I would assume because he knew I'd stop him."

"And what did he find, Melville? Fuck all, that's what," Mary chimes in.

"Calm down," Melville mutters, which is the wrong thing to say because Mary charges at him, driving a finger into his chest.

"Calm down?" she shouts. "My girls were harassed by your deputies. They're humiliated. Do you think an apology is going to fix that?"

Melville sighs. "No, ma'am. I wouldn't think they give a shit."

"Damn right, they don't." Mary turns on her heels and walks out, muttering under her breath.

“Listen, Sheriff. We have you on our payroll, and so far, it’s not helping us for shit,” I say.

“Whoa, whoa. I am not on your payroll.” Technically, he’s right. There’s been no exchange of money, only services.

“You think the county will agree when they see the footage we have of you?”

He pales. “Footage? There are no cameras in those rooms.”

I lift a brow. “You sure about that? It would be stupid of me to not have proof of your. . . indiscretions.”

We don’t have cameras in the rooms, but he doesn’t need to know that. Plus, I’m sure the footage of him walking into the rooms with courtesans would be enough to at least plant doubt about what went on when the door closed.

“You’re lying,” he says, but I see the fear in his eyes.

“I assure you, I’m not. But it wouldn’t even matter if you’d do your damn job and keep your asshole nephew away from the Honey Pot.”

He sighs heavily. “I have a meeting with him later today. I will make sure he understands he’s not to come out here again.”

“And you’ll pay us five grand for damages,” I add.

“Five grand? You’ve lost your mind.”

I throw my arms wide. “Go take a look at what your deputies did to the place. All because Clancy wanted to wave his dick around.”

Melville pinches the bridge of his nose. “I’m gonna kill that kid.”

“If you don’t, I will.”

He freezes in place because it’s just a saying for him, but he knows I’ve killed for less than what his nephew’s done. “That’s not funny.”

“Not tryin’ to be.” My warning is clear, and we both know the club’s capable of making his nephew disappear.

“It won’t come to that. I’ll get him in check.”

I nod sharply. “Hope so. Now get the fuck off my property.”

With one last glare, he walks out.

“I thought that went well,” Lucky says.

I scoff. “His prick nephew better hope we don’t cross paths anytime soon.”

“Want to go look at the damages?”

“Shit.” I roll my neck, trying to ease some of the tension. “Let me call housekeeping. We only have a few hours before we open back up.”

After calling in some extra help, we walk from room to room, taking stock of things that need to be replaced and cleaned up. Once I get a plan together and give everyone their assignments, I head to Mary's office to give myself a second to breathe. The second I step inside, I realize I forgot something. Something important.

"Where was Navy in all this?" I ask Mary.

"I didn't see her."

I furrow my brows. "But the deputies tossed the residential suites too. Lucky is going through them with the girls right now."

"I don't know. She wasn't handcuffed on the curb with everyone else. Honestly, I assumed she was with you."

"She wasn't," I bite out.

She rounds at me. "Don't get snippy with me. I'm not her babysitter, and she's not one of my girls, so she's free to come and go as she pleases."

"Fuck." Unease spreads through me, thinking of why she wouldn't be here, but I can only think of one, and it fucking terrifies me.

I run to her room, ignoring everyone who calls out to have me look at this or that. Right now, I don't give a shit about anything but Navy. Her door is the only one closed; the rest of the girls are busy moving out broken lamps and slashed mattresses. Those fucking assholes left no stone unturned on their hunt for jackshit.

Digging my master key out of my pocket, I unlock her door and step inside. Like the other rooms, hers is trashed. Clothes, shoes, papers, and toiletries are scattered all over the floor, and her mattress is on its side, slashed from one end to the next, chunks of memory foam sprinkled around like confetti.

At least they didn't fuck with her frogs. I crouch to make sure they're still swimming and find them going about their business like nothing happened. Must be nice.

The one thing that isn't in the room is Navy. I pull out my cell and call her, but there's no answer. I try again, shooting her a text between calls. My message doesn't even say delivered, and every muscle in my body tenses as my heart picks up.

Pacing, I shoot a text to Tigger, asking him to look at the video feed. It takes only a minute to get a reply. Glancing at my phone, I curse. She took off in a rideshare before any of this craziness began.

I leave her room in a rush, popping my head in every open doorway,

looking for Lucky. If Navy's where I think she is, I'll need backup. Not to help get her out of the house but to stop me from killing the son-of-a-bitch if even one hair on her head is out of place.

Before I can find him, Mary corners me. "Most of the experience rooms are salvageable, at least until we can reorder the décor, but the girls need beds, and we have to replace the personal items that were trashed."

"Do whatever you have to do. You have the company credit card. Use it." I try to sidestep her, but she steps right along with me.

"That's a big undertaking for one person. Where's Navy? She should be helping."

"That's what I'm trying to figure out, but you won't get out of my fuckin' way."

Before I can stop it, she slaps me hard across the face. "I let your attitude slide when other people were around because I've worked with enough men to know when they need their ego stroked, but it's just you and me standing here, and I won't tolerate it."

My chest tightens, and my nostrils flare. "You seem to have gotten shit twisted, Mary. You work for me, not the other way around."

"That doesn't mean I don't deserve some respect."

"Respect is something that's earned around here, and you're not earnin' it because an abusive asshole is doing God knows what to Navy right now. I'm trying to get to her, and you're worried about a goddamn mattress? Does that sound like someone who deserves my fuckin' respect?" I shout into her face, drawing attention from the girls watching this spectacle.

These are all things I'll worry about later, but not right now when I have no idea where the only woman I've ever cared about is.

"She's in trouble?" Her shoulders sag, all indignation gone.

"Yes." I throw my arms out to my sides. "And I don't like repeating myself, but you're in my way."

She steps to the side. "Go find her. I'll deal with shit here."

"Fuckin' hell. That's all I'm asking for, Mary."

I continue my search, finding Lucky in Fiona's room. They're facing each other, having a quiet but serious talk, not bothered at all by the shouting in the hallway. It's too intimate for the kind of relationship they should have, but there's no time for questions right now.

"Lucky," I call.

They take several steps away from each other, looking guilty as fuck. I

don't know what he's up to, but it's not good and will have to stop.

"You find her?" he asks.

"No. I think she's at Ray's. Let's ride."

"Okay." He gives Fiona one last glance before following me outside, where Cy, Golden, and Dutch are climbing off their bikes. Fuck. I don't have time for this shit.

"Heard you had some visitors." Cy tugs on the end of his beard, getting it fixed back into place after the ride over.

"Yeah, was gonna call, but things got crazy."

"Everything okay now?"

"As okay as it can be. Spoke to Melville, and he assured me he was gonna put his bitch-ass nephew in place."

"Good."

"We thought you might need some help getting things back in order," Dutch says.

"It's a mess in there. We could use all the help we can get. Mary wants the place back open by ten." I don't have time for small talk, but I also don't want to be questioned about where I'm going, so I swallow down my anxiety and try to be as calm as possible. No such luck.

"If they're hurting for hands, where are you off to?" Cy asks.

"Navy's missing. Not sure where she is, so I'm taking a ride to see if I can find her."

"That more important than the Honey Pot?" One graying, bushy eyebrow lifts. The perceptive asshole. I can't lie to my prez. Not only could that get me kicked out of the club, but it would be a major disrespect, and Cy deserves better.

"I think she's in trouble. She's not answering her phone."

"Where do you think she is?"

I gulp. "Ray's."

He steps closer, shaking his head. "Now, son, we talked about this."

"You said I couldn't kill him. That doesn't give him the right to mistreat Navy."

"What do you mean 'mistreat'?"

"He's been doing the same shit to her and her mom that he did to me. I think she left here last night to go check on her mom, and if I know Ray—"

Cy doesn't let me finish. "Then there's a good chance he's beatin' up on her right now."

I tuck my hands in my pockets. Now that the words have been said out loud and aren't just invasive thoughts running through my head, my stomach roils. The fear I lived with every day as a boy reemerges, and I feel small and powerless. It's fuckin' stupid because I'm not that boy anymore, and Ray doesn't stand a chance in hell against me.

"I just need to find her and make sure she's okay," I say.

He must've heard something in the way I said it or read something on my face because his eyes narrow and his ears perk up. "What's this girl mean to you?"

I feel my brothers' eyes on me, all of them asking the same question, though only Cy and Lucky know our connection. Telling them she's my stepsister feels wrong on all accounts, but there's nothing else I can say. Maybe if I had dealt with last night differently and forced her to listen, I could proudly announce that she's mine. I could stake my claim on her, and she'd become part of my family in a whole different way, but that's not what happened.

She pushed me away, and I fuckin' ran.

"She's my—I mean, we grew up—" I run a hand over my head and face Golden and Dutch. "I don't fuckin' know, okay? Her mom married my dad when we were kids. I got kicked out at eighteen and hadn't seen her until the meet-and-greet night. Y'all know I stopped her from being a courtesan, but you didn't know why. That's the reason. And now that we've reconnected, things have gotten. . . muddy."

"Dude, you're fuckin' your sister?" Dutch asks, grinning like an asshole.

"No, we're not fuckin'."

"But you're something." Golden's knowing eyes read my expression.

"Something," I agree. That seems to pacify them enough to turn and walk back to their bikes. "Thought you guys were going to stay here and help get things back in order?"

"It's seven, so we have three hours to get your girl and get back here," Cy says.

Knowing my brothers have my back, regardless of the situation, I secure my helmet and start my bike. I wait for Cy to pull out—the Prez always leads the charge—but he nods me ahead. It doesn't sound like much, but with our rules, our way of life, it means everything.

I nod back and take off into the hot morning sun.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## NAVY

**F**our hours earlier. . .

I'm startled awake by the feeling of my blanket being torn off me. The chilly air assaults my previously warm skin as my brain tries to catch up with what's going on. I blink my eyes open to nothing but darkness. Inhaling the stench of cigarette smoke, both new and stale, I remember where I am. Ray's house. There's only one reason I'd be woken up so violently.

Rolling onto my back, I see a dark figure looming over me, and my stomach sinks.

"I knew the Sons would get tired of you after they'd each taken a turn," he grinds out. "Your pussy's nothing special."

"That's not why I came back." I slowly sit up, drawing my knees to my chest. "Mom needed me."

"I don't think that's what happened at all." He steps closer. "I think you saw what was out there and realized how good you have it here." He kneels on the bed. "The thing is, I'm not runnin' no hotel."

"You want money? I have some. Just let me—" I move to get off the bed, but before I can, he grabs hold of my ankle and yanks until I'm flat on my back.

"I'll bet you learned all kinds of new tricks whoring yourself out over at that brothel. Why don't you show dear old dad some of them? I'm sick of doing all the work when I fuck you," he sneers.

"What you do isn't fucking, Ray. It's rape. You've been raping me for years." My breath hitches as I say the words out loud. If I thought admitting it would make anything better, I was wrong. The weight and severity of everything I've been through hits me square in the chest, constricting my

airflow.

“That’s bullshit. You wanted it, and you know it.” He climbs over my body the way he’s done so many times before, but this time, I don’t make it easy. I shove and hit and kick him, trying my hardest to stop this from happening. “You bitch!” He lifts onto his knees and backhands me so hard I see stars.

Before I can regain my senses, my hands are pinned above my head, and my legs are squeezed together with his thighs. No matter how hard I struggle, I can’t get away. Unwanted tears leak out of the corner of my eyes as I use all my strength to try to free myself, but it’s no use. I’m still too weak; the time spent at the Honey Pot hasn’t been long enough to reach a healthy weight, and my time in the gym not enough to gain muscle.

“Mom!” I shout. “Call nine-one-one!”

Ray chuckles. “You think that bitch would go against me? You must be a special kind of stupid if the last fifteen years have taught you nothing.”

He’s right. This last week has changed me, but Mom hasn’t. She’s been living here, taking the same shit from Ray that he’s always given. I can’t expect her to do anything besides what she’s always done.

With no other option, I used the only thing I had. “Colin will kill you for this.”

Ray laughs so long and hard I worry something broke inside his head. “Shit, Vivi. You can’t say funny shit like that when I’m tryin’ to get it up. You almost killed my boner.” He dips down and licks up the side of my face. His breath is toxic, and his tongue is dry. The two mixed have me dry heaving.

“It’s not funny. He won’t let you get away with this.”

He rests his crusty lips against the shell of my ear, his nose flattening into my head. “I’m untouchable. Those men you see me leave with? I’m working for them now, and they’re the reason there’s a Honey Pot Ranch at all. It was their money that funded the whole thing. So, if you think for one second that the club would cause that kind of rift between them and their cash cow, you’re dumber than I thought. You’re not special. To anyone.”

He clamps my hands with one of his and skims under my sleep shirt to my breast with the other. His rough hands fondle me and pinch my nipple, twisting it until I cry out in pain.

“My little whore likes it when I make her hurt.” He shifts to my side, clamping my right leg down with his own. His hand leaves my breast and

skims down my body, snaking under my sleep shorts and shoving his way between my thighs. He chuckles. “Dry as fuck. No wonder the Sons kicked you out, you frigid bitch.”

Ray retracts his hand and moves off me. For a second, I think he’s going to leave, that despite his bravado, he took my threat seriously. I was wrong. He rears back and punches me in the stomach. My body recoils, curling into a ball.

“Get on your stomach. If I have to look at your ugly face, I’ll never get off.”

All the fight leaves me, and I’m back to the person I used to be, allowing my own rape because at least then he won’t kill me. He won’t make me hurt anymore. Like a light switch being turned off, I roll onto my stomach and go somewhere else in my mind, somewhere far, far away from this ugly doublewide full of so much evil, even the soil grows nothing but weeds.

*When I get back, I need to validate timecards, enter payroll, and call the pool guy. That second filter isn’t working, and we don’t want anyone to get a rash from untreated water.*

“You like this, don’t you, you dirty slut?”

*I also need to make sure housekeeping knows that Dieanna’s tour is ending on Monday, and her room will have to be stripped and cleaned for the new girl. What was her name?*

“Why would you want all those amateurs when you have Daddy here to make you feel good?”

*Jordyn. That’s her name. She looks gorgeous in her pictures with all those tattoos and piercings. I’ll bet the guests are going to go crazy over her. Her nipples are even pierced. I wonder how bad that hurts to get done. Maybe I should get mine done. If I had to be blessed with small tits, I could at least decorate them.*

“Fuck,” Ray shouts, and I feel the telltale rush of warmth coating my insides.

I’ll have to ask the physician’s assistant the Honey Pot employs for another STI screening. It’s one of the first things I did when I moved in. Waiting for those results was terrifying. While I didn’t think anyone else would be dumb enough to sleep with Ray, I couldn’t rule out that I was the only one he was raping without protection. I was so relieved when the test came back negative, and now, I have to do it all over again.

At least I don’t have to worry about pregnancy. The morning after the

first time Ray snuck in my room, I made Mom take me to the free clinic for birth control. She didn't argue, which leads me to believe she knew what was happening from the very beginning.

He shoves my head into the pillow as he pulls out. "Underwhelming, as always. And unless you want more when I get up, you better get your scrawny ass out of my house. You hear me?"

I nod, not trusting my voice. He must feel it under his palm because he releases me and leaves.

I cried the first time Ray raped me. After that, I locked my emotions up tight and haven't let them back out. It wasn't until I was reunited with Colin and spent time with all the amazing women at the Honey Pot that I allowed them to peek through. And as I lie in the dark, curled up on my side, my stepdad's cum leaking out of my abused body, I blame them all for the tears pouring down my face.

No matter what I said to Colin, I was letting my guard down. I was entertaining thoughts of staying. Things at the Honey Pot were going so well, and I was doing such a good job. The girls relied on me, and even Mary was impressed by how much I could get done in a shift.

Now I know there's no other choice but to run. If Ray's right and he's untouchable, then I'll never be safe. If there was a chance I might change my mind before, it's gone now. Mom can come with me or stay here and let Ray kill her. I don't care anymore. I'm tired of trying to save everyone else. It's time to save myself.

I should heed Ray's warning and leave, but when I try to get up, my head spins, and bile creeps up my throat. I just need an hour to rest. Ray's no doubt snoring in bed by now and won't be up for hours. I'll be safe for a little longer. Feeling around for the discarded blanket, I find it and pull it over my bruised body.

An hour is all I need.



I startle awake for a second time, but this time, it's because of banging on the front door. It's light out now, and the realization of last night floods back to me as I struggle to sit up. Looking down, I find a massive bruise covering my side, and I'm having a hard time opening my right eye. I reach up to touch

my face and wince. I don't have to look in a mirror to know my eye is cut, swollen, and bruised.

Standing up slowly, the rest comes back as my thighs come unstuck from each other. Reaching between my legs, I feel the dry and crusty cum. Fucking disgusting.

The banging starts again as I look around for my sleep shorts, finding them in the sheets. I'm pulling them on when I hear a loud crash, and a voice I recognize calls my name.

Colin? He came for me?

I can't let him see me like this. Instinctually, I know he'll kill Ray no matter what kind of deal the Sons have worked out. What then? Would they kick him out of the club? He's said on more than one occasion that his brothers are everything to him. He wouldn't survive if he was stripped of his patch.

I move as fast as I can to my closet, opening it silently and slipping behind the bi-fold doors. Exhaustion sets in again, and I sink to the floor. My limbs feel heavy, and my head is foggy.

"Vivi!" Colin shouts again.

"What the fuck is going on?" Ray says after his bedroom door squeaks open.

There's another loud sound, like someone being thrown against a wall. "I know she's here. What did you do with her?"

"I don't know who the hell you're talking about."

"Yeah, you fuckin' do, you worthless pile of shit."

I hear the distinct sound of a punch. God knows I've heard enough of those to know what it sounds like.

"Don't lie to me," Colin grits out.

"I ain't lying."

"Come on, brother," Cy says in his distinctively deep and rumbly voice. "Let's look."

Boots pound the floors, going in all directions. My bedroom door creaks open, and I cover my mouth with my hand to not give myself away. Through the slats tilted just right, I can see bits and pieces of Colin as he searches my room. It's still destroyed, but I cleaned it enough for him to realize the bed is freshly slept in.

He rests a hand on the mattress, no doubt feeling the remnants of my body heat. His eyes catch on something, and he freezes, his jaw clenching.

“Motherfucker.”

I was dry, which means there’s blood on my sheets. Ray can’t be bothered by things like lube.

He scans the room, stopping when he reaches the closet. He’s at the doors with two giant steps, and I know I’ve been found out. Throwing them open hard enough to crack the wood, he looks right at me, like he knew exactly where I’d be. Even with his brows knit together and jaw clenched tight, he’s still the most handsome man I’ve ever seen.

“Vivi,” he says in a gentle tone that doesn’t match the fury rolling off him. “Why are you hiding from me?”

I push even further into the corner, staying in the shadows so all he can see clearly are my feet, calves, and knees. Shame covers me like a blanket. I tried so hard to keep this from everyone, especially him, but there’ll be no more hiding once he sees me.

“Go away,” I whisper.

“No. I’m not going to. Not ever. So you might as well let me help.” He holds out a hand.

I shake my head furiously. “No.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t want you to see me like this.”

“Fuck that. I’m getting you out of here.” His hand thrusts toward me again.

Desperation claws at my throat, making my voice louder. “I don’t need you.”

“The hell you don’t.” All the gentle hesitation he’s had for me since reconnecting is gone, and in its place is the dark and dominant biker he’d been holding back. I saw it in his eyes; I knew it was there. He’d been too afraid I’d run if he let it out.

I choke on a sob, realizing there’s nothing to say or do to get him to leave. I’m pathetic and weak. I let my own stepfather take advantage of me in the worst ways just to save a woman who has never wanted to save herself, let alone her own daughter.

He crouches, snaking one arm behind my back and the other under my knees before pulling me out of the closet and standing. With that, I finally break, burying my face into his neck, not bothering to stop my tears.

“Jesus fuck. What did he do to you?”

“Nothing. Just take me home. Please.” The request is out before I realize I

*am* home. This disgusting, dirty, depressive dump is my home. The thought only makes me cry harder.

“Yeah, Viv. I’ll take you home,” he whispers. His heavy footsteps carry us down the hall, where he pauses. “Gotta get her out of here.”

“We’ll be back for you, motherfucker,” a deep voice I don’t recognize growls out before I hear the distinct sound of a fist slamming into a face, followed by the crunch of bones and Ray moaning.

“That’s enough, son,” someone else says. This voice I do recognize. Cy.

Knowing all these men are seeing me like this, battered and broken, has me burying my face even deeper into Colin’s neck, despite the pain from Ray’s hit. Physical pain is nothing compared to the embarrassment I feel in this situation.

“Goddamn it,” Colin curses the second I feel the sun touch my skin. “I came on my bike. Dutch, can you get the keys to Navy’s car and call for a prospect to get my bike?”

“You want a prospect to ride your bike?” Dutch asks, astonishment in his tone.

“Don’t have a fuckin’ choice, now do I?”

“Guess not. I’ll wait here to make sure that fucker in there doesn’t mess with it.”

Everything in me screams that I shouldn’t be letting Colin make decisions about what happens to me right now. I should be strong, make him put me down. I should drive away from here. I trusted Colin once, and he let me down, so I shouldn’t depend on him now.

But I’m so goddamn tired of being self-reliant. So tired of having no one in this world who gives a damn about me. I’m going to choose to believe his reasons for leaving. Choose to believe he won’t abandon me again and give up my control. Once I get myself together, I’ll be okay. I’ll stand on my own two feet again. Right now, though, I need him.

“Here you go, brother,” a voice I now recognize as Dutch says. Keys jingle, and Colin’s hand leaves my back for only a second.

“I have to put you in the car now, okay?” he murmurs against my hair before kissing my head. I choke on my sob at the sentiment. Can’t he see how dirty I am? How used and gross I am? I don’t deserve such a sweet gesture. “What’s wrong? What did I do?”

“Nothing, I’m fine.” I cling to his neck as he opens the car door one-handed and sets me inside as though I weigh nothing. Crouching at my side,



he tips my head up, getting his first look at me.

“Motherfucker,” he curses and jumps to his feet before storming back up to the house.

“No. Don’t. He’s not worth it!” I yell out.

Dutch meets him at the front door, placing both hands on Colin’s chest. The rage emanating from Colin is palpable, making him stronger than Dutch, despite Dutch’s bulkier build. Colin nearly pushes him out of the way when Golden and Cy reach Dutch’s side, backing him up. Colin’s arms flail as they attempt to reason with him, but it only makes him angrier. He shoves Dutch in the chest, making him stumble backward.

I force myself to my feet just outside the car. “Rigger!” I yell as loud as my hoarse throat will let me, and everyone freezes. “Please. Get me out of here.”

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

## RIGGER

Hearing her call me by my road name gives me pause. It's probably the only thing that could've broken through the red over my vision. Ray fucked her up good. I know it's not the first time, but it's sure as shit the last. I'm making it my life's mission to see him meet the Reaper before I do. That's the only way I can be certain he can't go near her again.

"Come on, Rig. She's in a bad way and needs help. Get her back to the Honey Pot so the doc can look at her," Golden says.

I hang my head and take two deep breaths. I'm not the kind of man who walks away from a fight, but I need to walk away from this one. I know I do. Hell if it's not the hardest thing I've ever done.

"Yeah, okay." I run a hand over my head and walk back to the car, noticing the pained look on Vivi's face as she slowly lowers herself back into the passenger seat. She's got wounds I don't even know about yet, and it makes leaving Ray alive even more difficult. Before I slide behind the wheel, I call out one more request from Dutch. "Call the doc and have her meet us there."

The ride back to the Honey Pot feels like it takes a goddamn year. Vivi keeps her head turned away from me, looking out the window, while I split my time between the road and her. There's a lot we need to talk about, but it'll have to wait until she's cleaned up and checked out.

When we finally reach our destination, I park out front since the clinic is closer to the entrance than Vivi's suite. I'm pleased to see a mattress delivery van out front, plus the BMW I know belongs to the interior designer who helped put this place together. She's no doubt making a list of things that need replacing.

Climbing out of the car, I jog to the passenger side before Vivi can get out. Once again, I scoop her into my arms. Despite the situation, I love how close this makes us.

“I don’t want everyone to see me like this,” she says.

“Like what? Strong as fuck because you survived something godawful?”

She shakes her head, currently buried in my neck. “I don’t want to see the pity.”

“Well, that’s good because they won’t give you none.”

Given the stress of the morning, the brothel is busier than it usually is. More of my brothers have shown up to do the heavy lifting, and the girls are still running around, getting things back to rights. Much like I thought, no looks of pity are thrown our way as I walk through the parlor. Just words of support, everyone letting Vivi know they’re here for her. No one knows what happened, and that shit will be kept quiet by everyone involved so Vivi can control what she wants her story to be.

