



SABOTAGE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ELIZABETH KNOX

RAIDERS OF VALHALLA MC BOOK EIGHT

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Cover Design by Clarise Tan, CT Cover Creations

Photographer: Reggie Deanching, R+M Photography

Editing by Kim Lubbers, Knox Publishing

Formatting by R. Epperson, Knox Publishing

Proofreading by Beth Hale, Magnolia Author Services

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COMMONLY USED TERMS:

minn – mine

kirkja – church

hóra – whore

Sváss – Beloved

kone – wife

skytsengel or hamingja – guardian angel

cage – car/vehicle

TRIGGER WARNING

This content is intended for mature audiences only. It contains material that may be viewed as offensive to some readers, including graphic language, dangerous and sexual situations, murder, rape, and extreme violence.

Please proceed with caution. This book does entail several scenes that may very well be a trigger to some.

PROLOGUE



AZIZA

Three Weeks Ago . . .

Magnolia called me in hysterics, begging me to make her a wedding cake last minute. I already knew what I told her would happen: someone would let her down.

Every once in a while, she likes to give fresh blood a chance to prove themselves to her. Magnolia is a great woman and loves to give multiple small businesses the opportunity to work with her catering company, but in situations like this, I wonder why she gives anyone a chance at all. Imagine if I wasn't able to fit this cake in. She'd literally be screwed, and she'd be the one getting the bad review from her clients.

She gave me a basic color scheme based on what someone else had told her, and I searched Pinterest for hours until I came up with something unique and beautiful. Magnolia didn't give me any sort of indication of what the groom and bride wanted, a theme, or anything. All I was given was a few colors. In those sorts of situations, I always go with a floral-themed cake. You really can't go wrong, and I've never gotten one complaint about a floral theme.

I brought the cake here three hours ago, and since then, almost everyone has been partying and having a good time. They have a variety of beers on tap, as well as every liquor you could possibly think of to make mixed drinks and have shots, plus a variety of wines. I've had three glasses of chardonnay.

"You know we've barely seen each other these last few weeks, right? I think the last time I saw you was last month when we had another catering job together," Magnolia says as she comes right up beside me.

I turn to face her, noticing the beautiful rust-colored sweater she's wearing with skin-tight dark faded jeans. She has a pair of knee-high boots on, and Kraken's eyes are glued to her from across the main room.

"I know, things have been so nuts. I lost two of my helpers, so I've been working longer hours. Tyler said he was going to help me for a little while, but you know how that panned out." I can't help but let the annoyance slip past my lips. Tyler is my on-again, off-again boyfriend that I've been dating for the last three years.

I've known him for a while because he used to be friends with my older brother, Zain. I always ran to my brother to tell him about any problems the two of us were having, which is why he and Tyler aren't friends anymore. My brother can't stand him, mainly because of how he treats me.

Tyler's never done anything particularly awful, but he has done things that have made my life more difficult than it needed to be. Zain told me after the third time Tyler did that to me how it was bullshit. He told me I should break up with him. I did and thus began the cycle of the two of us being on-again, off-again, more times than I can count.

"Tyler's a waste of space, piece of shit, and you know it. Have you looked into getting an actual bakery location instead of working out of your house?"

I own a small two-bedroom house about five minutes away from the clubhouse. It's actually on the other end of this back road, surrounded by trees. On either side of me, I have neighbors who live in single-wide trailers. Across the street, there's a small farm, and then on the other side of that is the main road. I can't see it from my place because they have pine trees lining the back of their property. I'm going to guess it's for privacy reasons and to reduce some of the noise.

My house is maybe nine hundred square feet, so it is fairly small. The biggest space in my house is my kitchen/living room combination, as well as my master bathroom. My bedroom is okay, and the extra bedroom I have is really small, but it's enough to fit a queen-sized bed. I really don't even use it besides filling the closet up with my bakery boxes and supplies.

I don't know how to reply to Magnolia. She has a fully functional and operational business, whereas I don't have the supply and demand like she does. She told me a few weeks back that she booked up for catering jobs last March through the next month because of wedding season. It's one of the busiest times of the year. Granted, she's managed to hook me up to bake

some items for a few of those catering jobs, but I am in no way on the same level that she is. For goodness' sake, I'm a twenty-two-year-old woman who's doing this all by herself.

"No, I haven't." The truth is I can't afford to rent an outside space, so all I can do is keep working from my small house. It gets the job done, so I'm not complaining in the least bit.

Magnolia presses her lips together and looks me up and down. "Why don't you and I create some sort of deal? I just bought another building next to the club and catering business. I'm using it primarily for a new business venture and to expand the amount of guests we can accommodate for a catering event. You could use one of the kitchens. It has a commercial fridge, freezer, ovens, everything you could possibly imagine. You could give me different dessert options for a specific amount of people, something I could pitch to clients. In return for me letting you use the space, maybe you could give me a thirty percent discount and use the space for free?"

It's a tempting offer, but I don't know if it would be sustainable long-term. "Let's talk business another day. We're here to celebrate Dag and Esperanza's nuptials." I suggest we switch the conversation over to something a bit more personal. The truth is, even thinking about everything Magnolia mentioned to me right now is only going to end up stressing me out. "I will come up with some pricing and see if it could work, so I'm not shooting your idea down." I offer a soft smile, and Magnolia nods.

"All right, as long as you're not giving me a big fat no. But, if you say yes, it will only enhance your career into the very thing you've been dreaming about." Magnolia winks at me, and I know exactly what she's doing. She wants me to be successful, and I know she needs a baker who can maintain the level of catering that she needs. It would really be a win-win, but I have to weigh my options and put some real thought into it before I can say yes.

Vanir walks out with his hand around Vail, who is heavily pregnant. I think she might be due in a couple of days. "Oh, I wonder if she went into labor."

"Maybe. She's due around now, right?"

"Yeah, any day now. She's had Braxton Hicks a couple of times and has been complaining that she's over the pregnancy. She's at the point where everything is uncomfortable."

"Oh, that poor girl."

“Esperanza looks breathtaking. That woman has the best style out of any woman in the clubhouse. You should see some of the showstopper outfits she wears to head into her office in the morning.” Magnolia goes on, and the few times I’ve seen Esperanza in town, she’s always wearing a lot of bright colors. It seems to me like she’s a very positive, outspoken person.

I don’t really wear many bright colors, though I attest that to growing up in Dubai when I was a child. My mother moved my older brother and me here to Tallahassee when I was thirteen. Thankfully, we had both been speaking English since we were seven, since it’s taught in school.

Even now, I’m wearing a long, oversized medium brown sweater with dark skinny jeans and a pair of deep brown leather booties, and I have my purse slung over my shoulder. They said we could dress casually for this, so I was dressing casually, but I spruced up my outfit as much as I thought was necessary. My raven black hair is styled like normal. I’m lucky in that sense. It’s thick as can be, but it’s straight, so I never have to do anything to it unless I want to curl it or style it in another way.

“Oh, shoot. I’m being summoned. I’ll catch back up with you later,” Magnolia tells me. Kraken is waving her over. Everly is in front of him, looking quite emotional. I hope she’s okay, but I’d bet anything it’s some small problem that they’ll be able to fix. Everly is Kraken’s biological niece, but her mother was killed by her father. I believe it was a murder-suicide, but I can’t recall all of the details. I do know that Kraken adopted Everly, and when Magnolia married him, she formally adopted her as well. It was a beautiful end to a tragic story. At least that little girl is surrounded by nothing but love.

I take a sip of my drink, and a heavy feeling comes over me. The music is pumping loudly, and I scan the room, trying to understand why I’m suddenly so uneasy. Then I realize what it is. Aesir has his light hazel eyes glued to me.

Aesir and I . . . that is complicated. Whenever Tyler and I break up, I always run to Aesir. I wouldn’t call him a rebound by any means, but we have low-key sex when I’m single. There’s something comforting about Aesir and how he treats me. I don’t constantly get nagged at, ridiculed, or made to feel like I’m a piece of shit like the way that Tyler treats me. It’s easy.

The complications come whenever I get back with Tyler, and Aesir gets frustrated with me. Aesir doesn’t have a girlfriend, and I’m not sure if he ever

has. He's one of the youngest guys here in the clubhouse, and I think the most action he might get is from the hórás, who are the clubwhores who service the single members.

"Okay, crisis averted. What are you staring at?" Magnolia comes right back and turns, finding my eyes focused on Aesir. "So, care if I ask what's going on with the two of you?"

"Nothing, right now. We haven't hooked up since last month."

"Right before you got back with Tyler?"

"Yeah, but Tyler and I are done."

"You're done?" Magnolia doesn't sound convinced.

"Yeah, for good. I'm done doing this back-and-forth shit with him. If I'm in a relationship, I want it to be a healthy one, not whatever the two of us have been doing for this long. It feels toxic to me, and I think it's the first time I've realized it."

"Good for you. You know I'll always support you, but Tyler is a piece of shit. He makes excuses all the time and drags you down with him. That's the kind of crap that pisses me off."

Magnolia and I have known each other for almost three years now, a little longer than I've been seeing Tyler. She's a damn good friend, and she's never afraid to voice her opinion, yet she does it in the most respectful way ever. "I have to ask you something," Magnolia speaks up again out of nowhere.

"What is it?"

"Is Aesir the reason you're finally calling it quits with Tyler?"

I shake my head. "No, that's just a coincidence." My eyes drift, and I notice Kraken waving over in this direction again. "I think he needs backup," I say with a slight laugh.

Magnolia turns to look at her husband and sighs. "Ugh, you're probably right. I'll catch up with you later."

"Sounds good," I say with a laugh.

It's not even ten seconds before Aesir makes his way over to me. He licks his bottom lip and looks me up and down. "You look really damn good."

"Thank you. You look . . . normal." He's wearing a pair of jeans and a black T-shirt, and he has his cut on above that. He even has his typical black combat boots on as well. Most of the brothers dressed up for this party, or at least put a bit of extra effort in, not Aesir.

"They said casual."

“Yeah, they did,” I confirm. I take another sip of my drink before I’m out.

“I’ll go grab you another.” Aesir grabs my drink and walks off to the bar before I can say another word. As he’s walking off, I notice Dag and Esperanza’s eyes are glued on me. They look as happy as can be, and I smile, then wave. They look away like two teenagers caught eavesdropping, and I can only laugh. I do wonder what the two of them are thinking.

I wonder if people in the club know that Aesir and I have hooked up a few times. I’ve never come over here, and he always comes to my place. If they do, they might be thinking the two of us will be the next couple. I don’t know, though. I kind of want to spend some time working on myself after Tyler and I are finally done for good. The last thing I need to do is to go jumping into another relationship.

CHAPTER ONE



AESIR

Present Day . . .

It's colder than normal on this mid-November day. I remember riding through Arkansas and Missouri this time of year and it being this cold, but never in Florida. Typically, it doesn't get this chilly until about December, but I guess climate change isn't as big of a joke as I thought it was.

We're all sitting in the room where we hold *kirkja*. It's long overdue after everything that happened with Mord up in Tennessee, and now we're waiting to develop some sort of game plan to go after Roque. At least, that's my hope. That's why we're in here right now. We're all still waiting for Runes to arrive. Fenrir told me that Fern called him an hour ago, and he left in a hurry. He wasn't too sure why, though.

Over the past couple of weeks, there have been a lot of changes to the club. Vail and Vanir welcomed a baby boy named Gunnar on Halloween. He's the perfect mixture of the two of them, with his dirty blond hair, icy blueish-gray eyes, and the most alabaster skin. Rati and Gwen were right behind them and welcomed a little girl they named Saga on November 4. She has the darkest raven black hair with deep chocolate eyes. Finally, Fenrir and Charm welcomed their first biological child between the two of them on November 8 last week. They named their little girl Ingrid, and I personally think she looks more like Charm and less like Fenrir. She has red hair, just like her mother, and light sage green eyes. As of late, there's been a lot of crying around the clubhouse, and for once, it isn't coming from my brothers.

"Anyone know when Runes will be here?" Logi asks, looking around the room. It's a rarity that we're all here waiting and ready for him. Usually, one

of us is rushing to get into *kirkja* before we piss him off too bad.

“It shouldn’t be more than a few minutes. Fern had an issue at the spa, and Runes needed to rush over,” Fenrir fills him in, giving us all the details we didn’t know.

Fern owns a spa with Charm not too far away. Both of the ladies are very hands-on. They’re not like some owners who simply hire outside people to run their businesses. Nope, other than their children, the spa is their pride and joy. The last time there was an issue at the spa, I’m pretty sure it was the fire, but I hope it isn’t anything too intense. If it was, Runes probably would have asked for a couple of us to go with him.

We all chat with each other, and I pass the time looking at my phone. I’m scrolling through social media mindlessly when I get a text message notification.

I pull up my messages app and tap on Aziza’s name.

Wanna come over to my place in an hour?

I swallow hard as I weigh my options. I want to go over, but I’m not going to keep screwing around with her if she doesn’t know what she really wants. It can get so complicated between the two of us. She breaks up with her on-again, off-again boyfriend, and we sleep together for a bit, go on a couple of dates, then she’ll get all quiet on me, and I’ll ask what’s up. Eventually, usually after a few days, she’ll text me and let me know she got back together with her boyfriend, Tyler. He obviously doesn’t give her what she needs, so why does she keep going back? It beats me.

Yeah. I’ll be there in about two.

I don’t want her to think I’m completely eager to see her or like I can’t possibly wait. I like Aziza, I really do . . . but I don’t like how I’m always cast aside anytime Tyler happens to word things the right way. He’s a piece of shit, and she’s being stupid, giving him the time of day when I know he’s only going to end up hurting her again. I love that Aziza has a big heart, but most of the time, it only ends up getting her hurt. I want to put a stop to it, but she has to be the one who’s willing to give me a chance.

The door to *kirkja* swings wide open, and Runes comes inside. He shuts the door behind him and takes his seat at the head of the table, slamming the gavel down the second his ass hits the chair. “Apologies for the delay. There was something I needed to handle.” Through his tone, Runes sounds completely aggravated.

I know I’m not the only person wondering what happened, but I do know

I'll be the first to ask. "Everythin' all right, Prez?"

"It will be. Fern had this random man come inside today, someone she'd never seen before. Little did I know that the man wasn't a random person. He was romantically involved with Hillary before her death. Apparently, he went to visit Hillary's sister, and she told him Hillary died unexpectedly and very suddenly. She didn't give him any closure, I guess, and then he started looking into things. Well, he doesn't believe it was a simple, tragic death. He threatened my wife. Fucker thinks we're behind it, and it escalated from there. Fern and the women who work there weren't hurt, but Fern pulled a gun on him and told him to get the fuck out of her and Charm's business. By the time I got there, he was gone. We didn't get a name or anything, but we should have video footage of him." Hillary was Runes's ex-wife and the mother to the son they share, Tor. She was involved in some really messed up shit.

"Holy fuckin' shit, man!" Rati shakes his head.

"Yeah." Runes looks right at Vanir. "I need you to get over to the spa after church and look at the video footage. I want you to run it through every facial recognition app you can and let me know when you get a hit." There isn't a doubt in Runes's mind that Vanir is going to come up with something. Vanir might have needed a little bit of help lately since Roque hired the Toad to work on his team, but it doesn't mean that Vanir isn't capable or talented.

"You got it, Prez," Vanir instinctively responds.

"All right, on to other things. Since we're bringing up my ex-wife, I think it's a perfect opportunity to talk about my son. He turned eighteen, and he's been dropping hints that he wants to prospect for the club. Now, I doubt we have to bring this to a vote, but for old times' sake, we should."

There's a bout of laughter among the brothers seated around the table. Runes knows damn well not one of us is going to say no to Tor prospecting. It's his birthright, for fuck's sake.

"There's no need for a vote here, brother. Tor is welcome to join the club as a prospect." Fenrir is the first one to speak up, and with nods and grunts of approval coming from the rest of us, this issue is put to bed quickly.

We get off topic for a few minutes and discuss a couple of personal things, like how all the newborns are doing, and we even catch up with Dag to see how things with him and Esperanza are going. Their relationship pretty much came out of nowhere, but we're very happy to know that they're doing well. It seems like they found each other exactly when they needed each

other.

“I hate to cut this short, but we need to stop bullshittin’ and discuss something else. I want to get back to the spa and check on my wife as soon as possible,” Runes starts off.

“We understand, Prez. What else is on your mind?” I ask.

Runes takes in a deep breath and begins to look each of us in the eye as he speaks. “Mord has been handled, but we can’t ignore the threat Roque is pressing against us. He’s said he wants to get back at us and to wipe our club off the face of the earth. We know he’s in Cuba, and I doubt he knows we’re onto him. It’s already the middle of November, so I think right after Thanksgiving, a group of us should head to Cuba. I want your thoughts on this. All of your thoughts.”

The room is silent for a moment until Dag is the first to speak. “I think that sounds like a solid plan. Have you given any thought on who is going with you or who will be staying back?”

We never leave the clubhouse unattended, so I’m sure there will be a few brothers staying here at the very least, especially with all the newborns. “I’ve given it a bit of thought. The prospects will stay back, so Tor, Regnor, and Geirolf. I would appreciate it if two of the full-patched members volunteered to stay home. I’m sure you all know I don’t want the prospects to be in charge of protecting our women and children by themselves.”

There’s a bit of silence in *kirkja* until Kraken clears his throat. “I’ll stay back with everyone.”

“Okay, I need one more,” Runes states, looking around the room.

“I can too, but y’all better make that fucker pay. I’m gonna be sad to miss out on torturing his ass,” Magnus adds.

Magnus and Kraken are some of the strongest men we have in the club, so anyone who does have a woman or children in their life is undoubtedly going to feel a little better about leaving them behind. “Good. I’m glad we have that settled. The rest of you are coming with me.”

“When will we leave, a couple of days after the holiday?” Logi questions.

“Yes, I’m thinking the Sunday after Thanksgiving.”

“Vanir, have you found the town that Roque is residing in?” Magnus asks.

Vanir has his laptop in front of him. “Yes, I’ve caught him on camera in Havana multiple times, but for the last week, I’ve found him in Nueva Gerona, which is located on a Cuban island called Isla de la Juventud.”

“Okay, so are we going to decide what area of Cuba we’re flying into the day before?” I ask.

A sinister smirk flashes across Runes’s face. “I never said anything about flying.”

“So, how are we getting there?” Ivar asks with a cocked eyebrow.

“I have a friend who owns a large fishing vessel. We’re going to go out with him on Sunday. He has internet, so Vanir will still be able to keep tabs on Roque while we’re traveling,” Runes fills us all in. So far, everything sounds good.

“My guess is we’ll be keeping tabs on him until we’re on the ship and then come up with a more iron-clad plan?” Fenrir questions.

“Yes, it’s too early right now to be making decisions. Roque has a tendency to go from city to city, so I don’t want us heading into Havana if he’s on one of the outer islands. I imagine word will spread quickly when locals see tattooed, bulky, bearded white men coming. I’d like to avoid him being tipped off about our arrival.”

“It’s understandable, and it’s a solid plan,” Magnus comments.

“Do we know what we’re going to do with him when the time comes?” I ask, looking right at Runes.

He stiffens and licks his lips as he ponders what I’m asking him. “I’m not sure, but I do know we’re gonna make him pay for all the bullshit he put our club through.”

“You need some time to think about how fuckin’ sadistic we’re gonna be, is all.” Rati chuckles, and a few of the other brothers are getting a kick out of it, too. Roque might think he’s evaded us, but he’s in for a rude awakening.

“That’s an understatement,” Fenrir adds.

“It is. I need to get back to my wife, so go off and do whatever the fuck it is that’s been keeping you busy all day.” Runes picks up the gavel and slams it down on the table. At the impact of the wooden instrument hitting the table, he stands and prepares to leave, and the rest of us follow his lead.

Aziza wanted me to come over to her place in an hour, but I told her two hours just to throw her off a little bit. So, I head upstairs to my room and strip out of my clothes. I can at least take a quick shower before I go over to her place so I smell fresh as fuck.

I haven’t been this happy since we’ve settled down in Tallahassee. I never minded being on the road, but it’s nice to lay your head down in the same bed every night. The little things like having nice water pressure and hot water,

never having to worry about bed bugs, and an array of other shit humbled us from being on the road for so long.

I wait until I'm five minutes past the two-hour mark and finally leave my room. I walk down the stairwell, and Rayna, Dag's little sister, looks right at me while she's rubbing a rag on the tables. "Where are you heading off to?" Rayna wiggles her eyebrows playfully, and I smirk.

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"I'm dying to, actually. I need a distraction, so if you have something good to say, please do." There's a bit of desperation in her voice, and I want to know more. I want to know what's bothering her so badly.

"Is everything okay? You seem a bit stressed out." I'll give her the details about Aziza and me, but not until I check and make sure she's really okay.

Rayna goes from focusing endlessly on wiping down the table to looking right at me. "Honestly? Not really. I'm trying to not let it show, though. I'm exhausted. I'm tired of being freaked out, tired of constantly looking over my shoulder, waiting for the shoe to drop. My stepfather is a vile, despicable man. A man who somehow tricked the people who had the ability to let him out. He, a fucking psychopath, managed to convince them that he was this reformed man who loved Jesus. It's all a front. All bullshit. I knew that before he was released, but goddamn if I didn't see it firsthand when his closed fist collided with my face."

Dag and Rayna's mother was married to a man named Loren. I don't know all the details, but I know that when Dag and Rayna were children, he tried to kill their mother and went to prison. I imagine there were a couple of other charges for him to be in prison for so long, or maybe his DNA was in the system, and they finally pinned that shit on him when they booked him.

"I know it's been a little bit, but we're gonna find him. Loren's good at hiding, and he's gonna pop up eventually. You know?"

Rayna scoffs and shakes her head. "I get what you're saying, and I wish that made me feel better, but it doesn't. I just want all of this to be done and over with."

"It will, sweet cheeks. Just won't be today. Hell, it might not be tomorrow, but you can bet your sweet ass I'm not gonna let that fucker get close to you," Magnus pipes up out of nowhere.

Rayna turns and looks right at him. He's got that typical serious expression on his face while he's scrolling his phone. "If you keep being all sweet to me, Magnus, I might think you like me."

“Likes you? I’d say he like likes you.” I add fuel to the fire burning between the two of them and amuse myself. If I had to place any bets on who’s going to couple up next, it would be Magnus and Rayna. They have this playful chemistry between the two of them.

Magnus doesn’t say another word, but he does grunt.