Respect is built into our code, and our code is law.

The doc, Monroe, is already in the clinic room when we get there, sitting on a stool and filling out paperwork. Though she isn’t a full-time employee, she’s here most weekdays to perform exams, run the STI tests required by the county, and answer questions the girls have. Monroe was a sex worker throughout medical school, so she’s uniquely qualified for this position.

“Gonna set you down on the exam table,” I say, carefully lowering Vivi to the paper sheet-covered surface.

Monroe spins around to face us. “Hi, Navy.”

Navy. I need to start calling her that out of respect for Vivi’s reasoning behind using her full name. It might not be the same source of pride in getting a road name when you’re patched in, but it’s similar. Just like the change that happens the second our member patch is sewn onto our cuts, Vivi has been through a change. She’s not the girl she used to be, and I need to recognize that.

“Hi,” Navy squeaks out, wiping the endless tears from her face.

“Maybe it would be best if we have some privacy.” Monroe looks pointedly at me.

I narrow my eyes on her. “I’m not leaving her.”

Neither heaven nor hell could get me to abandon Navy right now. My dad, my own fucking blood, did this to her, but it’s not the guilt that has me cementing my feet to the floor. It’s something bigger, deeper. Somewhere

along the way, I claimed this woman. Not that I've made any declaration or anything. I didn't even know it until this very moment, but nothing has ever felt more right.

Navy is mine. Now I just need to convince her of it.

"Can I speak to you outside for a second?" Monroe stands, and her white coat parts to reveal her low-cut, silky blouse and short skirt. I don't even spare her a glance, though. Why would I want to look at anyone else when Navy exists in my world?

I cup Navy's cheeks, forcing her to look me in the eye. "Will you be okay for a second?"

She nods her answer. So, as much as it pains me, I step into the hall with Monroe.

"Talk fast," I say.

"I can't do a proper exam if Navy can't be honest, and she can't be honest with a caveman grunting and growling next to her as she answers my questions."

"I'll keep quiet."

"Even if that were true, I saw signs of other kinds of abuse," she says carefully.

"What do you mean? Like broken bones or some shit?" My anxiety level rises, thinking about her having a broken arm or leg and hurting her by carrying her.

"No." She sighs. "There are bruises on her inner thighs and possibly DNA there. I've received special training to perform a forensic medical exam, and I need to ask Navy if I can perform one on her."

I get caught up hearing about bruising on her inner thighs, the rest of Monroe's words going over my head. What did Ray do? Then it hits me, and my head spins with the realization. I clench my jaw so hard I hear a crack in a back molar, and my hands ball into fists as my breaths come in hard pants.

"This"—Monroe motions at me—"is what I'm talking about. I can't perform a rape kit with you going homicidal next to her."

"You're saying she's been raped?" I need the words. Need to be sure so I can have all the facts.

"I don't know, Rigger. Based on a quick visual exam alone, I'm going to say yes, but again, I need to do a physical exam and talk to her to be certain."

I leave Monroe in the hall and go back into the exam room, where Navy is in the fetal position, a paper blanket covering her nearly naked body.

“Listen.” I push a wayward strand of hair off her face. “I’ll be right outside, okay? I’m not going anywhere.”

She snuffles and nods, looking so goddamn small and broken. It’s not the Navy I’ve come to know, which only fills me with more fury. Ray did this to her, and that won’t go unpunished. My hands burn with the need to wrap my ropes around his throat and watch as the air leaves his body.

With one last kiss to Navy’s forehead, I leave Monroe to do her thing.

Standing in the hallway, I shoot a quick text to Cy, requesting he call Church for later today. It’s nine-thirty in the morning, and I already feel like it’s been the longest day of my life. I’ll be dead on my feet by tonight, but that’s nothing compared to how Navy’s going to feel.

“There you are,” Mary says, walking toward me.

“Not now,” I say.

“Yes, now. We’re opening the gate in a half hour, and I need to know my girls are safe.”

“Why wouldn’t they be, Mary?” I snark.

“You just paraded Navy through here looking like she got beat the hell up. Is there a threat I don’t know about?”

“What’s going on with Navy doesn’t concern you or the Honey Pot.”

Mary’s stern expression loosens into one of concern. I realize she didn’t come here to bitch me out because she’s worried about the girls’ safety. She came because she’s worried about Navy. My girl has charmed everyone in this place.

“Is she okay?” she asks quietly.

I suck in my lower lip to stop it from trembling. Now that I’m just standing here, my thoughts run crazy, and I realize the situation I’m in. If Ray did what Monroe said, I don’t know what to do. Everything in me screams to kill the bastard, but I can’t. I gave my life to the club the day I patched in. I vowed to put it before everything, including my own life. On my honor, I can’t go against that.

I also can’t let Ray walk the same Earth as Navy.

“Oh, honey.” Mary opens her arms, and I fall into them. “It’ll be okay. Whatever it is. I swear on it. That girl in there is tough as nails. There ain’t nothing that’ll knock her down.”

“How do I help her through this?” My voice comes out all shaky.

“You already are, sweetheart. Just keep taking care of her, even if she fights it. Okay?”

“Okay,” I say, pulling away and gathering my wits. This is the only moment of weakness I’ll allow myself. Navy needs me to be strong. It’s the least I can do.

Mary straightens her suit coat, uncomfortable with the out-of-character show of affection and support. “I’ll do one final walkthrough to make sure everything is as it should be. You let me know if that girl in there needs anything. And I mean *anything*.”

“Will do. Thanks, Mary.”

I pace the hall, occasionally listening at the door for any cries of pain or signs that Navy needs me, but it’s dead silent. I curse my insistence on making each room completely soundproof. It was smart for business, stupid for this situation.

My phone reads fifteen past ten before the door finally opens, and Monroe steps out, shutting it behind her.

“She okay?” I ask.

“She will be. She needs a shower and to be put to bed.” She holds up her prescription pad. “Do you have someone who can run to the pharmacy?”

“Yeah,” I say, already shooting a text to Tigger. “She need some pain pills or something?”

“You’ll have to talk to her about that. What was said and done in that room is confidential.”

I thought I’d locked away all my emotions, but more seeps out. “I need to know what I’m walking into here. Please, tell me.”

Monroe rests her hands on my folded arms. “My advice is to just be there for her. Don’t be a pushy asshole and press her for details she’s not ready to talk about. Let her come to you.”

I sigh heavily. “I don’t know how to do that. I’m used to getting what I want.”

“Don’t I know it,” she says with a huff. “You love her?”

I shouldn’t, but whatever innocent love I had for my little stepsister carried on through my life. When we were reunited, that love morphed into something different, something bone deep and essential to my existence.

“I do,” I admit.

“Then you’ll have to tamp down your own wants and needs to put hers first.” She pats my shoulder and walks away.

Steeling myself, I knock on the door and wait for her to grant me access. Sitting on the edge of the table with her hands clamped on either side, I

notice her face has been cleaned up, and a butterfly bandage has been applied to her upper cheek.

“Hey,” I say dumbly.

“Hi.”

“You ready to go back to your room?” I’m a fucking idiot to not have brought her clothes since she’s dressed in only sleep shorts and a tiny tank.

“Yeah.” She lowers herself to the ground and takes my hand. Knowing she wants that connection despite the night she had makes me feel more important than ever.

“Let’s go around the building so you don’t have to walk through the parlor,” I suggest.

“Good idea.”

The sun warms my skin when we step outside. Navy must like it too because she tips her head up to absorb the rays. Like this, hand in hand, walking down the sidewalk, I get a sense of déjà vu, back to a time when things were still shitty, but at least we had our walks in the sun.

“Remember the first time we met?”

“I do. You took me to the gas station while our parents fucked.”

I chuckle. “I wasn’t sure if you knew about that.”

She shrugs lightly. “I may have been six, but I don’t ever remember being a kid.”

“I kinda got that sense from you. I think that’s why I tried so hard to shield you from all the shit.”

She swings our hands back and forth. “You couldn’t save me from this life back then, and you can’t do it now. Some of us were born to live on the dark side.”

“It’s not so bad once you embrace it. It’s when you try to run from it that it becomes an issue.”

“I’m starting to see that.” She sighs and steps inside as I hold the side entrance open for her. “Crap. I don’t have my key card.”

“I got it.” I pull the master from my pocket and unlock her door.

“You have a key to my room?”

“For all the rooms,” I say, forgetting I let her believe she was the only one with access. “It’s for security.”

She gasps. “What the hell happened?”

I take in her room that’s still a disaster from the Sheriff’s Department tossing the place. The only change since this morning is that her slashed



mattress has been replaced with a new one, the plastic still on it. It's wild that all this happened this morning. It feels like weeks or months have passed in just a few hours.

I explain what happened while she stands dumbfounded, her arms wrapped around her middle. I wish I had the foresight to have someone pick up in here because now, on top of whatever trauma she went through last night, she has this to deal with.

"Sorry I didn't tell you before. I was distracted."

"Will they be back?" she asks before sucking her inner cheek between her teeth.

"Wish I could lie and say no, but I have no fuckin' clue," I say, fully knowing I have no business sitting in Navy's room when I should be out there, making sure everything is going well, that this won't happen again.

"Okay." She scans the room, looking overwhelmed as hell.

"Why don't you get in the shower, and I'll clean up?"

"I can do it."

"Not today, you can't. The doctor said shower and bed. That's it." I wish I installed bathtubs in these rooms instead of being cheap and only putting in walk-in showers.

"I'd argue, but I'm too tired." She opens a drawer, finding it empty. After closing it, she looks down, spotting her clothes. "Guess they couldn't be bothered to put things back where they found them."

"The whole place looked like this earlier. Everyone worked their asses off to get it back to normal so we could reopen."

"I'll just be a minute," she says, stepping into the bathroom.

"Take your time." Once the door closes, I get to work, cutting the plastic off the mattress and settling it onto the bed frame. After that, I go to the linen closet in the hallway and find a set of fresh bedding. If all I can do is make sure she has a comfortable and clean bed to rest on, then damn straight it'll get done.

I'm tucking the sheets around the mattress when a pained cry comes from the bathroom. The hairs on my neck stand on end as I rush over and pound on the door.

"Navy," I call out and get no answer. "Tell me you're okay, or I'm coming in."

I'm met with another otherworldly cry that has me ramming the door with my shoulder until the lock breaks and it swings open. The room is thick with

steam covering the glass shower door so I can't see in. Shrugging off my cut, I throw the door open and nearly fall to my knees at what I see.

Navy is sitting under the spray, her knees drawn to her chest, her head resting on top. From this angle, I can see a gnarly-looking bruise from her hip up to her underarm. She doesn't look up as I kick off my boots and step inside the stall.

"Talk to me," I say, sitting next to her, not giving a shit that I'm getting soaked.

"I just want it to go away," she cries.

"What do you want to go away?"

Her voice breaks. "The memories, all the times I let it happen, every memory of him, all of it. I want it gone from my brain." She fists her hair on either side of her head, yanking so hard I worry she'll pull it out.

"What did you let happen?"

She turns to face, an ugly snarl written all over her features. "You know."

"Need you to say it out loud, sweetheart. Tell me, because my imagination is running real fuckin' wild."

Her hazel eyes well with tears. "He made me have sex with him, Colin. So many times I lost count. All so he wouldn't kick us out. Or worse, kill us."

Even though I knew what she was going to say, hearing it cuts me so deep I worry any humanity I had left in me will bleed out, leaving me with nothing but emptiness and an inability to feel anything anymore.

"How old?" I ask, trying my damndest to keep an even tone.

"What?"

"The first time, Navy. How old?" It's a stupid question. It shouldn't matter, but it feels important for what I have planned for that motherfucker.

"Fourteen," she whispers.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

## NAVY

“Fuck.” The curse is barely audible as I feel the heavy weight of my secret transfer from me to him. Not all of it, but certainly some. It’s not fair to loop him into this, but I can’t deny the relief knowing I’m not alone in it anymore.

“I’m sorry.” Naked and exposed, I plead with him to understand.

“Goddamn it, Navy. What the fuck do you have to be sorry about? Huh?” Wrinkles form at the edges of his eyes.

“I didn’t want to do it, trust me. I didn’t, but I had no other choice.”

“You think I don’t know that? You were *raped*, Navy.”

My lower lip quivers, even more relief flooding through me that he doesn’t blame me. When I ran through this conversation in my mind, I expected questions about why I didn’t just leave or why I let it go on for so long. I should’ve known Colin would understand. After all, he was abused by the same man.

“I was,” I croak out.

He stands, pulling me to my feet, not sparing my nudity even a glance before wrapping me in his arms. He holds me so tight it hurts, especially by my ribs, where Monroe said there was certainly a fracture, but physical pain means nothing. Not when you’ve experienced the emotional pain I’ve been through. And right now, in this moment, with his arms around me, is healing me.

“You’ll never go back there, you hear me? Not even to check on your mom.”

“Okay.” I had already resolved myself to this the night before, but having him impose the rule takes away the remorse I felt for deciding it.

“Let’s get you cleaned up and into bed.”

“I can do it by myself.”

“No,” he says with a steely determination. “You’re not doing this alone.” Then he thinks better of his statement. “Unless you don’t want me in here. I’d understand.”

I almost panic at the thought of being alone. “Don’t go. Please. I don’t want to be alone right now.”

He nods and steps back, scouring the bottles on the built-in shelf until he finds the one he’s looking for. Squirting body wash into his palm, he holds my eyes.

“Tell me if I make you uncomfortable.”

I nod. “Okay.”

He rubs his hands together, building up a lather before rubbing them ever-so-gently over my shoulders and arms. Nothing about this feels sexual. Not for him. Not for me. Still, I can’t deny the way my skin heats under his touch. There’s nothing I can do about it; he just has that effect on me.

I close my eyes as his hands massage my chest before his touch turns into a whisper across my side where I’m bruised. Soon, he’ll be to the dirtiest part of me, and while I was okay with everything up to this point, I don’t know if I want him washing his dad’s cum from between my legs. On instinct, my thighs squeeze together.

When his hands leave me, I open my eyes to see him squirting soap onto a washcloth. My cheeks heat at the realization that he knows what I’m hiding.

His voice is a whisper, rough with emotion. “If you don’t want me to do this, I won’t, but please know that I want to. I want to wash him from your body, make sure all of him is gone, and then I’ll make damn sure you never so much as hear his fuckin’ voice again.”

“Okay,” I say because that was always the most degrading part of this process, and it’s felt so good to pass the shame and guilt over to him, so maybe this will feel good too.

I ease my legs apart as Colin lowers to his knees, one hand on the uninjured hip and the other tenderly cleaning me. Tears fall down my cheeks, mixing with the still-warm water from the shower. They’re not sad this time, they’re grateful.

Once he’s satisfied, he takes his time rubbing my legs. I relax into the massage, disbelieving that I could feel this good after such a horrible night. It doesn’t make sense, but I refuse to think too hard about it. I deserve this

reprieve.

When he stands, I move to turn the water off, but he wraps his hand around mine and brings it to my side before washing and conditioning my hair. Thank God for the on-demand hot water system in this place because I'm sure we've been here for an hour before Colin finally turns off the water and wraps me in a towel.

I've never felt so cared for and pampered as when he brushes out my tangled hair, rubbing my arms and legs with lotion before helping me into a clean pair of underwear and a sleep set. He doesn't say a word through it all, letting his touch say everything on his mind.

I've pictured how the "Ray chapter" of my life would end so many times, and never did it look like this. I imagined throwing him the middle finger as I drove away for good. I even imagined getting that gun out of his car and shooting him before leaving, but having Colin come back into my life has been an unexpected blessing. Maybe that's why there's still a niggle of doubt that this is really it.

"Come on. You need rest." He takes my hand, leading me to a partly made bed. "Lie down."

He tosses pillows onto the mattress, and I climb in, feeling exhausted down to my bones. A surprised giggle escapes me when he finishes making the bed with me in it, tucking in the sheets and blanket snugly.

"There. Now you can't get out." His stern expression tells me he's not joking, but it makes me laugh just the same before wincing at the sharp pain that radiates down my side. "Shit. Meds. Tigger was supposed to bring you some prescriptions."

As though hearing Colin's words, there's a knock at the door. Colin only opens it a crack, accepting a paper bag before slamming it shut again without so much as a 'thank you.' I find humor in that too, but I'm smart enough to keep my laughter inside this time.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he pulls out multiple yellow bottles. "What the hell are all these for?"

After all we've been through, I shouldn't find this to be the worst part, but it is. I sit up and take the bottles from him, carefully reading each label before removing the appropriate number of pills.

"Why so many?" he asks again.

"Morning-after pill, preventative STI pills, an antibiotic, and this one"—I hold up an oval-shaped pill—"is for pain. Monroe also got me up to date on

all my vaccinations.”

“Shit, Navy.”

I quirk a brow with a smile. “You’ve been calling me Navy. Guess that means I need to call you Rigger.”

“It’s a good way to start over.”

I nod. “It is.”



I wake with a start, groggy and confused. The only light in the room comes from my frog tank, letting me know I’m safe at the Honey Pot. A sharp pang radiates through me when I attempt to roll to my side, reminding me of the previous day.

At least I think it was the previous day.

I pat the sides of the bed for my phone to check the time. Instead, I find an arm that doesn’t belong to me. A glance reveals Rigger’s strong profile, and I can’t help but smile.

He stayed. Despite finding out my darkest secrets, he stayed.

My touch was enough to make him stir, and I watch with rapt attention as his eyes blink open and he sucks in a sharp breath, no doubt trying to figure out where he’s at. He turns his head and rolls to his side when he sees me.

“Hey,” he says in a voice husky from sleep.

“You’re here.”

After he put me to bed, he had to leave to handle “club business.” I told him not to, but he stationed a prospect outside my door so I could sleep knowing I was safe. He promised to return as soon as he could, but I thought that meant the next day.

“I hope that’s okay. Didn’t want to leave you alone in case you needed anything.” He sits up, digging his palms into his eyes and revealing his bare chest, littered with the many tattoos that decorate his skin. I wonder what they all mean, if they mean anything, and when he got them. It’s something I’ll have to ask when my head isn’t pounding.

“I’m glad you did.”

He tosses back the blankets and quickly throws on a pair of jeans on the floor next to the bed. “Sorry, I tried to sleep with my clothes on, but—”

“It’s fine.” Knowing he must think his nudity is offensive to someone

who just went through what I did, I'm quick to put him at ease. "I swear it."

What happened was new information for him, but it was just another night for me. The only changes I went through were admitting it to someone and deciding that it'll never happen again. If anything, I'm feeling calmer today than I have in a long time.

He pushes back the curtains, spreading sunlight all over my trashed room, reminding me that yesterday was a shit day for everyone.

"Everything here okay?" I ask.

"Yeah, a bit of a clusterfuck, but it's fine." He finds his shirt amongst the other clothes scattered on the floor and throws it on.

"Good." I struggle to sit up, the pain more intense than yesterday.

Rigger rushes to my side. "Don't get up. You're banished to bed for the day."

"No, I'm okay." I close my eyes and take a couple shallow breaths.

"I mean it, Navy. Betty'll be here in"—he pulls his phone out and checks the time—"ten minutes. She's gonna bring you some food and sort your shit out so you don't have to look at this disaster all day while you rest."

"Where will you be?" I ask.

"I got some shit to do at the clubhouse, then I'll be back."

A pang of disappointment hits me, but I shake it off. What did I expect him to do? Hang out here all day? That's stupid. Besides, I don't need him here. I'm good on my own, the way I always have been. It's not like him knowing my secret changes anything.

Except it feels like it does. I'm feeling vulnerable and in need of reassurance. I hate it. Things were better when no one knew, and I could protect myself.

He scans the labels on my pill bottles, shaking an appropriate amount into his palm before setting them on the nightstand. "Take these after you get some food in your system."

"I can take care of myself," I say with more confidence than I feel.

"I know you can." He cages me in with an arm on either side of my legs.

"Then let me get my own pills. I'm fine."

"That's not how this is gonna work."

I give him a confused look. "I don't understand."

"I know you don't, and that's my fault. I abandoned you, left you to fend for yourself in a bad situation. That's my fault, and I'll live with that regret for the rest of my life."



“I’m not your problem to fix,” I say softly.

“That’s where you’re wrong, buttercup.”

“Buttercup?” My nose wrinkles.

He shrugs. “Just trying out new nicknames. One’ll stick eventually.”

While I’m stewing in my annoyance and anger, he’s lighthearted and cheerful. It’s confusing.

“Whatever.” I lie down, not giving him my attention in hopes he’ll just go away already.

“Listen up because I’m only saying this once. I made a decision last night, one you can get on board with or fight, but just know that I’ll get my way eventually, so it’ll be a waste of time.”

I groan. “My head is throbbing. Can this wait?”

“No, it can’t. Now, I’m leaving ’cause I got shit to do, *not* because I want to. Once that shit is done, I’m coming back here to be with you, and that’s ’cause I *do* want to. And every day for the foreseeable future, I’ll be doing the same. I’m not leaving you again, darlin’, so get used to it.” He leans over and kisses my forehead.

The warmth from his lips rolls through my entire body, lighting me up in a way it has no business doing, forcing out the irritation I feel I need to hold on to in self-preservation. But it’s a losing battle when he’s saying and doing all the things I wish he’d done when I was just a girl. That craving inside me is being fed, and I’m satiated for the first time in years.

“We’ll see,” I say because the doubt is still there, battling for dominance, and only time will tell which wins.

“Yeah,” he agrees. “You will.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

## RIGGER

“**W**here are we at with Clancy?” Cy asks.

My leg bounces uncontrollably. This is the last place I want to be, but Cy called Church, and I can’t ignore orders.

“I spoke to Melville right before I came in. He assured me Clancy has been put in his place, and we don’t need to worry,” I say.

“Do we have anything to worry about if he can’t keep him in check?” Cy pins Golden with a look.

“No. I don’t keep our real set of books there, only the fake file. So even if they looked at them, everything appears on the up and up.”

“And *did* they look at them?” Cy pulls a cigar from his pocket.

“No. They didn’t touch our computers. Seems like they were only interested in trashing the place.”

Cy shifts his attention back to me. “Are we working under the assumption that Clancy made up this so-called intel?”

I nod. “Mary spoke to each of the girls, and they all denied having drugs. I know none of them are on drugs because I had Monroe test everyone, and they all came up clean.”

“Good.” Cy puffs on his cigar, plumes of smoke building on the ceiling. “Melville only has a few more years in him before the voters decide they want young blood taking over. I’d rather not wait until that happens to have some leverage on Clancy.”

“I agree,” I say.

“Riot, I want you and Satyr to do some digging. I want to know everything about this kid, from where he grew up to how many shits he takes a day. Got it?”

Riot and Satyr both nod.

“Anything else?” Cy asks, knowing damn well we’re not done here.

“Yeah, there’s fuckin’ something else,” I say.

“Rigger, you know where we’re at with that.” His tone is admonishing, but I don’t give a shit.

“Ray can’t get away with this.”

“And he won’t. We just have to be patient.”

“He fuckin’ raped her, Prez. Since she was fourteen.” My shoulders sag, gaze down, the words oozing out like mud.

The air in the room turns tense. We’re not angels, but we do have some morals, and we don’t fuck with the innocent. Back in the day, “the innocent” meant women and children, but that’s not the case anymore. Old-school gender roles don’t apply in the underground world of crime and deviance, so the club doesn’t give a shit what’s between your legs as long as you stay in your lane and don’t fuck with us.

“Fuck,” Cy curses, running a hand down his beard.

“I can’t let him walk around thinking he can get away with that shit.”

He sighs. “I understand what this must be doing to you, and trust me when I say it’s taking everything in me not to go over there and kill the bastard myself—”

“But your answer doesn’t change.” My posture becomes rigid, the anger I’ve been keeping at bay fighting to get out.

“Let me talk to Robert. Maybe he’ll have a solution if I go to him as a friend and explain the situation.”

I mash my finger into the table. “You and I both know Ray is invaluable to them. Having a dipshit with no association to the family, who’ll do whatever they want with no questions asked, isn’t something they’ll give up.”

“Maybe. Maybe not. It’s worth a conversation.”

A conversation? Is he kidding right now?

I jump to my feet. “With all due respect, fuck that. Since when did we start bowing to anyone? The only thing we owe them is money.”

“Sit your ass down, son!” Cy booms. “You know what we’ve been through the last couple years. We’re only just recovering, and you think we’re in a position to go to war with the biggest crime family in Reno?”

“It’s not like we’re some amateur outfit,” I argue as I take my seat again.

“Let me put this into perspective. We”—he motions around the room—“are friendly with the mayor. The Costas are friendly with the governor,

the attorney general, and a shit ton of other politicians who could make our lives hell.” His gaze sears into me. “Are you beginning to understand where we rank in all this?”