“Magnus is right. No one here is going to let him get near you. Take a deep breath, ‘cause you’re gonna be fine. You’re safe with us. Your mom is too.”

“I know. It’s just . . . our lives have been turned upside down since I found him in her house. It feels so weird not having any sense of normalcy. It’s throwing me for a loop, honestly.”

“It’ll get back to normal one day. It just might not be the normal you were expecting it to be.”

“Yeah, so, distract me. What’s going on with you?” Rayna continues wiping down the table, bending over slightly, and I notice Magnus’s gaze is off his phone and planted right on her dump truck ass. I’m not even being a dick when I’m saying that. Rayna has a stellar ass for a skinny chick.

“Nothing, really. A friend invited me over, so I’m gonna go see what’s up.”

“By a friend, do you mean a certain beautiful Middle Eastern woman? One who really knows how to make some sweet stuff?”

I snicker. “Yeah, that would be the one.”

“She isn’t your friend, Aesir, and you know that. You two have something real between you, and I’m going to tell you something. Chase that. Fight for it because I would kill to have someone look at me the way you look at her.”

Damn, Rayna’s getting real with me right now. “I’d fight for her more if she could make up her damn mind. She always calls me when she breaks up with her boyfriend, and then she gets back with him and ghosts me. I’m about to tell her tonight I’m done with being the on-call dude in her life. I like her, and if she only wants to fuck that’s cool, but I’m not gonna be doing anything but fucking her. Then when I find the woman I’m supposed to be with, I’ll drop her ass.”

“Why waste your time fuckin’ her in the first place? We have hórás here.” Magnus is talking about the clubwhores. What I’m saying is pretty much the same thing. I swear on the Gods that I want more with her. I don’t want to treat her like a whore. I want her, and I want her to want me, too. What I

won't do is beg her to want me. Fuck no. I'd rather fuck her and then drop her when someone else who garners my interest comes around.

"Not everyone wants to fuck a whore," Rayna spits out in my defense.

"I need to get going, but I'll chat with you two later." I can feel an argument brewing between Rayna and Magnus, so I leave the clubhouse and go into the attached oversized garage.

I walk right up to my bike, put the kickstand up, take the brake off, and walk over to the bay door. I press the button on my bike, and it opens up. Then I start her up and exit the garage. I click the garage door opener so the door shuts and head down the road.

Aziza lives on the other end of the road, where it's more desolate. Across the street from her is a farmer whose family has been here for generations. On either side of her, she has two mobile homes, and the people who live there are shady as fuck, but whatever.

She lives in a small two-story home. It might be nine hundred square feet, but I'd honestly doubt it's even that much. It's so fucking tiny, but it's cozy as hell. There's a small concrete porch on the front, and there's a small porch on the upper level, too. It's attached to her master bedroom, which isn't as nice as it sounds.

I pull up in her gravel driveway and park my bike, cutting off the engine and dismounting as I take the key out. I always keep my helmet plopped on my handlebars. There's a chill in the air as I walk up to her porch, and I glance up at the sky. I wonder if it's going to rain soon.

I press the white button on the doorbell and wait for Aziza to come to the door. After a couple of minutes, she comes to the door, and she's wearing a pair of jeans that cling to her skin like a second skin, with a skin-tight long-sleeve t-shirt. It comes down in a U shape, giving me a really good look at her breasts.

"Come on in. You want anything to drink?" Aziza exits the frame of the door and heads inside toward her kitchen.

"You got a beer?"

Aziza snickers and nods. "I always make sure to have beer when you're around. You want a beer, or do you want whiskey on the rocks?"

Ah, now she's talking. Aziza knows I love my whiskey. "Yeah, go ahead and give me some whiskey."

I walk over to the kitchen and lean against the wall as she gets a glass from the cupboard and snags her bottle of whiskey from on top of the fridge.

She even grabs a couple of ice cubes and puts them in the glass before she pours the whiskey. “You’re quiet, which can only mean one thing.”

“Mmm, what would that be?”

“You’re overanalyzing something, so spit it out. What is it?” Aziza hands me my drink and crosses her arms, pushing her breasts up in the process. She doesn’t have the biggest tits on the planet, they might be a B or maybe a C on a good day, but damn, does she know how to use them.

“I am curious about something.” I take a sip of the smooth whiskey and wait a few moments before I speak again. Aziza perks up a bit, and her posture stiffens.

“Okay.”

“Are you done with Tyler, or are you calling me like you have every other time before?” I want to know if she’s through with him. I’m not going to keep investing myself emotionally in something that will never go anywhere.

Aziza clicks her tongue against the roof of her mouth and grabs a glass for herself. She pours some whiskey into the glass and takes it back like a shot. “Yes, I am. I’m tired of what he and I have been doing these last few years. After a while, it gets exhausting, and I’m tired of constantly fighting for something that doesn’t make any sense.”

“I thought you were done with him for the last time a few weeks back, but he managed to crawl his way back, and I was cast aside yet again. Women throw themselves at me, Aziza. I ignore every other woman because I want you. All I need to know is if this is just sex or not. If it’s sex, I can fuck the shit outta you and then leave you before morning. If you want something more, then I need to know that.” As much as I’m telling her I could just fuck her and fuck her alone, I don’t know if I can. I’ve gotten so territorial over her during these last few weeks.

That only means one thing.

It means I have feelings for her.

CHAPTER TWO



AZIZA

I'm not going to lie. I'm a little taken aback by Aesir right now. I thought all he wanted was casual sex, but it's the opposite. He wants something real, and he's kind of telling me that right now. I've been on and off with Tyler for so long and want someone who will stand by me. I want the kind of man who will pick up when I call. Aesir is that man. He's the man I've been praying for, but he's here at the worst possible time. I want time for myself after Tyler, but I think if I don't see where things can go with him, I'll end up missing out on a good thing.

He always answers when I call. He texts me back within twenty minutes most days. Hell, he shows interest in my baking and actually gives a damn when we're conversing. There are no 'uh-huhs' or empty 'okays' like Tyler used to do. I would chat with Tyler, and he'd dismiss almost everything I had to say. He didn't give a damn, even if he was pretending he did.

"I'm done with Tyler, and I mean it. He says he's going to change, but he never ends up changing. He always reverts back to his old ways, and I'm not dealing with it anymore."

"All right." I don't think he's convinced.

"I mean it. Don't worry about Tyler because I'm sure as fuck not." I take a couple of steps closer to Aesir until our bodies are almost touching. I lick my lips and look up at him.

He has the most gorgeous light hazel eyes I've ever seen. They have a bursting green near the iris while the outside fades into a light brown with a bit of gold. Aesir is beautiful for a man. Sure, he's rough around the edges, but he's the pretty boy of that entire club.

I place my glass down on the kitchen counter and slither my hand up his torso, feeling every ridge of his abs through his thin t-shirt. I take it all the way up to his neck and flutter my fingertips against him. “I mean it, Aesir. I’m done with him. He’s not going to weasel his way back into my life. I’m not letting him.”

“You have a soft spot for him. He’ll say somethin’, and you’ll end up changing your mind again. Just like the last few times.” Aesir lowers his tone a bit, and I’m convinced what he’s saying is true. He really is done with me if I can’t choose.

Tyler only ever hurts me. It’s been a long, tumultuous road with him, but I do have a soft spot. It’s a soft spot that I’m going to have to ignore from now on. Why would it make any sense for me to keep this cycle going on and on with Tyler when I have a great man like Aesir standing before me? It would be dumb.

“No, not anymore.”

“I hope you’re not bullshitting me right now. I wanna explore this, go out on a few dates, or whatever. We have a good time whenever we’re around each other. At least I do.”

I smile so big when Aesir says that. “I do, too. I always have fun with you, regardless of what we’re doing. There are some things I enjoy doing more than others.” I wink at him, and he chuckles.

“I can’t imagine what that might be.” Aesir plays along, licking his bottom lip.

I lean up on my tippy toes and press my lips to Aesir’s. Every time our lips collide, it’s like the entire world around us stops moving. I only focus on him. I have tunnel vision, and I hope he has the same experience.

I kiss him softly at first, tasting the remnants of whiskey on his lips. We always start out slow and sensual, and it always gets more intense right before we have sex. Aesir drifts his hand over my hip and pulls me closer to him. He slides his hand around my waist and plants it on the small of my back, practically crushing me against him.

I push my tongue into his mouth until he willingly opens it. Our tongues unite, and we deepen our kiss. I’ve never really liked French kissing, but like a lot of other things, Aesir has changed my mind. “Fuck, you taste good,” Aesir groans as he breaks our kiss for a moment.

“Mmm, you do, too,” I murmur against his lips.

Aesir slides his hand under my legs and scoops me up in his arms. I yelp

in surprise, and he chuckles as he takes me up the stairs and into my bedroom. He tosses me down on the bed so hard that I roll onto my stomach. By the time I'm rolling onto my back, he's tossed his cut on the back of my office chair and is taking his shirt off.

Now, this is my favorite part. I love it when he strips for me. I love seeing every inch of his body. He's one of those guys who doesn't have to do anything. He just blinks, and women are fawning over him. I'm one of those women.

I lie on the bed watching the show until Aesir's standing in only his boxers and socks. He grabs me by my belt and pulls me over the edge of the bed, fiercely unbuckling my belt and taking off every article of my clothing until I'm in the matching neon green bra and panty set I thought he'd like.

"Gods, this is new." He licks his lips again.

"I bought it just for you." I gnaw on my bottom lip and watch his eyes glimmer. The fact I bought something and thought of him is making him happy.

"Too bad it's not staying on for too long." Aesir yanks down my panties, and I rise a bit to take off my bra, but he playfully slaps my hands away. With one hand, he unclasps my bra and tosses it somewhere in the room.

"You're a little eager tonight."

"It might have somethin' to do with you telling me you're done with Tyler. It's celebration sex. I'm not holdin' back anymore with you, Ziza." Aesir has never once called me Ziza, but I like it. It's a really cute nickname.

My heart flutters in my chest as he presses his lips to the inside of my thigh. He presses soft, chaste kisses until he's above my navel, and warmth pools in the pit of my stomach. Anytime we're together, Aesir distracts me from whatever's on my mind. I don't think about anything. I'm simply in the moment with him, focusing on whatever he's doing to my body.

He glides his calloused hands over my silky skin, and there's something about his mere touch that turns me on so much. Maybe it's because we come from two different lives, or maybe it's the undeniable chemistry the two of us have.

"Fuck, you smell so good," Aesir grumbles against my skin. The vibration of his voice causes goosebumps to spread across me.

"You do, too." He has this earthy musk about him. Sandalwood and cedar mixed with whiskey tonight.

Aesir slowly comes up the rest of my body, trailing kisses from my

stomach, between my breasts, until he stops at the nape of my neck. I suck in a deep breath, and my nipples grow hard from the chill in the air.

He brings his lips back against mine, and I kiss him with such passion. It's different from any other kiss we've ever shared. There's more emotion behind it. This isn't just sex anymore. It's a confirmation that I'm done with Tyler, and he won't be weaseling his way back into my life.

I'm giving this with Aesir a shot.

I've been fucking him on and off for months, and even with just fucking him, he's treated me better than Tyler ever has.

Aesir pulls away suddenly and goes for my bedside table. He knows exactly where the condoms are and pulls the drawer open. I rise up and grab onto his wrist, pulling him back against me.

He furrows his brows in confusion. "What?"

"Don't. I'm on birth control, and we're giving this a shot. I don't know what to call us, if we're dating, in a relationship, or whatever . . . but I'm considering myself monogamous with you, and I don't want a barrier between us. As long as you're clean."

Aesir nods. "Yeah, I've never fucked a woman without a condom. Not tryin' to put you out of the mood or whatever, but did you fuck Tyler without —?"

I don't even let him finish. "No. We were on and off so much that I didn't trust him. Who knows where he was sticking his dick, and I wasn't about to catch something because he wasn't being careful."

"And you trust me?" Aesir almost seems surprised by this, but I do. Sure, he's part of a biker club, but he isn't a whore. He's a good guy, even if others don't think he is.

I nod my head without a second thought. "Yeah, now get back here." I lick my bottom lip, and Aesir towers himself back over me with a satisfied smirk.

"I believe you, you know," he murmurs against my ear.

"About?" I turn my head to the side to look him in the eyes.

"That you're done with Tyler."

"I am, and I think we should stop talking about him. I'm focused on you right now, Aesir. I'm focused on us." I don't let him say another word. I press my lips against his and taste the whiskey. God, he's great.

Aesir pulls one of my legs up over his hip and slowly positions himself between my legs. He goes in slowly and fills me up. I gasp at his intrusion

and close my eyes as he eases in and out of me. Fuck, this feels so good. This is so much different from fucking with a condom on.

Aesir takes his lips from mine and kisses my neck as passionately as he has been to my lips. I wouldn't call this fucking. I'd say this is making love, and I've never done this before. I've only had a small taste, and all I want is more.

Aesir wraps his arm around me, pulling me in closer to him while we continue to move as one. It's like he can read my mind. He moves in and out at a speed that has my toes curling and heart rate spiking with every movement.

After a bit, there's a warmth growing deep inside of me, and soon enough, I'm ready to explode. My body begins to tremble as I moan out his name. "Aesir!"

He craves more of my mouth, claiming it once again with his lips. My hands roam up his back, gripping him tightly as he continues to pound into me.

"Gods, you feel so good," Aesir speaks to my lips as he continues to fill me up. I'm on the heels of another orgasm, ready for it to rock through my entire body. My breathing is erratic as I hold on tightly to Aesir for dear life. Aesir grunts and bucks hard before collapsing on top of me. We both lie here, trying to catch our breath, and I revel in the feeling of his sweaty body against mine.

He rolls onto his side, taking me with him, never separating from me. A cool breeze blows through my hair as a tear escapes from my eye with all the emotions I've felt this past week. I have been trying so hard not to jump into anything, but this feels right. Being with Aesir calms me down. There's no anxiety, no fear, nothing negative when it comes to him.

All I know is that I want to give this a shot. I want to know what it can be like being with him, and I'm damn certain he'll treat me better than Tyler ever has.

* * *

I wake to the sound of birds chirping outside of my window. It's not even daylight yet, but that isn't unusual. I'm up before the sun most days. Being a baker, I have to be up early to get my orders ready and delivered.

Aesir's arm is wrapped around me snugly, so I'm very careful moving it. I don't want to wake him up. We were up pretty late last night. We had sex once, and then cuddled for a while, and then came round two. It was great and just as sensual as our first round. By the time we were done with the second round, I was about to head downstairs to get us a muffin, but I was so tired that I fell asleep right in his arms.

I push down the comforter and wiggle my way out of bed quietly. It's the first time he's ever spent the night. Every other time, he's left right after we've done the deed. It was super casual, and there weren't any expectations between either of us.

I grab my robe off the back of my bedroom door and slide it on, wrapping a knot in the front as I head down the stairs. I walk right into my kitchen and get a pot of coffee brewing. I left my phone down here on the counter, which isn't like me at all. I'm lucky I woke up around my usual time.

I yawn as I press the 'brew now' button, and the fresh scent of coffee grounds wafts through the air. The pot of coffee isn't even halfway made when my phone starts ringing. I furrow my brows and groan, wondering who the hell it could be.

It's a relief when I see it's Magnolia calling me. "Morning."

"Oh, so it's not a good morning, huh?" Magnolia chuckles on the other end of the line.

"I haven't even had a sip of coffee yet, so it's just morning," I explain.

"Oh, okay. I thought you were normally up by now?"

"I am, but I didn't get great sleep last night, so I need my coffee fix."

"Oh shoot, well, sorry. I was just wondering if we could meet up sometime today and talk about what I brought up at Dag and Esperanza's wedding celebration."

"Yeah, what time are you thinking?" Magnolia totally could have texted me to set this meeting up.

"Mmm, maybe around lunch? Can you meet me at the club?"

I scroll on my phone and look at my calendar. I should be able to meet her since there isn't anything too pressing. "Yeah, I can do that. I'll text you about an hour before I'll be there just to make sure your day is going according to plan." There have been a couple of times when I've agreed to meet up with Magnolia, and then she's been late or too overwhelmed to actually have the meeting.

"That's perfect. I'll see you in a few hours." Magnolia and I say our

goodbyes, and then we hang up the phone.

My pot of coffee isn't finished brewing yet, so I go ahead and gather some of the materials I need to make a few batches of pumpkin muffins. That's the first thing on my to-do list, and then I need to decorate three cakes that are set for delivery today. My fridge is so filled with customer orders that I barely have any room for actual groceries. I end up going to the store every day just to get the ingredients I need to make myself dinner.

I manage to get everything I need out by the time my coffee is brewed, and then I take a couple of minutes to make myself a cup. I have to make six dozen muffins this morning and deliver them before ten. The first six I'm going to make will be for Aesir and me to munch on, so I waste no time getting them in the oven and preparing the rest of my muffin tins.

By the time I'm putting the fourth dozen in, the wood floors upstairs are creaking, which only tells me that Aesir is up. I have one of the cakes already decorated, and I'm working on the second one as he comes down the stairs.

"Good morning!" I practically sing it to him as he rounds the corner, groggy, wiping away the crusties in the corners of his eyes.

"Morning," Aesir grumbles.

I take it upon myself to get a coffee mug out of the cupboard and pour him a cup. I don't know how he takes it, so I hand it off to him. "Sugar is over here, and milk options are in the fridge."

"Mmm," he grunts and goes for the fridge. He grabs my half a gallon of whole milk and pours a little bit into the mug. He doesn't even mix it with a spoon. He just takes a huge sip and moans as the coffee takes hold.

I grab a couple of my muffin boxes and begin putting some of the cooled-down muffins in the boxes, packaging them up, and taking them over to the small three-person dining room table that I have.

"Smells good in here."

"Yeah, I love the smell of pumpkins. Fall is my favorite time of year. All of the apple cider, pumpkin-spiced lattes, apple picking! It just means the holiday season is right around the corner." I can't stop smiling.

It's prime time for me right now as far as productivity goes, so I grab my *Post-Its* and put them on each box, writing my clients' names and addresses in *Sharpie*, so I don't get anyone mixed up. When I go to make the deliveries, I'll pull the notes off the top and take them inside their businesses. Luckily, most of them are right in downtown Tallahassee.

I feel Aesir's eyes on me as I work, and sure enough, I glance upward,

and his eyes are pinned on me. “See something you like?”

“I sure as fuck do, but that’s not why I’m staring.”

“Why are you then?” I ask as I pop another box open.

“I’ve never seen you at work before. It’s cool to watch you in your element.” I walk over and snag a muffin for me and one for Aesir. I hand him his, and he takes a bite from it.

“Fuck, this is . . . it’s fuckin’ awesome.” He pauses to chew up his bite and continues, “I knew you were good, but I didn’t know you were this damn good.”

Aesir and I spend the next hour eating our breakfast and chatting while I get more baking done. He chips in as much as he can, helping me put the muffins in boxes and even helping me finish decorating the cakes I have to deliver today. Tyler could never be bothered to help me do anything with my business. He kept telling me I was going to fail at it while Aesir is doing whatever he can to help me.

“Thank you so much for all of your help,” I say to Aesir as we’re walking to my front door.

“Don’t sweat it. Oddly enough, I had fun. You can pay me in extra goodies.” Aesir winks at me, and I giggle like a schoolgirl with a crush.

“I can definitely arrange that.” I open the front door, and Aesir walks out onto my small porch. He turns around, wraps a hand around my waist, and pulls me against him.

“I’ll text you later, but until then, I want you to have a good day.” Aesir barely gets his words out before he’s planting his lips on mine.

Just like last night, our kiss is slow and passionate.

He has no problem taking his time with me to prove he’s serious about this.

I’m only left wondering why I never gave him a real chance before? I feel so foolish for it now. When I’m around Aesir, I feel at peace, and I want to keep feeling this.

I want this to work, and if anything, I know I deserve to be happy.

CHAPTER THREE



AESIR

I release a deep sigh and yearn for the days I don't have to leave Aziza. I want to spend more time with her, but I'll only do it if she really shows me she's done with him. Sure, she said she is, but talk is cheap. Her actions will prove if she really wants this to work between us, and Gods I hope she does.

I walk in through the front door of the clubhouse, and the second I do, everyone's eyes are on me. "Well, well, would you look what the cat dragged in?" Fenrir chuckles from his seat on the couch.

Ivar snickers. "I wonder what hole you've crawled out of, brother."

"I'd bet it's Aziza's," Magnus quickly chimes in, and every brother in the main area starts chuckling.

"Fuck, there's no reason to be so vulgar," I snap at the group of them. There's something about them even remotely mentioning Aziza's hole that rubs me the wrong way. I want to shield her from men talking about her that way, not encourage it.

"Since when have you been a prude?" Magnus questions, then takes a sip of his hot coffee.

"I haven't. Just don't think you should disrespect her, is all."

"Ain't nobody here disrespecting her. But we're not gonna sit back and act like you don't violate her on the regular, brother." Fenrir sticks up for the other guys, and I grow aggravated by the moment. If someone was talking about his ol' lady like this, he'd be annoyed too.

"Yeah, if anyone disrespects her, it's probably you," Ivar speaks up.

"What in the fuck are you talking about, man? Gods, you sound as stupid as you look," I snap, not caring if my words hurt Ivar's precious feelings.

“Shit, man.” Logi starts cracking up, obviously enjoying the show.

“I’m gonna head up and shower. I’ll talk to you guys later,” I say as I get the hell away from them. It’s too early to be dealing with this shit, and a shower will do me some good right now.

I make my way up the stairs and head to the floor where our rooms are. I walk all the way down the hall to my room and punch in the key code to get my door unlocked.

Every time I walk in here, there’s a rush of comfort. There are so many shared spaces within the club that sometimes it’s relaxing to be in your own area where no one else can bother you.

I head into my bathroom and strip out of my day-old clothes, tossing them in the tall white hamper I have next to my sink. I push back the black shower curtain and turn on the water to a medium-hot temperature. We have a damn good water heater here, so I hop right in and get down to business.

As I lather shampoo through my hair, my thoughts drift back to Aziza. I’m trying my damndest to not get too attached to her, but who the hell am I kidding? I’m already attached. I suppose I’ve been attached to her since we started sleeping together. Even knowing she got back with Tyler a couple of times, I’ve still had residual feelings.

I know we could be great together, and watching my brothers find their happiness makes me want to find my own. Everyone around here is settling down, and I mean everyone. Hell, if Kraken can settle down, then I think I can, too.

I’ve had my fair share of pussy over the years, but Aziza is something else entirely. I don’t know if it’s her will and determination or if it’s her beauty and kindness. She’s special, and I feel lucky that I even get to know her.

One thing I can’t understand is how she gives Tyler opportunity after opportunity to shit all over her. He doesn’t care about her at all, and if he did, he wouldn’t be treating her like crap all the damn time.

She deserves someone who gives a damn about her, and I’m that man. I’m the kind of man who would break into Hell to save her. The kind of man who would do anything for her if she asked.

I’ve never understood how good women continue to go back to their toxic exes. It’s exactly what she does, and for what? Does she think something will change? Because I can guarantee it won’t. People like that don’t change. They only get worse over time.

Tyler might be her first love. It's the only understandable reason I can think that she'd give him so many chances, even though he's proven that he's still the same jackass as before.

All I can do is hope and pray that she's finally done with him. Every time she gets close to me, he weasels his way back in and ruins what she and I are creating. I'm sick and tired of it. I want Aziza to truly give up on the thing that's holding her down—Tyler.

All I can do is proceed with caution. I'll give her my all, but I don't want to let myself fall for her when she could end up hurting me. It's a shitty situation to be in, but she's had a specific way of handling herself in the past.

I do know something, though. Tyler always makes some big ploy and tries to prove himself to her. I've already decided that if he starts sniffing back around Aziza, I will sabotage any effort he has to get back with her.

Tyler had his chance with her. He had multiple chances, and he somehow always found a way to fuck them up. His time is long gone. It's my time to be with her now.

I might not even tell him that face-to-face. I might be like a snake in the grass striking without him even knowing I'm the one doing it.

I want her, and I'm not going to stop until she's mine, no matter the cost.

Over the course of the day, I chill upstairs and play some video games. That's my biggest form of stress relief besides sex. Right now, I'm obsessed with an older game called *Dragon Age*. It's an inquisitor sort of storyline where you can choose to be a number of species. The storyline changes with every choice you make, and it always keeps you on your toes. Sometimes, playing games distracts me from my own life. It distracts me from everything I'm constantly thinking about.

After a few hours of hardcore gaming, I head downstairs to make myself a late lunch. I head right into the kitchen and find Rati sitting at the oversized island, eating what appears to be a chicken salad sandwich.

"You've crawled out of your den, huh?"

"Yeah, for a little bit. No one's given me any orders, so I'm chilling while I have the opportunity."

"Fair enough. You know we were bustin' your balls earlier, right?"

"Yeah, I do. Just don't like it when people suggest such vulgar shit about her." I have this newfound defensiveness about her. Sure, I cared before, but it's hard to keep my protectiveness under control.

"I get that. We were just messin' around. Don't let them rile you up like

that again, or they're just gonna keep doin' it. They live for the reaction you'll undoubtedly give them."

Rati is my oldest friend in the club. We've known each other for a few years, linking up right before my parents were killed. I was just about to graduate from high school when their lives were taken too suddenly. All through high school, I'd taken part in my local fire department, began volunteering, and took courses to get certified as a medic. My dream job was to work for the department, helping people in need.

Rati and the club were in my hometown for a span of three months. I didn't know anything about the club or what it meant, but I knew he was a decent guy. He was volunteering at the fire department, and we got close, especially after my parents were killed.

He saw something in me that I never saw in myself--potential.

He plucked me from my sorrows and gave me something to believe in. He made me feel like the club could be my family since my parents were gone and I was an only child. I had no one else, and while I was reluctant at first, I gave it a shot.

Luckily, it worked out, and here I am.

"I get that but fuck if it didn't irritate me."

I head over to the fridge and pull out some diced chicken, provolone cheese, and sliced ham. I can make some chicken cordon bleu in no time. It won't be the exact way most people make it, but it'll still taste damn good.

"I'm sure it did, and like I said, if they keep seeing that it irritates you, they're going to keep it up." I open up the packet of chicken, dump them into a strainer, and put the strainer in the sink. I pour cold water over the chicken for a couple of minutes until all of the slime is washed off them.

I'm the kind of guy who wants seasoning all over his meat, so while the chicken continues to strain, I get some onion powder, garlic powder, smoked paprika, and other seasoning out of the cabinets.

I get a pan and place it on the stove, putting it to medium-high heat, and toss a few tablespoons of oil in there. "You'd think they'd cut it out of respect for me and Aziza." I can't help but get irritated every time I talk about it.

"You really like her, don't you?"

I transfer the diced chicken to a bowl and begin putting the seasoning all over the chicken, tossing it with a spoon until everything is evenly covered. With a quick glance at the pot, the oil is perfect, so I toss the chicken in and

watch it closely while Rati and I continue our conversation.

“I do. I like her more than I want to admit.”

Rati chuckles lightly. “That sounds familiar. I didn’t want to like Gwen, but I craved her like a drug.”

“I just wish I knew what it meant.”

“If you ask me, it means she might be the one you’ve been waitin’ for.”

“Who says I’ve been waiting for anyone?”

Rati snickers. “Man, don’t try and fool me. You want to play it off like you’re some tough guy, but you want what we all have. I see it clear as day. Gods, I know you better than anyone in this damn club. You want a family. A real one. Sure, the club is your family, but it’s not the same as havin’ a woman by your side.”

“You know why I want a family.” I don’t have one. I lost the two most important people in my life. They died trying to make it to my high school graduation ceremony. It fucking killed me when I saw my chief from the fire department show up after the ceremony was over. I saw it all over his face. I’d witnessed family members getting horrible news so many times. I just never thought I was going to be the one getting the news.

“Is Aziza still jumping back and forth with her ex?”

I shrug as I flip the chicken over. Once both sides are cooked through, I’ll throw in the ham to get it crispy, and then I’ll put the provolone cheese on top. “She says she’s done, but time will tell.”

“I hope she is. I haven’t seen the two of you together too much, but I know what you’re like whenever you come back to the club. You seem happier. You’re like my little brother, and that’s all I want for you. I want you to be happy.”

Rati isn’t wrong. Aziza does make me happy. She makes me happier than I’ve been in a really long time.

CHAPTER FOUR



AZIZA

I've been running around like a complete lunatic making these deliveries. I didn't think they were much of a disruption to my day, but I failed to remember how bad the traffic can be here in Tallahassee. I've just finished making my last delivery, and I'm finally on my way to meet up with Magnolia.

We agreed to meet up at the bakery location. I park my car outside and walk up to the entrance. It's conveniently located next door to Magnolia's club.

I walk up to the door, noticing how elegant it is. Her catering business's name is on the door, and when you walk inside, there's a directory for the floors above. Surprisingly, on the third floor is the name of my business, Zizi's Treats.

I can't help but smile immediately. I haven't even fully accepted this, but it isn't surprising in the least bit that Magnolia is jumping the gun.

Magnolia didn't text me with where we'd be meeting specifically, but I can almost guarantee she's going to be on the floor that has the bakery's name on it.

I head down the hall to the elevator and tap on the white button. I'm finally starting to get anxious. My heart is beating so fast in my chest, and my hands are starting to get sweaty.

The elevator doors open, and I step inside, tapping on the button for the third floor. The music playing in the background is of a newer age. It's nothing like the instrumental music you constantly hear in upscale hotels.

In what feels like a few short moments, the elevator doors are opening,

and I'm stepping off the elevator onto the third floor. There's a small seating area to the left with a coffee table in between two couches. On the right are a few circular white tables with matching chairs. Meanwhile, directly ahead of me is a reception area. There's about a twelve-foot-wide wall directly behind the reception area, and on either side is clear glass that you can see straight through.

Through the glass is a massive kitchen, prepping area, fridges, and freezers. I can't see all the way in there, but I'm sure Magnolia has industrial ovens and storage areas as well.

"Like what you see so far?" Magnolia's voice comes out of nowhere, and I turn to the left, seeing her come out of the conference room door.

"Yeah. It's a lot to take in, though."

"I know, it looks a lot bigger in person."

"Probably because it is a lot bigger," I point out.

I don't know how she thinks that we're going to make this work by me just giving her a discount on services. I understand she wants me to make a profit with my business, but she's essentially renting me out an industrial kitchen with all the nines.

"Whatever you say, but bigger is better. It means you can grow your business to the size you want it to be. Plus, you're going to be getting a lot more orders once you give me some dessert options. I know my clients will extend their services to desserts as well."

"Please don't take anything I say as being ungrateful. It's just so much to take in."

Magnolia throws her head back and laughs. "I'm sure it is. Follow me and let me show you around the place."

Magnolia takes me around the reception area, down a large hallway, and pushes open a swinging door. We're in the heart of the expansive kitchen, and if I wasn't overwhelmed before, I am now.

There is absolutely nothing that needs to be added here. It is the best of the best and is completely ready for me to start tomorrow.

"And you just want discounted dessert options for me to use this?"

"Yeah. Discounted at first, and eventually, we can either bump you up to paying a small rent, or I can go in with you financially to put a small shop next door near the club. If people wanted to, they could order anything from your menu. We could even have people come in and buy cupcakes every day, cakes, cake pops, cookies, or whatever else you decide to offer."

It really sounds like Magnolia has given this a lot of thought. I'm not opposed to what she's saying at all, and I know if I don't accept, I'm going to miss out on the deal of a lifetime.

She isn't wrong. If I move my baking to this location, I'll, for one, be able to have a normal house like everyone else. The days of constantly having baking items thrown around are going to be long gone. I try to keep it as tidy as I can, but like everything else in life, sometimes it's not possible.

I'll also have the option to grow and have more products readily available every day. This is the next step in my career, and I'm not going to make a mistake and miss out on this opportunity.

Over the past couple of weeks, things have been looking up. Not only am I done with the draining relationship I had with Tyler, but there's never been more promise than I have right now with expanding Zizi's Treats.

I don't think anything could ruin what I have going right now. If anything, I only see things getting better.

"Okay, I'll do it, but after a couple of months, we should figure out another arrangement. I don't like the idea of getting a handout being here rent-free."

"It isn't a handout. You're going to offer certain desserts at a lower price for me. That will help me make a higher profit."

"Okay, fine, whatever you say." I roll my eyes in a joking manner and accept everything she's saying. I can't hide the fact I'm so excited for this new journey. I have always wanted to expand my business and haven't had the resources to do so. Now I do. All I need to do for Magnolia is come up with some dessert packages. "How many dessert packages do you want, four or five?"

"Mmm, how about we have four and then have a dessert bar option? I have this charcuterie bar that my clients love. I bet if we had a dessert option, they'd eat it up, quite literally."

"Yeah, we could do something like that. Right off the bat, I'm thinking about banana pudding cakes, fudge brownies, s'mores pops, and peach cobbler cups. I can change them every season to reflect the current time of year. Actually, that'd probably be a better summer menu. For the fall into the winter, we should have chocolate peppermint cake pops, gingerbread cupcakes with cream cheese icing, winter wonderland white cake, peppermint bark cheesecake, or an option of a sticky toffee pudding."

"You're making me hungry talking about them."

I can't blame her. Each and every one of them is a great option. "They're absolutely delicious. You have no idea."

"Would you mind making me a sampler box of all those desserts? I'd love to use them for a PR stunt. I can send some out to my top hundred biggest clients. It might entice them to try your baked goods, and it'll help spread the word."

"I'd love to. Before Thanksgiving or after?"

"Go ahead and make me ten boxes beforehand. Then, the week after, move up to twenty a week, and I'll hand deliver them with you so I can introduce you as well. It'll kill two birds with one stone."

"I really like the idea." I take in a deep breath and release it quickly. "Thank you for suggesting all of this to me. I don't think I deserve it, but I'm excited that you're giving me a chance."

"That's the most preposterous thing I've heard. If anyone deserves a chance like this, it's you. Since I've known you, I could tell how hardworking you are. All you need is for someone to help you out a little bit."

"Thank you. I appreciate that so much. When do you want me to start moving my things over here?"

Magnolia takes a few moments to think about it. "You could honestly start tomorrow if you want. Oh!" Magnolia digs in her pocket and hands me a key. "This is for the front of the building. This way, you can get in whenever you need to. I've heard rumors that bakers have crazy early hours."

I chuckle and smile. "Yeah, four is usually when I start."

"Wow. God bless you." Magnolia cracks up, and the two of us say our goodbyes. I thank her again for helping me out like this, and then I'm on my way out of the building, heading up to my car.

My phone started ringing, and I checked the caller ID. Surprisingly, it's my brother, Zain. "Hey there, stranger," I say as soon as I answer it.

"Hey, how's it going?"

"Good. I've been pretty busy, but I just left a really awesome meeting."

"You can't just leave me hanging. What happened?"

Zain has always been one of my biggest supporters. He even bought me my first ingredients when I didn't have the cash to.

"I'm moving to a commercial kitchen so I can provide desserts for a friend of mine who has a catering company. I can work on my other client's orders while I'm here, and there's talk about expanding later down the line."

"That's amazing, sis! Look at you go."

“Thanks. I’m really excited. So, why were you calling? You usually don’t just call for no reason.” There’s always some reason for Zain calling me, whether it’s him needing me to help clean his place, him telling me about a recent date, or something else.

“I was letting you know what my plans were for Thanksgiving next week in case you were thinking about cooking this big dinner or anything. You already know Mom booked that cruise, and I figure since she’s going to be gone, I’d do something a little adventurous, too.” Okay, now I get it. Zain’s leaving me to be by myself for Thanksgiving. How nice.

“Did you have anything planned with friends?”

I’m not going to tell my brother the truth. I’m going to lie and make sure he enjoys his time away and doesn’t worry about me. “Yeah, there’s going to be so many people. My first Friendsgiving ever.”

“Good. I was worried you wouldn’t be spending it with anyone.”

As of right now, I don’t think I will be.

CHAPTER FIVE



AESIR

It's been a few days since I was at Aziza's. We met up for a dinner date the day before yesterday, and she told me all of the good news. I couldn't be more excited for all of the good things coming her way. If anyone deserves it, it's her.

She's poured every ounce and fiber of her being into making sure Zizi's Treats is a successful business, and I'm glad everything is finally starting to pay off. I think Magnolia is a damn good friend for giving her this opportunity, too. She told me that she'd never be able to afford rent on a place like that until she grew her clientele, and since she'll be working with Magnolia directly, her client list will naturally grow.

Yesterday, I helped her take over a lot of her ingredients, some packaging boxes, packing material, decorating tools, and whatever else she had prepared in boxes. I stayed at her new kitchen with her for a couple of hours, helping her organize everything and even helping her make some of the desserts. She said she was grateful for the help and dropped a bomb on me that I didn't expect—Tyler never helped her with her business.

That blew my mind completely. When you're in a relationship with someone, you should want to help them in any way you can. It sounds to me like Tyler never really supported Aziza's dream. That not only pisses me off, but it's pretty fucking pathetic on his part. If she asked me to go to a bridal event with her to give out samples and advertise the business, I'd sure as fuck do it. I want her to succeed, and having a solid support system is the best way to do it.

My alarm clock begins going off, and I grab my phone, silencing it. I've

been up for the last thirty minutes, staring at the ceiling, thinking about anything and everything.

My stomach is grumbling, but I don't know if I want to make any food. I kind of want to stop in town and get something good. Maybe I'll take Aziza a coffee and a sandwich. She's probably already at the building.

I get out of bed, tossing my duvet off my legs, and throw my legs over the side. I take a couple of minutes to stretch and yawn before I get up and get dressed.

My attire never really changes too much. There are always the same few things. Jeans, boxers, socks, wife beater, t-shirt or tank top, depending on the season, and my cut. I grab a few things out of my dressers and throw them all on, sliding my cut on as I grab my phone and leave my room.

I head downstairs, where it's oddly quiet. It's still pretty early, and a lot of my brothers are night owls. They'd prefer to stay up later and party versus getting up early. I used to be like that, too, but I'd drink a few beers and then go game. Now, I find myself wanting to wake up earlier because Aziza is up very early.

I spot Magnolia with Everly, sitting on the lip of a pool table with an open first-aid box next to her. "Everything okay?" It seems kind of redundant to ask, but I have to.

"Yeah, it will be."

"I got a boo-boo!" Everly tells me, pointing to her bloody knee.

"Hmm, well, what happened, Princess?"

Magnolia lifts both her brows and looks right into Everly's eyes, surely curious about what she's going to tell me.

"I, uh . . . I ran when mommy told me not to and got hurt."

The second Everly calls Magnolia mommy, everything shifts. She stops opening the alcohol pads and is in awe. Magnolia and Kraken adopted Everly. Kraken's brother is her biological father, and he killed her mother in a murder-suicide. He stepped up to the plate afterward so social services wouldn't get involved.

"Mmm, it's probably best you listen to your mommy then, huh?"

"Yeah!" Everly smiles brightly, and Magnolia is fighting back tears. I think they're good ones. She really stepped up when she got into her relationship with Kraken. Most women would run in the other direction when they find out you have a kid, but not Mags. She accepted Everly like her own from the very beginning.

Magnolia proceeds to wipe the alcohol pad against Everly's knee, and she hisses. "Ow! That hurts!"

Magnolia nods, acknowledging her pain. "I know it does, but it'll help kill all the yucky germs so your knee can heal. I'm gonna put some antibiotic ointment on it, and then you can pick a band-aid out. Okay?"

"Okay."

"So, how are things with you and Aziza going?" Magnolia asks as she puts the used alcohol pad to the side.

"I think they're going well. Why, what has she said to you?" I'm anxious for her answer.

"Good, that's what I wanted to hear. I do need to say something to you, though." Magnolia grabs a packet of antibiotic ointment from the first-aid kit and puts some on a piece of gauze she already has ready.

"All right, hit me with it."

Magnolia tears her eyes away from Everly's scraped knee and looks at me for a moment. "Aziza, she's been through so much already. Tyler treated her like crap, and I think somehow she felt like that's what she deserved. She's a great woman. She deserves so much better than what Tyler put her through, so promise me you won't hurt her, and if you feel like you don't want to be with her, then don't drag her down a long road. Cut it off early."

Magnolia returns her attention to Everly's knee and rubs the ointment on it delicately.

"I assure you, I have no intentions of hurting her. If anyone is going to throw away what we have, I think it'll be her. She's cast me aside in the past for Tyler. Sure, we didn't have a label or anything then, but it still felt shitty. I told her I'm not doing this with her if she's going to end up running back to him the first time he says anything. So, I hope he doesn't try to weasel his way back in."

"That's comforting to know. I don't think that she has any plans to repeat the past. I've tried to convince her that Tyler isn't what's good for her. I'm trying to help her see her self-worth, but I really think the reason she keeps making the same choices is because of how long she's known him. But she does know he's not going to change. He's just going to keep doing the same shit over and over again."

I narrow my eyes, curious about something. I don't know if Magnolia will tell me, but it doesn't hurt to ask. "What did he do besides treat her like shit?"

Magnolia huffs and rolls her eyes, showing Everly the box of band-aids to choose from. “What didn’t he do is more like it. He did what he could to upset her. He compared her to other women. You know, the ones on Instagram with the big boobs, fillers, botox. He said he wished she was as pretty as them. That’s one of the big things. Other times, he’d be condescending, rude, give her attitude. Typically shitty things that she didn’t deserve.”

I shake my head. One thing I’ll never be able to understand is why women stay in relationships with people who treat them like that. It doesn’t make sense to me.

“I’m glad she has a friend like you to help her see her worth.”

Everly picks a bright pink band-aid, and Magnolia puts it over the scrape on her knee. “Women are supposed to lift each other up, not put each other down.”

“Very true.”

The truth is Aziza is the kind of woman I want to be with. She has a vision for her life and is kind, respectful, and beautiful, not to mention that she has a big heart.

I think she could be the love of my life if we really give this a shot.

When I think about her, I think I could love her the way my father loved my mother. It was pure, and I know there was never a doubt in their minds that there was someone else better out there for them. They knew the treasure they had in each other.

“We’re gonna head out and go get some breakfast, but we’ll see you later.”

“Sure, see ya.”

I walk away and head into the garage, grab the keys to my bike, and click the button for the garage door. I start my bike up, and the thundering sound of the motor wakes me right up. Putting the kickstand up, I drive out of the garage bay and tap the button to close it, sending a quick text to Aziza before I drive. I ask if she wants any coffee or if she likes a specific breakfast sandwich.

I get on the road and head to a local coffee shop a few miles away from her new business location. By the time I arrive, I have a text back from her letting me know what she’d like. So, I order for both of us and get two drinks in a cupholder, slide it on an addition I have for my bike that’ll hold the cupholder perfectly, and put the food in one of my saddlebags. When I’m

done with all of that, I head over to where she is.

The building is unlocked, so I head right up to the third floor where she is and find her in the kitchen. “Gosh, I needed a pick me up so bad. Thanks so much!” Aziza says as she rushes over to me and then plants a sweet kiss on my lips.

“No problem, Ziza.”

For the next twenty minutes, we eat our breakfast together and make some idle chitchat. It’s so hard to believe the holiday is coming up next week, and I notice she hasn’t mentioned it to me once. I wonder if there’s a reason for that.

“What are your plans for Thanksgiving?” I ask her.

She finishes taking a sip of her latte and chuckles lightly. “Nothing, now. My mom’s going on a cruise, and my brother is going somewhere. So, I’ll be all by myself.”

“Why don’t you come and spend it with us at the club? We have plenty of room, and that way, you won’t have to be alone.”

“Are you sure? I don’t want to impose.” I appreciate her being polite, but if I’m inviting her, then she’s welcome.

“You’re not imposing at all. Spend Thanksgiving with me. I’d love that. Just bring some of the desserts you’ve been making.”

Aziza throws her head back and laughs. “Okay, I think I can manage that.”

CHAPTER SIX



AZIZA

I might have outdone myself a little. Not only did I bake chocolate peppermint cake pops, gingerbread cupcakes with cream cheese icing, winter wonderland white cake, peppermint bark cheesecake, and sticky toffee pudding. I went overboard and also made a pumpkin cheesecake, pumpkin pie, pecan pie, and Norwegian Cardamom-Almond tart.

Aesir will probably think I've gone crazy, but I wanted to make sure I had something that everyone would like, and from what he said, there are about twenty-eight people in attendance, not including myself. Sure, some of them are little ones, and if they're able to have some goodies, I didn't want to have anything too crazy. Kids like the simple stuff, so the white cake, cake pops, and gingerbread cupcakes should be a big hit with them.

I drove my car over here to the clubhouse and texted Aesir to let him know I was on the way. I told him yesterday I'd probably need help carrying everything in, and just as I'm getting out of my car, Aesir is coming out of the clubhouse.