I glance up at him with one last bullet in my chamber. “What would you do if it were Charlotte?”

His nostrils flare, and his face turns an unnatural shade of red as he stamps out his cigar in the ashtray. “I’d fucking hang him by his toes and gut him slowly.”

“Then you know how I feel.”

“All we have to do is pay them back,” Lucky chimes in. “Right?”

“It’s not chump change. They’re in this for two mil,” Cy says.

The room goes quiet, all my brothers trying to work it out. Despite the torment eating up my insides, I feel lucky to be in a room with nine other men who give enough of a shit about me to want this problem solved. I’d suffer at Ray’s hands ten times over if I knew this was where I’d end up.

“So we need to find someone with real deep pockets who wants to invest in the brothel.” Lucky drums his fingers on the table.

“It should be easier to convince someone now that we’ve been open a spell and have the receipts to prove what we’re capable of,” I say.

“Then that’s our mission.” Cy slams the gavel.



Not wanting to wake Navy if she’s sleeping or make her get out of bed if she’s not, I use my keycard to open her door.

“Navy?” I whisper into the dark room. It’s only early evening, so the sun should illuminate the space, but her blackout curtains are drawn.

“Yeah?” Her voice sounds strained, making my chest ache.

Using that as permission to enter, I walk inside, using the flashlight on my phone to light the way. “I brought you some food from the restaurant.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“You have to eat so you can take your pills,” I remind her.

“Maybe later.”

I pull the curtains back, earning a groan. “What’re you doing?”

“I already told you. It’s time to eat.” I set the bag of food on her bed before climbing up and setting up a picnic, ignoring the Navy-sized lump

next to me with the covers pulled over her head. “How are you feeling?”

“Great,” she says sarcastically.

“Liar. Sit up. I brought your favorites.” I unload the sampler platter that’s packed full of fried food, everything from egg rolls to mozzarella sticks, with at least six different sauces. If there’s one thing I’ve noticed after sharing so many meals with this woman, it’s that she loves her sauce.

The covers fly off her head. “I’m not hungry.”

“Come on,” I say lightheartedly, trying to boost her mood. “Just a few bites.”

Betty’s been blowing up my phone since she left Navy’s room two hours ago, telling me Navy refused to eat and wouldn’t talk to her while she was cleaning the room.

“Will that make you go away?” she asks, spotting the Skittles I brought along with the food. She picks the red package up and studies it as if remembering the bag of candy we shared on the day we met and many times after that.

“Nope.” I pop a fry in my mouth, hoping the small gesture will make her smile. But no such luck.

“Then what will?” She tosses the candy to the side and a pang of disappointment hits me square in the chest. It’s fine, though. She deserves to feel however she wants right now, and I won’t let it deter me from taking care of her.

“Fuck all.”

She sits up to face me. I try to hide my reaction but must not do a good enough job because she reaches up and gently touches her face. Her cheek is so swollen that half her eye is hidden. With the bruising still in its early stages, it’s mostly red and purple, but there’s a streak of yellow where the skin is straining to contain the swelling.

“I’m ugly. I know.”

I shake my head. “That’s not at all what I was thinking.”

“Then what?”

My nostrils flare. “You don’t want to know.”

Not even knowing that Ray’s days are numbered is enough to keep my rage contained. My brain is on a constant loop of saying “fuck it” and taking him out, and forcing myself to be patient. It’s fucking exhausting.

Right now, looking at Navy’s wrecked face, all I want to do is ride to his piece of shit house and blow his brains all over his tobacco-stained walls.

Her eyes redden as though tears are on the horizon. “Are you going to kill him?”

“Yes,” I say with determination.

She nods and lies down, her back to me. “Good.”

That she isn’t trying to talk me out of it anymore says a lot. She’s hit her limit. It’s not that I’m glad this happened, but I won’t have to lie when I take him out.

“We don’t have to talk if you don’t want, but you need to eat.”

“Leave it.”

“Not until I see you get some food in you.”

She sighs dramatically. “Jesus Christ, Rigger. You’re not my mom, and I don’t have to do shit.”

In seconds, I’m straddling her, pushing her onto her back. “What you went through was the worst fuckin’ thing that can happen to a woman, and I get that. As much as I can anyway. But I will not lose you to this, Navy. You won’t disappear. I won’t fuckin’ let you.” I grip her shoulders, shaking them slightly. “Do you hear me?”

Liquid sadness leaks from the corners of her eyes, her nose running as saliva gathers on the corners of her lips. She’s so fuckin’ beautiful, even like this. Even with the demons winning the battle in her mind, she’s beautiful.

“You don’t understand.”

“You’re right. I don’t, but that doesn’t change a fuckin’ thing.” I stroke my thumb over her uninjured cheek and lower my lips to hers, hoping my kiss tells her all the things I don’t know how to say. If she fought me, I’d pull away, but she returns the kiss until her sobs take over.

I don’t know the right thing to do. I’m just a stupid man who has never been in this situation. Do I push? Do I back off? How the hell do I get her back?

I search for my answers in her hazel eyes but come up short. So instead, I say the only thing I know with certainty. “I love you, Navy Kennedy.”

“Blue.”

I give her a puzzled look. “Huh?”

“My middle name. It’s Blue.”

I smile and cup her face. “I love you, Navy Blue Kennedy.”

She doesn’t say it back, but I don’t care. I didn’t tell her for validation. I told her so she knows there’s someone out there who wants her to survive this, someone who’ll be by her side through it all.

“I have a few things to take care of. I’m trusting you to take care of yourself, okay?”

“Okay,” she whispers.

As I climb off the bed and walk to the door, I hear her sheets rumpling and the distinct sound of a Styrofoam container opening. It’s a small victory, but it feels huge.

My first stop after making sure her door is closed and locked is a few doors down. Navy’s become friendly with a lot of the girls, but especially Betty. Today’s her last day on tour, but I’m hoping she hasn’t left the property yet.

I knock and hear, “Hold on a sec.”

The door opens, a look of concern on Betty’s face. “Is it Navy? Is she okay?”

“She’s fine,” I say, then amend. “As fine as she can be, I guess.”

“Oh.” She opens her door the rest of the way and hooks a thumb over her shoulder. “I’ll be out of here soon. Don’t I have until eight?”

I shake my head. “No, that’s not it. You’re fine.”

“Then why are you here?”

Suddenly, my mouth goes dry, unable to form words because why *am* I here?

“Oh, honey,” she coos. “Come in. Let’s talk.”

I tuck my hands in my pockets and follow her inside. She offers her vanity stool, and I accept, shoulders slumped and mind spinning.

“When something like this happens, she’s not the only victim.” Betty sits on the corner of her bed and rests a hand on my knee. “It’s hard on everyone who cares for her. It didn’t even happen on the property, and all the girls here are shaken up because we all love Navy.”

I nod, still unable to say shit.

“She’s going through a lot, and right now, it feels like it’ll always be this way, but Navy’s one of the strongest women I’ve ever met,” she says. “I feel like an asshole, though, because this whole time, she had this big, huge trauma, and no one ever knew.”

“It’s my fault. I left her with him.”

Any secrets Navy and I kept have been exposed by now. Thankfully, no one has said shit about our relationship and what it’s progressed into.

Betty sinks to her knees in front of me. “No, honey. It’s not your fault. There’s only one man responsible. You have no idea what would’ve



happened if you'd kept in contact. There's a good chance she still would've hidden it. It's not something women like to admit."

I look at her with broken eyes. "So, what do I do?"

"Exactly what you're doing now." She stands and walks over to her closet to pack. "I won't be back on tour until next month, but I decided not to go home between now and my next tour. I got myself a short-term rental in Reno so I can keep an eye on our girl."

"Really?" I ask because I knew they were friendly, but that's a lot.

"Yeah." She folds a T-shirt and sets it in her suitcase. "I was molested by my uncle when I was ten."

I swipe a hand down my face. "Fuck."

"It's not the same because it only happened once, and my parents believed me when I told them about it and put an end to it, but I still feel a kinship with Navy. We were friends before, but now we're sisters."

"I'm sure she'll appreciate it."

Betty laughs. "No, she won't. She'll hate it, but she needs to be held accountable. If she doesn't have our help, she might get lost in the dark."

Goddamn. Of all the things I imagined when we opened the doors to this place, gaining an extension to my club family wasn't one of them, but that's exactly what happened.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

## NAVY

I startle awake, panic clawing at my throat and sweat beading across my brow.

“Shh,” someone whispers at my side, draping an arm over me and scaring me even more. “You’re okay.”

I get a whiff of leather and what can only be described as the outdoors, and my nerves settle. *Rigger*. Then, I realize it’s the middle of the night, and he’s in my bed.

“What the hell are you doing in here?” I squeak, scrambling away from him and sitting up.

“Sleeping,” he drawls, as if I’m slow.

“I can see that. What I meant was, why are you in my bed?”

He rubs his eyes as he sits up and yawns. “I couldn’t sleep and was too worried about you, so I thought it was best for both of us if I slept here for a few nights.”

“You didn’t think to ask me?”

“You were asleep,” he deadpans.

“You scared the shit out of me.”

He drapes an arm around my waist and lies back down. “Well, now you know I’m here, and you can go back to sleep.” When I don’t immediately join him, he tugs on me. “Come on. You need your rest.”

I turn to lie on my side, still trying to work this out. I should be pissed, but if anything, I’m glad he’s here. After that nightmare, I doubt I could’ve calmed myself down. It was so real, so vivid. I take a deep breath and shake the memory from my head.

“You okay?” he whispers.

“Yeah.”

“You wanna talk about it?”

“No.”

He kisses the top of my head. “I’m here, Navy.”

I try to fight it and stay irritated, but those two words nestle deep inside my heart. He’s here. I’ve done nothing but push him away since he came back into my life, and he’s done nothing but prove he won’t make the same mistake he did all those years ago. Can I trust him? God, I want to.

Maybe it’s the exhaustion or the weight of his arm and warmth of him pressed against me, but I quickly fall back asleep with his words running through my head.

*I’m here.*

The next time I wake up, I expect to still be lying beside him, but his manly scent and comforting presence are gone. I chastise myself for the disappointment I feel. He snuck into my room and fell asleep in my bed. Who does that? But the indignation I should feel over this never comes, only acceptance.

Rolling onto my back, I assess my body. There’s a bone-deep ache in my ribs and a pulsing pain shooting across my face. I feel absolutely destroyed, both physically and emotionally. The past two days were a lot, and while I feel relieved, and can say for certain it’ll never happen again, I’m embarrassed at all the fanfare. It means I can’t ignore the situation any longer. Now that everyone knows, I’m forced to confront my demons, and I’m not sure how to do that.

I’m still processing when there’s a knock at my door. I attempt to sit up, but it puts too much pressure on my side. So instead, I ignore it. They’ll go away eventually, and I’m not up for company.

“Navy?” Rigger calls as he opens the door.

Fuck it. “In here.”

He walks in looking refreshed and beautiful, while I’m certain I look like something close to Sloth from *The Goonies*.

“I brought breakfast.” He holds up yet another plastic bag of Styrofoam containers.

Learning my lesson from yesterday, I know he won’t leave until he sees me eat. I choose the path of least resistance and hold out my hand for help to sit up. He’s there in an instant, and I appreciate the fact that there’s no pity on his face. It must take a great deal of effort to pull that off.

“How do you feel?” he asks.

“How do I look?”

“Strong,” he says confidently, righting the strap of my tank that had fallen off my shoulder. And it’s the best compliment I’ve ever received. How am I supposed to keep my distance when he says things like that and crawls into bed with me to make sure I’m okay? “Let’s get you up. I thought we could eat breakfast outside.”

“I don’t want to.”

He smiles, and I swear, my heart stops. “I know, but the fresh air will do you good.”

“You’re not hearing me. I don’t want to.”

“And you’re not hearing me. Even if I have to pick you up and carry you out there, we’re going to the pool deck for breakfast.”

“I really hate you right now,” I groan.

“I know that too.”

He helps me to the bathroom, where I pee and brush my teeth, avoiding the mirror. I’m not ready for that. Back in my room, Rigger holds up a T-shirt to put over my tank top.

“What if there are guests out there? You really want them to see me like this?”

“I checked, and no one is using the pool right now. I also told the staff to not let anyone back there for an hour.”

“You thought of everything, didn’t you?” I grumble as he pulls the shirt over my head.

I can’t lie that the sun feels incredible as we slowly walk around the property to the pool area, though I’d never admit it to him.

He pulls out my chair at one of the umbrella-covered tables and takes the food out of the bag. “I got you bananas foster French toast because I know it’s your favorite. In case you didn’t want sweet, I also got a two-egg breakfast.”

“Thank you. The French toast sounds good.” Picking up the fork he set in front of me, I cut off a small bite and place it in my mouth, savoring the sweet bread. Rigger’s eyes are on me the whole time, making me uncomfortable. “What?”

“I have something to say, but I need you to not go nuclear about it,” he says.

A shiver runs up my spine. “What?”

“I was talking to Mary, and she gave me the number for someone you can talk to.”

I scrunch my nose. “Like a shrink?”

“A therapist. The club has one contracted for any of the girls who need it, and”—he squints over at me—“I think you might need it.”

I scoff. “I don’t need a therapist. What happened is nothing new. I just need a few days, and I’ll be good. I swear it.”

“See, I don’t think you will, or at least you shouldn’t be. If you think you’ll be okay after a few days, I’m even more concerned.”

I sigh. “You don’t need to worry about me.”

“But I do, and it’s not up to you if I worry or not.”

Thinking about what would happen if I opened the Pandora’s box in my mind terrifies me. There are so many horrors I’ve tucked neatly away. Letting them out would not do me any good.

“Just trust me, okay? I’ll be back to work in no time.”

His face screws up. “Fuck work. I don’t give a shit if you never go back to fuckin’ work. I’m worried about *you*.”

“Well, don’t be.” I take another bite of the sweet, decadent toast.

“I didn’t want to have to do this, but if you refuse to at least try, I can’t honor our agreement.”

I hadn’t even thought about my deadline to switch positions at the Honey Pot. Now more than ever, I need to earn as much money as possible in the shortest time. Getting out of Reno felt important before, but now, it feels crucial.

“Don’t do that.”

“Do what? Fight for you?”

I scoff. “Ever since my first night here, you’ve been dangling this over my head. It’s like you get off on controlling me.”

“That’s not it,” he says, the chords in his neck straining.

“Isn’t it?”

His voice raises to just below shouting. “This has nothing to do with us and everything to do with the fact that I can’t allow you to go in there and fuck random strangers when you’ve been raped for years by your stepdad! I can’t be sure you won’t freak out when that door closes and you’re left alone with a client. Until you can get a professional to sign off that you’re mentally stable enough for that, you’re not doing it.”

Tossing a card on the table, he storms off, leaving me with my thoughts. I

push my food away. Any appetite I was pretending to have is now gone.

Picking up the card, I read it and wonder how I can get out of this. Or maybe I don't need to at all. I can keep being Mary's number two, and though it might take me longer, the money is good. Plus, I'm not sharing it with Ray anymore so I can save faster.

Except I still can't breathe easy living in the same city as Ray. Not even the Sons can touch him, so what's keeping him from coming after me again? My stomach tightens into a knot, threatening to expel what little breakfast I consumed.

Then a thought hits me. I can fool a therapist, talk to her about the bare minimum and convince her I'm all good. I did it with all my teachers in high school. They'd ask where my bruises came from, and most believed me. Over four years, CPS was only called twice, and I convinced both social workers I was in a happy and healthy environment. Because even though things sucked at home, I knew foster care would be infinitely worse.

Yes. That's what I'll do. It might set me back a few weeks, but ultimately, I'll reach my goal faster.

"And one more thing," Rigger shouts across the pool deck, looking almost comical with his finger pointed at me in indignation. "If you care about me at all, if you've forgiven me even a little for my role in all this, you'll at least try. For me."

I roll my eyes. "Fine."

He eats up the distance between us. "Really?"

"Yeah. Really." I stand and gather the uneaten food. "Because I do care about you, Rigger."

That part is true, even if I have no intentions of giving the therapy thing a real shot. Lord knows I tried to stop feelings from forming. It's pointless and will only lead to complications. To my chagrin, somewhere between waking and sleeping last night, his arm around me, I realized I never stood a chance.



*Two months later. . .*

"You've done good work the past couple of months, Navy," Danielle says.

I smile into my phone screen at the middle-aged woman I've come to

adore. As hard as I tried to fight, Danielle found her way into my mind, drawing out everything I didn't want to admit. But that didn't make them any less true, and Danielle's helped me realize that.

"Aw, thanks."

"I'm serious. After our intake session, I thought it would take us years to reach this point. You were so closed off and resistant."

"I planned to stay that way until you broke me," I joke. "Thankfully, you're also helping put me back together."

"That's not me. You've done all the work; I only facilitate the conversations."

I didn't want to give healing any time since my focus was on getting out as soon as I could, but through our twice-weekly appointments, Danielle helped me realize that no matter where I go, there I am. Even after I move to Henderson, I'll still suffer the loss of my childhood. I'll still be unable to open up to people, and I'll still feel like my past is chasing me.

It was then I realized I didn't want that for myself. When I leave Reno, I want it to be with me in a good place, ready to move on and start a new life. So, I switched my focus to confronting my demons, bringing them to life before facing them head-on.

For now, at least.

"I have kind of a personal question before we sign off," I say sheepishly.

"Because nothing we've been talking about is personal?" She grins.

"You're right, but that was all my past. I want to talk about my future and how I move on."

She nods. "Let's do it."

"The only sexual experience I've had is with *him*, and I. . . I don't know. I don't like it."

"So you want to know how to start a healthy and consensual sex life?"

"Is it too soon for that?" My cheeks heat in embarrassment.

"If you're asking that I give the Honey Pot the green light to allow you to work there in a different capacity, I can't do that."

I was upfront about my career aspirations and was promptly shot down. Not only that, but she said she probably never would agree. It angered me initially, but after only a few sessions, it was no longer important. Healing was.

"Is there someone specific you want to have sex with? Maybe the guy who's been sleeping in your bed every night?" She gives me a knowing look.



I cover my face with my pillow. “I don’t know. Maybe.”

There have only been two nights that Rigger hasn’t slept next to me, and that was because he had a charity ride. I fought it at first, my stupid heart always wanting to push him away, but he showed up even when I gave him attitude about it.

Actually, he’s been showing up for me every day since he chased me down outside the Honey Pot.

“This is a question you have to answer for yourself. He’s not pressuring you, is he?”

“No, nothing like that.” If anything, he’s taken extra care not to make me uncomfortable. He keeps a drawer here with T-shirts and sleep pants now, and there hasn’t been any kissing, minus the forehead kisses when he leaves me each morning.

He also tells me he loves me every day, but love can mean many different things. I wouldn’t blame him if he’s no longer interested in me like that, especially after the shower, when he cleaned between my legs. There’s nothing sexy about that.

“Are you having desires?” Danielle asks.

“Is that wrong?”

She shakes her head and smiles softly. “No. You’re a young, healthy woman, and what happened to you doesn’t define who you are as a sexual being. It’s actually a good sign that your body is having natural responses.”

I raise a brow. “Even if those responses are toward my stepbrother?”

“Had you grown up with him, I might dive deeper into that. But you’re different people now.”

“Okay, so, how do I . . . do that?”

“Let me ask you a few questions before we talk about it.” She hovers her pen over her tablet. “Do you feel safe with him?”

Without an ounce of hesitation, I say, “Yes.”

“If you were in the heat of the moment and decided it isn’t something you want after all, would he stop?”

“I think so.”

“That’s a conversation you need to have with him because there’s a good chance that’ll happen. Sometimes you’ll get a flashback if he touches you or says something that triggers a memory. He has to look for signs and read your cues.”

“Okay,” I draw out.

“If you need support, we can always bring him into one of our sessions.”

“No. Absolutely not.”

“Then you need to get real comfortable, real fast, because you shouldn’t enter into any kind of physical relationship without discussing boundaries.”

“Right. Okay. I can do that,” I say, though doubt creeps along the corners of my mind.

Danielle sees it immediately. “What’s your hesitation?”

“That he might not feel that way about me, and I don’t want to get rejected.”

“That’s a risk you’ll have to take.”

I scoff. “So, do I just say, ‘Rigger, do you want to have sex with me? But before you answer, I might freak out, and even if you’re balls deep, you have to be okay pulling out?’”

“I mean, you could, but I might start the conversation a little slower. Ask him on a date; let him romance you a little.”

My head cocks to the side. “You’ve met the guy. Does it look like he does romance?”

She laughs. “He might surprise you, and I think I’ll make that your homework. I want you to ask Rigger out on a date.”

I practically snort a laugh. “Okay, but when I call you crying because he’s disgusted by the thought, I’ll expect you to cancel all your other sessions and fix me.”

“You know I will.”

“Okay. Wish me luck. I’ll talk to you on Monday.”

I hang up and jump off the bed, feeling energized and ready to work. Leaving my room, I stop at all the open doors, saying hello to all my girls. Rigger and therapy have held me together over the last month, but my girls have given me life.

Betty, who just arrived for her third tour, calls me into her room.

“What do you think about this?” She stares into her full-length mirror, running a hand up and down her curves. The outfit—if you can call it that—is three small triangles of fabric strung together by what looks like hot pink floss.

“I’d bang you,” I say with a laugh.

“Really? It’s not too much?”

“If it’s too much, then the guest isn’t enough for you.”

“Truth.” She sits down in front of her vanity. “How was therapy?”

Needing to talk to someone who will give me more direct advice, I shut the door and sit on the bed.

“Uh oh, what happened?” she asks, giving me her full attention.

“Nothing happened.” I weave my fingers together. “I just asked her if she thought I was ready to maybe have normal sex.”

“Normal? What’s the fun in that?”

I laugh at her joke. “I just mean sex that isn’t forced on me by my stepdad.” It’s still crazy how I spent years never saying those words, and now, they freely fly out of my mouth.

She grimaces. “Why do you have to say it like that?”

“Is there a better way?”

“I guess not. So, what did she say?”

“She said I should start slow.”

“I guess I don’t need to ask who you want to have sex with.”

I cringe. “Is that weird?”

“Hell no. Even if that man was my full-blooded brother, I’d still fuck him.”

“Eww. That’s so gross.”

She just rolls her eyes in response. “You know what I mean. He’s hot.”

I sigh, thinking about the way he looked when he left my room this morning. Something about his low-slung jeans, the chain on his hip, and his leather cut just do it for me. “He is.”

“He *really* cares about you. I can’t think of anyone better.”

“So you think I should talk to him about it?”

She smiles widely. “Yes. I think you should fuck your stepbrother.”

Well, okay then.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

## RIGGER

“What’s up, ladies?” I walk into the office where Mary and Navy sit together on the couch, each with a tablet on their lap.

“Just talking about promotions,” Navy says. “It’s riveting entertainment. Want to join?”

I dip down to kiss Navy’s head—the only contact I allow myself—and sit behind Mary’s desk, thoroughly enjoying the look she sends my way. If there’s one thing she hates, it’s disrespect, and sitting in her executive chair falls into that category.

“We’re putting together an exclusive VIP package. We’ve partnered with some casinos to bring their VIPs in for a fantasy weekend, where they’ll stay in one of the residential suites we aren’t currently using. While here, they’ll have access to the pool, bar and restaurant, and of course, they can book as many parties with the ladies as they want. We’ll also shuttle them to golf courses and the casino,” Navy explains.

“That sounds great. I’m assuming these packages will be expensive?”

“Of course.” Navy grins.

“That’s what I like to hear.” Done pissing Mary off, I get up and sit on the arm of the sofa next to Navy. “You have time for lunch?”

“Yep. I’m off shift, but it’s been a few days since Mary and I could meet, so I stayed late.” Navy closes her tablet and sets it on her desk. “But we’re done, so I’m good to go.”

“You need anything, Mary?” I ask.

She shakes her head. “Nope. I’m good. You two have a good lunch.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Mary,” Navy says.

Mary shoos us away, placing her reading glasses on and getting back to

work.

“How was the morning?” My hand itches to grab hers, but I made a rule for myself that I’d leave her alone until she’s ready for more. I don’t know how long that’ll take, but I’d wait forever if it means I get Navy back whole.

“Good. We already have three guests on property, and ten girls are booked for parties later.”

“Busy night.”

“Very.”

We enter the restaurant and are greeted by the hostess. “Hey, Rig. Your usual?”

“That’d be great, darlin’.”

Even though this business is completely separate from the brothel, it’s still on our property, so the women we hire to work in the restaurant are just as beautiful as the girls next door. I hardly notice her, though, paying more attention to how calm and happy Navy is today. Not that she wasn’t like that before, but there’s something different about her today. There’s an aura around her that’s light and warm.