They live in an absolutely massive restored warehouse. There are multiple floors, and I don't even want to guess the square footage. I'd say anywhere between six and ten thousand square feet.

"Hey there, baby girl." Aesir's been laying on the pet names pretty thick over the last week. His favorite nickname for me is Ziza, which I like. Most people call me by my full name, or it's Zizi at the bakery.

"Hey," I reply back.

He comes right up to me and plants a sweet and passionate kiss on my lips, sliding his hands around my waist and holding me here for a few

moments.

Aesir smiles as he pulls away, and I can already feel the heat rushing to my cheeks. He takes a step back and looks me up and down, taking everything in.

“You look amazing,” he says. I didn’t do anything overly crazy. I’m in a pair of suede brown leather boots, with black skin-tight leggings and an oversized cream sweater with studs on the shoulders. I did make my make-up a little flashier today, though. I wanted to not only impress Aesir but make a good impression on everyone at the club. Sure, my appearance is one thing, but I’m trying anything that could help me right now.

I laugh nervously as I fiddle with my hands. “Thanks.”

We both grab one dessert and start to walk toward the entrance of the clubhouse.

“I can’t wait for everyone to take a bite of the stuff you made. I told them you can bake, but I doubt any of them know how well you do.” He snickers with a smile on his face.

We make our way inside the clubhouse, and as we enter, all eyes are on us. Everyone stops what they’re doing to watch us walk through the main area. I follow Aesir’s lead because I don’t know where the hell I’m going. Aesir briefly and proudly introduces me to everyone as his girl as we pass them, and they all give a warm welcome in response.

We make our way into the kitchen, where Aesir helps me unload all of my desserts onto the countertops, showing them off to everyone around us. Magnolia’s in the kitchen and unwraps the peppermint bark cheesecake while Aesir takes the foil off the gingerbread cupcakes. Everly is in here and runs right up to the side of the counter. “Ooh! Those look yummy.”

“Yes, they do, but you can’t have any until after dinner, okay?”

“Okay,” Everly whines, and it instantly causes me to smile. She reminds me of my little sister, who passed away. So innocent and sweet. I shut my eyes briefly to shove away the memories of her that come crashing in like deadly waves. I’ve never been able to handle her loss well, and truthfully, I don’t know if I’ve ever fully processed it.

Aesir and I continue to go get the rest of the desserts while Dag and Esperanza help us get the last couple out. As we unwrap them in the kitchen, Esperanza’s eyes are practically growing twice their size. “I don’t even want the turkey after looking at these.”

Dag cracks up. “I’ve decided I’m eating one plate of food, and my second

plate will be trying every one of these.”

“I was thinkin’ the same damn thing,” Aesir adds with a chuckle.

Aesir takes me around to meet every club member and their ol’ lady that I haven’t met while I greet the ones I’ve met in the past. Everyone has their kids here, and there are so many babies.

I’m so glad he decided to invite me. I couldn’t imagine being stuck at home by myself today. It would’ve sucked so bad.

Once we have the desserts out on the counter, a woman whistles from the other end of the kitchen. “The turkey’s done, so if I could get one of you muscular men to take it out and cut it for me, then we’re good to go,” Gwendolyn, Rati’s woman, says.

Rati walks right over and grabs some oven mitts, then takes the turkey out and places it on the counter. He grabs a knife and begins slicing the turkey up evenly. It’s a massive turkey. I don’t think I’ve ever seen one this big before, but goodness, it smells so good.

Everyone begins piling in the kitchen, and we each grab a thick white Chinet plate, then go down the lineup. There’s the turkey, a sweet ham, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, sweet potato casserole, homemade stuffing, cranberry sauce, green bean casserole, bacon, green beans, garlic roasted carrots, and creamed Brussel sprouts. There’s so much that I don’t know if I’ll be able to hold myself back from eating two heaping plates full of food.

We make our way out of the kitchen and go down the hall, and there’s a huge dining area. I don’t want to call it a room because it’s more like a hall. It is something you’d see in a firehouse or in a cafeteria, but I guess that makes sense, considering this used to be a functioning warehouse. It also makes sense because of the size of their kitchen, too.

I follow Aesir’s lead as he picks a seat, and I sit directly beside him. Every single person takes a seat, and Runes, the president of the club, rises. He has a beer, and I notice a couple of ladies coming around the table either handing out beers or pouring wine. I opt for a sweet white wine while a couple of the other ladies are drinking wine as well, although Mags has a bottle of ginger ale in front of her.

“I can’t tell you how grateful I am that we can all be sitting around this table with our families and loved ones. Even more so since we’re all here together. I remember a time when we were cooking in motel rooms or going to McDonalds. This is such a step up from what we used to do. There have

been so many additions over the years, especially over this last year. It makes me happy to see all of you happy, starting families of your own and furthering the familial bond the club has. I'm not really one for toasts, but I'd like to say one now. To love, to family, and to loyalty. I love and appreciate every one of you, brothers and sisters, and thank you for riding this road with me." Runes lifts up his beer, and everyone else lifts their beers, wine glasses, and ginger ale.

We clink glasses, and all take a drink. I'm just coming into this whole situation, but it's so interesting to me that they have such a strong family dynamic here. I suppose in life, you don't just call your blood your family. Hell, sometimes your blood can be the worst people in your life.

We all proceed to eat the delicious meal everyone pitched in to make, and after a while, everyone begins going crazy about the dessert items I brought. Everyone is so impressed by how much work I put into making everything. I even get some compliments on the presentation, and it really humbles me. I'm just so glad everyone loves it.

The peppermint cheesecake and the almond tart are my favorite. It just makes me think about what I'm going to do for the seasonal catering menu in the spring.

Kraken stands up out of nowhere and clears his throat. "I know there's already been one speech tonight, but I have something to share with you all. Well, we do." Kraken looks down at his wife, and a few of the ladies around the table start smiling. "We're having a baby."

The whole table starts giving their congratulations, and then the ladies pull Magnolia off to the side and start chatting with her. I end up going with them, and they want to know how long they've been trying, why she didn't tell anyone, and essentially everything. The reason she didn't tell anyone is because she is a little older, and her risk of miscarriage is higher because of her age. She didn't want anyone to know until she at least got through the first trimester, which was yesterday.

The night continues, and after a few drinks, Aesir takes me upstairs. We only ever stay at my place, but this is a welcome change. I'm so excited that our relationship is blossoming.

We walk down a long hallway, and finally, he stops in front of his door. He types in a key code, and a few moments later, the door beeps, and he's pushing it open.

I walk into a room that I think I'd see in a frat house. There are a couple

of dressers, the bed is unmade, magazines are on his computer desk, and he has clothes thrown around everywhere. It's giving me a good laugh right about now.

"I love this." I giggle with a smile spreading across my face.

"You love how unorganized and unprepared I am, huh?"

"Yeah, I do." I nod and then look right at him.

He shuts the door behind him and locks it as he takes off his cut and places it on the back of his desk chair. As soon as he has his cut off, I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him in close for a kiss.

He kisses me deeply, softer than he's ever kissed me before, and it makes me feel like I am the only woman on the face of the earth for him. He's sweet and kind and is what I've always deserved.

I hate that I ever gave Tyler the time of day, especially when Aesir treats me so much differently. I spent too much time on someone who never really valued me. I don't feel that way with Aesir, though.

He wraps a hand around the back of my neck and takes me to the bed, slowly peeling off layer after layer, pressing soft kisses down my body in the process.

I pull at his shirt and help him get every article of clothing off, and we continue kissing like two passionate teenagers. Before I know it, we're tangled with one another on his bed, doing the one thing we love most.

I end up falling asleep next to him and wake up after a couple of hours to go pee. I grab my phone and look around the room, hoping he has an attached bathroom since I'm in my birthday suit. Luckily, he has a bathroom right here. I push the door open slightly, head inside, shut it behind me, and pop a squat on the toilet.

While I pee, I check my text messages to see if my mom or brother sent me anything, but they didn't. However, someone else did.

From: Tyler

Happy Thanksgiving, baby. I missed you today.

Without even thinking about it, I sent a response.

To: Tyler

Save that shit for someone who can be fooled by you. I'm not your baby anymore. Go fuck yourself.

CHAPTER SEVEN



AESIR

The group of us that are leaving are heading down to the port. Runes's friend is supposed to be taking us out within the hour. We don't know how long we're going to be here, but I'm hoping that it's only for a few days. We all brought a couple changes of clothes, essentials, and nothing else.

I'm following Runes on my bike, and the rest of the guys are scattered behind me. For it being close to the end of November, it's overly warm. That's all right, though. I'm not really a big fan of the cold.

We arrive at the port in no time and park under a covered awning. Runes's friend's truck is parked there, and there are cameras that watch over this part of the parking lot. I like the additional layer of security.

We all get off our bikes, grab our duffel bags, and follow Runes's lead. He walks toward a massive fishing vessel called Skip's Explorer. An older man who's probably in his late fifties smirks at the group of us. "Here, I thought you were gonna stand me up."

"I'd never stand ya up, Skip. I do appreciate you helpin' us like this," Runes tells him.

"I'm glad I can. Now, come aboard, and I'll show you the boat."

We all get on the boat and follow Skip as he tells us which is the bow and stern, which are the different floors of the boat, and finally shows us the below deck. There are some bunkbeds in one area, and tells us we can sleep in them whenever we need to catch some z's. He also shows us where his quarters are and tells us not to bother him if he's getting sleep unless they're in the middle of a storm or something is wrong with the boat.

We go through everything pretty quickly, and I think Skip is going to be a

good captain. We all toss our duffel bags below deck near the bunkbeds in cabinets on the end of them. Each bunk bed has a cabinet, and our bags fit in them perfectly.

“I’m gonna head upstairs and get ready to leave the dock,” Skip says, heading for the stairs.

“Do you need any help?” Runes asks.

“No, I’m good. I’ve got my crew.” Skip heads up the stairs, and the door to the upper deck shuts.

Vanir sits down at the U-shaped kitchen table and pulls his laptop from his backpack. He powers it up and gives it a few moments to load, then starts typing away. He pulls a small black box from his backpack, too, and sets it up. I don’t know what the hell it is, but as long as he does, it doesn’t matter.

“We have a plan for Cuba yet, or what?” Rati asks, looking right at Runes.

Runes shakes his head. “No, not yet. We have a bit more to do. Vanir is going to keep watching Roque’s location to see how it’s shifting. Once we get an idea of what his day-to-day is like, we can set a plan. That won’t be until we’re close to Cuba.”

“There’s so much time and resources in this. We don’t want anythin’ to fuck it up,” Fenrir adds.

I give a nod of understanding, and the other brothers are quiet. “Regardless, it won’t matter. Roque is going to be finished once we set foot in Cuba.”

“Damn straight. He’s gotten away with way too much,” Dag comments.

“No, he hasn’t. Him paying now might be overdue, but he hasn’t gotten away with it,” Logi comments. There’s so much anger behind his words, and I can almost guarantee Logi is going to be the one who takes Roque’s life. Sure, Mord was a big part of his issues with Skadi, but Roque had a small hand in it, too. Not to mention the child trafficking. None of us can stand that.

When Roque dies, the world isn’t going to miss him for any sort of shining light. The world will be better with him gone, but none of us are fools. Killing him will only mean someone else takes his power at some point, and there are men just like Roque. We’d stop them, too, if we knew who they were.

“What are we going to do when Roque is dead and someone takes his power?” I ask, wondering if anyone has given it any thought.

Runes takes in a deep breath and sighs heavily. “It’s inevitable,

unfortunately. But we'll face that bridge when we come to it. As of right now, Roque is our priority, and we'll handle him."

I nod, understanding.

"The Cubans won't be happy with it. Once we do this and leave, they'll know where to look. We could be opening up another can of worms," Vanir speaks up for the first time. "I'm not saying we should put any of this to a halt, but I'm serious. They have the Toad working with them, which means they have an unlimited amount of cash. I worked my ass off with our ally's hacker to get this far. The Cubans *will* know it was us."

"I have no doubt about it. There's nothing we can do to stop that. It's a risk we have to be willing to take. We all want revenge for what Roque did to us, and it's long overdue, isn't it?" Runes looks at every brother who's here, and we all nod, give a grunt of approval, or some other confirmation.

"Nothing is being changed. We already voted on this a couple of weeks ago. Roque is dead meat," Fenrir grits out.

This is the first day of our trip, and I hope we're out of here within a few days. I want this shit with Roque to be done and over with. When he's dealt with, it'll mean there's one less thing for us to worry about.

We've been keeping an eye out for Dag and Rayna's stepfather to be showing up around the club. His mom and sister are still staying with us because no one knows where he is. We know he's not going to give up until he can get his hands on the girls. They're safer with us than if they went back home.

Thinking of keeping women safe, my mind drifts back to my woman. The one I left at home. It feels odd to be so far away from her, and I'm sure I'll be thinking about Aziza as much as I can. There's something about her that always stays with me.

The more time we spend together, the more I know I could be with her long-term.

Gods, I didn't want to admit it, but I grew attached to her months ago when we were just fucking. I'm latched on, and I don't want to let go. I will just pray to the Gods that she doesn't give me a reason to.

CHAPTER EIGHT



AZIZA

I've been busting my ass left and right since Black Friday getting everything ready for this wedding. Who on Earth gets married on the Sunday after Thanksgiving? They have to be borderline insane between preparing for Thanksgiving festivities, shopping on Black Friday, and trying to fit in family time, too. Plus, having wedding events? You couldn't pay me enough to have a wedding on a holiday weekend.

I've already finished decorating the cake, and I'm waiting for Magnolia's team to come pick it up. It's a four-tier system, and I will help them secure it in their vehicle. I've already told them they'll need a cart to take it into the venue and they have to be very careful while they're driving. Mags assured me everything would be fine. However, I have reservations about their ability to transport a cake of this caliber properly.

I'm putting the finishing touches on the cupcakes the bride and groom requested. They're a mixture of gingerbread, pumpkin, chocolate devil, red velvet, and a snickerdoodle. All of them have a sweet cream cheese icing, and I'm sure the clients are going to love them. I naturally kept a few for myself since I overestimated how much batter I'd need for each. I figure the people at the club won't mind eating some extras, and I know Everly loves cupcakes.

I grab a few of my black cupcake boxes with my Zizi's Treats logo on the top. My logo is a combination of gold, pink, and white with flowers around my name and a couple of flares.

Each box fits twenty-four cupcakes, and I pack them quickly yet carefully. Magnolia's team is going to be here within the hour, and I want everything perfect for when they arrive. I decided to put the cupcakes in one

of the large fridges so the icing stays nice and firm, plus the fridge will preserve the freshness.

I continue keeping myself busy by packing the twenty boxes of desserts for Magnolia's top clients. We've been chomping away at the bits to get them done as soon as possible. She's very eager to make the deliveries and has verified twenty of her clients will be at their businesses or homes this weekend. Magnolia wants me to succeed, and I'm glad to have such a great friend like her.

We've already made deliveries to ten of her clients last week before the holiday, and they all seemed eager to try the desserts. She had a great idea to do these boxes, and I know word is already spreading quickly. One client has already booked me for custom orders for their personal Christmas party, and they referred me to a friend who booked the catering company for the company's Christmas party.

Things are finally starting to look up, and I think it's because of the dead weight I cut off. Rather, I finally cut off the dead weight. I should have never stayed with Tyler after what he did to me. The way he demeaned me. The way he'd toss me aside like I was nothing after I'd literally give him the last of my money to pay his bills.

He was ungrateful, and I only ever felt like a cash cow to him. It's a cash cow that wasn't even loaded in the first place.

I take in a deep breath and shut my eyes, trying not to remember everything he put me through. It was all so unnecessary. There was absolutely no reason for 90 percent of what happened in our relationship, and yet I thought it was acceptable.

I blame myself, honestly. If I really dig deep down, I stayed with Tyler because I didn't want to be alone. I felt an obligation and loyalty to him because we'd known each other for so long. In the beginning, I felt that fealty because he was best friends with my brother, but he even managed to fuck that up.

My father left my mother when we were in Dubai. It was after our little sister, Yasmin, died. She was diagnosed with leukemia when she was two and didn't even make it to her fourth birthday. My father couldn't handle the pain of losing her, and I think at the time, he wanted to start over.

I'm the kind of person who wants to find logic behind the choices people make. I never realized that, subconsciously, I didn't want to be alone. That's why I stayed. I didn't want to be in a position like my mother, where she

invested so much in her partner, and they abandoned her like she was nothing.

That's what my father did. He abandoned us. He started a new life with a new family. My mother started the process of obtaining visas for us so we could start the journey to become United States citizens, and we started a new life.

The whooshing sound of the swinging door leading into the kitchen pulls me from my thoughts. I figure it's Magnolia or her employees coming to pick up the cake and cupcakes, but it's someone else entirely.

"How did you know where I was?" I come to a complete stop packing up these desserts and stare Tyler down.

He smirks smugly, and it immediately pisses me off. He's always been a cocky bastard, and not in a good way. "I'm always going to know where you are, Aziza. I love you. Do you really think I'm not going to keep tabs on you?"

I raise my brows and scoff. "Do you realize how creepy you sound right now? I broke up with you, Tyler. I ended our relationship because it wasn't working. Why do you think you have a right to keep tabs on me? You don't. You don't even have a right to be texting me and surely no right to show up here unannounced."

His smile grows bigger, and I can see he's completely unaffected by this. "Sure, we've broken up a few times, but we always find our way back to each other. The same thing is going to happen, even if you keep telling me it won't."

God, this guy is unbelievable.

"You're delusional if you think I'm ever going to come back to you. I told you I was done, and I mean it. I'm done. I don't want to hear from you. I don't want to see you. I don't even think about you anymore. You're dead to me, Tyler. What is so hard to understand about that?"

He shakes his head, almost as if he's denying everything I'm saying. "You don't mean any of it. You can't live without me, Aziza. I'm your rock. I keep you grounded. I make you happy. You acting like you don't care is adorable, but I'm not buying it."

I huff in aggravation, and my words start spilling out of me faster than I anticipated. "It's anything but an act. It's the cold, hard truth you're trying so hard to deny. I was a fool for ever falling for you in the first place. All you did was degrade me and compare me to women who were made of plastic.

You put unobtainable standards in front of me and shit on me anytime you could because I wasn't the perfect bimbo Barbie bitch you wanted me to be."

I was a fool for ever loving him. I see what I deserve now, and I will never go running back to him whenever he calls. I was loyal to Tyler but knowing him for so long doesn't mean I should get treated like shit.

"I like it when you're mad. Please, keep going." Tyler leans up against the counter and bites his bottom lip. It's the same thing he would do whenever he wanted to fuck me. Nausea flutters through me at the sight of it. He makes me fucking sick.

"Get the fuck out and don't ever come back," I snarl at him while I get back to boxing up these desserts.

"Stop saying things you don't mean."

That's it. I shoot him a death stare that should convince him I'm not playing around. "Get the fuck out, Tyler! The fact you keep tabs on me like this is freaky as fuck, and I'm over it! Do you hear me? I'm fucking over it!" I'm screaming at the top of my lungs and don't even notice Magnolia pushing the door to the kitchen open.

"I'm pretty sure it's your cue to go," Magnolia speaks up, glaring at Tyler like he's the devil himself.

He stops leaning on the counter and shifts his eyes over to Magnolia. "People like you are the reason she's not coming back to me. Always meddling and putting idiotic ideas in her head. She was happy with me until she started doing more work with you. Dumb bitch."

"You've got one thing right. I'm a bitch, but I'm sure as fuck not a dumb one. Now, get the fuck out before I pop off on you." Magnolia pulls a gun from her purse and points it right at Tyler. He doesn't even look afraid. He smiles and grazes his eyes up and down her body.

"You wouldn't dare."

"Don't test me right now. I'm feeling a little trigger-happy."

Tyler scoffs and turns to meet my gaze. "You're going to regret this, Aziza. It would've been better for you if you just came back to me, but if you want to do it this way, we can."

He doesn't give me time to respond and finally leaves the kitchen. Magnolia follows him, and I move so I can see through the glass. I want to make sure nothing bad happens to her. She locks the door behind him once he leaves, and she comes right back into the kitchen.

"Holy shit. How did he know you were here?"

“I don’t know. He said he was keeping tabs on me, but I don’t know how. It’s not like any of my friends are on his side, so no one could be tipping him off.” Every single one of my friends always told me one thing: I deserved better.

He might have one of his buddies tailing me, but I feel like I would’ve noticed someone by now.

“God. Why is he such a creep?”

“I don’t know. I think he’s a narcissist who’s getting annoyed that I’m not playing his game anymore.”

“That sounds about right. Don’t let him make you feel like you’re doing something you shouldn’t. You left him, and I’m so proud of you for that. But you have the right to be happy. Tyler never made you happy. He only muted your happiness.”

Magnolia is right. Tyler didn’t make me happy. My world was full of color until he came into my life, and then he made it black and white. I found the color again, and I will never let that change ever again.

CHAPTER NINE



AESIR

“We good to get this thing docked, or do you want me sitting pretty out here for a while?” Skip asks Runes the second he gets to the bottom of the stairs.

Runes looks over at Vanir, who’s been typing away on his laptop for the last forty minutes. Gods knows what he’s doing, but I imagine it’s something to do with getting to Roque.

“Give me two minutes, and I’ll—ah! Okay, he’s stayin’ consistent. He’s only going to a few places every day, but he does the same thing every night. He’s in bed by ten and stays there until nine the following morning. We can grab him easily if you want to, Prez.”

“Yeah, I don’t want any fuss. The less of a scene we can make, the better,” Runes confirms before looking over at Skip. “Go ahead and dock the boat. We’ll make sure we’re fast with what we need to get done, okay?”

“Sounds good. I don’t plan on staying here for long. As soon as you boys are done with your business, we’ll get the hell out of here. I’ll make it seem like I’m heading into town for some supplies, food, and whatnot.” I’m sure if Skip gets off the boat and makes it seem like he’s docking for a specific reason, it won’t cause anyone to pay too much attention to us.

Skip heads back up the stairwell to the upper deck to make his call while the group of us stay below deck. We’re trying to keep a low profile, and that means we need to not be seen until we’re ready to strike.

“So, what’s the plan, Prez?” Logi’s the one to ask it, but we’re all wondering how he wants to pull this off.

“Skip’s calling so he can put the boat in the port, so I think we let him get

off and go get his supplies. We don't want to draw too much attention, so I'd say at nightfall we go," Runes answers, looking around to each brother who's scattered around the galley.

"Sounds solid. Do we know if he has security with him?" Fenrir asks.

Vanir's the first one to chime in. "I don't have confirmation on it, but I wouldn't be surprised if he did."

Fenrir nods and sucks in a sharp breath. "We all need to be careful then. Do your jobs and do it swiftly."

"Fenrir is right. It's going to happen very quickly once we get there, but this is where I want you guys. Aesir and Dag, I want the two of you with me. We're going into the house, and we'll deal with Roque. Fenrir and Vanir, keep an eye out out front and make sure no one comes inside. Logi and Rati, I want you two doing the same out back. I don't want any surprises."

"What about the sides?" Rati asks.

I know there's no possible way we're not going to clear those out before we head inside. "We'll circle the home before we head inside and make sure there aren't any surprises. Once we're done with that, you can all go to your positions."

A couple of us grunt while the rest nod. It's silent for a few moments, and Runes clears his throat. "Get some rest and do whatever you need to do. We're going to be busy tonight, and I need all of you ready for what's about to go down tonight."

A couple of the guys go back to the sleeping quarters where the bunks are, but I sit down at the U-shaped table and pull out my cell. The rest of the guys scatter until it's just me and Vanir. He's continuing to type away on his laptop while I call Aziza and put my phone to my ear.

It took a few rings, but she finally answered. "Hey, I wasn't expecting to hear from you."

"Well, you should've known better than that. Whenever I can call when I'm away, I will. How are things back home, Ziza?"

There's a brief moment of silence before she answers. "They're okay. I'm just . . . something happened at the bakery."

"Like what?" I immediately ask.

"Tyler showed up."

"Sorry, what?" I'm seeing red right now. Why would he think it's appropriate for him to show up at her place of work? How did he even know where she worked to begin with? It's not like she made a public

announcement about the new business location yet. She told me she hasn't been doing that for a while because she wants to get up and running before she gets people showing up there for catering order appointments or pickups.

"Yeah, he walked straight into the kitchen. I didn't even know how he knew where I was working, and then I asked him. He responded back, creepy as hell. Basically, he asked if I really expected him not to keep tabs on me."

"What happened after that?" I'm trying not to let my anger show through my voice so evidently, but it's hard. All I want to do is have the bastard right in front of me and rip his head off. He has no respect. None. Aziza ended things. You think he'd understand that means he can't bother her anymore.

"It was a combination of a sob story and bullshit, telling me that we're meant to be together, that I'm his girl, all this other crap. I told him I broke up with him for a reason, and I'm not getting back together with him this time. He's fucking crazy if he thinks I am. He told me that he was my rock and I can't live without him, but it's a bunch of bullshit. I *can* live without him, and I'm happily doing so with a great man by my side instead of him."

Warmth spreads through my body, hearing the last part of what she's saying. It's confirmation she's happy with me, and I don't think Tyler will end up being successful in weaseling his way back into her life. She sees his true colors, and he isn't a decent guy.

"I'm glad I'm makin' you happy. Anything else happen with him?"

"He was persistent and wouldn't leave, kept telling me how my act was adorable. He's so delusional that he thought I was faking not wanting anything to do with him. Ridiculous, completely ridiculous. I told him to get the fuck out and never come back, and instead of listening to me, he told me not to say something I didn't mean. One thing led to another, and Magnolia came in. She ended up pulling her gun out on him to convince him leaving was in his best interests."

Damn, Magnolia has zero fear. I snicker to myself, thinking how savage she can be. She's kind of the female version of Kraken.

"I'm glad she was there to ruin that asshole's day. Hopefully, he got the message." If anything, I know Tyler is a persistent son of a bitch. He's had Aziza in his life for so long that I doubt he knows what life is without her anymore. It makes sense that he's struggling now and wants to get back with her. It's getting to the point where he comes crawling back and makes false promises he has no intention of keeping.

"She made it very clear that it was a bad idea for him to stay. Crystal

clear.” Her voice gets a little more serious, and I’m glad Magnolia was there for her. There’s no telling what would’ve happened if she wasn’t there.

“You have no idea how relieved I am to know that she was there when I couldn’t be. Now, I don’t know if you’ve thought about it, but I don’t think you should stay at your place. I’d really appreciate it if you stayed in my room at the club. Kraken and a couple of my other brothers are there. Until I’m back, I’d feel good if you’re there.”

“I don’t think Tyler is going to cause any more trouble. I’ll be fine back at my place, and I don’t want to impose on you.”

“Ziza, you couldn’t impose on me even if you tried. The code for my room is 4739. You type in the number and then click the button in the center.”

“Okay, fine, I’ll stay in your room.”

Honestly, I’m pissed that I’m here. Aziza needs me there, and I don’t trust Tyler as far as I can throw him. But the club needs me here. It’s hard being torn between two different places. I want to be there, but the club needs me here too.

“Thank you, I appreciate that, Ziza. I’ll let Kraken know to expect you at the club.”

“Okay, sounds good. I’ll text you in a little while. Stay safe, okay?” Aziza sounds a little worried, so I do my best to reassure her I’m okay.

“I will, and I’ll see you as soon as I can when I get back home.”

“Okay, bye.”

“Bye.”

Vanir turns his head my way once he sees that Aziza and I have gotten off the phone. He shrugs with a smirk on his face before going back to his laptop. “So, what did Tyler do now?”

“Showed up at Aziza’s new bakery talking a whole bunch of nonsense, then acted like Aziza didn’t mean a word she said when she told him to get out, that she didn’t care, or anything else.”

“Gods, man. What the fuck is wrong with him?” I wish I knew.

“Who knows.”

I shoot a quick text over to Kraken, letting him know Aziza will be staying at the club for the next couple of nights. I didn’t give him all the details, but I let him know that Tyler showed up at her bakery. He told me he’d keep her safe until I returned, which lifted a lot of weight off my shoulders.

I need to focus on what's going on in the present moment, not worry about things going on back home. If I can't focus on what's going on, I could end up getting hurt, or one of my brothers could end up getting hurt in the process.

My brothers and I wait for nightfall, and once it's dark out and Skip is back, we go above deck and get off the boat. Roque's home is only about a mile away from the dock, so we should be able to work quickly.

We arrive at his home and sneak onto his property, all of us being careful not to draw too much attention. We have a job to do, but first, we have to make sure Roque doesn't have any security lurking around. I'm certain he must have some. He's the head of the Culebra cartel, which means he's always going to be protected.

Everyone takes their positions and checks the property, but as we make a turn down the stone path, I spot a dark figure standing off to the right. It looks like he's staring at the house and not away from it.

I sneak up as quietly as I can and go up behind him. I grab the man by the neck and tackle him to the ground. He begins struggling, and I slam my head against his. He's trying to gather his bearings and overpower me, but he won't.

While I might not be the strongest man in the club, I know how to fight. I slam my head against his again, and he grows still for a few moments.

I think I knocked him out, but he shifts slightly, which only proves he's still awake. My heart beats intensely in my chest, and he reaches for something. Before he can make a move on me, I grab my knife from my pocket, flip it open, and jam it right into his neck. The last thing any of us need is for him to make a fuss and draw attention to us.

I keep the pressure on my knife and look around. Luckily, the moonlight gives us enough illumination to see where everyone is. Honestly, that's how I saw this guy.

"Come on, let's circle around the place and see if this guy has any more buddies," Runes says lowly.

I twist the knife in this guy's throat and wait for any other movement, but there isn't any. I remove it from his neck, wipe the blade on the ground, and rise, following the rest of the guys as we make our way around the place.

Both Rati and Logi end up taking down two other men, and Fenrir finds another one on the other corner of the property. We all take them out quietly so Roque doesn't get awoken by us.

Once the outside perimeter is secured, Runes, Dag, and I head for the front door, and surprisingly, we don't have to break in. The door is unlocked, and we walk right into the house. Everyone else takes their positions outside, making sure nothing will go wrong for us.

The entire home is as luxurious as the outside. Chandeliers hang in almost every room. There are rich rugs and ornate art pieces hanging on every wall. The entire place bleeds money, and blood is what's gotten him this far. Roque is the head of the Culebra cartel and one of the most sinister sons of bitches on the planet.

We walk through the home quietly, trying to locate which bedroom he's in. Vanir's really good at what he does, but we can't pinpoint exactly where he is in the home, just that he's in the home every night.

I find it funny that he's the leader of a cartel, yet he's running from us and hiding. He knows we're not the kind of people you can fuck with and get away with it. There will always be consequences for what you do to us or the people we care about.

Finally, I push open a door, and there's an obvious body in the middle of the bed. I walk over to the person who's lightly snoring. As I tower over them, I realize this is Roque. Sleeping peacefully, but he won't be for long.

I keep my eyes on him while briefly glancing around to make sure there are no weapons. I spot a gun on his bedside table, so I pick it up and tuck it in the back of my pants. I wait for Dag and Runes to come near the door so I can wave them in. A couple of minutes pass when Dag comes by, and then Runes.

They both walk into the room just as quietly as I did. Runes points to him, and I give a firm nod. This is him.

Runes and Dag grab him by either leg and yank him out. Roque tries to reach for the gun by his bedside table, but I have already moved it.

He begins speaking Spanish, but none of us understand what he's saying. "What the fuck!" Now that we understand.

Dag and Roque drag him into the hallway. The next thing I know, the light is turned on. They drop his feet simultaneously, and Dag pulls a gun out on him.

Roque reels his head back in shock. "Are you surprised to see us here?" Runes questions him, slight amusement lacing his tone.

"Let me go before my men kill each and every one of you." He doesn't know all of his men are dead, and I can't wait to see his face when he finds

out.

Runes takes a step forward, towering over him. “You think you’re invincible because you’re the leader of a cartel? Did you think you could hide from us forever? You fucked with the wrong people, Roque.”

Roque’s eyes dart around the hallway, searching for an escape route, but there isn’t one. He’s trapped, and he won’t make it out. Vengeance has finally come for him.

“I didn’t do anything to you! Why are you so dead set on coming after me? Huh? Nothing I did directly affected you, Runes.” Roque is grasping for straws, but it won’t work.

Runes kneels down and grabs Roque by the back of his greasy hair, holding it firmly. “If it affects my club, it affects me. You wouldn’t understand that because you don’t care about anyone other than yourself. You tried to get one of my brother’s ol’ lady killed. You hired someone we kicked out to work with you, who had a vendetta against the club. Dare I even mention your involvement in the child trafficking ring. You acted like our ally, yet all you were was a snake in the grass.”

“We’re all drudging through this shit pile called life. Don’t act like every choice you’ve made is a good one. It wasn’t. I do what needs to be done.”

Runes grabs him by the collar and pulls him up to eye level. “Is that how you condone selling children as sex slaves?” There’s a cold, hard edge to his voice. “You thought you could get away with this? Fuckin’ pathetic. You aren’t. Not anymore. You might have hired the Toad to hide all of your disgusting business ventures, but you would have never escaped us. We’re the Raiders of Valhalla, and we slaughter every enemy in front of us.”

Runes releases Roque, and he falls back, his head hitting the floor. Dag walks off, and the next thing I know, he’s coming back with Logi.

A sickening smirk is dragged across his lips, and he marches right over to us. “What’re we doin’? Clean? Dirty? Quick?” If anyone has built up rage, it’s him. Skadi was almost killed because of Roque.

“Quick and painful,” Runes grumbles. I haven’t seen my Prez with so much anger in a really long time. He rises and makes room for Logi, who quickly goes into action.

He pulls his leg back and slams it into Roque’s ribs. Roque coughs loudly and groans. He tries to get away, stumbling in the process, but Logi doesn’t allow him to make another move.

He jumps on his ribs with all of his body weight, and there’s a large

crackling sound. There's no doubt Logi just broke multiple ribs. It sounded so bad that it almost caused me physical pain.

I stay back and watch, letting Logi take Roque's life. Logi gets down on the ground and grabs Roque by the head. Roque tries to struggle, moving his head to the right and the left, desperately trying to get Logi's grip off him. It's no use.

Logi pulls his head back and slams it on the marble floor in the hallway, once, twice, three, and then four times. After the fourth time, there's a steady stream of blood pouring out of the back.

Roque stops struggling, and Logi goes to grab something, but there's nothing there. "Fuck, I lost my knife."

"Here." I hand him mine, and he flips it open, jamming the knife in Roque's eye sockets.

There's no way Roque is coming back from this, and Gods, does it feel good.

He's finally dealt with.

CHAPTER TEN



AZIZA

Aesir called me this morning to let me know they arrived home from Cuba. I thought they were going to be gone a lot longer than they were, but I'm not disappointed at all.

In fact, I'm elated. I've missed him more than I thought I would since he's been gone. I can't wait to have his arms wrapped around my body, holding me tight.

But that will have to wait until later. I'm so busy here at the bakery, preparing boxes of treats for some of Magnolia's top catering clients.

Every client we've visited thus far has been happy to receive the boxes, and I've made good impressions. I'm really glad we came up with the idea to do this. I knew it would be good for my business, but I didn't anticipate so many orders coming in so soon.

I'm currently putting the finishing touches on each box before we head out to deliver them in person. I make sure every dessert looks nice and has tissue paper placed beautifully around them so none of them rub together. I want every person to be able to see how much pride I take in my work.

Magnolia's going to be here any minute. She texted me not too long ago and said she'd be on her way soon, that she was finishing up some things at the club next door.

I don't know why, but every time we get ready to go out and give these to clients, I get so nervous. I think it's a combination of excitement and anxiety. I want everyone to love what I'm making for them, and if someone doesn't like it, it could very well cost me business.

I'm very meticulous with each and every box, making sure every single

one of them is perfect. I know all of my hard work will be worth it when I see the looks of joy and gratitude on our clients' faces when they receive them.

The bakery smells heavenly, a mix of sweet and savory aromas that make my mouth water. It doesn't help that I haven't had any breakfast this morning, but I've been so busy. Sometimes, I'm lucky if I get in a protein shake after my coffee fix.

The shelves are lined with freshly baked goods like croissants, cupcakes, and muffins just waiting to be packaged up and sent off on their way. I've had an influx of orders, and Magnolia needed two hundred croissants for a catering order tomorrow. It's some sort of brunch deal where they requested a variety of cold salads. I'm excited to get feedback on that. Usually, she gets her bread from a wholesale company.

If she keeps me busy like this, I'm going to end up needing to hire some help soon. The crazy thing is I think I'll be able to afford it!

I take a moment to appreciate how beautiful they look, all arranged in neat rows, before I turn back to my task at hand. It makes me think about the small store she has discussed with me. She wants me to put it in the building next door so anyone who orders from the club can get whatever's being offered that day. Plus, customers could stop in and order whatever is available that day in the display case.

Everything I've ever wanted is being displayed in front of me, and I'm in complete awe. Sometimes it doesn't even feel real.

I shake away my internal thoughts and continue filling the boxes.

I carefully pick up each item and place it inside one of the boxes before tying it closed with twine and a pink bow. Each box is unique in its own way yet still follows the same color scheme.

Once all ten boxes have been filled with delicious treats, Magnolia makes her way into the kitchen. "Hey there."

"Hey, sorry I'm late. I thought I'd be here sooner."

"It's okay. You didn't tell me a time, so I wasn't pressed. I knew you'd get here as soon as you could."

"Okay, whew. What do you still need help with?"

I take a quick look around and see that we're all good to go. "We just need to load the boxes up in your car and get going."

"Awesome. You got a lot done this morning. How's it going with the croissant order?"

"All done and cooling off."

“Man, you’re the best,” Magnolia says as she begins grabbing a few boxes. I grab the rest, and we make our way out of the kitchen and go to the elevator. It only took us a couple of minutes to get downstairs, and then we headed straight to Magnolia’s car.

It’s an absolutely beautiful day with a slight chill. It’s almost like the chill you experience when you place your hand on a cast-iron bathtub, shocking but manageable. Luckily, I have a light jacket on.

Magnolia and I proceed to load the boxes into her car and quickly get to action making deliveries. A couple of clients weren’t where they were supposed to be, so we handed them off to their wives, partners, or assistants. We’re pulling up to the last client now, which is one of the biggest attorney offices in Tallahassee.

It isn’t something small like Dag and Esperanza have. They have attorney after attorney who specializes in various types of law.

We make our way up to the reception desk, and Magnolia asks for Sal, who is her client. The receptionist is a nice older woman who warmly greets us. She makes a call to see if Sal is available, and once she gets the go-ahead, she personally escorts us back to his office. He’s looking over some paperwork with glasses perched on top of his nose.

Magnolia greets him warmly and introduces me to him, then hands him the box with all of the desserts I made. He smiles wide as he opens the box and grabs a chocolate peppermint cake pop. His face lights up as he takes his first bite. “This is amazing. You’re the one who made them?”

I nod and lightly smile. “Yes, I am. I’m glad you like it.”

“I do. I don’t think I’ve ever tasted a dessert this good before. Are you doing catering events or personal orders?”

“Both. I can honestly do whatever you need me to as long as I have notice.” My business has been growing and growing since I became partners, in a sense, with Magnolia.

Let’s face it. If she had never given me the ability to start working from the new kitchen, I would never be getting all of this done.

“I have board meetings every month. I’d love for you to make a few options of sweets for them. Magnolia’s company usually provides our food, so can you deliver everything all at once, or how does that work?” Sal looks right at Magnolia.

“Zizi’s Treats is an extension of my catering company. For any catering events, we can deliver everything at once, and as far as individual orders and

delivery for cakes, cookies, those sorts of things, that's something you'd have to speak directly to Aziza about."

"Okay, I see. Well, I want desserts for the monthly board meetings, and I think we might as well add desserts to our yearly Christmas, Halloween, and 4th of July parties. My youngest daughter is turning sixteen next week. Is that enough notice to have you bake a cake for her?"

"That's plenty of notice. I just need you to email me with the flavor of cake and icing that she'd like. If you have any idea on how she wants the cake to look, send me some inspirational photos." I dig into my pocket and hand him one of my business cards. It has my phone number and email, so he'll be able to reach me.

"I will chat with her this evening and send you an email sometime tomorrow."

"That's perfect. I'm glad you like the desserts, and I look forward to hearing from you."

"It was lovely meeting you," Sal says and then turns to look at Magnolia. "Thank you so much for bringing her by. It was a pleasure as always."

"The pleasure is mine. Have a great day, and we'll chat soon." Magnolia and I both take our leave and walk down the hallway, go into the main lobby, and then leave the building.

As we're walking up to Magnolia's car, we both begin chatting. "These boxes for the clients are working out really well. Even if we only have one like Sal every day we do this, that's a consistent job you'll have."

"Yeah, you're right. This client outreach was really smart. I'm so glad we're doing this. I . . . I also want to tell you how appreciative I am that you're giving me these opportunities, Magnolia. Seriously, it's starting to change my life." I was astonished to receive my first check from her a couple of days ago for the desserts I've been providing her with. It was triple what I normally bring in for one week's worth of work.

"I know. It's why I decided to invest time and energy into you and not someone who was going to fuck me over. We've worked on so many catering jobs that I trust you, Aziza. You're a good girl, and you're a great friend."

"Thank you."

We get into her car, and both buckle up before she takes off. There's a couple minutes of silence, and it'll take us almost fifteen minutes to get back to the bakery, so I might as well chat with her.

"So, this club stuff. I need you to explain that to me. I'm new to all this,

right? But things are so hush-hush.”

Magnolia giggles lightly. “You’re talking about some of the guys leaving for Cuba, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I just don’t understand why Aesir isn’t telling me what he’s doing.”

“It’s because it’s club business. I’m Kraken’s ol’ lady, and I don’t even know everything that’s going on. He pulls me into some things, and I do know why they went to Cuba. It was for a good reason and made sense, so I assure you there’s nothing to worry about.”

“Oh, no. I’m not really worried about anything. The secrecy was just getting to me a bit. I don’t really know much about the club either, except the fact that they have a brotherly bond sort of thing.”

Magnolia nods. “You’re right, they do. When people are patched into a motorcycle club, they become your family. If you’re married to someone, dating them, they become the club’s family too.”

“So, how do they make money and stuff? I don’t really see many of the guys having outside jobs except Dag,” Dag’s an attorney, but do the other guys even work? I know a couple of them volunteer at the local fire department.

“I can’t speak on that. There are some things I’m not able to tell you, even if we are friends. In time, you’ll find out everything you need to know, Aziza, especially if you plan on being with Aesir for a long time.”

I think we could be together for a while, but I don’t know if we’re going to be together for the rest of our lives. It’s still so new, and I’m taking it slow with him. What I don’t want to do is have a repeat of everything I’ve been through with Tyler. I jumped in way too fast in that relationship.

Magnolia continues to drive, and we eventually arrive at the building. I’m done with work for the day, so I say my goodbyes and then get in my car, heading straight home. I’m so beat, and I’m craving a shower more than anything.

I get behind the wheel, start my car up, and then buckle up. With one quick glance, I make sure I have my purse and head home.

It starts pouring out of nowhere, and every time this happens, people suddenly forget how to drive. I swear, everyone wants to drop from going fifty to thirty just because water is falling from the sky. There’s no reason for it. It’s not even like it’s been raining for a long time, and we have to worry about sitting water and hydroplaning.

I shake my head and continue driving when, suddenly, my low-pressure sensor goes off on my dash. This couldn't be worse timing. The light just came on, so I'm sure I can make it home and put some air in it in the morning.

At least, that's what I think. I don't make it very far until I feel like I'm driving on my rim, so I pull off to the shoulder and wait for cars to pass. I'm on a back road at this point, so at least I can be thankful for that.

I get out of the car and shield myself from the rain as much as I can. One quick glance at the tire, and I know I'm fucked. It's completely on the rim. There probably isn't one pound of pressure in there at all.

Fuck.

"Hey, I thought that was your car. You okay?"

I know that voice. It's one I don't want to hear.

"Tyler?" I turn, and sure enough, there he is in the flesh.

He's wearing the same baseball jacket he wore on our first date, and his hair is still sleeked back like it usually is.

"What are you doing here?" My heart is racing as I'm trying to figure out how he happened to be here, just as my tire went flat.

He shrugs and looks right into my eyes. "I went out to get a bite to eat and saw your car pulled off to the side. Figured I'd see if it was actually you and if you were okay."

My stomach drops, and I have to hold back my frustration. I'm so mad and confused. What is he doing here? It seems like too much of a coincidence for him to magically be here right now.

It finally clicks. Tyler must have been following me. His excuse of going out to get food is total bullshit. He hated wasting money like that when we were together, so why would he start going out now that he's single?