*Jesus Christ. Aura? I’ve been spending way too much time with Bones lately.*

That is, until we sit, and out of nowhere, she clams up on me, scooting to the other side of the U-shaped booth, as far away as possible. My brows knit together as I watch her open the menu roughly and hold it close to her face.

“What just happened?” I ask.

“Nothing. I’m literally just looking at the menu.”

I shove down the length of the booth and slap a hand over her menu, bringing it to the table. “Try again. Thirty seconds ago, you were happy, and now you’re being bitchy.”

She glares, her eyes bulging and her lips flattening into a line.

*Oh shit.*

“If I’m too *bitchy* for you, maybe you should go have lunch with the hostess. Maybe you’d like her company more than mine right now.”

I try to fight it, but a smug grin breaks free. “You’re jealous.”

“I’m not jealous. I just think maybe she shouldn’t ignore me, and you shouldn’t be going around flirting with the staff.”

I chuckle. “I wasn’t flirting.”

She lowers her voice, mocking me. “‘That’d be great, darlin’.’ Do you know what that does to a woman?”

“You’re being goofy.”

“No, I’m not. She’s probably back there looking at how fast she can get an ol’ lady cut shipped out.”

I bellow out a laugh. “Now I know you’re fuckin’ with me.”

“I’m not. I wanted to have lunch and talk about something important with you, and you’re too busy keeping your options for later open.”

My smile falls. “I’d never do that to you, Navy. You should know that by now.”

“How would I know that? For weeks, we haven’t discussed anything besides how I’m feeling and how therapy’s going.”

I already feel exasperated. “What about me spending every spare moment of the day with you and sleeping in your bed every night has made you think I’m interested in anyone but you?”

She shrugs a shoulder. “You just feel a weird sense of obligation toward me.”

“There’s no obligation, Navy. But what about you?” I pin her with a look.

“What about me?”

“I told you I loved you weeks ago, and you haven’t so much as told me you like my company.” I try to not sound like a little bitch, but I don’t think I’m successful. I’m not an insecure man, but damn, I’ve never had to work so hard for a girl, and it’s giving me a complex.

“You need me to say it?”

I shrug. “I mean, yeah. That’d be fuckin’ nice.”

“I love you, Rigger. I always have,” she bites out, but I don’t let her tone take away from the words she said.

“You do?”

“Of course I do. Happy?” She scowls.

I tackle her in a hug, my weight pushing her down onto the bench. “Yeah, babe. I’m so fuckin’ happy.”

Laughing, she shoves at me until I sit up, taking her with me as I straighten. Then without any thought, I’m gripping the back of her neck, and my lips are on hers. I freeze, wondering if I’ve gone too fast or should back off, but that worry eases when her silky lips move against mine. Charged static spreads through my body as our tongues slip and slide together, completely forgetting where we are.

She cups my cheeks, holding me so close that our noses are mashed together, and I feel her deep exhales. I didn’t think anything could top our

first kiss, but this one does. There's no hesitation coming off her like last time, and I'm not scared she'll bolt at any minute. Maybe it's wishful thinking, but I'm choosing to believe there's a reason she's allowing this to happen. Maybe she wants this as much as I do.

We're interrupted when glasses clank onto the table. Pulling away, I hold her gaze for as long as I can. Her flushed cheeks and secret smile nearly bring me to my knees.

I thought Cy was so attached to Charlotte because he's pussy whipped, but I think I get it now. I haven't even fucked Navy yet, and I'm ready to give up every other woman in the world just to know she's mine. The visceral pull I feel to her cannot be ignored or shut down. I want nothing more than for her to belong to me.

When we can't ignore that our waitress is standing at the table, I shift my attention to her.

"You love birds ready to order?" Kimmy asks, smiling. She's normally on lunch shift when Navy and I are here, so she's witnessed the progression of our relationship.

"I'll have a prime rib burger and fries," I say.

"That's original," Kimmy jokes. "And you, hun?"

"The New York steak sandwich is next on the list." Navy closes the menu, still determined to try every item.

"I'll get your orders in right now."

Once Kimmy is out of earshot, I turn to Navy. "That was unexpected."

"Yeah, it was." She touches her lips, almost as if she doesn't believe what just happened.

*Believe it, babe. If I have my way, it'll happen every day until the Reaper takes my soul.*

"You said you wanted to talk to me about something?"

"I did, and now that I know how you feel, it'll be easier." She shifts in her seat. "I had a really good therapy session today where we discussed how I'll move on from here."

"Move on?" I ask, hoping this isn't going to lead to more talk about her leaving because that isn't fucking happening. Not after she told me she loved me, and definitely not after that kiss.

"I don't want what happened to define me in *any* way."

"I agree. You are so much more than your fuckin' trauma."

"I'm glad you feel that way because I think we should have sex."



Thank fuck I wasn't taking a drink of my water when she said that because I would've sprayed it all over her. Of all the things I thought she'd say, that was last on the fucking list.

A million thoughts run through my mind, but one specific one forces its way to the front of the line. "Are you ready for that?"

"Honestly, I don't know, but I want to work toward it."

"Work toward it," I say slowly.

"Yeah. Danielle suggested we go on a date."

"A date," I deadpan. I've never been on a date, not even in high school. I had no interest in getting to know girls. I wanted in their pants and figured out how to make that happen without taking them on fucking dates.

But this is Navy, and I like spending time with her. I spend every second I can with her; taking her out on the town might actually be fun.

She takes my silence for unwillingness. "I mean, if you want. She thinks we should take things slow."

Now I reach for my water because this is too much to process. After drinking half the glass, I think I'm ready to speak. "I can do slow."

"You should see the look on your face right now." She covers her laugh with a hand.

"I don't look like anything."

"You looked like I just dropped a bomb in your lap."

"You kinda did."

"So, what do you think?"

"I think I'm gonna take you out on a date."



"What do we have?" Cy asks from his place at the head of the table.

My brothers look at each other, none of them jumping to answer. My head falls forward. This isn't good. It's been weeks since we started searching for someone to buy the Costas out of our loan, and it's been one dead end after the next.

"No one?" Cy's look of disbelief mirrors my own.

"It's too much money, and we haven't been open long enough to prove our value," Lucky says gently, probably hoping I don't blow a gasket like last time.

“Fine. Keep your feelers out, and we’ll revisit.”

I wish I could be pissed, but I haven’t found any investors either. With all the scum I know who have amassed a fortune through illegal means, you’d think one of them would want to be part of this. But, no. Each day we fail, Ray is living a life he doesn’t deserve, and it’s a fucking slap in the face. My anger hasn’t lessened; if anything, it’s worse.

Each time Navy has a nightmare, each time she flinches when I move too quickly, and each time I hear her crying in the shower, all I can think about is killing that motherfucker. The only good thing to come out of this is that I’ve never been more ripped. The only way I can get my mind right is by spending hours at the gym.

Cy blows out a mouthful of smoke. “What about Clancy? What do we have on him?”

“He’s a fucking Boy Scout,” Riot says, holding up a picture of Clancy as a kid in a blue and gold uniform. “Like, literally. Two-finger salute and everything.”

“Even his porn is all romantic shit and nothing underage.” Satyr wrinkles his nose. “He really watches things like ‘nude massage’ and ‘gentle lovemaking.’ That shit nearly made my balls shrivel up.”

“Hey, there’s nothing wrong with that,” Lucky says.

“You’re fuckin’ lying.” Satyr shakes his head. “I’ve updated your laptop before; I know exactly what your freaky ass is into.”

“There’s nothing wrong with my porn.”

“One word. Granny.” Satyr’s face contorts with disgust.

Lucky’s eyes shift to each of us. “That was an experiment.”

I huff. “I don’t even want to know.”

“It was one time,” he says in defense. “One fuckin’ time!”

Cy tucks his chin, shifting his gaze down as he shakes his head. “How did I get stuck with so many sick fucks?”

“Takes one to know one.” Lucky smirks.

“This is obviously going nowhere. Rigger, anything we need to know about the Honey Pot before I call this disaster of Church to a close?”

I launch into my update. “Mary and Navy have started offering weekend specials through the casinos, where we rent out a couple of our empty rooms so guests will have unlimited access to the common areas, like the pool and spa. It shouldn’t affect your security shifts, but just keep an eye on them and make sure they aren’t harassing the girls.”

“Bones? Dope doing good?” Cy asks.

“All good.” Bones flashes his goofy grin. “We got a new sativa strain in if any of you want to pop by and give it a try.”

“And Riot?”

“We have a couple contracts next month. We’ll need to pull some backup for one or two if anyone’s interested?”

I lift a hand. “I could use some violence.”

“Yeah, me too,” Lucky says, but I know his real reason. Ever since we were kids, we had each other’s back. So if I’m volunteering for something dangerous, I know he’ll be right by my side, no matter what.

“Cool, cool. I’ll be in touch.” Riot’s one of the few brothers I’m not close to, but I think it’s intentional. He keeps everyone at a distance, which is on par with his crazy eyes and dark demeanor. The guy has something loose in his head, but he’s loyal as fuck and has saved my ass more than once.

“All right. Anyone else?” Cy asks with a look that dares anyone to speak up, but we’re smart enough to shut the hell up. “Then get to it.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

## NAVY

“Where’s he taking you tonight?” Gwen asks. She’s one of the newer courtesans, here on a three-week tour from Amsterdam.

“I think we’re just going for a ride, maybe get some dinner.” I wince as Gwen tightens one of the two braids she’s putting in my hair. After seeing them in her strawberry blonde locks, I asked if she could do the same to mine for tonight.

“That’ll be fun.” She wraps an elastic around the end and moves to the other side. “How’d you get around the rule about dating a Son?”

“It’s not against the law for me since I don’t work on your side of the business,” I explain.

“You mean fuck for money?”

I laugh at her crassness. “Yes, that.”

“It’s really too bad. They’re all so hot.”

“Yeah, they are,” I agree.

“How long have you two been dating?”

“Technically, we only just became a couple, but we’ve known each other since we were little. My mom married his dad.” It’s hard to believe it’s been three weeks since I asked Rigger to take me on a date. At least once a week, he humors me by taking me off property. We’ve seen a movie, eaten at restaurants, and last week he took me mini golfing. It was a disaster. Neither of us had ever been, so we didn’t know how it worked or how to properly putt the ball, but we had a blast.

There’s been more kissing too. *A lot* more kissing. He’s even cleared second base. The slow speed is giving me time to adjust and associate what he’s doing with my body’s reactions. I love him for putting so much effort

into me, even if he has to take a cold shower before bed after we've kissed our lips raw.

"He's your stepbrother?" Her vivid blue eyes widen.

"Yeah, but we didn't grow up together. He's older than I am."

"You don't have to explain to me. I think it's hot." She secures the elastic and turns me to face the vanity. "What do you think?"

Looking at myself in the mirror, I can't believe how far I've come in such a short period. My cheeks have filled out, I have some color in my complexion thanks to my favorite pastime of lying by the pool, and there's something else I can't quite pinpoint.

"You look happy," Gwen notes.

Happy. That's what it is.

"Thank you for doing this. Now my hair won't blow all over the place when I'm on his bike."

"Anytime, hun." She kisses my cheek and leaves me alone, though I'm not alone for long before there's a knock at my door.

I take one last glance at myself in the full-length mirror—skinny jeans with holes in the knees, a black crop top, and biker boots with heavy-duty buckles on the side. I look the part of a proper biker chick.

"You read—" Rigger's words die on his lips when I open the door. "Shit, Navy. You look hot as fuck."

"Really?"

With his eyes half-lidded with lust, he cups my cheeks and kisses me as he walks me backward and slams the door closed with his foot. He devours my lips, his hands moving to my ass and lifting me up so I can wrap my legs around his waist.

I run my nails over the short stubble on his head, loving the roughness on my way up and the silky softness on my way down. If I could do one thing for the rest of my life, it would be to kiss this man because it's never just a kiss. It's domination, a takeover of everything that is me—my senses, my emotions, my body, my mind. He consumes them all until there's nothing left but *him*.

He bites into my lower lip, giving it a sharp tug before diving back in, pushing his tongue past the seam of my lips. My nipples pull tight, and my clit throbs with need. If sex with him feels even half this good, I know I'm ready to move forward.

Pulling away, he rests his forehead against mine, his breaths coming in

pants, matching mine. “Sorry. Didn’t mean to maul you.”

I smile softly. “It’s okay. I liked it.”

He slowly lowers me to the ground before taking my hand and abruptly pulling me out the door. “We better get out of here before I do it again.”

“Wait. I need my bag.”

He releases me long enough to grab a sweater and the crossbody purse I purchased recently, and we walk hand-in-hand to his bike. Like always, he carefully secures the helmet he bought me before putting his own on. Then we’re off.

There’s no fear when I’m on his bike anymore, just the freedom of fresh air and the excitement of what’s to come. I don’t hold back with touching him either, using my time on the back of his bike to reach under his shirt and run my hands across the rippled muscle of his abs and small swells of his pecs. He doesn’t seem to mind, though it leaves him adjusting himself when we get off.

With no real plans for the night, we ride for a long time, going all the way to Lake Tahoe before we pull into the parking lot of a restaurant with a view of the insanely blue lake. We get a table outside on the deck looking out at the boats and jet skis that haven’t called it quits for the night.

The host moves to pull my chair out, but Rigger practically growls at the kid until he steps to the side and allows him to be the one to help me sit.

“Can I get you something to drink?” The poor kid’s voice shakes, clearly fearful of the growly biker.

“I’ll have a glass of whatever wine you recommend.” I don’t drink often, but it sounds good tonight.

“I’ll have a Bud. In the bottle,” Rigger says, not even sparing the kid a glance.

“Okay. Be right back with those.” He nearly runs away.

“You didn’t have to be so rude.”

“That wasn’t rude.”

I pin him with a look. “He nearly pissed himself.”

“Maybe he shouldn’t take liberties with my woman, then.”

“Your woman.” I beam, completely forgetting I was in the middle of scolding him.

“You are, aren’t ya?”

I nod happily. “Yeah.”

After that, we have one of the best meals I’ve ever eaten. As I sip my

wine, he makes me laugh with crazy stories about the club and his brothers. I haven't been back to the clubhouse since the night I got wasted, but now that I'm learning more about it, I want to spend time there and get to know his family.

Once our plates are cleared, we watch the last minutes of the sunset, and I decide to bring up something I've been thinking about for a while.

"This dating thing is going well, right?" I ask.

"You tell me."

"It is," I say with confidence. "So now I think it's time we have sex."

Rigger chokes on his own spit. "You gotta start warning me before you say shit like that."

"I don't know how else to say it. Danielle told me I need to be open and honest about it."

His face is beet red. "Yeah, but maybe clue me in before you drop the bomb."

Feeling butterflies taking flight in my tummy, I look down at the white tablecloth. "What do you think about what I said?"

"If you're asking if I want to, the answer is hell yes. Just want to make sure you're okay."

"I appreciate that, and I think I am." I sit on my hands, which are getting cold from the drop in temperature now that the sun has set. "But I thought of a way to do it that might be less triggering and more fun."

Rigger sighs. "What bullshit are you up to now?"

"It's not bullshit. I just thought that every time I've done *that*, it's been in a bed, so it might be a little easier for me if we weren't. . . in a bed at first."

"I'm not following."

"The experience rooms. They're not all used at the same time, and I thought if there's a free one, maybe we could use it."

He opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. He looks like a fish, his mouth gaping two or three times before saying something. "Don't know what I was expecting, but that wasn't it."

I'm sure I'm blushing at this point. "What do you think?"

"You know everyone in that place will know exactly what we're getting up to, right?"

"Does that bother you?"

"Hell no, it doesn't bother me. I'd take you to the Nature Room right now and let those motherfuckers watch."



I smile. “Maybe we can skip that room.”

“Whatever you want, babe. I’d do anything for you.”

With a smile, I stand, gathering my bag. “Then let’s go.”

“Right now?” He gets up and slings an arm around my shoulders. “My girl is needy. Can’t have that.”

I’m slightly anxious but mostly excited as we ride back to the Honey Pot. Nerves have me questioning if I made the right choice, but I focus on the man I’m holding onto, and I know it’ll be okay. Through years of conditioning, the world has taught me people cannot be trusted. That they’ll always let you down and use you for whatever they want. Rigger has proven that assumption wrong, though.

Once we reach our destination, Rigger helps me off the bike and walks me to my room. “You get ready, and I’ll be back in five.”

I narrow my eyes. “Where are you going?”

“I’m finding out which room is free right now and not booked later.”

“Oh, right.” I fidget with the hem of my shirt.

“We don’t have to do—”

“No. I want to. I promise.”

He kisses all my fears away, wrapping his arms around my shoulders and surrounding me with his scent and body heat until all I can think about is him. He didn’t know I needed to be grounded, but he does it anyway.

“I’ll be right back,” he says in a low tone, pecking me on the lips one more time before beelining it out the door.

I’m antsy as I feed my frogs, take my pills, and fret over what to wear. The jeans I’m wearing are tight and will be a bitch to get off in the heat of the moment, so they have to go. Maybe a dress? That feels too formal. I pull out another of my matching sets, soft shorts and a cropped sweatshirt. It’s kind of cute and definitely comfortable. It’s not like I’ll be dressed for long, and I can make my panties and bra sexy. He’ll see more of that than anything.

I quickly change, brush my teeth, and smooth some flyaways from wearing a helmet. I step side-to-side in front of the mirror, giving myself a pep talk.

“This is going to be good. Rigger is kind—I mean, not to other people, but he is to you, and that’s what counts. Plus, he’ll stop if you need him to.” I point at my reflection. “But you won’t need him to. Remember what Danielle said. What Ray did was a crime. What you’re doing with Rigger is engaging in love and intimacy.”

I bend in half, groaning. Why is this so difficult?

“Navy?” Rigger calls out. He’s probably been knocking for five minutes, but I didn’t hear because I was too busy talking to myself.

“Just a sec!” I shout through the door.

I got this. And even if I don’t, I have Rigger, sex or not.

Opening the bathroom door, I find Rigger crouched in front of my frogs, giving them a couple of brine shrimps.

“You’re making them fat,” I scold him.

“It’s just a little treat.”

“Uh-huh.” I fold my arms and lean against the wall. No one can tell me there’s anything more adorable than a big, strong biker sneaking my dwarf frog treats. My chest warms, and a calm settles over me. This is the man who can give me back what’s been taken; I just know it.

He stands to his full height. “You ready?”

I nod. “Where are we going?”

“The Kitchen.” He grins.

“Really?” Of all the rooms, I didn’t really consider that one. I thought he’d jump to The Office to boss me around.

“Yup.” He takes my hand. “Let’s go.”

The way this man drags me down the hall and to the west end of the property makes me giggle and brings a playfulness to the moment I desperately need. Like mischievous teenagers about to do something wrong, we look up and down the halls before walking into The Kitchen.

I’ve been in here before, but now that I know what will happen, I look at it differently. The light gray cabinets are in an L-shape in the far corner, capped with solid white countertops. The island matches, a good size and height for plenty of activities. A functioning stove, dishwasher, fridge, and sink are perfect for dirty housewife fantasies.

The kitchen table sits opposite, with a strong wooden base painted black, a gray and white marble top, and gray chairs. In the center of the table is a bowl full of phallic-shaped vegetables. I wonder if they’re real and if the girls really use them because that eggplant looks painful.

On the walls are artistically sexual paintings of fruit. I take in one with a strawberry dripping white cream, a halved grapefruit with two fingers entering the center of it, and a juicy papaya glistening with moisture.

Rigger turns toward me, and my heart races at the vulnerable look on his face. “What do you think?”

“I think I want you to kiss me.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

## RIGGER

I'm not scared of anything. I made peace with who I am and what my life would be like a long time ago because we have enemies, a lot of them. Jealousy and a desire to be top dog put us at risk daily. . . Yet standing in front of the most beautiful and broken girl I've ever known, I'm fucking terrified.

What if I do something wrong?

What if I'm too rough?

What if I don't pick up on her cues?

I don't want to fuck this up, but even more than that, I don't want to fuck *her* up after what she's been through.

"I think I want you to kiss me," she says with a smile that could bring a man to his fucking knees. Surprisingly, I hold strong and do exactly what she asks for.

Before my lips reach hers, I grip the back of her legs, lifting her into my arms and forcing her to wrap her arms around my neck. Her fingers immediately rake up and down the back of my head, nearly making me purr like a fucking cat.

Only then do I kiss her, letting every ounce of my desire pour into her.

Palming her ass that's grown juicy thanks to me force-feeding her and her newly found addiction to the gym, I walk us over to the island and set her down, pinning her in place with my hips.

Her cunt is flush with my hardening cock that's getting way too ahead of itself. I've already decided I'm not fucking Navy tonight. We'll play, and I'll make her come so hard she sees stars, but if I'm going to do this right, we need to go slow.

I pull away long enough to lift her sweatshirt off and reveal a lacy maroon bra with center seams that run straight across her nipples.

“Goddamn,” I murmur as I trace one of those seams, feeling the hardened pebble underneath. “Do you have any idea how fucking sexy you are?”

Running my hands up her bare thighs and inching underneath her shorts, I keep my distance from her center and repeatedly chant the word ‘slow’ in my head. I dip down to kiss her neck, stopping to tug and suck on the gold hoops adorning her earlobes.

“Rigger,” she moans breathily.

“Feel good?” I check in on her.

“So good.”

“Can I take this off?” I run my finger along the top of the lace. I’ve already decided I’ll be asking for consent for every move I make.

“Please,” she begs.

With one hand, I unclasp the back and slide the straps down her arms, getting my first look at the tits I’ve spent so much time fantasizing about. They’re even better than I imagined, bite-sized with small, dark pink nipples.

“Touch me,” she whispers, placing her hands on the counter and arching her back.

I grip her neck and lean in to feast on her lips while my other hand tickles from her neck to her breast. I cup the soft swells, gently running my thumb across her nipple and swallowing her gasp as she tilts her hips, grinding her cunt on my jean-covered cock. I’m already leaking pre-cum, and I wonder how the hell I’m supposed to keep control of the situation.

If she were any other girl, I’d have torn off her shorts and banged her ten different ways by now. But she’s not any other girl. She’s my Navy.

I give one last nip to her lower lip before trailing kisses down her neck and across her collarbone. She smells fucking incredible and tastes even better. Moving lower, I reach her breast but glance up before I go further. Her eyes are dark and half-lidded, and her lips are slightly parted as she nods.

Not needing more, I grip her breast and flick her little nip with my tongue before taking it in my mouth and sucking gently. Goddamn, I love tits. Love everything about them, from how soft they are to how good they feel with my hand wrapped around them. Size doesn’t mean shit to me, especially when they’re attached to the woman I love.

I give that one a final flick before moving to the next, paying it equal attention. My erection is physically painful now, desperate for some action of

its own. There's no doubt I'll be walking funny until my nightly shower, where I'll relive this moment and jerk myself off.

"Rigger, I need. . . I want. . ." she whines, making me grin.

"I know what you need, babe. Give me a second." I walk over to the fridge and pull out a couple items I had the kitchen staff bring down.

"Chocolate sauce?" she asks.

"And whipped cream." I set the bottles on the island and return to my spot between her legs. "I'm going to take off your shorts and eat your pussy. Is that okay?"

Her cheeks pink up adorably. "Yeah."

"That's good, babe. You're doing so good. I'm so proud of you." I rest my hand on her cheek, showing with my eyes that I'm not being condescending.

She bites her lip and smiles.

"Put your feet up on the island and lift your ass," I say.

She does as I say, helping me divest her remaining clothes, but the second her shorts are off, she pinches her knees shut. This will be the hardest part for her. She's told me all about what my father did to her, and it all revolved around the one place that's supposed to bring her pleasure and give life to this godforsaken world if she chooses. Instead, it's a source of shame and pain.

Thinking about all that is a damn boner killer, but I'm gonna do my damndest to turn that shit around for her if she'll let me.

I lift her foot, allowing her to keep her knees together as I rest it on my shoulder. Popping the cap off the chocolate sauce, I drizzle the smallest amount along her calf and set the bottle down. Her legs are freshly shaved and soft as I lay open-mouthed kisses over them, licking and sucking the sauce, hoping the sensation will pull her out of her head a little.

"That tickles." She giggles as she tries to jerk her leg away, but I don't allow it.

Taking a step closer, her calf resting on my shoulder, I repeat myself with the chocolate, only right above her knee. I can feel her eyes on me, watching intently and probably knowing where I'm going with this game. I'm so far out of my comfort zone with this shit, but I keep doing what feels right and hope it puts her at ease.

I'm not a romantic, and normally, I find the whole concept of romance stupid. For me, it's always gone like this: I spot a chick I like, I introduce

myself, maybe buy her a drink or two, then take her to the cabin and fuck her. There's no planning dates or playing with food in the bedroom, but there's nothing I won't do for Navy.