He somehow knew I had a flat tire, and that's why he's here right now. He wanted to be the hero and swoop in to save me, just like old times.

"I appreciate that, but I'm okay," I tell him as I go around to my trunk and get out my spare tire. All I need now is my jack, but I look everywhere, and it's gone.

What in the actual fuck?

I take a step back and look right at him. This is too weird. I need some distance between us before things escalate. "That's kind and all," I say, trying my best not to snap at him. I know Tyler. I know what he's capable of, and he would do this. He's the type who plays games to gain the upper hand, "But

it looks like you already know what happened, so there's *no* need for you to change the tire. I have roadside assistance, so I'll call them."

He steps forward and starts explaining himself, but I don't want to hear it. "It'll be hours before someone can come out and help you. Come on, Aziza, just let me help you out."

"No. Get lost. I'll call someone from the club to come help me if you really think roadside assistance will take that long."

"The club?"

"Yeah, the Raiders of Valhalla MC. My boyfriend is a member there."

Tyler raises both of his brows in pure and utter shock. His eye twitches, and I know he's about half a second from going postal. "You won't give us another chance, but you'll be with some lowlife scum like that?"

I scoff and glare right at him. "Leave me the fuck alone, Tyler."

Tyler cusses under his breath and walks back over to his vehicle. Meanwhile, I get in my car and call Aesir, praying he's available to come help me. Sure enough, he answers on the second ring.

CHAPTER ELEVEN



AESIR

Aziza called me out of nowhere and told me she got a flat. I told her to send me her location, and within ten minutes I was there with a jack, completely changing her tire out.

“Thank you so much for coming to help me. You have no idea how much I appreciate it.”

I flash her a smile. “Ziza, I know, trust me. Whenever you call, I’m gonna answer, okay?”

“Okay,” Aziza murmurs, coming over to me. The rain has come to a complete stop and she wraps her arms around my neck. She pulls me down until my lips meet her own.

The feeling of Aziza’s soft lips against mine sends a surge of electricity through my body. Gods, I always want this woman. My hands instinctively find their way to her waist as I pull her in closer, deepening the kiss as much as I can. The air is still heavy with the scent of dampness.

We continue kissing for so long. Eventually, we part our lips. I can feel Aziza’s warm breath on my cheek. I look into her eyes and see a hint of desire flicker within them. “I want you, Aesir. Right here, right now.”

I’m not going to fuck her in the middle of a back road. Sure, not many people drive by here, but I don’t want someone coming up on us when I’m balls-deep in her.

I wrap my arms around her, pulling her in for another kiss. This time it’s different. There’s no more sweetness like our first kiss. It’s been replaced with a raw passion. We’re like a raging inferno combining together. I run my fingers through her hair as I feel her nails dig into my back. She really does

want me, and fuck, I want her.

“Get in the back seat,” I tell her, and she gnaws on her bottom lip. She’s wearing this cute dress that I want to rip right off her. Man, this is going to be fun.

Aziza does exactly what I say. She scurries around to the back seat of her car, and I follow right behind her, taking a great peek at that bombshell ass of hers. She’s wearing a deep maroon cheeky pair of lace panties under her dress, and I can’t wait to drag them off with my teeth.

The interior of her car is much warmer than outside, and only a few moments after we’re inside, it starts to fog up from the heat of our breaths. I can tell that the desire between us is growing stronger with every passing second, but it always is.

I push her down onto the seat, keeping her ass up, and lift the skirt of her dress up over her hips. She lets out a gasp as I place my crotch right at the back of her ass. She can feel my hardness. That I have no doubt about.

I allow my hands to explore every inch of her body as I kiss the back of her neck hungrily. My lips yearn for more, but I need to be inside her.

I’m ready to eat her up. To devour her like the big bad wolf.

I drag my hands lower until I’m lightly skirting my fingertips along her crevice. She moans lightly as I pull her panties down and take away the only layer on her.

I unzip my pants and shove them down, pulling my raging hard cock out, but I don’t want to rush this. I want to feel her wetness on my fingertips before I slide my cock in her.

I lightly drag my fingers along her pussy lips. They’re drenched, wet, and waiting for me to rock her world.

I drive two into her perfect pussy and slowly go in and out. She moans in pleasure and turns her head back to look at me. “Aesir, come on. I don’t want to play around right now. For the love of God, fuck me.”

I smirk at her words, loving the fact she wants me just as bad as I want her. I grind my cock against her bare ass and smack her just as I slide my cock inside her tight hole.

I hold onto her hips as I move in and out of her. Whenever I’m inside Aziza, a euphoric feeling floods through me. I imagine it’s what drug addicts feel when they get their high. Aziza is my fucking high.

I start out slow and progressively get more intense. For fuck’s sake, we’re in public, so I don’t want to take too long. Sure, her windows are tinted, but I

don't want anyone looking at her body. She is for my eyes only.

She arches her back and shoves her ass up a little higher, giving me deeper access. "Aesir, fuck-k-k."

"You like that, Ziza? Hmm?"

"Yes, yes, yes. God."

I grab her by the back of her hair and hold onto her tightly. "The only name you should be moaning right now is mine," I tell her, and she lets out a moan.

"Aesir!"

"That's right, baby. That's it. Come for me. I wanna feel the walls of that perfect pussy tightening around me."

I fuck her like a savage. I'm fucking her so hard that her car is physically moving, and finally she goes still. Her walls tighten around my cock like a vice, and I know she's close.

She screams out my name as I fucking pound into her. I fuck her like I've never fucked her before. Her juices gush down my cock. Fuck, I can't get enough of this. I don't know if I ever will. I wouldn't say I've ever had any vices, but Aziza is my first. I crave everything about this woman.

I pick up the pace as I thrust into her over and over again. I want her to come again. Once doesn't feel like jack shit to me. I want her to know I'm the only man who can bring her all of this pleasure. I want to make sure she doesn't want another man on the face of this planet. I want to feel her scream my name as I make her come every single time. Most importantly, I want to hear her burst apart at the seams.

"Aesir, fuck, I'm going to come again!" she cries, trying to hold back her orgasm.

"Uh-uh. You'd better come for me, Ziza. Come all over my cock. Give me what I fuckin' want." I grip her hair even tighter, and she cries out.

"Oh fuck, oh fuck!"

I slam into her a few more times, and then I'm finding my own release. If she wasn't on the pill, I'd be pulling out right now, but I don't. I coat her walls with my cum, and I actually enjoy doing it. I've never nutted in another woman before.

I pull out, and she rolls over onto her back. My cum slowly oozes out of her pussy, and there's something erotic about knowing I loaded her up.

She's completely breathless, gasping for air like a fish out of water. I lean down and kiss her softly on the lips. "Those orgasms good?"

She looks right into my eyes. “No, they weren’t. They were phenomenal.”

A pleased smile spreads across my lips, and I kiss her once more. When we’re done, I pull up my pants and get myself situated. She grabs a couple of tissues from a box on the floor and cleans herself up, then puts her panties back on.

“Perfect. Are you good here? I have to get back to the clubhouse. We have church in,” I pause and glance over at the clock in her car, “twenty minutes.”

“Yeah, I’m good. Do you want me at the club tonight?” I asked Aziza to stay in my room because Tyler’s been a fucking persistent motherfucker.

“Yeah, please do. I enjoy sleepin’ beside you,” I tell her, and she smiles softly.

“Okay then, I’ll see you tonight.”

I get out of her back seat and hold a hand out for her. She takes it, and I make sure she gets behind the wheel safely before I walk over to my bike and get on it.

In no time, she’s pulling out onto the road, and I’m heading to the clubhouse. I don’t know if she’s going straight there or not, but I know she’ll meet me there later this evening.

I’m at the clubhouse in no time and pull my bike straight into one of the garage bays. Luckily, a couple of the other guys were out, too, and just pulled in. I do a quick count of the bikes, and it looks like two are still missing, so I head inside and go straight to the room where we hold *kirkja*.

I find my seat beside Vanir, and Runes is already seated at the head of the table. We’re still waiting on Fenrir and Magnus.

Within ten minutes, Fenrir and Magnus are here, and Runes is slamming the gavel down on the table. “As you all know, we no longer have to worry about Roque or the Culebra cartel. We can rest easy for a while, but let’s face it, we all know our rest will be short-lived. I’ve been thinking about our threats, about the individuals who have made it known they’re dangerous. I keep thinkin’ about Dag and Rayna’s stepfather.”

“I’d like some help dealing with him so my mom and sister can go back to their normal lives. They’ve uprooted everything since he tried to kill my mother, and I feel like it’s my duty to handle my stepfather. They’re good people, and they deserve to have freedom. Right now, I don’t think they have that,” Dag speaks up, looking at every brother through his speech.

“Because they don’t. They’re basically under lock and key,” I state, and

most of my brothers nod.

“They aren’t going anywhere without one of us with ‘em,” Magnus comments.

Now, they aren’t prisoners by any means. We’re only tailing them because we want to make sure he doesn’t creep out of the bushes and try to kill them.

“What about Hillary’s ex? The one who showed up at the spa. Have we heard anything from him lately?” Rati questions.

I almost forgot about that guy.

Runes shakes his head. “No, but I don’t know if he’s a big priority right now. He hasn’t shown his face since that first day.”

“Yeah, but we also haven’t put the fear of the Gods in him either,” Fenrir grits out, obviously having a bit of anger because he wasn’t at the spa when it happened. We all know that if he had been there, he would have put an immediate stop to it. I’m sure he really wanted to go after Hillary’s ex when we were all told about it. The fucker made idle threats, and we don’t take too kindly to that. The man wants to find out the real reason she died because he doesn’t believe it was an accident. It wasn’t, but no one knows that.

“All right, so we keep our eyes peeled for Loren and for Hillary’s ex. Both of them should be on our radar. Vanir, can you do your computer shit to try and find Loren?” Runes questions.

“It won’t be so simple,” Dag interjects. “He doesn’t use computers. Doesn’t use a cell phone. I’d be surprised if he even uses a debit card.”

“Normally, I’d say that would make it hard to track him, but it won’t. I have access to facial recognition software. I should still be able to locate him.” Vanir sounds very confident in his ability.

“I don’t know, man. I know him. I was raised by him. I know what he is like. He’s conniving, meticulous, paranoid. He’ll do whatever he can to keep his head in the grass,” Dag comments.

“We’re gonna find ‘em, brother,” Magnus speaks up.

“I just want them to be able to live their lives the way they want. I hate this for them.” Everything Dag’s saying is understandable.

I glance over at Magnus for a brief second, and the mere mention of Rayna returning back to her normal life causes him to go stoic. I’ve witnessed him flirting with her a couple of times, but I don’t know what the deal with that is. To my knowledge, they haven’t crossed a line, but I know he likes her. He likes her a lot. I’ve also noticed he hasn’t been fucking any

of the *horas* in a minute.

“I got you, brother. Now that we’ve all discussed Loren and Hillary’s ex, I think it’s time we move onto something happier,” Runes states, as he goes over to the back side of the room and grabs a cardboard box. He opens it up and reveals Tor’s cut.

The room goes from being somber as fuck to happy as hell. We’re all elated that Tor is joining our ranks. “One of you go get my son.”

I rise without question and leave the room. Tor is usually in the main area if he isn’t in his bedroom, so I search the main area and find him practicing some pool. “Tor.”

His eyes drift upward, and he looks right at me. “Yeah?”

“Come with me.”

“Why? What’s up?” He seems a bit nervous, which is amusing as hell.

“Your father wants you in *kirkja*.”

“Uh . . . why?”

I can’t handle this shit right now.

“Would you shut the fuck up and just come on?”

Tor follows me closely, and we both enter *kirkja*. “Hey, uh, everything okay?” He’s about to shit himself.

“Yeah, everything is great. The brothers and I thought it was damn time you start prospectin’, so get your ass over here,” Runes demands, and Tor’s nervousness shifts to excitement. He heads over to stand right next to his father, and Runes slides the cut on him.

Tor glances down at his cut with a shit-eating grin. I don’t know if the kid has ever been so happy, and he’s gone through some intense shit in his life. “Thanks, everyone. I’m really fuckin’ excited to be part of the Raiders of Valhalla.”

“You got it, son. Now, go wash everyone’s bikes. Wax the fuckers good. We wanna see our reflections in ‘em.” Runes smacks Tor on the back so hard it rings through the room, and all of the brothers begin laughing, even me.

It’s a new era for the Raiders of Valhalla.

Tor is the first child to start the second generation of the club.

CHAPTER TWELVE



AZIZA

I've been at the bakery since the sun was rising, which is later than usual. My alarm clock didn't go off, and I guess that means I really needed some shut-eye. Regardless, it's thrown my entire day off, and I've been so much more stressed than I usually am.

I've been at the bakery for longer than I would have liked, but I have to make up for the extra couple of hours I lost this morning. Thankfully, I was able to get everything done for the day, and now I'm cleaning up the kitchen.

I'm lucky in the sense this isn't a bakery where I have to take clients' orders and make their orders immediately. Clients only come here to pick up their orders at a scheduled time. It means that I can push through the day and get everything I need to complete without any worries.

Although, I have been thinking about allowing clients to come here for their taste testing. Eventually, I'm certain Magnolia and I will open that small storefront next door, not only for the dessert orders her club might get but for everyday customers who want something a little sweet.

There's just so much that goes into opening something like that, to begin with. Here, I only have to worry about ordering my supplies, making the desserts, and making sure they're ready for the client. Sure, I have to make sure the health department is satisfied with my facility, but with opening a storefront, there will be many more requirements. Sure, Magnolia will help me every step of the way, but it's not her job to do so.

Right now, I'm decorating some cakes that will be ready for pickup tomorrow. One is a little girl's birthday cake, and it's absolutely beautiful. Honestly, I'd say this is one of my favorite cakes I've ever made.

The colors are a combination of pink, orange, and yellow, and it's decorated with edible glittery unicorns along the sides. Plus, on the top are eyes, a horn, a nose and mouth. I'm sure the little girl will love it! If I were her, I surely would.

The cake consists of three layers, with each layer being a different color. On the top is an orange ombre effect that fades from darker to lighter oranges as I get closer to the edge of the cake. Beneath that is a yellow layer with white swirls around the side. Finally, there's the pink layer, which has some cute little candy hearts in various colors on it, along with some edible pearls scattered throughout.

The parents of the little girl didn't really have a vision at all, so I wanted to make sure the cake looked elegant and adorable.

To finish off the cake, I added some colorful cream flowers and butterflies in hues of blue, purple, and green around the sides. The birthday girl will be sure to love it! I wish I could see her face when she lays her eyes on it.

I finish my last touches on the cake, and then the bell in the reception area rings. I'm not expecting anyone to arrive for any pickups, but it's very possible someone has their date wrong.

I take off my apron and place it on the counter before I push myself through the swinging kitchen doors. Much to my surprise, there's a young man from one of those corporate flower companies. He has an arrangement of mixed flowers with him, as well as a box of chocolates.

"Thank you so much," I say to the delivery man as he places them on the counter.

"Of course. If you don't mind, I just need you to sign here saying you received them." He hands me some sort of receipt, and I sign, and then he's on his way.

The flowers are absolutely beautiful. There must be at least two dozen different flowers in the arrangement. There are a few roses, carnations, daisies, lilies, and some exotic orchids. They're all in various shades of pink, purple, and white, with a few green leaves mixed in there. I don't even want to know how much something like this cost Aesir, but I remember any time I've ever had to send floral arrangements to anyone, they're expensive as hell.

The arrangement is held together with a satin ribbon around the glass vase that's tied in a bow. The ribbon has tiny white pearls stitched into it,

which adds an extra bit of elegance to the bouquet. Yep, this one had to be super expensive.

I leave the flowers where they're sitting and get back to work, finishing up my cake. Once I have the cakes wrapped up, I put them in the fridge until they're ready for pickup tomorrow. With that, everything is ready, and I grab my purse and then turn off all the lights in the kitchen.

I head over to the flower arrangement and pick up the small white card attached to them. The outside has a nice cursive lettering with my name on it. I can't help but smile thinking about how much thought Aesir put into this.

I open the envelope and read the contents of the card.

I'll do anything to win you back, baby. You say our storybook is closed, but it's not.

Anything, Aziza. I'll do anything.

-T

My stomach immediately drops. While the flowers are beautiful, I'm not keeping them. I grab the vase and dump it in the nearest trash can. I don't know how much clearer I can be to Tyler. We are done, and nothing is changing my mind.

I try to ignore what just happened and not think about it but damn it's hard. The one thing I want more than anything else is to just be done with Tyler, but he doesn't seem to understand that. He just wants to keep trying to win me back, to try to get me to be his girl again and in his life. I don't know what I need to do to convince him it isn't going to happen.

I tried being nice, but then I got firm and rude. Now, well, I don't know what to do.

I huff and leave the building since I have plans to meet my brother for dinner. I haven't caught up with him in quite some time, and it'll be nice to chat, especially since I don't know what he's been up to since the holiday.

I drive out to a local Vietnamese restaurant my brother and I love. It has the best Pho around, and that's one of my and Zain's favorites. I park my car around the corner and grab my purse before walking inside. It's bustling with people, but that isn't too surprising. Zain and I usually grab lunch during the middle of the week, and it's never too busy. But it's our fault for getting here later in the day. I spot Zain at a table in the corner and make my way over to him.

When I reach him, he stands up and gives me a big hug. "Hey, it's so nice to see you."

“You too.” We both sit down at the table and scan over our menus quickly, but I’m certain we both know what we’re ordering. It’s practically the same thing every time we come here.

“How was your Thanksgiving?” I’m really curious to know what Zain ended up doing.

“It was nice, actually. I ended up traveling and spent it by myself, but I didn’t get much peace and quiet. It was a breath of fresh air.” Zain works in a corporate office, so he’s always having to do something for someone else. I can’t imagine how many people he has to communicate with on a daily basis, so I can understand why he wanted to be by himself.

Just as I’m about to respond, our waitress came up and takes our order. Per usual, we order our regular Pho options, plus add on some spring rolls, and when she walks off, we continue our conversation.

“That had to be nice, though. I’m not going to lie; it was really odd not being with you guys for the holiday, but I made the best of it.”

“Yeah, it was. What did you end up doing?” I have yet to tell Zain I have a boyfriend, so right now is the perfect opportunity.

“I spent the holiday with my boyfriend and his friends.”

Zain narrows his eyes at me. “I thought you and Tyler were done for good?”

“We are. I’m dating someone else. Someone new.”

Zain can’t hide his smile. “Oh, really? Do I know this guy?”

I shake my head. “No, I don’t think so. He doesn’t run in the same circles as you and Tyler do or did. He’s the guy . . .” I pause, trying to think about how to explain who Aesir is to Zain. My brother knew I was hooking up with someone during the times Tyler and I weren’t dating, but I never gave him a name. “He was the guy I was sleeping with whenever Tyler and I were on a break.”

“Is he a decent dude?”

I nod. “Without question. He’s so respectful and treats me great. He even comes into the bakery and helps me get orders ready. He’s so supportive. I can’t think of one thing that’s wrong with him.”

“Don’t you mean your kitchen?” Zain laughs.

Oh, shit. I never told him about Magnolia offering me a space to work in. “No, actually. Do you know how I work with that catering company sometimes? Well, the owner gave me a deal I couldn’t refuse. Now I’m working in a new kitchen that’s massive compared to the one I have at the

house. It gives me so much space, and it's awesome. It's exactly what I need to be able to grow Zizi's Treats."

Zain's smile grows even more. "That's great, Aziza. I always knew you could do it. And honestly, I only ever felt like Tyler was holding you back. I'm happy you're with someone new and that he's a good guy. You didn't deserve half the shit Tyler put you through."

"Thank you, I appreciate that. Have you heard from Mom?"

Zain nods. "Yeah, I got a 'Happy Thanksgiving' text from her. I imagine she's enjoying her time on the cruise, day drinking and making friends."

"Hopefully, but I'm hoping she meets some handsome bachelor while she's out there. She hasn't been in love in so long. If anyone deserves it, it's her."

"Yeah, you're not wrong about that. One day, I think she'll open herself up to it, but for right now, I don't know if she wants to."

We continue to catch up on what's been going on in our lives while we wait for our food. Once our food arrives, it's like the two of us go radio silent.

The broth is flavorful and savory, making it hard not to slurp up every drop of it until our bellies are full. Pho is super filling, and with the additional spring rolls, I'm stuffed, but I'm not full enough to say no to some boba tea and *Bánh Tieu*. It's a deep-fried puffy yeasted donut that's hollow in the middle. The donut has sesame seeds around the outside, which you think wouldn't be good, but they're amazing.

Zain and I wrap up our dinner, and I had a great time with him. I love that we can take time out of our busy schedules and see each other every once in a while. A lot of siblings don't make time for each other, but I'm lucky enough to never have to worry about that with Zain. He'll always have time for me. We have a bond that can't be broken.

As I drive to the club, I feel pretty good about the day. The only thing that keeps coming up in the back of my mind is the flowers I received today and the fact Tyler happened to be around when my tire went flat.

Something is rubbing me the wrong way about everything that's been happening, and I have to tell Aesir about both. He doesn't know Tyler showed up when my tire went flat, and he obviously doesn't know about the flowers I received today.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



AESIR

Aziza told me after she got off work today, she was heading out to dinner with her brother, who she hadn't seen in a few weeks. Initially, I felt a bit nervous about it, but she has to see her family. I won't be the kind of guy to keep her from doing that.

Her seeing her brother isn't the part that made me nervous. It's the fact that we know Tyler has been a bit persistent about getting back together with her.

I let go of my anxiousness and knew that if Aziza got in any sort of trouble, she would reach out to me immediately. Thankfully, the dinner with Zain went well, and she's on her way to the club as we speak.

I'm sitting on one of the many couches in the main area, waiting for my woman to come through the door and tell me how her dinner went when LeAnn beelines it for me.

LeAnn is one of the few *horas* we have here at the club. Truth be told, none of the guys mess around with her other than Regnor and Geirolf. Ivar prefers to spend his nights with Starla, who's the most respectable one out of the *horas*.

LeAnn is definitely the hottest *hora*, and tonight, she's wearing a tight black dress that accentuates the few curves she has. Her long blonde hair is pulled back into a tight ponytail with a few strands framing her face. She strides toward me with a determined look on her face.

"Hey," she says in a low voice as she reaches me, plastering a sweet smile on her face, "I need to talk to you about something." I already know whatever she wants to talk to me about isn't good. This is the kind of woman

who never has good intentions.

I glance up at her and cock a brow. “What’s up?” I ask cautiously, not sure if I want to know in the first place.

She takes a deep breath and licks her lips slowly before beginning. “It’s about Aziza. We all know she and Tyler have been on and off for so long. You’re only going to get hurt, Aesir. She *always* goes running back to him.”

I open my mouth to reply, but before I can do so, she continues, “You need someone who’s going to stick by your side no matter what, and I’m that woman. I’d never give up on you, Aesir, ever.” She looks me right in the eye as she says this, and I don’t know if this woman can get any dumber.

“Don’t worry, LeAnn. I know Aziza will stay by my side.” I shoot her a wink, and she’s immediately insulted that I jumped to defend Aziza. “Everyone here knows how much Aziza means to me, and I’ll be damned if anybody comes between us. So, you can keep trying, but it won’t work.”

LeAnn scoffs and rolls her eyes, clearly not taking me seriously. She should. Everything I’ve said is coming straight from the heart. “You’re just wasting your time on her. She’s not worth it. But I am.” She steps closer to me, her hand reaching out to touch my arm delicately. “I can give you *everything* you want and more, Aesir. Just give me a chance. Did you forget how good I used to pleasure you?”

I slept with LeAnn a couple of times back in the day, but I was single and plastered. If I slept with any of the *horas*, it was usually Starla or Meghan, but most of the time, it was Meghan.

I pull my arm away from her grasp and stand up, towering over her. “I don’t want anything from you, LeAnn. I’ve made it clear that I’m not interested, and I seem to remember you were warned not to come onto men who are committed.”

“You’re committed to her?” LeAnn narrows her eyes in on me. She doesn’t believe anything I’m saying to her. “That woman is my ol’ lady, and you’d be smart if you left me the fuck alone.”

LeAnn is pretty much flabbergasted. “I . . . I just thought you two were screwing around. I didn’t know you two were—”

“Would you stop fuckin’ lying to everyone? Gods!” Starla snaps out of nowhere. She marches right over to where LeAnn and I are, glaring at someone who I thought used to be her friend. “I told you Aesir was seeing Aziza, and that’s why she’s been sleeping here.”

“No, you didn’t.” Damn, LeAnn is really sticking to this lie.

“I did, too.” Starla folds her arms across her chest and rocks back on her heels. The air is dense, and I know she’s about to lose her shit at her. “You can act like I didn’t tell you, but we both know I did. You’re only trying to save your ass, but I know the truth.”

LeAnn looks at Starla skeptically and then looks at me, her eyes pleading for me to listen to her. “I just don’t want to see you get hurt, Aesir. I’m sure she seems like a nice woman, but you don’t know her that well. I’ve heard about her from a reliable source. She’ll break your heart and then act like you’re the bad guy when it’s all said and done.”

“Gods, LeAnn. You really don’t know when the fuck to stop.” Starla snickers as she rubs her hands together like she’s getting ready for a good fight. “You’re begging for it, and you’re gonna get your ass handed to you, LeAnn. Most of the time, I can ignore your ignorant ass, but not anymore.” There’s no denying Starla has reached her limit with LeAnn. Now, I don’t know if those two have some tension the rest of us aren’t privy to, but I’d bet on it.

“I’m not afraid of you, Starla.” LeAnn glares at Starla, her hands balled into fists. “Who would be afraid of a meth baby like you?” LeAnn licks her lips as if her insult was something the rest of us didn’t know about.

We all know about Starla’s past.

We know she got the fuck out of a horrible situation, even when the odds were against her.

“Aesir, go get some towels. LeAnn’s begging for a blood bath.” Starla cracks her knuckles and leans her head to the right and the left until a popping sound rings out.

I leave the two girls alone and head to the storage closet, but Runes walks over. I guess he feels like he finally needs to interject himself. “I don’t give a shit what you two do to each other but don’t mess up the club. You got it?”

“Yeah, Prez. Loud and clear.”

“Sure, Runes. Whatever you say.” Starla is pissed by LeAnn’s lack of respect, and I don’t blame her. She isn’t grateful we protect her ass. She’s an ungrateful piece of shit, and if I was a woman, I’d beat the fuck out of her.

I grab a couple of towels, knowing all too well Starla isn’t the kind of woman to fuck around. She puts her hands in front of her face and antagonizes LeAnn. “C’mon, hot stuff. Aren’t you gonna kick my ass? You some big bad bitch, or is the meth baby gonna beat your pathetic ass?”

I make my way back over to where the girls are, and the brothers who are

here make a circle around them. LeAnn tries to hit Starla, but Starla is too quick for her. Every single time LeAnn throws a punch, it's almost like Starla is anticipating her next move.

"I could ruin you. You don't even realize it," LeAnn spits at Starla.

Starla starts laughing, which only pisses LeAnn off. "Yeah, okay. I'm so scared right now." The sarcasm is thick through her tone.

LeAnn charges right at Starla, and that's when she gets her. Starla gets her right in the nose, and a cracking sound breaks out. Some of the guys grunt in anticipation, while others have their eyes glued on the fight unfolding before us.

LeAnn screams in pure anger, and this is the first time I've ever seen the sadistic side of Starla. She charges up to LeAnn and tackles her to the ground, punching her over and over again until blood is oozing onto the floor.

"Fuckin' hell," Ivar mutters as he looks around to see if anyone is going to stop it.

No one does.

Ivar goes up to Starla and wraps his arms around her torso, yanking her off LeAnn. "Fuckin' bitch! Don't say shit if you can't back it up."

Dag clears his throat and looks right at Runes. "Prez, she keeps goin' after brothers who have women. I don't like it, and you know the ol' ladies aren't gonna like it when they hear about this shit."

"I know. I'm damn certain this is unanimous." Runes looks around at all of the brothers with voting privileges, and we all nod. We want LeAnn gone, and we want it done now. "LeAnn, pack your shit and get the fuck out of my club."

"W-what?! I'm a *hora*. I'm supposed to come on to you guys! That's the price I pay for protection."

Runes scoffs. "Yeah, the ones who aren't tied down. You've crossed the line more than one time, and I'm done with it. You're a menace more than you're a help, so my word still stands. Get the fuck out." Runes shakes his head and starts walking away. I'm sure he has better shit to do than be here and listen to this shit.

"Y-You can't do this to me!" LeAnn screams.

Runes stops in his tracks and turns around, staring coldly at her. There's not one ounce of remorse in his eyes. "I can, and I am. I won't say it again. If I do, your ass is getting dragged out of my fuckin' club. Got it?" Runes doesn't wait for a response. He walks away, and LeAnn picks herself up off

the floor with tears streaming down her face.

Not one of us has any sympathy for her.

She did this to herself.

We'll offer a helping hand to anyone who needs it, but the moment you fuck around, you'll find out why people don't cross us.

The club door opens, and Aziza walks in. A shocked expression crosses her face the second she sees LeAnn bloodied and bruised.

I immediately walk up to her. "What happened?" Concern is lacing her voice.

"I'll tell you when we get to our room. Come on." I lead Aziza up to our room, and as soon as we get behind the door, I lay it all out for her.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



AZIZA

I walked into an actual shit show. Never did I expect I'd arrive at the clubhouse and Aesir would tell me Starla beat the shit out of LeAnn for coming onto him.

Apparently, LeAnn has a long history of going after the men in the club who are dating or who are married. The club wasn't going to continue tolerating constant disrespect to the women who love these men.

We talk about LeAnn and what happened for at least ten minutes, and then it's my turn. I have to tell Aesir about what happened when I got a flat and about the flowers today. I wanted to ignore it because Tyler's starting to creep me out, but I'd be a fool if I did.

Tyler isn't giving up. He seems to think that I'm coming back to him, and I'm not. I . . . I'm starting to feel like he's dangerous. If I'm being honest with myself, I just don't like the way I'm feeling.

"I need to tell you something, and I don't want you to freak out when I tell you, okay?"

I already know he's going to be upset, but it doesn't hurt to try and soften the blow.

Aesir narrows his brows and looks right into my eyes. "What haven't you told me?"

Geeze. It blows my mind how he knows me so well. Sometimes, too well.

I nervously clear my throat and strum up the courage to tell him. "You know the day when I got the flat tire?"

He instantly smirks. "Yeah. I remember it quite well." He's totally thinking about the two of us romping around in the back of my car.

“After my tire went flat and I pulled over, Tyler showed up. He essentially told me it was a coincidence, how he was heading out to get a bite to eat and recognized my car. I’m going to be honest, at the time I didn’t think much of it . . . but now I don’t believe him. I’m getting these really weird vibes, and I don’t like it.”

Aesir clenches his jaw, visibly angered by the fact Tyler was around me. I know why, too. Aesir was always my second option and never my first. I was so cruel to him when I’d always go back to Tyler, and sometimes I’m still shocked that he even gave me a chance to date him after tossing him aside for so long.

“What’s changed? Why don’t you believe him now?”

“I got flowers at the bakery. I thought they were from you, and I was so excited to get them, but then I read the card and saw they were from Tyler. I immediately tossed them in the trash. He keeps thinking I’m getting back together with him, but I’m not. I don’t want him, Aesir. The only person I want is you.”

“Let me get this straight. He showed up the day your tire went flat, and you didn’t tell me?”

I already know I fucked up. I should have told him that day, but I didn’t, and now I’ll have to face the music. “Yeah, he did. I told him my boyfriend would come help me. I dropped that you were a member of the club. He seemed really aggravated by that and said I was basically lowering myself to be with lowlife scum. I figured he’d finally leave me alone since he was visibly so pissed about us being together, but then he’s sending me flowers . . . I don’t like it.”

“He’s being fuckin’ crazy.”

“I know. One minute he’s acting like I’m a bitch for not giving him another chance, dating some ‘lowlife’, and the next, he’s there to help me with my tire and sending me flowers.”

“He wants you back, Ziza. I knew this was going to happen. I knew he was going to want you again.”

“He can want me as much as he can. I’m not going back to him. Have you ever heard that the definition of repeating the same actions and expecting a different result is insanity? That’s what it is going back to him, thinking things will be different. I don’t want him anymore. I haven’t wanted him since before we started this. I’m ready for the new phase in my life. The one where it’s just you and me.” I grab Aesir’s hand and give him a reassuring

squeeze.

The man sitting in front of me is the one I want to be with. There isn't even a fraction of a doubt in my mind. He's my future.

Tyler was a stepping stone. One I had to step over to get where I was meant to be.

"That's the one stipulation I had with you. I wanted you to be done with him. I know you are, and I'm glad you kept your end of the bargain. Just don't like how he's not letting you go. It's pissing me off, honestly."

"I know, I'm not happy about it either. I just want him to get the message that I'm done, and I mean, I'm *really* done."

Aesir turns his neck to the side a little bit. "You want me to tell him to leave you alone?"

I shake my head immediately. "No, you don't need to do that."

"I know I don't *need* to, but I *want* to get him off your back. I don't like this shit, baby girl. I'm not gonna ask you again, so I'm telling you that I'm handling him. Tyler will know sooner rather than later that he needs to leave you alone."

I know the club does some illegal things. I'm not as blind as I was when Aesir and I first started to see each other. Tyler might be freaking me out with his persistence, even when I've told him to stop . . . but I don't want him killed.

"You're not going to kill him, are you?"

Aesir chuckles. "Wasn't planning on it unless you want him dead?"

"No, I don't want you to kill him."

"No one said I had to do it." Aesir raises his brows, and there's a bit of playfulness to his voice. Yet, my gut tells me if I wanted Tyler dead, Aesir would happily oblige.

"Stop playing around."

"I'm not. You know damn well I'd go to hell and back if it meant you were protected. I'd kill whoever I needed to, and I wouldn't even care. I love you, Ziza. I think in a way I always have, and I'd do *anything* to protect you."

This is the first moment Aesir has let me know any sort of true feelings. He's always been so guarded. I think that has something to do with his past, but I can't be too certain.

What I am certain of is the fact I love him, too. "I know you would, and that's how I know you're the man I'm supposed to be with. I love everything about you, Aesir, from your kindness to your callousness. It doesn't matter if

it's your worst trait or your best quality. I love them all."

Aesir slides his arms around my waist and pulls me to him, capturing me in one of the hottest, most passionate kisses we've ever had.

His hands tighten around my waist as he presses his lips harder against mine. The kiss is raw and intense, like we're two star-crossed lovers who haven't seen each other in ages. I can't help but moan into his mouth as the kiss deepens.

His hardness is pressing against me, and I know that he's as turned on as I am if not more. As much as I want him, I want answers even more. "Aesir." I pull away from his lips for a moment, my voice breathless. "What are you going to do about Tyler?"

His eyes narrow, and his grip on me tightens as he pulls me closer to him. "I'll take care of it, Ziza. You don't have to worry about him anymore. Fuck, you don't even have to think about him anymore. He'll leave you alone. Be sure of that." Aesir starts to bring his lips back to mine, but he doesn't get that far.

"But how?" I ask, my voice trembling slightly. "I don't want you to get into any trouble." I'm so nervous that he will get into some trouble. I know Aesir. I know how much he wants to protect me and how passionate he is. He could allow his need to protect me to cloud his judgment and make some bad decisions.

Aesir's lips curve into a small smile. "Don't worry about me, baby girl. I've got this."

I have to trust him. After all, he's always been there for me, and he's never let me down. Aesir is by far a man of his word. Yet, there's still a part of me that's scared. Scared of what Aesir might do to Tyler. Scared of what might happen if he gets caught doing whatever he's going to do.

But Aesir is looking at me with such intensity and determination I know there's no stopping him. He's made up his mind, and he's going to do whatever it takes to protect me, no matter the cost.

So I take a deep breath and lean into him, letting him pull me closer. His hands continue to roam over my body, and I know that I'm exactly where I'm meant to be—with Aesir.

Aesir and I slowly begin peeling off each other's clothes, stripping ourselves down until there's not one layer between us. His cock is hard and waiting, precum oozing at the top.

I smirk devilishly at him and get off the bed, dropping down to my knees.

“Fuck, I love the way you think, baby girl.” Aesir’s voice is nothing more than a low and sexy growl coming from the back of his throat.

His cock grows even more as his anticipation builds, and I don’t think this thing could get any bigger. I’ve never sucked Aesir’s cock before, but I love the way it looks. Cocks aren’t even pretty things. They’re just . . . there. So many of them look like shriveled-up worms that have been stepped on too many times, but not his.

Aesir’s is so big and perfect, and all I want to do is take it in my mouth and make him want me more than he’s ever wanted me in his entire life.

I lick my lips, and Aesir scoots to the edge of the bed. I take his cock in my hand and give it a soft tug. He lets out a low moan. I know it’s what he’s been waiting for, and I want to give him everything he wants.

“You want this?” I ask, making my tone as seductive as possible. “You want these lips wrapped around your cock?”

Aesir nods, and his eyes sparkle with desire as he stares down at me. He doesn’t want to wait, and I can see it. It’s written all over his face. “I do, baby girl. I want it so fuckin’ bad.”

I lick my lips again and smile as I bring my mouth to the head of his dick. I’m just about to take him into my mouth when I stop and look up at him. I want him to wait a couple moments more just to build the anticipation, and then I do it.

I open my mouth and take his cock, wrapping my lips around his shaft. I plant a hand at the base of his dick and go up and down in unison with my mouth. I want him to feel like he’s getting the best blowjob of his life, and I’ll be damn sure he is.

After a few minutes, he grabs me by the back of my hair and yanks me off his cock. “If you keep going like this, I’m going to come, and I don’t want to come in your mouth. I want that pussy.”

Aesir pulls me up slightly, not hurting me per se, but he’s being rough with me. I love it. I love it when he tosses me around like a rag doll.

He puts me on the bed on all fours and lines his cock up right at my entrance, slamming into me. I instantly moan, unable to help it. Every single time he drives himself into me, I’m seeing stars.

He rocks in and out of my pussy, my essence coating his cock. I pinch my legs together to give him a tighter feeling, and he groans from pleasure. I revel in the feeling of him filling me up with every stroke. “Fuck, Aesir. Just like that!”

He digs his fingers into my thighs as he continues to pound into me while he shoves me down into the pillows. The pain and pleasure mix together and it's the most incredible feeling I've ever felt before.

I grab my tits and play with my nipples, twisting and tweaking them as Aesir fucks me. My face is buried in the pillow, and I can feel the heat rushing to it.

The way we're positioned, it's like he's hitting me in all the right places. My orgasm is building up inside of me, and I know it's going to completely take over my body. "A-Aesir," I moan.

"Yeah, baby girl?" Aesir asks, continuing to fuck me hard.

"I'm so close. *Please* don't stop," I beg, knowing damn well he probably won't. If he did, I might go apeshit on him.

"I'm not going to stop until you come, and you're going to scream my name so loud everyone in the club's gonna hear."

I don't doubt Aesir for a second. I know he'll make me scream his name. It's now or never. He yanks my hair and pulls me further away from the pillow, and it sets me off.

"Come for me, baby girl. Come for me right now," Aesir says, and I do as he says.

I come harder than I've ever come before, my orgasm shaking through me like a shockwave spreading across the earth. As I do, I scream Aesir's name, and he smacks my ass hard. The pain is so delicious I can't even keep track of how many times I've come because he doesn't stop. He keeps fucking me, dragging out this orgasm.

Aesir is on the edge as well, and he lets go, filling me up with his hot load. As he reaches his own orgasm, he pumps into me, and I find myself having another orgasm.

God, I love him, not just for the man he is, but for the way he makes me feel.

I can't imagine my life without him by my side.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



AESIR

Over the last few days, everything has been peaceful. It's been quiet. Too quiet.

I've been staying with Aziza at her place down the street, still not feeling comfortable enough for her to stay here by herself. I don't have any solid proof, but I do think that her tire going flat didn't just happen. I think something was done beforehand. I have gone over everything I did, everything I looked at the day her tire went flat.

I keep wondering if there were any knife marks, if there was a nail or if there was damage to the rim, and if maybe the rim pressing into it caused a slow leak. The truth is I wasn't paying enough attention. I was only focused on getting my girlfriend out of a tough spot.

Aziza is at the bakery right now, working her tail off and getting ready for some sort of wedding this weekend. She told me she has to bake over four hundred cupcakes plus finish a six-tier cake. She was going into the intricate design the bride and groom wanted, but she lost me halfway into the conversation. I think I might head over there after I handle some business today. I bet she could really use the extra help.

I leave my bedroom and head downstairs to the main area of the clubhouse. Tor is mopping the floors. I smile to myself, knowing damn well we all paid our dues. Though, I think he had some idea in his head like he wasn't going to have to do any of that. He might be our president's kid, but that doesn't give him the right to jump over the hoops we all had to jump in.

We pay our dues, and in doing so, the club respects you and has your back. I don't think Tor understands that, but one day, I'm sure he will.

“Hey, you goin’ somewhere?” Kraken asks as he peers up from his phone. The man is obviously bored.

“Yeah, I have an errand to run. Wanna come with?” I figure the more help I have, the better. I was fully prepared to go scare the shit out of Tyler by myself.

I enlisted Vanir’s help, and he told me that Tyler’s been at the same place throughout the day for the last two days. He works in construction, and it must be some sort of new job site.

“Anything to get me out of here. It’s been too fuckin’ quiet, and I don’t know what to do with myself. I’m sure as fuck not gonna head home and choke my chicken like Regnor’s been doin’.” Kraken shakes his head.

I did not need that image running through my mind. Regnor is one of our three prospects, and over time, I hope he’ll become a good friend to Tor. They’re all at the bottom of our totem pole, and they need to have support because the club won’t be supporting them too much right now.

If shit hits the fan in their lives and they need help, we’ll of course offer. That’s what we do for family, and they are family, even if we’re hard as fuck on them.

“What are you doin’?” Kraken asks as he rises from the couch.

“Tyler’s been bothering Aziza. I’m gonna head over to his job site and pay him a visit.”

Kraken shakes his head a couple of times. “I don’t understand men like him. They’re so desperate for acceptance that they don’t give up the one person they treated like trash, even if the woman is done with them.”

“Yeah. Did Aziza or Magnolia tell you what he did?” I’m curious if Kraken knows everything.

“Nah, man. I can imagine it isn’t anythin’ good.”

“Well, you know he showed up at her new bakery location first and basically lost his shit on her. She told him to get out, you know, it was conflictive. That’s why I wanted her to stay at the club while I was in Cuba. A couple weeks later she gets a flat, and he’s somehow magically around when it happens.” Kraken gives me a knowing look. “Then he sends her flowers, assuming they’re getting back together. It’s pissin’ me off, man. Aziza’s all freaked out, and I can’t blame her. I told her I’d handle this shit, so that’s what I’m doin’. I’m going to handle it.”

“Bet. I’ll happily go with you. I’ve been cravin’ some action, and I’ll guarantee you there will be some.”

“Yep.” I don’t have a doubt about it.

Kraken and I head into the garage, get on our bikes and we get the hell out of here in no time.

We ride for about an hour until we arrive at Tyler’s work site. It’s a large construction area with huge cranes, trucks, and diggers everywhere. There are mounds of dirt everywhere, and the air is filled with dust. There are multiple parts moving, from men in a building on the right, a few machines driving around, moving dirt, asphalt, and a variety of other substances.

Men in hard hats walk around the grounds, some carrying tools while others are busy working on something specific. A few of them look over at me and Kraken. We’re not supposed to be here, and they all know it.

I notice a port-a-potty off to the side. It’s been here for quite a while based on its dirty exterior. I’d put my money on the fact it’s at least ten years old, and I don’t even want to know what the inside looks like. We park our bikes nearby and begin to walk toward the construction site.

It only takes us a couple of minutes until we spot Tyler, who seems to be supervising a group of workers. I’m not going to lie, I’m shocked that he’s a boss. I figured he’d be one of the guys walking around, bitching about his job.

Kraken and I approach him from behind, but he notices us right away because a couple of his guys nod in our direction. He turns around slowly, and his face is filled with disbelief and annoyance when he sees us.

“What do you want?” he asks gruffly.

I take a step forward and look right at his dumb ass. “You should know damn well why I’m here.”

“Yeah, I do. You’re fucking pathetic, man. Showing up to my job like this. Really? This isn’t the time or the place. But while I have you here, let me remind you that Aziza and I have a lot of history. We’re meant to be together, and you might not believe it right now, but we are. You’re just a distraction until she comes crawling back to me like always.”