Once the chocolate is cleaned up, I take another step, forcing her legs to part. I keep my eyes on her, not wanting her to think this is all about what's between her legs, even though I'm dying to see what I'm working with. More than tits, I fucking love pussy. I'm not one of those assholes who refuse to give head. I love exploring what each woman has and figuring out what they like because it's different for each one. To me, it's a game and fuck if I'm not competitive.

Picking up the sauce again, I drip it down her thigh, holding her gaze while I suck it off, slowly moving closer and closer to the apex of her thighs until I'm so close, I can smell her. Goddamn, she smells like she was made for me. My mouth waters, eagerly anticipating what comes next. Will she give it to me?

“Can I?”

Hesitantly, the leg that's still perched on the island falls to the side, and she's finally—fucking finally—spread wide for me. I groan at her nearly bare pussy with only a trimmed patch of hair above her slit. I skip the chocolate sauce and instead shake the can of whipped cream, squirting a row down each of her outer pussy lips. I don't want to get it on the inner parts, worried it'll give her an infection or some shit.

Dipping down, with one hand on her thigh and the other on her lower stomach, I take my time cleaning the sweet cream off her, not allowing myself to dip between her lips and taste the cream that's uniquely her. Not yet.

“Oh, God,” she cries, but it's a good sound, full of lust and need. Exactly what I wanted to hear.

“This is my pussy from now on. You hear me?” I ask. “Nothing and no one matters after this moment because you're mine.”

“Yours,” she says in agreement.

“That's my good fuckin' girl.” I run a finger up her center, so goddamn thankful to find her wet. I'd stop here and now if she wasn't.

She inhales sharply as I repeat the motion, only this time with my tongue, giving her clit a flick on the upstroke. Just like I imagined, she tastes like my new favorite thing, tangy and sweet, the perfect combination. One taste isn't enough, and when I eat pussy, I fuckin' eat that shit.



I lick and suck, stopping now and then to remind her she's mine and how fuckin' proud of her I am. I use my fingers to spread her open, nearly coming in my pants when I get a look at what's easily the prettiest pussy I've ever seen. So pink, so wet, and so ready to come for me.

She lowers onto her elbows, her head rolling back as I slowly insert a finger.

"Oh my God, yes!" she shouts. "God. Fuck. Rigger. Jesus Christ."

I grin and pump my finger in and out while I lick and suck at her swollen clit. Her thighs shake as her internal muscles tighten, telling me she's close, so I keep doing what I'm doing until it happens. She screams a string of curse words as she spasms around me, her juices dripping down her pussy and onto the counter.

Witnessing her falling apart is the greatest moment of my life, and I can't help but be fucking proud that I'm the one who made it happen.

When she collapses onto the counter, her arms fling to her sides, and I give her pulsing clit one last kiss.

"Rigger, that was. . . I don't even know." Laughter erupts from deep inside her. "I think I get it now. Oh my god, do I get it."

I set her leg down and move to her side, resting an elbow on the island and gazing down at her. "You good?"

"So good." She rolls onto her side, using my shoulders to help her sit up, then pulls me to her, crushing her lips to mine. I hold her close, wanting her to feel how much I fucking love her and how happy she's made me. Pulling away, she hugs me back.

"I love you, babe."

"I love you too." She pulls away and moves her hands to the waistband of my jeans.

"Not tonight," I say, stopping her.

"But you haven't. . . you know."

"Come?" I fill in the word while I adjust the rock-hard erection in my pants. "No, I didn't, and I'm not going to. Not tonight. Tonight was all about you."

She screws her lips. "I don't feel right about that."

I pick her clothes up off the ground. "I'm fine. You don't need to worry about me."

"But why?" True concern is etched on her face, and I wonder if I fucked up.

Setting her clothes down next to her, I place my hands on her hips and say, “I don’t want to fuck it up, and Danielle said go slow. So this is me, going fuckin’ slow.”

“Do you not want to?”

I take her hand and place it over my cock. “Baby, I can’t wait to fuck you stupid, but your idea of using the rooms sparked my imagination, and now I have a plan. You don’t want to ruin my plan, do you?”

Her smile returns. “I guess not.”

“Good girl. Now let’s get you dressed because I need a shower.” I pull her sweatshirt over her head, not bothering with the bra since we’re just going down the hall. I also don’t bother with her panties and just pull her shorts on as she jumps down from the counter. When she looks away, I tuck her panties into my pocket because no matter how gentleman-like I was just now, I’m still a dirty bastard.

“What are you gonna think about during your shower?” she asks teasingly.

I grip her ass as we walk out of the room. “You know exactly what I’m gonna think about. Your sweet ass pussy.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

## NAVY

I couldn't spend last night with Rigger because he had "club business" he refused to tell me about. All I know is he didn't come to bed until well after two in the morning, and when I woke up this morning, his knuckles were split open, dried blood crusted across them.

Not wanting to wake him, I quietly got ready for work.

Now it's nearly noon, and I can't tell you what I've done today. My thoughts have ping-ponged between wondering what room he'll take me to tonight and what happened to him last night.

I try to answer emails and log timesheets, but I can't get it together. After Rigger gave me my first orgasm, it's like my brain went to mush. All I can think about is when he'll do it again. I was a little disappointed that things didn't go as far as I thought, but as Rigger softly snored next to me later that night, I had time to process. I was thankful for the care he was putting into my sexual awakening.

Honestly, what kind of man would jump through this many hoops for a piece of ass? *It's because he doesn't want just your ass, dummy. He wants all of you.*

That thought gives me pause because, in my head, I'm still not staying in Reno. No how, no way. I love Rigger, but I can't give him all of me with that monster breathing the same air I am. It's not possible, and I'll never be able to fully relax.

He refuses to talk about it whenever I mention the fact that he could come with me and Mom. Reno is where his brothers are—where his family is—and abandoning them is not something he'll even consider. I get it; I just wish I meant more to him than the Sons do.

Thinking about my plan has me realizing I haven't spoken to Mom this week, so I pull out my cell and dial her up. Something between us changed the day Rigger rescued me. It put space there that I don't know if we'll ever get over. And I'm not talking physical space, although there's that too because no chance in hell Rigger will let me go see her. Not that I want to, anyway.

"Hey, honey," Mom answers with fake cheerfulness. "How are you?"

"Hey, Mom. Just wanted to check in."

"I'm fine. Just putting dinner in the crockpot."

"What are you making?" I ask.

We haven't spoken about what happened, and maybe it's for the best. Because I'll never forget the way I screamed for help only to be met with silence.

"Some ranch chicken thing I saw on TV."

"Sounds good. Are you safe?" It's a dumb question. She'll never be safe living in that house.

"I'm. . . well, you know." She laughs humorlessly. "I'm not dead."

"Mom."

"I'm being dramatic. I'm fine. Actually, your stepfather has been quite busy lately. I think he's spending time with those men, doing whatever it is they're having him do."

"Kill people," I say, knowing she doesn't like to hear it. "He kills people to pay off gambling debts. Human beings with families and lives. All dead because of Ray."

"We both know what he does," she bites out. "There's no reason to spell it out."

I sigh, my frustration growing. Danielle told me to expect this. I'm not hiding behind loyalties or stuffing my feelings deep down anymore. I'm talking about them, making them real, and in doing that, my tolerance for her bullshit is the ground.

"We need to talk about it because that's what's really happening. Don't you see?"

"I see just fine, Vivi."

I wince at the use of my childhood nickname. No one calls me that anymore. It almost feels like a separate entity. Danielle told me it's a coping mechanism.

"Do you want to come here? Maybe stay a couple nights and get a

break?” I offer.

“You know I can’t do that. It’ll only get worse when I come home.”

I sigh. “Then don’t go home. Just move in. We have open rooms.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea. Not right now. I promise I’ll go with you when you’re ready to go. We’ll do what you said and move to Henderson. Maybe I can get a job as a cocktail waitress.”

I quirk an eyebrow I know she can’t see. “You want to serve drinks to drunk gamblers?”

“Beats being locked up in this house all day.”

“Do you promise you’ll come with me?”

“I promise,” she hums.

“Okay. Call me if you need anything.”

“I will. I love you.”

“Love you too.” I end the call and decide that while I’m at it, I’ll text Olivia to tell her I’m alive and well. We’ve been texting for quite a while now, and she’s getting impatient about not seeing me.

I put her off at first because I didn’t want her to see my fucked-up face and explain the whole ‘living in a brothel’ thing. Then it was because I was doing nothing but work and intensive therapy. Now, I’m out of excuses and actually feel stable enough to come clean about everything.

**Me:** Hey, bestie. How are you?

**Olivia:** I’m amazing. I’m out at Lake Tahoe sunning myself. It’s a beautiful day.

**Me:** Wish I was there.

**Olivia:** You could be. We’ll be here for another couple hours.

**Me:** I’m at work. Maybe you could come by sometime and see where I live?

**Olivia:** Omg yes. When and where? I’m still on summer break, so my schedule is wide open.

**Me:** How about tomorrow?

Sundays are usually the slowest day of the week, so I figure it’s the best time to have her come. It’ll be shocking enough for her to learn I’m living and working here; I don’t need the added ambiance of a wild night at the Honey Pot.

**Olivia:** Sounds good. Just let me know when and where. I’ll be there.

**Me:** I’ll text you tomorrow. Bring a swimsuit.

**Olivia:** You’re living somewhere with a pool?

**Me:** You'll see.

**Olivia:** Rude but okay.

Tucking my phone away and feeling better after the mental distraction of Mom and Olivia, I get back to work. Now that I know what I'm doing and I've proven myself, I'm working longer days. Most of the time, my shift is from five in the morning until five at night, but as long as I keep up with my actual work, I'm free to hang by the pool or relax in my room anytime I want. I just have to be on call when guests arrive or if someone needs me.

Rigger doesn't stop in for lunch like I was hoping he would. It happens sometimes, but today of all days, I wanted to see him. I don't expect an explanation about the knuckles, but since he was asleep when I woke up, I want to make sure he's okay.

He did text to tell me he had Church. That he'd probably hang out at the clubhouse all day but would be back for dinner. I better get more than dinner. After our experience in The Kitchen, I'm looking forward to what happens next.

I'm finishing my last task of the day when Mary comes in, right on time.

"How'd today go? Any surprises?"

"No, but we had a mom bring her eighteen-year-old son in as a birthday present."

"No," she draws out. "I hate it when the parents do that. It's so awkward."

I chuckle. "Oh, yeah. They sat at the bar together and interviewed every single girl on shift. It was creepy."

"Who did they pick?"

"Gwen."

"And how'd it go?"

I relax in my chair. "The mom sat at the bar for an hour while her son got his world rocked. Oh my god, you should've seen his face when they were leaving. I've never seen a happier customer."

She shivers. "So fucking weird. Why would a mom be so invested in getting her son laid?"

"No clue. It was bizarre."

She laughs. "Then again, if I'd had kids, I might've done the same. They should learn with a professional. Their future partners will be thankful."

"I guess." I stand and close my laptop. "Other than that, it was a good day."

“Let’s hope that continues on through the night.”

“Crossing my fingers for you.”

“I checked the schedule before I came in and saw Rigger had The Classroom blocked off for an hour tonight,” she says nonchalantly while watching me out of the corner of her eye.

My face instantly heats. “Maybe maintenance?”

“Maybe. He was doing maintenance in The Kitchen the other night too.”

Not wanting to take this conversation any further, I gather my stuff and leave as fast as my feet will move. Of course, whoever was here the night before last knows what Rigger and I were getting up to, but they’re all professional enough not to throw it in my face. That doesn’t mean I haven’t been teased a little, especially by Gwen and Betty.

I head straight to my room to clean up before Rigger gets here, take a quick shower, and dress in my most schoolgirl-esque outfit—a short-sleeve button-down, frilly skirt, and boots. Looking at myself in the mirror, I think it’s giving Catholic schoolgirl rebel, perfect for Rigger to teach me more about the wonderful world of orgasms.

I’m touching up my makeup when I hear my Rigger coming through my door. He doesn’t knock anymore, not since he basically moved in. The room isn’t big enough for two people to stay long-term, but we’re making it work.

“Hey, babe,” he says right before he turns the corner to the bathroom and stops dead in his tracks. “Fuck me. You look hot.”

I bend over the counter to apply a coat of gloss, fully knowing he’ll get a good view. “You think?”

He steps behind me, running his hands up the back of my thighs to my exposed ass, thanks to the thong I’m wearing. “You planning on killing me tonight? These long legs in this short skirt are lethal.”

I snort a laugh. “Corny.”

“More like horny. Come on, let’s get out of here. We have plans.”

I smirk. “I heard.”

“What did you hear?” he asks as we walk out of the room.

“That The Classroom was blocked off, hence the outfit.”

“Ah, I get it now.” He dips down for a quick kiss. When he pulls away, his face screws up, and he wipes off his mouth. “I hate that sticky shit.”

“Guess you’re gonna have to kiss it off me, then.”

“Bet.” He places a hand on my lower back and leads me straight past the restaurant, where I assume we’re having dinner, but then he explains. “I was



going to take you to dinner first, but now I'm thinking food can wait."

"Smart man."

Swiping his master key at the door to The Classroom, he holds it open for me. Feeling playful, I skip to one of the two desks in the front row and sit.

"You're in the wrong spot."

Confused, I ask, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you're the teacher. I'm the student."

I furrow my brow. "But I don't know what I'm doing."

He pulls me to stand and places his hands on my hips. "Last time, I did whatever I wanted to you. Now it's your turn to tell me what you want."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, you're in charge."

Not having thought through this scenario, I get flustered. I don't know how I feel about that. It's one thing to work through what's happening when I can mentally check out and just feel, but this is something else.

"Hey, hey." He gives one of my pigtails a tug. The hairstyle made sense when I thought I was the student. "Don't overthink it. We're here to play and have fun."

"I don't know what to do or say."

"Just tell me what you want. Teach me how to please you."

My mind spins with possibilities. It's not a bad idea to let me control things. It's all I wanted when I applied for the courtesan job. Besides, if I'm in control, I can explore his body the way he's done mine, and I'm dying to make him feel as good as he's made me.

I can do this. It's Rigger, the man who would never make me feel unsafe or do something to harm me.

"Okay." I sidestep him and turn around, building a character in my head. I can do this. I can be his college professor, and he can be the troublemaking student who's never paying attention. Then, I can make him do extra credit, only make it naughty. "You're late again, Mr. Brown. Please take a seat so we can get started."

"Yes, ma'am," he says.

Rigger is a dominant man who thrives on control. At any given moment, he knows everything going on at the Honey Pot and the clubhouse. He derives pleasure from telling me what to do and having me do it. I've seen it over and over, and to be honest, I like it that way. After so many years of making all the decisions and not having anyone as a sounding board, it's been

like a mental vacation since he's been back in my life.

All to say this can't be easy for him. I know he'd much rather be at the head of the room ordering me around. This is just another example of the lengths this man will go to for me.

Walking up to the whiteboard, I pop the cap off a marker and poise my hand inches away. "Today we're going to learn about—" I look behind me, not surprised that Rigger's eyes are on my ass. I recap the marker and turn to face him. "Do you have a problem, Mr. Brown?"

"Who, me? No, I'm good. Proceed."

"I don't think you are. As of yesterday, you're barely passing my class, and now I catch you being inappropriate? I don't think I have any other choice but to fail you."

He jumps to his feet, a sneaky grin on his face. "You can't do that, Miss Kennedy. This is the last course I need to graduate."

I snicker. "That's too bad."

"Please." He lowers to his knees, begging. "I'll do anything."

"Anything?"

He nods, a fake plea in his eyes. God, he's so cute. It's hard to remember this man is in a motorcycle club. He's left little doubt in my mind that he's killed people, many people, and here he is, playing along and getting on his knees for me.

"I guess I could give you extra credit."

"I'll do whatever you tell me to do," he begs.

"Hmm." I turn around so he's facing my back and slowly lower my panties, bending in half so he gets an eyeful of my ass.

"Jesus," he mutters under his breath.

Turning back around, I place my boot on his shoulder and lift my skirt, showing him my pussy. "I want you to eat me out like the last time you needed *extra credit*."

"Fuckin' gladly."

He crawls on his knees until his face is perfectly aligned with my center. This time, there's no teasing, no hesitation. He dives right in, wrapping his arms around my thighs and digging his fingers into my flesh.

I suck in a sharp breath the second his mouth is on me. His tongue is slick and smooth as it glides up and down my slit before making my clit its home. He starts with a flat tongue, lapping at the bundle of nerves and working me into a frenzy. I could never describe how he makes me feel, but I can best

relate it to fireworks.

It's that feeling in your chest when the smaller ones start. They're impressive and so beautiful, but then come the bigger, sparkly ones, and it gets even better. They fire off closer and closer together in time with the music, so loud you feel it in your bones. By the time the finale hits, you can barely breathe from the wonderment of it all. You never want it to end, but at the same time, you can't wait to see how it does.

Then it happens.

Rigger's tongue flexes, and he rotates between gentle flicks and a side-to-side movement that has my brain misfiring. My legs go weak, and I'm worried I'll collapse with nothing to hold on to. When his lips wrap around my clit and suck, I go off. My hands go to his head, holding him in place while I grind against him, using him for my pleasure. That was the point of this whole thing, wasn't it?

My orgasm rolls over me, through me, around me until I can't see straight. This whole fucking time, I've seen people walking around this world, doing mundane things like shopping and eating at a shitty diner when they could've been home, doing this? It makes no sense. I'm literally outraged.

Unfortunately, the violent waves of pleasure ebb, and I come down from my high. I lower my leg to the ground and stumble to the desk to sit down. This will never get old.

Rigger stands, wiping his smug mouth off with his hand. "What next, Teach?"

"We get to do more?" I ask, wondering if he would cut me off after oral like he did last time.

"Like I said, you're in charge."

I smile. "Good. Now, strip."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

## RIGGER

I kick off my boots before removing my cut and putting it on the desk. Navy bites into her plump lower lip, watching me like I'm her favorite movie as I tug off my shirt. When my hands move to my belt buckle, I ask, "Just 'cause these come off, doesn't mean they can't go back right on whenever you want."

"I know." She flashes me a soft smile that tells me she's good with it, and I undo my buckle before pushing my jeans and boxers to the ground.

I'm a confident guy, so standing here buck-ass naked doesn't faze me. It's the look on Navy's face that has me questioning my choices.

"What?"

"Rigger, that thing is big."

I look down at my semi. "Maybe a little more than average."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, babe. I'm sure. Have you never seen a dick before?"

She looks away shyly. "He used to. . . um, I was always face down."

Motherfucking shit goddamn. I stride over to her, tipping her chin up to look me in the eye. "I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking."

"No, it's okay. I'm good. I just haven't ever seen one up close and personal." She shakes off her sadness. "And I'm impressed my man is so well endowed."

"I love you," I say and, to make sure she remembers who I am to her, add, "You're mine. All of you. Your pretty lips." I kiss her. "Your perfect tits." I palm one of her breasts. "This sexy body." I run my hands up and down her sides. "And this amazing ass." I cup her ass cheeks. "All of it. Mine. You hear me?"

She turns pink with a blush. "I hear you."

"Good. Now tell me what you want."

"I want to do some research."

I nip her lower lip. "What kind of research?"

"The kind that puts *me* on my knees this time."

Just like that, my deflated boner from our momentary break in character returns. I hold my arms to the side, taking a step back. "Research away."

She starts kissing my pecs and letting her hands wander over my chest and abs. I might be flexing to impress her, but I'd never admit it out loud. Slowly she lowers, running her tongue over each rung of muscle on my abs. Judging by the way she's taking her time, I'd say she's been thinking about doing this for a while now.

Eventually, she makes it all the way to her knees and comes face-to-face with my dick. There's no way this is going to last long. Even if she just jacks me, having her this close after wanting her for so long, I won't be able to keep my control the way I normally pride myself doing.

"Take out your tits, babe. I want to look at them while you do your research."

She gives me a sideways grin but unbuttons her shirt and slides it off before unsnapping her bra. Her creamy skin comes into view and my cock jerks in response.

"Better?"

"So much," I moan.

"So, do I just grab it?" she asks curiously.

"Not too hard, but not too soft either."

My hips thrust of their own accord when her soft hands wrap around my shaft. She moves them up and down, getting a feel for something she's never done before.

"I want to taste you," she says.

"I want that too. So fuckin' bad."

Her lips part, and as God is my witness, having her mouth on me is straight up heaven. She takes me down only slightly before backing off, testing the waters, then moving back down again. My body shakes as I fight to hold myself back. Yet another situation I'm not used to being in. I like controlling blowjobs, deciding how far and how long to hold myself in. Not with Navy, though. Not yet, and maybe not ever, but I'm not disappointed. All I want in this world is whatever she'll give me.

“Fuckin’ hell, babe. That feels so good.”

Busy learning, she doesn’t respond. The look on her face is serious, like she’s studying a math problem she can’t figure out. It’s fucking adorable.

She takes me in further on each pass before I bump the back of her throat, sparking her gag reflex. The momentary squeeze on the tip of my dick sends sparks shooting down my spine.

“Sorry. I’m sorry. I’m not good at this.”

I tip her head up, her hands still pumping my shaft. “It actually feels good. The way your throat constricts and tightens around me turns me on.”

“Oh.” She does it again, only this time, she holds me in longer, fighting her reflex.

“Fuck me. I’m gonna come soon. You need to decide where you want it.”

“Where I want. . . oh. I, uh, want to taste you. The way you tasted me.”

“Music to my fuckin’ ears.”

I wrap my hand around hers, guiding her with the right amount of pressure to use on the part of me she can’t fit in her mouth. She might’ve been playing the teacher, but right now, she’s the best student I could ask for, taking my direction and running with it.

“A little faster, if you can,” I say, and she picks up the pace.

My balls tighten, and a tingle spreads along the base of my spine until there’s no turning back. I lift onto my toes and erupt while spouting a string of curses. Navy’s throat works to swallow everything I give her until there’s nothing left.

“Fuckin’ hell.” After I recover for a second, I lift her up and wrap my arms around her, holding her to me. “That was so good, babe. You did such a good fucking job. I’m so proud of you.”

“I did?” she asks, her cheek smooshed to my chest.

“The best.” It’s not a lie. All that bullshit about everything being better when you’re with the right person? Turns out, it’s fucking true. I could kick my own ass for even thinking it, but I wouldn’t believe it any less.

“I’m proud of myself too.”

“You should be.” I glance over at the wall and decide to press my luck. “Can I do one thing before we get dressed and leave?”

“Yeah, what?”

“Will you please bend over the desk and let me paddle your ass?”

She looks at me like I’m crazy. “Seriously?”

“I’ve always wanted to do it.”

She rolls her eyes. “Don’t hurt me.”

“I won’t. Not badly, anyway.”

She scowls, but I see the smile she’s hiding as she bends over the desk and flattens her hands on the wood. She looks so fucking sexy lying across the desk topless, her breasts smashed to the wood, creating an intriguing amount of side boob. I approach slowly, taking this moment in. I was serious when I said I’ve wanted to do it. Since this room was built, it’s been on my bucket list.

I flip her skirt up, revealing the round ass she’s working on at the gym. Moaning, I palm her cheeks, loving the way they feel.

“Get on with it,” she says.

“Hey, don’t rush me. I’m living out a fantasy.” Walking over to the wall, I grab the paddle, flipping it around to test the weight. Not actually wanting to hurt her, I give her right cheek an easy swat, earning myself a surprised gasp. “Are you okay?”

“Do it again.”

She doesn’t have to ask twice. Moving to the other side of her, I give that cheek a swat, and she lets out the same breathy gasp.

“You can go a little harder,” she moans.

“You sure?”

“Yeah. I kind of like it.”

Fuck yeah. I swat her over and over, stopping every few times to palm her warm flesh and check in. Her ass lights up a beautiful red that I wish I could photograph and hang on the wall, but that’s an ask for a future time. I think I’ve pushed my luck enough tonight.

I rehang the paddle before bending over to kiss each of her cheeks and cover her back up with her skirt.

“Come on,” I say, helping her up and dressing myself as she puts back on her bra and shirt. I also might’ve tucked her panties into my pocket while she wasn’t looking. “Let’s order in and eat dinner in bed.”

“That sounds perfect.”

I take her hands in mine, and she lifts them to stare at my knuckles. “Can you tell me what this is from?”

“It was nothing. Just a disagreement.” The “disagreement” was with a human trafficker’s bodyguard who didn’t think we should kill his boss, and we did. Ultimately, he was wrong, and I got out some of my frustrations by beating his face in before putting a bullet in his head. Riot had the honor of



killing the trafficker.

I don't even care that Mike, the asshole who hired us, is also in the business of selling women and children and used us to get rid of his competition. Especially not after Riot told me that once Mike pays us, he's taking him out, too, pro bono.

"But you're okay?"

I smile and dip down to kiss her. "Always."



With summer ending, there's a bite in the air as Navy and I ride toward the clubhouse. Her hold tightens on me, and I reach back to run my hand down her jean-covered thigh.

We haven't spent an evening together since we played in The Classroom, and it's been killing me. Riot needed help with another hit, which required a couple nights of surveillance. I still crawled into her bed in the early morning hours to make sure I was there to hold her close while she slept.

That's over now because we made our move last night and took out the man we were after. It was quick, just a drive-by in a stolen car we ditched the next block over. No cameras, no witnesses, and no one to miss the asshole we took out.

It was good timing, too, because while I was helping Riot, Navy had her friend Olivia over. I'll meet her best friend someday, but we both thought it best that Navy was alone when she told her the truth. She was super nervous and worried her friend would look at her differently, but from what she told me later that night, Olivia had known there was more to what Navy was telling her, which eased the truth bomb.

I guess she's coming back out to the brothel next week, so I'll meet her then.

Tonight, though, she's all mine. After we make a pit stop at the clubhouse for a party, I have another room reserved for us at the Honey Pot.

I park my bike at the end of a long line of Harleys. There's no reason for the party tonight, just my brothers needing to blow off some steam, which is honestly reason enough.

"Wow. There are a lot of people here," Navy says as she removes her helmet.

I smirk, loving the way she's turned into a biker chick. Though she hates it when I buy her shit, I knew she'd need a jacket for the coming months, so I picked up a black leather one with silver chains hanging from each of the front pockets. It looks badass on her, and paired with her dark wash jeans and distressed cropped tee, she looks like she grew up in the club.

"You're so fuckin' sexy," I growl, pulling her to me for a kiss. Thankfully, I don't have to battle all that sticky shit she usually has on.

She pulls away. "Don't start that, or we'll never make it inside."

"I'm willing to make that sacrifice." I yank her toward me by her front jean pockets. Like always, she rests her arms on my shoulders and scratches her nails across the back of my head. I roll my neck, giving her full access because it feels so damn good.

"You're like a dog, always wanting to be petted."

I scowl. "I am not."

"Are too." She flattens her palms on my head and holds me in place while she smacks a kiss on my lips. "Come on, let's go have some fun."

"Fine," I draw out as I take her hand.

Inside, the place is chaos, with booming voices trying to be heard over the loud music and people mashed together in small groups. In the corner, some of the club sluts have already taken to the pole, drawing attention from the hang-arounds. Poor schmucks will go home alone because those women are only here for the patch.

"There's someone I want you to meet," I say after we stop at the bar for a beer.

I pull her behind the bar and into the kitchen, where I know I'll find the woman I'm looking for. Just as I thought, Sugar is in the kitchen, whipping up trays of snacks.

"Sugar Mama," I call out, startling her.

"Rigger, I swear to God—" Her berating stops short when she sees Navy at my side. "Now, who do you have there?"

"Sugar, this is my woman, Navy," I say proudly. "Navy, this is our club mom, Sugar."

Technically, Sugar is Mustang's mom, but ever since we pulled her out of a bad situation and moved her into her own cabin, she's taken over the role of all our momma. She takes care of all us men, runs the household, and keeps any of the regular club whores in check.

"My god, you're stunning." Sugar pulls Navy in for a hug before

releasing her to swat me on the chest. “Took you long enough to bring her around. I heard whispers of the girl weeks ago.”

“It’s not his fault,” Navy says. “I’ve been busy working over the Honey Pot.”

“I’ve been meaning to get over there and see what you’ve done, son. I heard it’s quite the place.”

“It is, though I don’t know if you want to be hanging around there. Our guests might get the wrong idea and try to hire you for a night,” I joke.

She straightens her posture and runs a hand down her body, making me laugh. “I don’t want to brag, but I still catch an eye or two now and then.”

“Brag away. You’re beautiful,” Navy says.

“Thank you, sweetheart. Can I get you two anything to eat?”

“No, we’re good. Just wanted her to meet the only reason I haven’t withered away from malnourishment and died on the side of the road from all my bad decisions.”

Sugar takes Navy’s hand. “One day soon, you’ll have to come by so I can tell you stories about this hardheaded idiot.”

“I’d love that.”

I kiss Sugar on the cheek. “Don’t work too hard. Get one of the girls in here to help you.”

“I would, but they seem more interested in spinning on that pole,” she scoffs, but we both know she doesn’t like anyone helping. She has her ways, and if it isn’t done precisely how she likes it, she gets all pissy.

Rejoining the party, Navy takes the lead, tugging me over to where Bones and Judge are gathered around a high-top table.

“Navy!” Bones greets her, bringing my girl in for a hug. “Good to see you again. Did you cleanse your aura?” He places his palm on Navy’s forehead. “You’re yellow.”

“What does yellow mean?” she asks.

“Balance and happiness.”

She smiles. “That’s good to hear, but you’d know if I cleansed my aura because you’d be the one helping me do that.”

Judge also greets her with a hug, and I step back to watch Navy interact with two elders of the club. They must’ve made an impression on her last time, and it fills me with a sense of pride that she gets along so well with my family. Someday, I’ll put a ring on her finger and make her part of it officially, not just through association.

Over the next hour, we're tugged in all directions because, apparently, Navy has built relationships with everyone who works security over at the brothel. There's an exchange of inside jokes and conversations about things that've happened at the Honey Pot that I know nothing about.

She fits into my life seamlessly, and I can't help but think this is how my forever will look.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

## NAVY

With a stolen piece of licorice in my mouth after one of the most fun nights I've had in a long time, I'm in the best mood and even a little buzzed from the three beers I had throughout the night. It's only getting started because tonight is *the* night. I can feel it.

"Which room are we using tonight?" I ask.

Rigger steals my Twizzler and takes a bite. "I wanted The Galaxy, but it was taken."

"Hmm, I had no idea implanting an alien egg in my ass was your thing."

"I'm kidding. Though I'm not completely turned off by the idea."

He keeps me in suspense until we stop in front of a room I hadn't considered, given his previous choices.

"The Mirror Room?"

"Just trust me."

The room is pretty unassuming compared to others, with yellow-green painted walls, peacock feather print curtains on the windows, a sumptuous bed with white linens, and antique fixtures. The devil is in the details, though, because there are strategically placed mirrors with antique gold frames around the room, including over the bed. On top of that, there's a two-way mirror separating the bathroom and bedroom areas. You can see into the shower and tub from the bed, but you only see your reflection if you're in the bathroom.

No matter where you are, or what naughty things you're getting up to, you'll be able to watch yourself doing it. I usually write this room off for the narcissists who get off from themselves more than their partner, so I'm interested why Rigger thinks it's a good place for us to finally have sex.

It's romantic, though, with the sconces on either side of the room and an overall luxurious atmosphere. Maybe that's what he was thinking?

"I'm going to start a bath while you get comfortable."

"A bath?" I ask, almost disappointed. I'm keyed up and just want to get it over with. That sounds horrible, but this thing has been looming over me, and I have no idea how I'll feel about the main event. Everything we've done so far has been fun and playful, and I wasn't scared of doing any of that with him, but sex? That scares me.

"I want you to relax."

"I'm relaxed," I say, knowing my shoulders are tight and I have anxious bubbles in my tummy.

"Ha!" He pushes my jacket off and bends down to remove my boots. "Do you trust me?"

That's the reminder I needed because, yes, I trust him. "Fine."

He leaves me, and I watch through the mirror as he fills the deep tub with water and sprinkles in some oils out of fancy jars. Maybe it would be nice to soak for a minute and calm down.

I strip my clothes off, pull my hair into a messy knot, and walk into the bathroom, enjoying the way his eyes feast on my body. No one has ever made me feel as confident and sexy as he has, and I allow myself to believe I'm the person he thinks I am.

Climbing into the tub, I lower into the water, inhaling the floral oils floating on the surface. Rigger bends down and kisses my head. "I'll be in the bedroom when you're done."

"You're leaving me?"

He laughs. "I'll be right over there."

Seconds after he disappears, music plays through the hidden speakers around the suite. I don't recognize the dark and sultry song, but I like it. It's sexy and has me swaying in the water.

I look up to see my reflection staring back at me and remember that I can't see him, but he can see me. Maybe that was the point of this whole thing. Maybe he's getting off on watching me in this private moment. If that's the case, I'm going to make it count.

Sitting taller, I pour a handful of liquid soap into my palm and work up a lather before slowly running my hands up and down my arms. Realizing he can't see below the lip of the tub, I push up and sit on the edge so I can work the suds lower, across my chest and down to my breasts. I take my time,

massaging myself, enjoying the zing of pleasure each time I pass over my sensitive nipples.

Moving even lower still, I soap up my stomach and then spread my legs. I don't know what kind of soap this is, so I rinse off one hand before running it over my heated core. I've tried to get myself off, but my mind gets in the way. It eventually turns more frustrating than anything, and I give up.

This time, though, it just might work because I can practically feel his eyes on me as one hand kneads my breasts and the other rubs small circles across my clit. The first waves of pleasure spread through me, and my hand moves faster as I chase the ecstasy.

I'm interrupted when Rigger, dressed only in his tight black boxer briefs, storms in with a look of determination. "That's enough of that."

"Wha—" My words are cut off when he bends down and throws a shoulder into my middle before lifting me up. I squeal as he carries me—ass in the air and dripping water—to the bed and tosses me down.

"Remember when I said you're mine?" he growls.

"I am," I say through giggles.

"That meant this pussy too, and I don't remember saying you could make yourself come."

I give him a devilish grin. "I got bored."

"Maybe I should keep you entertained, then." He pushes the last of his clothing to the ground, revealing his hard cock as he climbs on top of me and dips down to kiss me full on the mouth.

I try to push away my fears and stay locked in the moment. It's not easy, but it helps to get lost in the rough way he kisses me, full of sucking and teeth. The slight bites of pain are quick reminders of where I'm at and who I'm with.

His lips move down my neck, switching between love bites and gentle kisses. I cling to him, one hand on his muscular shoulder and the other scratching his scalp the way I know he likes.

"Oh god," I moan as he makes his way to my breasts, following the same recipe of sharp tugs with his teeth on my nipple and then soothing sucks. My thighs tighten around his hips as my pussy clenches, aching for more.

His hands grip my outer thighs, pushing me farther onto the bed before pinning my legs open and sitting on his knees. "Look up."

My gaze shifts to the ceiling, where I get a bird's eye view of our position. Rigger's attention is locked between my spread legs, all of his



ripped muscles on display. I'm flat on my back, my pale skin marked red along my neck and chest, my nipples puffy and swollen.

I can't pull my gaze from the mirror as he lowers his head between my legs and works fucking magic with his tongue. My hands fist the bedding, and my toes curl, but still, my eyes remain wide open until I can't take it any longer.

Rigger pumps two fingers inside me while his tongue dances circles around my clit. I come so hard that I know despite the soundproofing in each room, whoever's next door can hear my cries of pleasure.

"Yes. Oh my god. That's it." I grind shamelessly into his face, hanging onto the feeling for as long as possible before going limp.

"My girl comes so good for me," Rigger says after wiping his face on my inner thigh. "And now you're going to do it again."

I inhale deeply as I try to catch my breath. "I don't know if I can."

"You will," he affirms. Reaching into the nightstand, he produces a condom. "Just so you know, I had Monroe test me, and everything came back clear."

"After what happened, I've been tested a couple times, and my results were clear too."

"But I'm still going to use a condom. That okay?"

Without him spelling it out, I know what he's doing. I told him about the disgusting feeling of Ray coming inside me, so Rigger's saving me from a trigger. My eyes sting and my nose twitches, but I stop myself from going there, not right now.

"Yeah," I whisper.

He sheaths his shaft before leaning over me, snaking a hand under my back and rolling us both so I'm on top. I land with my pussy right on top of his hard length.

"I want you to see me. See who's fucking you," he says, and I nod. "It's me and you, Navy. No one else matters, not when we're together like this."

"I don't know what to do."

"It's pretty easy." He smirks. "Sit on my dick."

I rest my hands on his rippling abs as we laugh. The comedic relief is exactly what I needed. When the moment passes, I lift onto my knees. He grips the base of his dick as I slowly lower onto him before he lets go and rests his hands on my calves.

From this position, I'm completely full of him, and it's incredible,

nothing like I'd imagined. Then again, I've been preparing myself for the worst, which never came. I have a man gazing up at me with nothing but love in his eyes to thank for that.

Tentatively, I lift before sliding back down, meeting no resistance because I'm soaked. My lips part as a lightning bolt of pleasure hits me, so I do it again, then again.

Rigger shifts, bending his legs. "Reach back and rest your hands on my knees so I can watch your tits bounce."

Using his knees for purchase, I work up a rhythm, rolling my hips before lifting and falling back down, discovering what feels good to me and hoping it feels good to him too. I don't wonder for long when I see Rigger's eyes go half-lidded and watch as he swallows hard, his expression blissed out. I'm doing that. *Me*.

"Fuck, babe. Your pussy feels so fuckin' good. So tight and so wet." He reaches a hand out to tug on a nipple as I continue to move. "You like that? You like the way I feel inside you?"

"God, yes." Sweat beads along my spine, and my thighs burn from exertion, but there's nothing that could stop me now, especially when his hand moves between my legs and his thumb strums my clit while I ride him.

The sound of skin slapping against skin competes with the sound system still playing sultry music. I catch sight of myself in a tall mirror positioned just so and do a double take. My back is arched, and my breasts are thrust out, bouncing in time as I ride my man. The visual turns me on even more, and I get why people like this room.

"I think I'm gonna come," I moan, seconds before I explode into a million pieces. His cock inside me as I spasm only intensifies the orgasm into something I can't explain. It's mind-blowing and so intense my eyes water as I ride it out, my movements erratic and no longer following any sort of pattern. Instead, I let my body chase the high however it wants.

I sit on his cock and circle my hips as I come down, enjoying each of the aftershocks.

"You're so pretty when you come," he coos. "Such a good girl giving me all you have. I'm so fuckin' proud of you."

With my chest heaving and my orgasm over, I smile at how euphoric and full of love it leaves me. I did it. I faced my demons and fucking won.

"I can't believe how good that felt." I push a piece of wet hair off my face.

“You did so good, babe, but I’m gonna take over now, okay?”

“Please do,” I say breathily.

“Lift up on your knees and hold yourself there.” The second I’m in position, he bucks up into me, his pubic bone slamming into my overly sensitized clit.

*Oh.*

When he repeats the motion, I swallow hard. I didn’t think it was possible to be turned on after two insane orgasms, but here I am, wanting him to do it again.

Holy hell, does he do it again. His hips thrust at an impossible rate as he plows into me, forcing me to lean forward and use his pecs to hold myself up. His fingers dig into my thighs as his head tilts back, his face scrunching in concentration.

My teeth rattle and my tits bounce as every muscle in his body goes rigid, the energy of it almost more than I can handle. God, does it feel glorious.

He grunts loudly, holding himself as deep inside as he can get before pulling out and doing it again. I squeeze around him, a small wave of rapture coming over me too.

“Fuck,” he drawls, low and throaty. “Do that again.”

I squeeze around him again, loving the way my pussy tingles. He keeps going until I feel him pulse and know he’s releasing into the condom. Still, I don’t freak out.

When his body goes limp and his eyes close, I fall to his side, my entire body spent and raw. We lie there for long seconds in silence before he gets up briefly to remove the condom, flinging it into the bedside trash. They thought of everything in these rooms.

Returning to lie on his side, he props his head up with one hand while the other traces along my tummy. “How are you?”

“I’m amazing.” I grin up at him.

“You did so good, babe.”

I preen at his compliments. I love it when he praises me like this; I think we both do. After growing up without any kind words, we tend to overcompensate. It’s good, though, because I always know how proud he is of me and how much he loves me.

“It wasn’t too much, was it?”

I frown. “No. It’s just different.”

“I should hope it fuckin’ is.”

I shake my head. "I just mean, before something was done *to me*, but with you, it's what we're doing together, and I guess I've already made that distinction in my mind."

"That's good, babe. Real good," he says with his lips hovering over mine. He's about to kiss me when there's a knock at the door.

"Shit," I curse. "Have we been in here too long?"

"No. Just cover up and stay here while I see who it is." He jumps off the bed and pulls his boxer briefs up as he walks to the door, opening it a crack.

With a hushed tone I can't hear, Rigger speaks to whoever it is. Judging by how Rigger goes rigid and his eyes dart to me in concern, I can tell it's not good. He shuts the door and begins to dress quickly, a sick feeling invading me.

"What is it?"

"Put your clothes on," he orders, all the sweetness he was giving me moments before gone.

"Why?"

"Don't have time to give you answers. Please. Just get dressed."

I do as he says, but my hands shake so violently that I can't fasten my jeans. Impatiently, Rigger storms over to me and slides the button through the hole.

"You're scaring me," I say.

"Listen, Tigger's gonna come in here and sit with you while I take care of something. Don't open that door for anyone but me. Do you understand?"

I look up at him with frightened eyes. "I want to go with you."

"No," he bites out. "Stay here. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Rigger." My chin wobbles.

"Just do it, Navy." He storms to the door but turns around before walking out. "For me."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

## RIGGER

“Rigger.” Mary stops me in the hallway with her hands on my chest. I glare daggers at her because right now, the only touch I want is my knuckles pounding flesh. She frowns in response and wisely drops her hands. “I know you want to go out there guns blazing, but he’s with some very wealthy clients. We can’t afford to get the kind of reputation that killing him in front of witnesses would give us.”

I snort. “You think I give a shit, Mary?”

“I can see that you don’t,” she says carefully. “But those girls out there stand to make a small fortune tonight, and they don’t deserve to have this opportunity ripped out from under them. Not to mention what this would do to help pay off certain debts.”

“There will be other opportunities. Now get the fuck out of my way before I make you.”

She sighs but steps to the side.

“Turn around and march your ass back to the hell hole you crawled out of!” I shout as I reach the parlor and spot my sperm donor standing with four men in tailored suits. Standing behind them are Satyr and Dutch, both with arms folded across their chests, glares fixed on Ray.

Ray’s smug-ass smile beams back at me. “No can do, son. My employer has requested that I keep their high rollers safe, and they’re booked for a stay here.”

My conversation with Mary and Navy about the new packages they’re offering comes back to me. Goddamn it, I should’ve known that would bite us in the ass. Not to mention, how is this old, out-of-shape prick supposed to protect anyone? No, this is the Costas fucking with me.

“They can stay. You can’t.”

“That’s gonna be a problem because my employers, who have a financial stake here, specifically said I’m to stay nearby. You can call them if you want.” He holds out his phone. “I have them on speed dial.”

His cocky attitude has my molars grinding together in an attempt to think clearly. Except I can’t. Because Navy just gave herself to me after what this asshole did to her, and that’s all I can think about. How he thought it was okay to take a sweet, trusting little girl and abuse her in the worst way possible.

Now he’s here, flaunting how he got away with it?

No. Fuck that.

“What’s going on here?” Navy’s frightened voice sounds from behind me.

I whirl around. “I told you to stay put.”

“Rigg, man, I’m sorry. She pushed her way past me, and I knew you wouldn’t want me to put hands on her,” Tigger explains.

“I’ll fuckin’ deal with your ass later,” I growl. “Get her out of here.”

“No!” Navy bats at Tigger, who tries to grab her arms. “I’m not a child, and I’m in charge of this place, at least partly. So, I’m asking again, what is going on? Why is he here?”

“I brought you some customers,” Ray chimes in.

I get in Ray’s face. “Don’t fuckin’ talk to her. Don’t even look at her, you piece of shit.”

One of the businessman types steps in. “Listen, we didn’t know there was history here. We don’t need to stay.”

“No, that’s ridiculous,” Navy says. “I’m sure these two men can control themselves while we get you settled.”

“Navy,” I warn.

“Mary, do you want to call a line-up? I’ll take Rigger to my room.”

“Sure, hun. That sounds good,” she says gratefully.

Navy steps between Ray and me, putting her trembling hand in mine. “Come on.”

“Don’t ask me to do this,” I beg. My insides are being torn in two, part of me wanting to kill him right here and now, the other part wanting to get her the hell away from her abuser because she’s being so fucking brave.

“Please. I need you.” Her eyes turn glassy, and I know she’s going to lose it if I don’t go, so I choose her. Later, when she’s not around, I’ll choose him.

I point at Satyr and Dutch. “Keep an eye on him. I don’t want him leaving the parlor for any reason.”

“We got this,” Dutch says, cracking his knuckles.

Taking her hand, we head down the hall, but I stop short at Ray’s parting words.

“Oh, I see. He’s fuckin’ her. She must’ve picked up some skills from this place because I can say from personal experience that she’s nothing special.”

Dropping Navy’s hand, I rush back into the parlor and punch him in the fucking face so hard, he drops like a sack of potatoes. Ignoring the fallout, I return to Navy’s side. She’s full-on crying now, her arms wrapped around herself, trying to disappear.

“Come on, babe.” With one hand at her back, I lead her to her room, locking the door behind us.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” she says, wiping away her tears.

“He doesn’t get to come here, throwing the fact that he’s still alive in your face.”

She sniffles. “You think I don’t know he’s out there living it up, knowing he can’t be touched? That’s not something I can forget.”

I sit on the edge of the bed, resting my head in my hands. I’ve never had to hold back this devil inside me before. The life I lead doesn’t require it. I’m not quick to kill, but beating someone’s ass can be just as satisfying. If the crime fits the punishment, though, I’ll tie my ropes around someone’s throat, watch the life in their eyes die, and an hour later, sleep like a fucking baby.

This is the first time I’ve been put in this situation, and I’m failing.

“I get that, but the only reason he came here tonight is because he knows what it’s doing to us and wanted to rub in our faces.”

“So? Let him. I booked that party, so I know for certain those men out there are loaded. They plan to drop a lot of cash on those girls. We don’t get to take that away just because we have a grudge against that asshole.”

I shake my head. “Fuck the money, Navy. I’d set a match to this place right now if it meant you felt safe outside these doors.”

“It won’t. The only thing that’ll make me feel safe is leaving Reno. After seeing Ray, I think I should go sooner than later.”

My gaze slowly lifts, disbelieving what I’m hearing. “What?”

“It’s time. I feel stronger now, and Danielle said I can continue my sessions when I get to Henderson.”

She hasn’t mentioned leaving in a while, definitely not since we started



fooling around. I guess I assumed she was over that stupid idea.

“What about us?”

She steps between my legs, resting her hands on my shoulders. “I love you. I always have, but I can’t stay here.”

“This isn’t forever. I just need more time to figure out how to pay off the Costa assholes. After that, Ray won’t be a problem.”

Her shoulders sink. “Ray is only part of the problem. I have so many bad memories, and I could ignore them while I was in this happy little bubble, but —”

“But then he showed up tonight, and now it’s tainted here, too.”

“Exactly. I need a fresh start, Rigger.”

No, this can’t be happening. I can’t let it. I’ll lock her inside this room before I let her walk away from me. Maybe I deserve to be left alone after what I’ve done to her, but I’m a selfish prick and will do what it takes to keep her in my life.

I stand, feeling a fresh wave of anxiety. “That’s bullshit, and you know it.”

“No, it’s not.”

“Yes, the fuck it is. Moving away won’t evict the memories from your mind.”

“I know that, but it’ll be easier to forget.”

“Will it?” I ask.

“It’s not just that. I need to do something with my life and not just get handed pity jobs to work at and pity rooms to sleep in.”

I pinch between my eyes. “You think all this is pity?”

“Isn’t it?”

“Maybe it started as a way for me to keep you from fucking strangers, but do you think for one second that Mary would’ve kept you around if you weren’t doing a good job?”

“This wasn’t even a position you were hiring for,” she argues.

“We had no idea how much of a success this place would be and how many employees we’d need, and babe, a lot of that success is due to you. You came around at the perfect time.” I take her hand, feeling like I’m fighting for my fucking life right now because that’s what she’s become, my life. “Mary’s old school and doesn’t consider things like an interactive website and online booking. Sixty percent of our business is coming from that, not to mention this whole high roller experience.”

She chews on the inside of her mouth, deciding whether I'm blowing smoke up her ass.

"You're a part of this, and we'll suffer without you. *I'll* suffer without you." I stroke my thumb over the cheek she's abusing. "I'm just asking for a shot here. If it doesn't work out, I'll move you wherever you want to go myself."

"The same way you let me work the other side of the house after a month of admin?" Her smile is small, but it's there, and it warms me from the inside fucking out.

"Kinda like that," I joke.

This woman has me wrapped around her finger, and I don't think she knows it. If she does, then she's a sadist because each second that passes without an answer is fucking torture on my soul.

"Fine. I'll stay, but I'm not making any promises, and you have to help get my mom out of there and figure out what to do with her."

I tackle her in a hug that lifts her off her feet. "I love you, Navy Blue."

"Love you too."

My phone vibrates, so I set Navy on her feet and dig it out of my pocket. Seeing it's Satyr, I put it on speaker.

"Yeah?"

"The asshole is gone."

I snarl. "How? He said he had to stay."

"Don't think that was true. I think he just wanted to poke the bear because after you two left, so did he. Said he'd be back tomorrow to pick them up."

Navy shakes her head. "Why am I not surprised?"

"Hey, Navy girl. You okay?" Satyr asks.

"I'm good."

"Glad to hear."

"Make sure you keep an eye on those guys he brought. I don't trust them if they're associated with the Costas."

"You got it, boss."

I hang up, feeling suddenly exhausted. Nothing has gone as planned, and the last few hours have been a rollercoaster.

"I'm glad he's not on the property anymore," Navy says, dropping onto the bed and pulling off her boots.

"Same." I sit next to her. "Are you really okay?"

"Yes." She bites her lip. "No. I don't know."

“But you’ll really stay?”

She lets out a long sigh. “I don’t think I have a choice.”

“Damn right.”

She huffs. “I thought I could love you, have sex with you, and still leave when the time was right, but I don’t think I could’ve left even if you hadn’t talked me out of it. My love for you is bigger than my wants and desires, and honestly, that scares the shit out of me.”

It’s like she took my own feelings and put them into words. “That’s exactly why I’m so fuckin’ scared all the time. You’re here, but I never knew for sure how long I had you. I convinced myself you couldn’t leave, but it was wishful thinking.”

“Rigger Brown gets scared?” she asks in a mocking tone.

I shake my head, wishing she’d finally get it. “Babe, I’ve been fuckin’ terrified ever since I laid eyes on you when you were six years old. I knew Ray would spew his toxicity all over you, and I haven’t been able to relax ever since. You leaving me was just the newest stressor on the shit pile I have going.”

“But you have your brothers. You don’t need me.”

I think for a second about how to best describe it. “My club is the air I breathe, but you’re the blood in my veins. If you left, I could breathe, but everything inside me would shrivel up and die. You’re my only reason for living.”

She straddles my lap as if that’s all she needed to hear to be okay with her decision. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” My hands travel down her back and land on her ass. “How do you feel about the whole sex thing? You okay with that?”

She smiles. “Actually, I think I am. It sucks I didn’t get any post-coital snuggling, though.”

“Snuggling?”

“Yeah. At least that’s how it is in the movies. We do it, and then we snuggle and have deep conversations about our future.”

“The only thing I want in my future is to fuck your sweet pussy again because that was incredible.” I kiss her long and deep. “But if my girl wants to cuddle, I’m down.”

She giggles against my lips. “I should shower first.”

“How about this? You go shower, and I’ll give you a massage after.”

“Is that code for dick me down?” She chuckles again, which only goes to

show how fucking strong this woman is. Nothing ever ruins her day.

“I can’t make any promises.”

She holds my face in her hands, bringing our foreheads together. “Good.”

“Now go shower.”

“On it,” she says, and I watch as the little tease strips right in front of me. First, her skirt comes off, then her shirt. Her back is to me when she pulls down her panties, but then she turns around when she slides her bra off. Her little tits drive me wild.

“Goddamn,” I curse, reaching out to palm one of them. She smacks my hand away. “Hurry, or else I’ll be in there with you, and neither of us will get clean.”

My eyes are trained on her ass as she walks into the bathroom, her round cheeks bouncing with each step. I don’t know how I got so lucky,

The second the bathroom door closes, I snap out of my lustful daze and dial a number I did *not* want to use. Unfortunately, I’m getting desperate, and if I want Navy to stay in Reno, I can’t wait.

“Loki,” a deep voice rumbles on the other side of the line.

“Hey brother, it’s Rigger with the Sons.”

“I know who you are. What do you want?”

Loki, the president of the Royal Bastards MC, isn’t one to mince words. He doesn’t have it in him for niceties, but I don’t take offense. A lot of people say the same thing about me.

“I need someone gone, but I can’t do that until a loan from the Costas is paid off.” I get right to the point, knowing there’s no good way to ease into the conversation.

“You borrowed from Leo and Robert?” he asks in disbelief.

“It’s a long story, but yes.”

He blows out a heavy breath. “How much are we talking?”

“Two million.”

He whistles. “That’s a lot of coin.”

“I know. It’s short-term, five years max. We’re ready to provide ten percent interest.”

“Now how the hell are you going to do that?”

“We opened up a brothel out here in Sparks.”

“I heard your joint is solid,” he says. It’s the closest thing to a compliment I’ll ever receive from him, and it doesn’t surprise me to know he’s heard of the Honey Pot. The Royal Bastards owns a strip club called

Royal Treatment, where a few of our girls work when they're not on tour with us.

"It is, but now we have a problem to take care of, and we can't do that until the Costas are paid off."

"We don't have that kind of liquid cash lying around," he says. "I'll ask around, but don't hold your breath."

On that note, he hangs up. I'm bummed the club can't help because I trust them, but I also know that if they find someone, it'll be a solid contact. The Royal Bastards do business the way we do, carefully.

"Asshole," I mutter, tucking my phone back into my pocket.

I'm digging through Navy's toiletries to find some kind of oil or lotion to rub her down with when my phone buzzes with a text. I'm shocked as shit to see it's from Loki.

**Loki:** I can get you a sit-down with Manuel. He's a gun supplier and has the cash if it's the right investment.

**Me:** Thanks. Give him my number.

**Loki:** Already did.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

## NAVY

When I get back to the bedroom, Rigger is stripped down to his underwear and tells me to lie face down on the bed with my towel. Once I'm in position, he flips the light off, leaving only the gentle glow from my frog tank.

"Have you ever given a massage before?" I ask.

"No."

"Has anyone ever given you a massage?" I regret asking immediately because if he tells me some story about one of the club chicks rubbing him down, I will throw up. We've never talked about how many or which of them he's fucked, and I don't plan to. Things like that are better left unsaid, especially if he expects me to show face at the clubhouse ever again.

"No, but how hard could it be?" I hear the click of a bottle lid open. "I found this lavender shit on your vanity. Will that be okay?"

"Yeah."

There's a squirting sound, then him rubbing his hands together. My body hums in anticipation. I want the massage, but more than that, I want Rigger to touch me. I can't believe I'm in a place where things like sex and intimacy don't make me want to crawl out of my skin. It's everything I've wanted for myself.

I'm not dumb enough to think I'm cured, but I'm aware and comfortable enough to have those hard conversations with my partner. That's more than good enough for me.

He straddles my hips, bringing my towel to just above my ass. "Let me know if I'm not doing it right."

"You think I've had a massage before?" I laugh.

“Guess not.” He chuckles deep and throaty. “At least your expectations won’t be high.”

His warm, strong hands begin at my shoulders, kneading away at the knots that have lived there for most of my life. It feels so good I can’t help but moan and close my eyes. He takes his time, working through each knot before moving lower. By the time he reaches my lower back, I’m blissed out and nearly asleep.

“New rule. If you want me to stay in Reno, you have to do this every night,” I slur.

He chuckles. “Oh yeah? What do I get out of it?”

“Whatever you want.”

“Better not make promises you can’t keep, babe.”

My curiosity is sparked, and I ask, “What would you have me do?”

“My mind is full of ideas.”

“Like?”

He scoots down to my upper thighs, his hands massaging my lower back. I swear I almost orgasm at the euphoric feeling. “I liked seeing your ass red with my mark.”

“I liked that too.” Something long and thick settles between my ass cheeks, and it only takes a second to realize what it is. Talking about this has made him hard.

“I fuckin’ loved your lips wrapped around my cock.” He climbs off the bed and removes the towel, leaving me naked and exposed.

“That sounds like a fair trade,” I say, my breath hitching when he kneads the fleshy part of my ass.

The relaxation I felt a moment ago turns to need and want, my core throbbing for his fingers to go just a little lower, but he doesn’t. He moves to the other cheek before lowering himself onto my legs.

His big hands work my inner thighs, getting even closer to what I want. When he doesn’t comply with my needs, I squeeze his hands between my thighs, hoping he gets the picture. Still, he ignores me, pulling his hands free before moving to my calves. My pussy nearly weeps with disappointment.

This is all he offered, though, right? A massage. Nothing more, nothing less. I just didn’t realize how it’d make me feel.

“Time to turn over,” he says after thoroughly rubbing each of my feet, and even that was a turn-on.

“Roll over?”



“Gotta do the front.”

I snicker. “I don’t think that’s how it works.”

“You said yourself that you’ve never had a massage. How would you know?”

I grin. He’s doing this on purpose, teasing me until I break down and beg for it. Clearly, he hasn’t learned how deep my stubborn streak goes.

Rolling over, I splay my arms out to the side and part my legs, laying myself out for him like a buffet. He lets out a strangled groan from where he’s standing at the foot of the bed.

“Something wrong?” I ask.

“Not a damn thing.” His voice is gruff and low.

“Then get to it.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

He moves from one side of the bed to the next, rubbing my arms and hands. I can feel his eyes devouring my naked body the whole time. I wonder what his next move will be, and that question is answered when he straddles my stomach and rubs my upper chest. The hard bulge I felt earlier presses into me while he works, so close yet so far from where I want it.

His thumbs tease the top of my breasts, dipping lower with each pass until they finally skim over my nipples. My core clenches, and I gasp, that tiny move doing so much to my body. Everything in me screams to beg him to fuck me already, but I swallow it down, and instead, up my game.

I moan loudly. “God, that feels so good.”

It’s not a lie. I just wouldn’t normally be so vocal.

His hands skirt lower until he’s palming my breasts, kneading them the same way he’s done to my whole body, but rather than relax me, it keys me up even more. I’m wet and sticky between my thighs, my arousal growing by the second. Then he’s gone, off the bed and back at my side.

This time, he starts with my calves and works his way up to my thighs. The bastard. That was intentional. He wants to see me squirm.

And squirm I do when he kneels on the bed between my knees and lifts my left leg to his shoulder. He massages my thighs, higher and higher, until he’s centimeters from my dripping pussy. I thrust into the air, earning a slap to my leg.

“Hold still,” he chastises.

“Rigger,” I whine.

He runs his fingers along the outside of my pussy lips, and I nearly

combust. After repeating everything with my right leg, he scoots closer until his knees touch my ass. His hands wrap around my hips, and his thumbs work the area just above my center.

He's toying with me, going low enough that my nipples harden to stones, and I fist the sheets at my side. My mouth goes dry, and I'm seconds from breaking. Right now, I need to come more than I need air, and if he doesn't give it to me, I'm worried I'll cry.

Inhaling deeply, he moans. "You're so turned on, I can smell your desire."

"You cannot."

"Are you trying to tell me if I went just a little lower, I wouldn't find your pretty pink pussy dripping for me? I wouldn't find your little clit swollen and needy?"

"No," I lie, still not willing to give in.

"Goddamn, you're stubborn," he growls, and then he's off the bed. Thankfully, it's only for a second before he's pouncing on top of me, totally naked. He spreads my legs with his knees and drags his thick length up my center.

I throw a fist in the air. "I win!"

He dips down to bite my nipple before giving it a rough tug. "If things go as planned, you'll be winning all night."

Lifting onto his knees and gripping the backs of my thighs, he pushes inside me in one fluid thrust. I gasp at the intensity of the intrusion from this angle; it's overwhelming in the best possible way.

"Play with your pussy while I fuck you," he says, and I snake my hands between my legs, shocked at how wet and swollen I am. "You're mine, Navy."

It's true. I feel thoroughly owned and possessed by this man. It should make me feel weak to need him the way I do, but I know I would've been okay without him. Life before Rigger didn't break me; it only made me fight harder.

My goals have changed since the first night I walked into the Honey Pot, but the result is the same. All I want is to be happy, and being here with the only man I've ever loved makes me happier than I could have imagined.

Rigger drops my thighs and leans over me, holding his weight on his elbows as his strokes become long and languid. With a tilt of his hips, he bumps against a spot inside me that makes my toes curl and my back arch.

Over and over, he repeats this motion, bringing me higher and higher until I lose myself completely.

“Shit,” I curse, clamping down on his rigid length as I fall over the edge. Tingles of pleasure erupt through my body, making my head feel light and my vision blur.

“That’s it. Give it all to me.” He picks up his pace, his body becoming rigid, his cock swelling impossibly bigger inside me. Before I have a chance to recover, he’s pulling out, sitting back on his haunches, and stroking himself vigorously. My eyes latch onto his weeping tip as spurts of cum shoot onto my breasts and stomach. With a heaving chest, he squeezes out every drop before he releases himself. “Fuck, I’m sorry. I forgot a condom.”

He wasn’t the only one. I was so wrapped up in him I wasn’t thinking about anything or anyone else.

“It’s okay,” I say.

“No, it’s not. I promised I’d take care of you, and I’m fucking it up already.”

“You didn’t. You pulled out. But even if you hadn’t, Rigger, I was right here with you, not stuck in my nightmares.” I sit up and bring him to me for a kiss.

“You have no idea how happy you make me.” He slips a hand between us and rubs his cum into my skin.

“What are you doing?”

“I like the way you look covered in me.” Suddenly, I understand. It’s another way he’s claiming me. I relax back onto the bed, allowing him to settle the demons in his mind. When he smears it lower over my pussy and then pushes a finger inside, I let him, wanting him to own that part of me too. “Just give me this, okay?”

“I get it,” I say. And I do. To anyone else, it might seem animalistic and crude, but as I watch him concentrate on pushing his cum inside me, I feel the moment the last tie I had to Ray is broken. Now I’ll be Rigger’s forever.

We’ll never be a conventional or normal couple, but that was never an option for either of us. We’ve made it to the other side and come out on top, and I’m not sure I’d change a damn thing.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

## RIGGER

“So, Manuel is prepared to buy out Leo and Robert’s loan?” Cy asks.

“Every penny.” I glance at Lucky, who was with me when I met with the arms dealer. It was a tense meeting, but after showing him our operation and the books, he agreed it was a solid investment.

“And he knows we’re not offering anything but interest on the loan? I don’t want to use the Honey Pot to wash any of their cash or have them knocking on the door for free services.” Cy puffs on his cigar.

“He’s clear on the terms.”

“I guess we should take a vote then.” Cy looks to me to start.

“Aye,” I say, hoping this is the right move.

Lucky, Riot, Mustang, Golden, and Dutch give their support, but when we get to Satyr, there’s a pause.

“I’m sorry, brother. We don’t know shit about this guy, and I think the devil we know is a better option,” he says.

I nod in understanding. It’s a risk.

“Bones? Judge?” Cy asks.

“Aye,” they say together. That’s not a surprise because they adore my girl like she’s their daughter.

“Not that we need my vote, but I trust Rigger, and if he thinks this is a good idea, then you have my support.” Cy bangs the gavel.

We’re interrupted by a knock at the door. Tigger pops his head in. “They’re here.”

“Send them in,” Cy says, standing. “Knowing this was how the vote would go, I invited Leo and Robert over to break the news.”

The two men enter, and out of respect, Dutch and Satyr offer their seats at

the table.

“Want to tell me why we’re here?” Leo asks, suspicion lacing his tone.

“We have some good news. We’re prepared to pay off our loan in full,” Cy says. “The money will be wired later this afternoon.”

Robert’s cloudy old eyes narrow. “This comes as a surprise. Can I ask why?”

“You know we aren’t pleased with an associate of yours, and we decided it would be best to end our ties with your organization,” I say.

“That seems drastic.”

“It is,” I agree.

“Hold on a second,” Leo chimes in. “Just because you pay us off doesn’t mean he’s not still under our protection. Ray handles a lot of work for us, and until he pays off his debts, he’s off limits.”

“After that money hits your account, we have no obligation to you.” I mash my finger into the table to make my point.

“That’s not how this works. If you lay a hand on him, we’ll take that as a personal offense and react accordingly,” Leo says.

“So you’re saying you’ll go to war over some peon? Guys like that must be a dime a dozen in your line of work.”

Robert shrugs. “Morals are a strange thing. Just because someone’s willing to overextend their debts doesn’t mean they’ll do the kind of work Ray will.”

“Either way, that’s not our problem.”

“Except it is,” Leo says threateningly.

“Listen,” Robert interjects. “We’re happy to give him up if you can offer someone to take his place.”

I figured this might be something they’d want, but we hadn’t worked out how to handle it. War is not an option. We have too much to lose right now, with Clancy watching our every move and trying to grow a new business.

But we’re also not the Costa’s whipping boys.

“We’re not doing your dirty business for the rest of eternity,” I say.

“That’s not what I’m saying. I think we could agree on the time.” Robert leans into the table. “Let’s say your replacement is at our disposal for six months.”

I look to Cy, who nods almost imperceptibly.

“Then we have a deal.” I stand and hold out my hand. Robert and Leo join me, each shaking their agreement.

“I’ll be looking for that transfer,” Robert says, buttoning his suit coat.

The two men leave, and I breathe a sigh of relief. It’s done. Over. Now I can finally end Navy’s nightmare.

“That went well.” Cy stamps out his cigar, his gaze on me. “I’m assuming you’ll be volunteering to take care of their business?”

Before I can affirm, Riot speaks up. “It’s my area of expertise, so it should be me.”

“No. I can’t ask that of you, brother,” I say.

“You didn’t ask. I’m volunteering.”

I give him a tight-lipped nod. “I appreciate that. Navy does too.”

“She’s a good one,” he says.

That’s the first time I’ve ever heard him speak positively about anyone. Riot thrives on violence, negativity, and chaos. It’s why none of us are close to him; he’s too intense. Well, no one except for Dutch. It baffles me because the two couldn’t be any more opposite. Dutch is funny and social—the guy you go to when you want a good time.

Then again, Dutch enjoys a kill the way Riot does, so maybe that’s their connection.

“I appreciate you saying that.”

“You claimin’ her?” Riot asks, sending red flags my way. The bastard would try to move in on my woman.

“Yeah, I’m fuckin’ claiming her.”

My brothers pound their fists onto the table, cheering, and I can’t help but smile. Adding someone to the family isn’t taken lightly. If they all hated her, it would make things difficult. But Navy fits in like a missing puzzle piece.

“Never thought I’d see the day a woman would lock you down.” Cy leans back, folding his arms across his chest. “I’m happy for you, son.”

“I’m just as shocked as you are,” I say.

Cy bangs his gavel. “Get the fuck out of here. Meeting’s over.”

We sidle out of the room, and I head to the bar, needing a drink while I come up with a plan. I feel like a kid at Christmas, giddy with anticipation now that I have free rein to deal with Ray.

Lucky throws an arm over my shoulder. “So, when’s the big day?”

I look at him questioningly. Navy and I haven’t even discussed marriage. She’s my forever, but we need more time to settle into our relationship before talking about things like a wedding and kids.

*Kids?*

Jesus fuck. I never pictured myself being a dad before. I'm not sure I have it in me, but I can picture Navy being a mom. I've seen the maternal role she's taken with the girls at the Honey Pot, even though she's younger than most of them. I wonder if it's something she wants because if it is, I'll give it to her. Might be fun to have some little ones running around here.

"Ray," he clarifies. "When are you gonna take him out?"

I grunt. "As soon as motherfucking possible."

"Well, let's go then."

"Now?"

He slaps me on the shoulder. "No better time, brother."

I take another swig of my beer. "Fuck it. Let's do it."

The sun is just setting as we climb into the van used for these purposes. I text Navy, telling her I'll be home late. *Home*. That's another thing we need to discuss. I don't mind spending every night at the Honey Pot, but there's not a lot of room. My place isn't a mansion either, but it's bigger than her room. Plus, with this new marketing thing she's doing, we'll need her space soon.

I push all that to the side as we ride, focused on what's about to happen and why. All the conversations I've had with Navy play through my mind. It was important for her to give details about what was done to her. I don't know if she thought it would change my mind about her or what, but the only thing it did was stoke the fire that's been burning inside me since I was a kid.

As much as I hate myself for leaving her, I hate him even more for playing us both so he could use her for his disgusting desires. Now, it's time to pay.

I'm pleased to see his car parked in the driveway when we pull up to the house. I didn't want to have to chase the bastard down.

Lucky slides on his leather gloves. "Ready?"

"Let's do it."

"We taking him to the Honey Pot?"

"Yep," I say, pulling on my own gloves.

I knock on the front door but cover the peephole. As far as Ray knows, he's still protected. Still, that doesn't mean he'd answer the door if he knew I was on the other side.

"Laura," I greet when she opens the door a crack. I notice a fresh bruise around her throat, and the white of her right eye is stained red from a broken blood vessel. "Ray around?"



“It’s not a good time,” she whispers.

“I think the timing is just right.” I push the door open, taken aback when I see red all down Laura’s clothes. “What the fuck?”

She holds her shaking hands out in front of her. “I-I don’t know w-what happened.”

“Where is he?” I ask, charging into the house, not waiting for a response.

“I d-didn’t mean t-to do it,” she mumbles.

I look to Lucky. “Can you handle her? I’ll go see what the deal is.”

“Come on, darlin’. Let’s get you cleaned up.” Lucky leads Laura into the hallway bathroom.

Following the blood trail, I step over broken dishes, mail that’s been tossed to the ground, and God knows what else. Stopping at the kitchen, I notice the butcher block tipped over with a knife missing. All the clues tell me what I’ll find in the next room, but it’s still shocking to see Ray splayed on the living room floor, covered in blood, his face screwed up in pain, and the missing knife sticking out of his shoulder.

“Looks like you went too far this time, old man.” I step over him and crouch at his side.

“That bitch’ll pay for this.” Beads of sweat drip down his forehead as he wraps a rag around the knife to staunch the bleeding. I debate yanking it out and really giving him something to bleed about, but I don’t want to risk him dying before I can kill him.

“I’m not too happy with her either, but not for the same reason. You see, I came here because your employment with the Costas has been terminated. You know what that means, right?”

His eyes widen, and I relish the fear that washes over him. “That can’t be right.”

“Why else would I be here with my gloves on?”

“I’m your father,” he says like that means shit.

“And I’m your fuckin’ nightmare.” I lift him onto his feet, grabbing a blanket from the back of the couch to cover the gruesome sight.

Lucky appears with a dazed and frightened Laura. “All good?”

“Yeah, let’s get some prospects out here to clean the place up.”

“I’ll text them from the car.”

“Where are you taking me?” Ray growls.

“To your final resting place.” I pull zip-tie handcuffs from my pocket and secure his wrists behind his back before shoving him forward.

The back of the van is open with no seats. Not a problem when I thought we were only transporting Ray, but now we have Laura too. I'm proud of the bitch for fighting back, but fuck, it took her long enough. Of course, she picks the day I come for him.

"I'll sit in back," Lucky says, trading me Ray for Laura.

I help her into the passenger seat as she mutters incoherently. Shock still has a firm grip on her, a normal reaction when it's your first time stabbing someone, but I don't have time to talk her through it. It puts a wrench in my plans because now I have to decide how to handle this.

Part of me wants to take her out too. As much as Navy likes to believe none of this is her mom's fault, Laura was complicit in Navy's continuous rape. I understand she was being abused too, but Navy's her daughter, and she should've fought tooth and nail to get her out of that situation. Instead, she almost welcomed the break it gave her.

I couldn't do it, though. Navy loves her mom through all her faults. So that leaves me with only one option. I need to take Laura to Navy and have her deal with the aftermath. I hate doing it, but what other option do I have? I don't know how to fix her.

Through the rearview, I spot Lucky next to Ray, keeping the knife secure so he stays alive long enough for me to kill him. It seems pointless, but it's not. I need this. I need to watch the light in his eyes go out. And I need to be the reason it happens. Not some stab wound from his wife.

The drive to the Honey Pot is tense, me splitting my attention between Laura and the road. There's no reasoning with her in this state, and I'm worried she'll do something crazy, like jump out of the van while we speed down the highway.

Eventually, we make it to our destination. I park in the delivery bay off the kitchen where we receive all our food and supplies before I climb out of the van and walk around to open the door for Lucky.

"We're clear," he says. "Tobi has all the kitchen staff taking a five-minute break."

"Good. Will you get him downstairs while I deal with her?"

"Yep." Lucky scoots out the back and grabs Ray by the legs to drag him out. "Let's go."

"You can't do this," Ray blubbers. "I'm your blood."

I pull a rag from a duffel bag full of supplies and shove it in his mouth.

"Thank fuck," Lucky says. "His snivelin' was getting to be too much."

Once he's out of the van and inside, I slam the doors shut and drive around to the side of the property.

"I'm taking you to Navy, okay? But Laura? She's in a good place right now, and I don't need you fucking that up for her. I get that you're scared or whatever the fuck you are. Just try to pull yourself together." I'm being an asshole, but this woman means dick to me, and her daughter means everything to me. She's my entire fucking world. So I'll deal with her, for Navy's sake.

"I-I don't think I sh-should see her right now."

"I feel the same way, but I'm running out of options." I get out of the van and walk to the passenger side to help her out.

Thankfully, there's no one in the hall as we make our way to Navy's door. I unlock it and step inside to find my woman huddled under blankets, watching TV.

"Mom?" In a flash, she's off the bed and standing in front of us. "What's wrong with her?"

I look up at the ceiling, not wanting to tell her any of this, but not seeing another choice.

"We found her like this," I say. Maybe she'll be so wrapped up in her mom she won't ask questions.

"Where?"

No such luck.

"Her house."

"What's going on, Mom? Are you okay?"

"I didn't m-mean to. You have to b-believe me." Laura's eyes are so wide that I worry they'll pop right out of her head.

"What did you do?" Navy asks. Laura shifts her gaze to me.

"Don't look at me. I'm not the one who stabbed Ray."

"You stabbed Ray?" Navy squeals.

"Shh, babe. We don't need this blasted around the joint," I say.

"Is that true, Mom?"

Laura's head bobs up and down.

"Oh my god." Navy covers her mouth with a hand.

"Can I talk to you for a second? In private?" I ask, taking her hand and dragging her out into the hallway, where I lower my voice. "Listen, I hate to drop this on you and run, but I gotta go."

"Not until you explain."

Fuck.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

## RIGGER

“I got the thing with the Costas figured out, which means Ray is fair game,” I say carefully.

I’ve been honest with Navy about my plans to kill Ray, so this isn’t news, but without a timeline, she must’ve thought about it in the abstract, not in the definite way I was, because the look she gives me is straight-up sad.

“Rigger,” she whispers.

“Let’s deal with that part later. Right now, all you need to know is that we got to the house, and Laura was like she is now, only covered in blood. Lucky cleaned her up, and I found Ray with a butcher knife in his shoulder.” I wish I knew how to sugarcoat this, but I don’t.

“I didn’t think she had it in her.”

“Me neither. If I were to guess, it’s good she did because she has fresh marks around her throat, and I’m sure you noticed her eye.”

She stifles a sob. “Oh god.”

“So, I got Ray downstairs, and I didn’t know what to do with your mom. I figured you’d want to help her through this.” I brush her hair off her shoulder and run my hand down her back.

“Yeah, of course.” She blinks back tears. “This is so fucked up.”

“Not gonna disagree, but are you okay?”

She nods. “Yeah, I’ll be fine.”

“Okay. I’ll come check on you in a bit and have housekeeping get a room ready for your mom.”

“She can stay with me,” she suggests.

“Not a chance. I get your mom needs some support right now, but you do too. We’ll get her settled somewhere tonight while I take care of you.” Tears

roll down her cheeks. “No, babe. Don’t cry. It’ll be okay.”

She shakes her head, sniffing. “I’m not crying. Well, I mean, I am, but not for the reason you think. All these years, I’ve only prayed to God for one thing. For someone to put me first. What you said just now made me realize my prayers have been answered.”

I hold her to my chest, my black heart breaking for the girl who spent so many years without anyone to tell her how goddamn special she is.

“I love you,” I murmur, my lips pressed to the top of her head.

Her arms wrap around my middle. “I love you too.”

“Do you need something before I go?”

“No. We’ll be fine. You go ahead.”

I release her, but before she can go back inside, I grip her by the back of her neck and kiss the shit out of her, vowing that she’ll always know how much she means to me.

“Be back soon.”

“Okay.” She watches as I walk to the door. “And Rigg?”

“Yeah, babe.”

“Kill him good.”

I grin, nearly turned on at the devilish glint in her eyes. It’s the first time she’s been honest about what Ray deserves, and fuck does it do something to me.

“I will.”

Feeling like a valet attendant, I drive the van back to the delivery bay and park. The kitchen staff are all back at work, but they know the score and keep their eyes on what they’re doing. There’s not an employee in this place who hasn’t had the fear of God instilled in them about minding their own business. In exchange, they’re paid well and have excellent benefit packages.

Walking into the pantry, I release the secret door and walk down the steep stairs.

“About time you joined the party,” Lucky says, looking bored.

“Had to get my girl right first.”

“I love Navy and all, but you’re kinda turning into a little bitch,” he jokes.

“Fucker.” I approach Ray, who’s lying on his back, groaning in pain. “You have no idea how long I’ve been wanting to do this.”

“You’ll regret it,” he says lamely.

Walking over to the stainless-steel tool shed in the corner, I dig out my ropes and wrap them around my knuckles, making sure Ray can see what I’m

doing. “There are a lot of options for rope these days, but I prefer a good quarter-inch manila. It has a classic look and feel, holds knots well, and is known for its strength and flexibility.”

As if suddenly realizing there’s no way out of this, Ray mumbles, “Just get it over with.”

I shrug and toss one end of the rope over the top of a wooden beam that travels the length of the ceiling. This is my first time using this room, so I test the strength of the beam, making sure it’ll hold before going through the ritual of tying a hangman’s knot.

“Doesn’t that ever get boring?” Lucky asks.

“No,” I deadpan. “If you want to help, you can stack some of that wood over there.”

Lucky retrieves some of the two-by-fours and places them on top of each other. “There.”

“Help me get him up.”

We struggle a little because, not surprisingly, Ray isn’t all that compliant. Eventually, we get him standing on the wood and the noose around his neck. Right now, the game isn’t hard. All he has to do is stand flat-footed on the boards.

“Apologize,” I say.

“For what?” he spits out. “Turning you into a man and not some pussy who doesn’t know how to take a hit?”

With the toe of my boot, I kick one of the boards out from under him, throwing his balance off a bit. On instinct, he reaches up with his hands still cuffed together, forgetting he still has a knife in his shoulder. He grapples for balance while howling in pain. It’s like music to my fucking ears.

“Motherfucker,” he curses, finding purchase.

“Apologize,” I repeat.

“For beating your ass or fuckin’ your sister?”

Something dark roars to life inside me, but I tamp it down, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of seeing how pissed off I am. Instead, I casually kick another board out from under him. He’s on his tiptoes now, sweating like a pig, his face contorted into something ugly.

“Apologize.”

“I’m sorry, okay? Is that what you want to hear?”

This is why I do this. I don’t just want to kill him; I want him to be so desperate he’ll swallow his pride and die knowing his last moments were



spent being pitiful and weak. I keep him there, struggling to stay alive for a long while, soaking up the moment and basking in the control I have over him.

The veins in his forehead protrude as he flexes his jaw to keep the rope from cutting off his air supply. The tips of his work boots are barely connecting with the wood now. All it would take is one small misstep, and he'd take care of the job himself.

But I don't want that. His death belongs to me. I'll be the one sending him to meet the Reaper, so I push one more board out from under him, causing him to lose his footing. His legs kick out violently, and despite the pain, he reaches to his neck, desperately trying to keep the rope from choking him out.

It's useless, though. His mouth opens to suck in a breath, but there's no air to be found. It's not a pretty death, but it's goddamn beautiful to me as his eyes bulge and his face and neck turn an unnatural red. Blood trickles from his ear as his hands go limp and his legs lose their fight, dangling uselessly.

Air whooshes from my lungs, and I'm forced to bend over, resting my hands on my knees. It's over. It's fucking over.

"You did good, brother." Lucky holds out a hand to help me stand upright and yanks me in for a backslapping hug. "Love you."

"Love you too."

Of all my brothers, Lucky has seen me through it all. He knows more than anyone what I went through and how hard it was to walk away from my past.

He groans. "Now what do we do with him?"

"Call Levi. He'll take care of it."

Levi is a friend of the club who owns a crematory. For the right price, he takes care of our problems and discards the remains.

"No way. Not a chance. That asshole creeps me the fuck out."

I shrug. "He's not that bad."

"Last time I saw him, he told me I have nice ears. You can't tell me that's not creepy as hell."

I laugh, the adrenaline of the night slowly leaving my bloodstream. "That's a little creepy. But you still have to call him."

"Fuck you."

I flip him off as I head back upstairs, wanting nothing more than to spend the rest of the night with my girl in my arms.



“You think she’ll be okay?” Navy asks.

I inhale her floral scent, curled around her from behind in bed. “Yeah. I put a prospect outside her door in case she needs anything.”

“I’ve never seen her like that. The last couple years, she’s been detached, but not like that. It’s like she was in a trance.”

I tug her closer. “It’s just shock. She’ll snap out of it after she gets some rest.”

After I returned to the room, Mary helped me get Laura to an empty suite a few doors down from Navy. I don’t know what we’ll do with her long-term, but for now, she’s safe. And after getting a sedative from Monroe, she’s sleeping.

“I hope so.” Navy’s quiet long enough for me to think she’s asleep, but then she whispers, “It’s done?”

“Yeah, babe. He’s gone.”

She turns to face me, digging her face into my chest and tangling her legs with mine. What starts as a sniffle soon becomes sobs and full-body quaking. I hold her through it all, whispering I love her and that she’s mine. Mine. Mine.

I know the tears aren’t from sadness. They’re born from keeping her shit together even though the devil was still walking around free. Now that he’s gone, she’s feeling all the weight that’s been lifted. I only know because I feel the same damn way.

“It’s over,” she cries.

I stroke the back of her head. “It’s over.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t have to thank me. It was as much for me as it was you.” I only say that to ease any guilt she might feel. My girl is sweet and innocent, so it’d only be natural for her to take on some responsibility for this and I don’t want that. Not ever.

“I don’t know how I should feel.” She looks up at me, her eyes swollen and bloodshot. “Does it make me a bad person if I’m relieved?”

“I’d be worried if you weren’t.” I stroke my thumb over her cheek, wiping away her tears.

“You won’t get in trouble, will you?” she asks, her body finally relaxing.

“No.”

“Eventually someone will realize he’s gone. And what about my mom? Will they find his blood?”

I’m quick to ease her anxiety. “I’ve been doing this a long time, Navy. I swear to God, no one will find anything and your mom and me are right as rain.”

She lets out an audible sigh of relief. “Thank you. For getting her out of there.”

I leave that one alone. I don’t want her thanks because I didn’t want to help her. “I got something else I want to talk to you about.”

“What’s that?”

“How would you feel about moving into my place?” I ask.

“At the clubhouse?”

“Yeah. For now, at least. Maybe when the time comes, we can find a little house of our own, but until then, we could use a little more room. Besides, I don’t like that everyone here has twenty-four-hour access to you. When you’re not working, you should be able to relax without someone knocking on the door and needing something.”

“You mean, you want my full attention when I’m off shift.”

I twirl a piece of her hair around my finger. “That too.”

“I guess that would be okay.”

“Don’t say it like that. My place is great.”

“If you’re into gothic home design,” she quips.

“How about this? You move in with me, and you can decorate however you want.”

Her eyes widen at that. “Really?”

“I mean, don’t go crazy. I’d like to take a shit without staring at a framed picture of puppies in a basket.”

She hums in thought. “I’m thinking leather and lace. Rock and roll, but feminine.”

“If that’s what makes you happy.”

“Maybe we should make a mood board. Hold on, let me grab my phone.” She struggles to break free of my hold, but I don’t relent.

“Put the mood board on hold. For tonight, at least. You need sleep.”

She relaxes with a yawn. “You’re probably right. It’s been a day.”

I hold her tighter. “But it’s the last one of its kind. I can’t promise it’ll all be puppies in baskets, but I swear to God, today will be the worst of it.”

“You can’t promise that.”

“No, I guess I can’t. But I can promise we’ll make it through all the hard times and come out on top.” I kiss her forehead. “You and me, Navy Blue. We’re gonna be okay.”

She sighs with contentment. “Now that, I believe.”

THE END

# EPILOGUE

## NAVY

**T** *hree months later. . .*

Rigger flips off the overhead lights and turns on the black lights that run around the room. The space takes on a whole new appearance as different aspects light up with neon colors, thanks to the special lights.

I kneel on the crater-shaped bed and take in the sexy alien artwork on the walls, the geometric shapes painted on the hardwood floor, and the tie-dye bedding I'm on. Even my hot pink mesh panties and thong are glowing. The set makes me feel sexy. My nipples and pussy are visible in normal light, but with the black light, only the neon-checkered pattern can be seen.

Rigger approaches, the whites of his eyes and the neon green cock sleeve with attached scrotum ring glowing brightly. While we've explored most of the experience rooms at the Honey Pot many times, this is our first time in the Galaxy Room.

"Lie down on your stomach," he says, stroking his length that's even bigger now with the layer of silicone covering it.

I fall forward close to the edge and wrap my hand around him, feeling the suckers that run along the underside of the sheath. I never imagined this to be a turn-on, but goddamn, is it ever. Tightening my grip, I stroke him up and down while I wrap my lips around the only part of his cock that's him, his fat mushroom head peeking out the top. With my other hand, I palm his balls that are pulled taught from the ring.

"Shit, babe. That feels so fuckin' good." He tangles his hand in my hair at the nape of my neck and I moan as a burst of pre-cum hits my tongue.

Way back before Rigger and I reunited, all I wanted was for sex to be normal and not feel like a punishment. I never expected that someday I'd

know the joy of the intimacy and trust that it builds. And the pleasure. Oh my god, the pleasure. I've had more mind-blowing orgasms since Rigger came back into my life than I can count, many of them because of the playful and fun environment the brothel creates.

Not that the times we make love in the cabin aren't special, because they are, but there's a magic about this place that strips away my inhibitions and lets me be whatever the scene inspires.

I swirl my tongue around his tip before lightly scraping my teeth down it, earning me a growl from Rigger. With my hair in high space buns and tall, white tube socks pulled up my legs, I'm feeling extra naughty.

Holding his cock up, I dip lower to mouth on and suck his freshly shaven balls. Turns out, it takes some preparation to put a cock sleeve on, including a lot of grooming. Rigger wasn't sure he wanted to take a razor to such a sensitive area, but I had my ways of convincing him.

"Get on your knees," he orders, and I comply. Reaching out, he palms my breasts, teasing my nipples through the fabric.

"God, this is so hot."

"You have an alien fetish, babe?" His hands creep lower until it finds my drenched core.

"I have a Rigger fetish," I say breathily as he tickles a finger against my slit.

Then his hand is gone, and he's ripping away the mesh covering my chest. He palms a breast and dips down to suck a nipple into his mouth while his other hand reaches around to grab my ass. My head tips back, my breaths coming faster as he flicks his tongue against my puckered nipple before moving to the other, giving it the same treatment.

"Come here," he says, taking my hand. I climb off the bed and follow him to the swing. "Sit down here."

Helping me in, he guides my hands up, directing me to hold on as he secures straps around my thighs that force my legs apart. Before we came in here, he explained everything he wanted to do and asked for my consent. It would feel awkward and clinical if he didn't make talking about it nearly as sexy as the actual experience. Communication is a good thing, especially when he's describing—in detail—all the ways he wants to make me come.

He moves behind me and holds me against him with a hand around my throat, sucking and biting on my earlobe and kissing that place behind my ear that drives me wild.

When he's had enough, he reaches under my arms and between my legs to rip the mesh apart, like he did with my top. Spreading his first two fingers, he torments me by running them up and down the length of my outer pussy lips, keeping just shy of where I need him.

"Rigger," I whine.

"Have you been a good girl today?" He leisurely runs his fingers up and down my inner thigh.

"Yes."

He chuckles darkly. "Then say please."

"Please," I beg.

Four fingers rub now, spreading my arousal from my asshole to my clit. "God, you're so wet for me."

I grip the straps of the swing, holding on tight as a finger pumps inside me, making obscene wet sounds. I'm so aroused but can't be bothered to be embarrassed. Besides, my man loves witnessing all the ways my body reacts to his touch.

He pulls out and traces my mouth with the same finger, coating my lips in my juices. I turn my head to the side, and he grips my cheeks, holding me in place as he licks it off with a sloppy kiss. Our mouths remain fused together as his hand returns between my legs, finger-fucking me with two digits this time.

"Need you to come for me," he growls, adding his thumb against my clit to the mix.

"I want to come with you inside me," I pant.

"Oh, you will, but I'm thicker with this thing on, and I need you soft and relaxed." Bringing his other arm around me, he plays with my breasts, knowing they're a direct line to my pussy.

He hooks his fingers inside me, fucking me fast while stroking that place inside that only he's ever reached. My jaw clenches and I rest my head on his chest as I chase my orgasm. My lips part as my body coils into a tight knot before coming undone. I shout my release, cursing and calling his name as aftershocks move through me.

"Such a good girl," he murmurs in my ear, pulling his fingers free. Spinning me to face him, I catch sight of his still-hard erection jutting straight out. I'm eager to know what it'll feel like to have him inside me with that thing on. His cock alone is a tight fit, and I'm worried he won't be able to get it in. I told him as much and he shrugged it off, telling me he'd just remove it.



His laid-back attitude about sex is probably from years and years of experience, but it's exactly what I need to calm my shit. I can't imagine how awful things would be if he were a stress case about it like I am.

Knowing I need to be worked back up, he kneels in front of me, hooking his arms around my thighs and diving between my legs, showing no mercy as he eats me out.

"Fuck, you taste so good. The sweetest pussy I've ever had." He licks inside me and I gasp, knowing this dirty fucker just wanted a better taste. I love how obsessed with me he is. "I could eat you for hours."

"If you did that, you wouldn't get to fuck me," I say.

"You're right." He stands to his full height. "Let me know if it's too much."

"I will," I say, licking my lips in anticipation.

He reaches around, putting a hand on my back to hold me in place while the other grips his shaft and pushes inside me slowly. The ripples of the artificial suckers on the sheath feel strange but good as they bump against me both inside and out. My spine straightens and I squeeze my eyes closed as he stretches me wide.

"How do you feel?"

"Full. So, so full," I groan.

"I'm going to move now." He reaches for the same straps I'm holding onto and uses them to pull me up and down his cock, controlling the movement so he starts out slow. "Open your eyes, Navy, and watch as your pussy swallows my cock."

I look down, marveling at how the glowing green color disappears and reappears. The swing allows him to go even deeper than normal, and the fluid motion makes me feel weightless and high. The whole thing is so erotic, a second orgasm sneaks up on me.

"Shit. I'm coming."

Rigger picks up speed, slamming his hips against me, driving the orgasm higher and higher until I lose all control. My brows furrow and my lips part as my pussy clamps down, making the suckers feel better as they massage me. I scream his name and spasm around him, spurring on his own release.

The slapping noise of our bodies echoes in my ears as he fucks me so hard my teeth rattle. Then his hands grip my hips, holding himself inside me for a long moment before pulling out and thrusting in again.

"So fucking good," he grunts, repeating the motion before I feel him

come inside me. His cock pulses, pumping me full of his cum, so much that it trickles down my crack before landing on the floor.

Thankful for the straps holding me up, I sag back, exhausted. It takes way more effort to do this in the swing, but the payoff is worth it. That was the most intense orgasm of my life.

“You okay?” he asks, slowly pulling out. He releases his hold on the swing, sending me floating back and forth as he peels the sheath off his dick.

I laugh, feeling so free and light. “We need to get one of these for home.”

“I already ordered one.” He chuckles, coming over to untangle my limbs. “There are so many different ways I can fuck you on this thing.”

“Oh yeah?”

He pulls me to my feet. “You can be face down while I fuck you from behind.”

We’ve conquered a lot of my fears over the past few months. I now welcome his cum inside me, and no position is off-limits.

He wraps his arms around me, pressing his naked body to mine as he murmurs in my ear. “You can lie back with your head hanging down and suck my cock.”

I smile. “That could be fun.”

“Endless possibilities.” He slaps my ass. “Let’s get you cleaned up.”

The bathroom is just as magical with the black lights. Like the main room, the ceiling has a black light rope that circles the perimeter. The tiles on the floor and in the shower are all painted bright neon colors, making them glow. For added illumination, a neon sign is hung across from the vanity that reads, “Fuck me.” Even the soap dispenser on the wall in the shower is glow-in-the-dark.

The Galaxy Room might just be my favorite.

Rigger follows me into the shower, leisurely soaping me up as we talk about our day.

“Did you see the listing I sent you?” I ask.

“Yeah. I liked it, but I don’t think it’s right.”

“Why? I loved that one. There’s even a mother-in-law suite out back. We have to get my mom out of the clubhouse before Sugar murders her.”

Mom only stayed here at the Honey Pot for a week before Cy offered his cabin until we found permanent accommodations. Mom began intensive therapy with Danielle, and after starting a whole host of anti-anxiety and anti-depression medications, she’s been feeling better and wanting to help around

the clubhouse.

Turns out, there is such a thing as too many cooks in the kitchen because Sugar didn't take too kindly to having Mom around. She runs things a certain way, and Mom wasn't complying. It's been a battle of wills ever since.

"But it only has two bedrooms in the main house," he says, turning me around to shampoo my hair.

"We don't need something big. It's just us."

"But someday, it might not be."

"What do you mean?" I ask, confused.

"Someday, all this practicing we're doing will make a baby, and we'll need somewhere to put him."

My brows furrow. "You want kids?"

It's not that I've never thought about it, but I always assumed he wouldn't want the liability or responsibility. Plus, I help run the brothel that he owns, which isn't exactly a wholesome environment. Not to mention, the whole one percenter motorcycle club thing. I assumed there wasn't room for a child in all that.

But then I get an image of a little boy with Rigger's unusual green eyes and my blonde hair, and my heart melts. Maybe it *is* a possibility.

"I don't know. Never did before. I was too worried I'd fuck them up like my dad did to me."

I whirl around, cupping his face. "You are not fucked up. You're beautiful and perfect, and you fuck like a porn star."

He throws his head back in laughter. "You know what I mean."

"Yeah, I know," I say soberly. "All things considered, I think we turned out all right."

He looks to the floor. "Anyway, that wasn't the point. The point is, you'd make a great mom."

"And you'd make a great dad." I kiss his wet, stubbly chin.

"That's why I think we need a bigger house."

I grin. "Okay. I'll have the agent look for something with three bedrooms, then."

"Might as well get four. Just in case."

That has me picturing a little girl with blue eyes and dark hair. "Might as well," I say.

"And a mother-in-law suite." He turns me back around to finger-comb the conditioner through my long hair. "Because you're right. Your mom is

driving Sugar up the wall.”

“Will we be married when you put these kids in me?”

He wraps his arms around me, pressing his pelvis against my ass. I suck in a sharp breath when his semi-hard cock slips between my ass cheeks.

“You saying you want to be my wife?” he asks, his lips pressing to my ear as we rock side to side.

I move his hands up to my slick breasts. “Hmm. Do I want to be Mrs. Rigger Brown?”

He slaps my breast before massaging the sting away. “I take it back. I’m not asking. You *will* marry me.”

“Then I guess it’s settled,” I breathe out as his other hand snakes between my legs to rub circles on my clit.

“Glad you agree.”

There probably aren’t many women out there who would find a forced proposal in the gaudy bathroom of a brothel romantic, but I’m not like other women, and Rigger isn’t like other men. Bonded through trauma and reunited under the most bizarre turn of events, our love story is just as unique as we are.

“That conditioner needs to sit in your hair for ten minutes,” he says. “Why don’t you spend it on your knees?”

He takes a step back and sits on the tiled bench, legs spread wide and his cock now fully erect. God, he’s a sight. Strong, gorgeous, and perfect in every way. It hits me how different my life could’ve turned out had my best friend not told me about the Honey Pot.

Would Rigger and I have found our way back to each other eventually? Maybe. Maybe not. All I know is I’m grateful we did. So, I’ll gladly spend the next ten minutes on my knees and the rest of my life worshipping this man.



If you enjoyed Rigger’s Mistake, I invite you to check out the [FREE novella](#) of Mustang’s Torment, book .5 in the Sons of Erebus series, previously in the Anti-Valentine Anthology.

For news on when the next Sons of Erebus book will release, sign up for my

newsletter [here](#).

Still wanting more bikers? My Royal Bastards series is complete and in Kindle Unlimited here: [Royal Bastards: Reno, NV](#).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Misty Walker is a USA Today Bestselling contemporary romance author. Her books have been translated to Hebrew and adapted into audiobooks.

She reads the way she writes, so in between writing her dark and delicious novels, she'll sneak in a few sweet and steamy ones to "cleanse the palate", as they say.

Misty currently resides in the high desert of Reno, NV with her husband, two daughters, and two dogs. She enjoys camping in her comfy travel trailer, reading, and writing. She loves connecting with readers, so her email and DMs are always open.

If you'd like to keep up to date on all her future releases, please sign up for her newsletter on her website. You can also order a signed paperback of this book, or any of her releases, there.

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