“She’s not crawling back to you this time, man. She’s sick of you. It’s why she pushed you away the day her tire went flat. It’s why she threw those flowers out the second she knew they were from you. She doesn’t want you anymore. She wants me, and fuck if she’s been getting me.” I stare right into his eyes, wanting this pathetic piece of shit to know I’m enjoying every moment with her.

“Enjoy her while you have her. It won’t be long.” Tyler goes back to

looking at the blueprints in his hands and tries to act like I'm not there.

"Man, I don't think I've seen a more delusional man. She doesn't want you, dude. If you keep showing up to her bakery or bother her in another way, our club is gonna get involved. Aesir here is tryin' to keep it civil, but we protect our women," Kraken interjects, unable to stay quiet any longer.

"Think whatever makes you sleep better at night. She'll be back. She always is. All it ever takes is a little sweet talking and a few nice gestures."

"I feel like this guy doesn't have a fuckin' brain." I look right at Kraken, who chuckles lightly.

"Mmm, don't think so."

I glance around us and look at the port-a-potty not too far away from us. Kraken averts his eyes there, and I smirk. "You know what I'm thinking, yeah?"

"Oh yeah." Kraken has a shit-eating grin on his face.

Kraken and I briefly look at each other and then charge forward. We grab Tyler by his shoulders and push him back on the ground. All of his workers stand around and stare, not one of them offering to help him.

I bet all of them hate him. If they didn't, they'd be trying to get us off him, but they're not.

We pound our fists into him until he's screaming for mercy, begging us to stop. He tries to fight back, but he's pathetic. He can't even land a single punch on either of us.

Kraken and I rise up and stare down at him, fists clenched at my sides as I glare down. "Leave Aziza alone." Make no mistake, there is no room for misunderstanding in my tone. If he so much as looks at her, I will kill him. I'm tired of him being a leech on our relationship. I'm tired of him scaring her. I'm not going to stand by and keep letting it happen.

"I can't. I love her, and we're meant to be together. All you are is a fucking distraction. I can't wait for her to give you shit when I tell her what you've done today." Tyler quickly gets back on his feet and walks away.

Does he really think he'll just walk away right now?

Kraken and I share a look, grab him by his shoulders, and yank him toward the port-a-potty. Again, no one is doing anything to help him. "What the fuck, guys?! Help me out!" he hollers at his employees. He's pissed, but this isn't the half of it. He's going to be so much more pissed here in a couple of seconds.

Kraken throws the port-a-potty door open, and I shove Tyler inside.

Kraken spots some industrial plastic wrap. It's the kind that's used to wrap large shipping pallets on trucks. He gives me one end of the wrap, and together, we make sure Tyler has no way to get out of here.

"You motherfuckers! You're going to pay for this!" He can holler as much as he wants, but it won't make a difference. He's not taking us seriously, so I'm going to make him understand he's barking at a bigger dog right now.

I'm not afraid of him.

Sure, I'm not killing him right now. I'm only doing it for her. She still cares for him in some way, so I refuse to kill him—yet. If he steps out of place one more time, I will slit his fucking throat without even giving it a second thought.

Once the port-a-potty is wrapped, we tip it over. Tyler yells for help from his employees as feces and urine flood the port-a-potty. It's soaking his clothes, drenching him, and I wonder if he managed to swallow any of it on the way down.

He's practically drowning in the disgusting liquid. The stench is unmistakable, and I'm glad we chose the nastiest, dirtiest-looking port-a-potty to toss him in. I'm glad we wrapped it up first. Otherwise, he'd be out of it by now. He deserves to be soaking in shit.

Gods, who am I kidding. He deserves so much worse than this.

Kraken and I share a pleased look before we walk off, heading back toward our bikes. Next stop: the bakery.

Aziza needs some help prepping for the wedding this weekend, and unlike Tyler, I'll actually pitch in when she needs me.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



AZIZA

Aesir arrived a few hours ago with Kraken. Kraken has been sitting around watching us work, becoming a certified taste tester. Aesir and I have been baking, and baking, and baking even more.

He helps me mix up the batters and get them prepared, takes the cupcakes out of the oven on time, and places them on the cooling racks. He's honestly keeping me on target. Right now, I'm about three-quarters of the way to my goal.

The scent of gingerbread and vanilla cupcakes wafts through the air. The sweet aroma is almost like a symphony. All of the ingredients together make something magical, with notes of cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice dancing around in the air. I'm pretty sure I have enough ingredients to make an extra two or three dozen so everyone at the club can have some. It blows my mind how I don't end up eating so many of these every day.

The smell of these freshly baked cupcakes makes my mouth water. I have some real self-control by not taking one and shoving it in my mouth this very moment.

We're getting everything prepared for the wedding this weekend, but I still have regular day-to-day orders that I need to get done. While Aesir's pulling a few dozen cupcakes out of the oven, I decide to strike up a conversation.

"So, how has your guys' day gone? You haven't really said much about it." I'm asking both of them, looking between Aesir and Kraken.

Kraken's gaze drifts over to Aesir for a split second. "Nothing much, just dealing with some stuff. It got a little messy, but it wasn't anything we

couldn't handle.”

“That’s good to hear. How have things been going with the club? I . . . I don’t really know what I can ask or whatever. I’m still trying to figure it out, but a lot of the guys went to Cuba, and I assume it wasn’t for a nice getaway.” Aesir and I are very much together, but I still don’t understand how things with the club work. I’m not sure if I’m privy to certain information that I wasn’t allowed to know before.

“Things are good. No issues at all right now.” Kraken’s reply is so simple.

I sprinkle some powdered sugar on top of each cupcake for one of today’s daily orders and spot Aesir’s eyes. He’s watching me and Kraken very carefully. I’m not sure why. I don’t think he believes Kraken would try to flirt with me or anything. For fuck’s sake, I’m his wife’s business partner and good friend.

“Rayna and her mom are still at the club, so I’d say that’s an issue.” The issue isn’t them being there. It’s Rayna’s crazy stepfather who desperately wants to kill them.

“Yeah, her stepfather’s still out there, but we’ve got our eyes peeled,” Aesir speaks up.

I’ve been spending a lot of time at the clubhouse, and while all of the ladies are amazing, I’m the closest with Magnolia and Rayna. Rayna is a total sweetheart, and I hate that she’s in the position she is. I can’t imagine being thrown into living an entirely different life like she is.

Both she and her mother had to uproot their lives just to stay safe, and that’s ridiculous. The prison never should’ve released her stepfather. He’s insane, and he tricked the prison into believing he was this Bible-thumping guy who was determined to turn his life around. It was only a facade, a con, if you will, and they fell for it.

“Is that the only thing the club is worried about?” I ask out of pure curiosity, wondering how much information I can get out of them.

“Right now, yes,” Kraken answers. He looks over at Aesir again. “Is she your ol’ lady yet, or what?”

Aesir nods, and I know from Magnolia how his words have a deeper meaning behind them. “Yeah, she’s my girl.”

“All right. Do you know what that means?” Kraken turns to look right at me.

I shake my head. “I don’t have the slightest idea.”

“It means you’re privy to certain information other women aren’t. It means you’re on the totem pole now. You’re above the *horas*, the girlfriends, the patch bunnies, all of ‘em. You’re part of our club, our family, now. Aesir’s claimed you, and that’s a big fuckin’ deal, little lady.”

There are a few moments of silence between all of us, and the scent lingering through the bakery distracts me. You can almost taste the sweetness just by breathing in the air. It almost makes me laugh. Maybe that’s why Kraken is still here. It might not just be about eating some fresh goodies. Maybe he needs the distraction.

“I didn’t have any idea I was tiered like that. Does there need to be so much secrecy now?” I search Kraken’s eyes, hoping it means Aesir can finally be honest with me.

“No. Aesir is free to tell you whatever he wants. That doesn’t mean you can go around and tell other people, though. The club is his family, and therefore it’s yours. Our secrets are now your secrets and vice versa.”

“I understand.”

“Good. I need to get goin’, but you got any extra stuff here? I have a little girl who loves anything you make.”

“I don’t have much, but I’ll stay here for an extra hour and make more just for Everly. Can I bring some things to the clubhouse when we’re done for the day?”

“Yeah, I’m sure she’d love that.”

“Awesome. I’ll bring her some yummy treats,” I say with a beaming smile.

“Great, thank you.” Kraken stands up from his seat and starts to walk toward the doorway.

“Kraken.”

He stops and turns to look back at me. “Yeah?”

“I just have to say, what you did . . . taking her in after all that happened. It takes someone really special to do that. You and Magnolia are phenomenal people.”

“I’m a firm believer that people need to do what is right. I wasn’t ever gonna let anything bad happen to her. I was her uncle before, and now she calls me Daddy. I never thought I’d have kids. In a way, something beautiful came out of their deaths. I wouldn’t have said that before, but time gives you perspective, and I’m glad I was here for her. Magnolia and Everly are my whole fuckin’ life. Now that she’s pregnant, there’s going to be someone else

who's my entire world."

"It's commendable," Aesir speaks up, now coming behind me. He wraps an arm around my waist, and his presence always makes me feel at home.

"It's not hard to do what's right, brother. Always remember that." Kraken is one of the older men in the club, and I have a feeling like he's the kind of man who gives fatherly advice.

Kraken makes his way out of the bakery, and Aesir presses a sweet kiss to my neck. "That got insanely deep out of nowhere."

"Yeah, it did, but in a good way," I say, turning around to face him.

I slide my arms around his neck and capture him in a sensual kiss. His lips are soft and inviting, exploring my mouth with a gentle passion. It's nothing crazy, nothing too X-rated. It's simply sweet.

The taste of honey and sugar lingers on his tongue, reminding me of the bakery. I'm damn certain Kraken wasn't the only one having treats all day long. His hands press against my waist as he pulls me closer, deepening the kiss with a hunger that I could never deny. It takes minutes for us to break away from our kiss, and every single time he does, I never want it to end.

"I'm so glad things worked out the way they did," Aesir whispers against my lips. There's a seriousness in his words. A seriousness that I can't deny.

"Me too. I never would've thought we'd be together like this, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love you. I love us," I answer honestly, loving how safe he makes me feel. Aesir is the kind of man who would set the world on fire for me. That is what every woman wants, and if they tell you differently, they're lying.

"Me too. I'm just glad you gave us a chance. A real one." Aesir runs a hand along the side of my head sensually, capturing strands of my hair as he does so.

"Me too. I wish I would've done it sooner." Tears well in my eyes as I admit it out loud for the first time. Deep in my soul, I know Tyler was never the man of my dreams. He was the guy I stayed with because I was lonely. The one I felt obligated to be with because of how long we were together.

But I wasn't happy.

This is happiness.

Aesir is who makes me happy as hell, and I know without a doubt, I'm going to spend the rest of my life with him.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



AESIR

Aziza and I finished getting everything she needed done by the end of the day, plus we made a variety of treats for the club. Everly got her own special box with unicorn cookies, cake pops, and a couple of cupcakes.

Everything is put away and packed up, and we're just about ready to head to the clubhouse. If there are times when I'm helping her, I typically ride behind her on the way home. It makes me feel better knowing she's safe, and I think she'd have a serious problem if I was riding ahead of her. Let's just say I have a need for speed.

Aziza's wiping off the stainless steel counters, making sure there isn't a speck of flour, dough, or anything else left on them. She's very meticulous in this way, always wanting to start fresh the next morning. I commend her for it. A lot of people would've left here with it dirty and cleaned it first thing tomorrow morning.

"I'll be done in three minutes, I promise." Aziza's eyes dart up to meet mine, and she shifts her weight from one foot to the other while still running around trying to clean up. Her skin is more gold than tan, and she's definitely not fair-skinned. The goldish hue is darker, almost making her look like she is tan, but she isn't. I can just make out the flush on her cheeks.

"Take as much time as you need, baby girl. I'm not rushing you one bit."

She gives me a soft smile in return and continues cleaning up the bakery. I offered to help, but she insisted, and I quote, 'Shut up, sit down, and eat a cupcake. You've done enough today'. What she doesn't realize is I'd help her do anything she needed. Absolutely anything.

Aziza continues cleaning the bakery for another five minutes, and then

she's finally done. She comes over to where I'm sitting on one of the barstools along the back wall, forcing herself between my legs.

She leans against my chest and sighs. "Ugh, that was a *long* day."

"I know it was. You got it all done though, so everything is good, yeah?"

She peers up at me and nods. "If it wasn't for you, I'd be here for at least another four hours. Thank you so much."

"Anytime you need me, I'll be here. That's a promise." I wrap my arms around her and hold her close, reveling in her body pressed up against mine.

I don't know how I didn't see it before. This woman is my entire future. I wish I would have convinced her to be with me sooner. We lost so much precious time. Time that shouldn't have been wasted.

I lean down to kiss Aziza, pressing my lips against hers.

At first, it's just a simple kiss. Sweet and tender. I don't think anything is going to progress from here, but neither one of us pull away.

The longer our lips stay pressed together, the more passionate our kiss becomes. My heartbeat starts to race as our kiss becomes more ferocious, and her hands come up to rest on my chest. She moans lightly into my mouth, and I know this isn't just a simple kiss. She wants me as desperately as I want her.

My hand slides down her arm until I reach her waist. Looping my fingers through the belt loops on her jeans, I pull her closer to me. The bakery is warm from all the baking we did today, but that's not the reason the heat level is rising. Nothing is comparable to the heat radiating off our bodies as things shift.

We start taking each other's clothes off without breaking apart as we move toward the stainless steel counter behind us. I lift Aziza onto the counter so she's sitting on it. I press myself in between her legs and get as close to her body as I can. Our mouths are still connected because not one of us wants to part.

Before either of us knows what's happening, we're tearing each other's clothes off bit by bit. I waste no time getting inside her, and then we're fucking on top of the counters like two wild animals unable to control themselves. It's savage, carnal, feral.

Aziza cries out in pleasure as I thrust into her over and over again. I want her to have the most pleasure she's ever had with me. I want her to think back on these moments and have heat rush to her cheeks because she's so turned on.

“God, Aesir. Just like that.” She paws at my chest and drags her nails down it. There’s something erotic about nails being dragged against your skin.

“You know I got you, baby girl. You get whatever you want,” I say as I pound into her tight pussy. Her essence is coating my cock, dripping down my balls.

Aziza moans and they echo throughout the empty bakery. We’re lost in each other, and nothing else matters. We’re deep in this moment, unified, just the way I like it. Nothing compares to being inside her, absolutely nothing.

The intensity builds until I feel like I’m about to burst. “I’m gonna fill you up, *minn* baby girl,” I growl with such intensity.

“Yes, please. I want you to. I want you coating my walls, Aesir.” Gods, if that isn’t the hottest thing that’s ever come out of her mouth, I don’t know what is.

I lose all control. A few more thrusts are all it takes. It’s like the floodgates are down, and my cum rushes out of me. My hot seed coats her walls, and it’s the most exhilarating feeling in the world.

Through my own release, I keep fucking her, and she begins shaking, a telltale indication her orgasm is on the horizon. I fuck her and keep ramming my cock inside her. Her walls tighten up and constrict my cock, taking it for everything I have left, and I find my own release again as her orgasm is rocking her entire world.

Her orgasm is still rocking through her body as she shudders on the cool steel. I lean down and capture one of her nipples in my mouth, sucking and teasing as we come down from such a glorious high.

She wraps her hands around my head, running her fingers through my hair. There’s something calming in every movement she’s making. It’s nurturing, and I find myself really enjoying it.

We stay here for a few minutes afterward, just enjoying the afterglow of our intense sex together before we finally get dressed. We share a few soft kisses before I help her disinfect the counter, we just had sex on, and then we grab the boxes for Everly and the clubhouse, walking out of the building.

I follow Aziza until we’re back at the clubhouse. She parks her car around the side where the rest of the vehicles are, and I pull into the garage bay. Once I have my bike parked, I walk outside and take three of the large boxes. She carries the one we made up for Everly, along with her purse.

“How have things been since LeAnn was kicked out? I haven’t heard

anyone talk about it too much,” Aziza asks out of nowhere.

LeAnn’s been gone for a couple of weeks now, and as far as I know, we haven’t heard anything from her. “I expected her to reach out, apologize, and try to come back into Runes’s good graces so he’d give her another chance. She hasn’t. It’s been radio silent.”

“Hmm. Don’t you think that’s weird?”

I shrug. “Might be, might not. She could have realized there’s no way she was getting back into the clubhouse. Maybe she isn’t going to waste her time on it.”

“I didn’t know her well, but she doesn’t strike me as the kind of woman who gives up easily.” Aziza has a point, but I don’t care enough about LeAnn to be worried or stressed about her.

“She might not be, but we don’t have to be concerned about her. She’s not a threat to us.”

“If you say so. I know women, Aesir. Some of them don’t give up, and she seems like that crazy type.”

“Aren’t all women crazy?” I play around, but Aziza doesn’t find my joke funny.

I go over to the clubhouse door and open it for her, allowing her to walk in first. “We have treats for everyone!” she announces, and as I walk in, I spot Fenrir and Logi getting up straight away.

They walk right over to me, and each take a box out of my hands. “Can’t wait to see what you brought today.” Logi chuckles, his eyes huge like a kid on Christmas morning.

They take the boxes over to the bar and open them, and I place the last box over on the dining table we have off to the side. I open it up and grab one of Aziza’s sugar cookies with chocolate icing. They’re so fucking good, but then again, everything she makes is.

Aziza goes and gives Everly her box of desserts, and the little girl gives her a massive hug. It warms my heart knowing that she fits in so well with everyone here. She is a part of this club, even if she doesn’t think she is yet.

After she gives Everly her box, I notice she goes over to Rayna and sits next to her on the couch. They’re becoming good friends, and I’m glad. None of the other ladies are getting really close to Rayna, and I have a feeling that she’s going to be here for a while. Aziza will be a good friend for her to have.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



AZIZA

Over the last couple of days, things have been so calm. It's nice to finally have a break from the chaos. The most chaos I've had this week was probably getting everything ready for the wedding order.

Magnolia and I, plus a couple of her catering employees, are on our way to the venue now. They are driving Magnolia's catering van while the two of us are heading over in my vehicle.

"When I got to the club the other day, I noticed you were chatting with Rayna."

I nod, paying attention to the road ahead of us. "Yeah, she's a really nice girl. I . . ." I pause for a moment, trying to make sure this doesn't come out the wrong way. "I noticed not a lot of ladies actually take the time to chat with Rayna, so I have been. If anything, Starla talks to her a lot, but no one else. Charm and Fern are practically glued to the hip and are super close. Vail and Gwen are close too. You're close to me. Esperanza and Skadi stick to themselves for the most part. I think Rayna needs friends. She needs support."

I glance over to Magnolia for a split second, and she nods. "You're right. All of the ladies have established friendships. It's not like we go out of the way to ignore anyone. We always chat and whatnot at big events, but I see what you're saying. Rayna kind of fell through the cracks a little."

"Exactly, that's what happened. She and her mom are going through a lot right now, so I think I need to be there for her if she needs me."

"That's really nice. You have a great heart, Aziza."

"I just try to be a good person, is all. I'm able to do what I want now, so

I'm going to be friends with whoever I want to."

Magnolia seems surprised by what I've said. "What do you mean by that?" she asks, raising an eyebrow.

"Before, when I was with Tyler, he was very demanding. He didn't want me going out without him or talking to anyone without him. I think that's part of the reason we were on and off for so long. He became so possessive and controlling and turned into a man I really didn't like. Now, I have the freedom to do what I want. Aesir isn't like him at all."

"First of all, that's some bullshit right there. He wasn't just being controlling and possessive. Aziza, what Tyler was doing to you is a form of emotional abuse. Sure, he wasn't physically hitting you, but he was playing mind games. I wouldn't say one is worse than the other, but it's bullshit. God, I fucking hate that dude. I'm glad you moved on, and you're with someone who actually wants to see you happy."

"Me too," I reply with a light smile. "I don't have a crushing weight on my shoulders anymore. It's nice to have Aesir in my life, and I don't think we're going anywhere. I told him I loved him the other day. He said it, too. It was so beautiful!"

Magnolia smiles from ear to ear. "I had a feeling you two would be together forever. You just had to figure out the right timing for it to make sense. Kraken might have mentioned to me that Aesir called you his ol' lady the other day. Welcome to the club."

"Thank you. I'm excited to be in it." I laugh and then change the subject. "How are things going with your pregnancy? Are you still feeling nauseous and stuff?" It's almost Christmas at this point.

"A little bit, but it's passing. I'm in the second trimester now, and I've been told that things are going to get easier. What isn't going to be easy is shoving these two kiddos out of their luxury hotel when the time comes."

Whoa. Wait a second. Did she just say two? "You're having twins?!"

"Yeah, I am. I haven't told Kraken yet. I kind of want to surprise him at the birth. He didn't go to the first couple of ultrasounds, and the one he has been to, the surprise wasn't spoiled. Most guys would be freaked out, but I think he's going to be so happy about having twins."

"You're crazy if you're going to wait to tell him until delivery. How are you going to handle two cribs, two of everything?"

"I was thinking I'd get some of the girls to help me put the second crib all together after he does the first one. I know it's crazy, but I'm kind of having

fun keeping a secret like this from him. It's not a bad thing, so I don't feel guilty at all."

I laugh lightly and pull into the venue parking lot. We pull up to the front doors and the wedding coordinator comes right up to my car. Magnolia and I get out, and the coordinator shows us where to set up for the wedding reception.

Magnolia gives orders to her employees, and they bring the cake in first, then I apply the decorations. I didn't want to do it beforehand in case anything were to bump around while being driven here. While I'm getting the cake ready for the wedding, Magnolia and her employees are carefully placing the cupcakes in a beautiful way on the tiered trays the bride wanted on the tables beside the cake.

Once we're all done, her employees leave and go back to the van, heading back to the club. Magnolia and I stick around for a few extra minutes just to make sure everything is perfect, and then we head outside.

I glance up for a split second, thinking a man is standing next to my car, and sure as shit, I'm right. I narrow my eyes, and as we got closer, I instantly recognize him. "Tyler, what are you doing here?"

Magnolia looks right at him, and I know she's just as pissed as I am.

We continue walking, and he starts to speak. "I wanted to talk to you, baby. You're not giving me the time of day, and it's really starting to get to me."

Magnolia crosses her arms and looks at him like he's fucking insane. "Have you ever thought her having a boyfriend might have something to do with that? Huh?"

Tyler shakes his head. "He's not her boyfriend. He's a rebound. A distraction. He is nothing." Wow. He's in such denial.

"He isn't nothing, Tyler. He's the person I want to be with for the rest of my life." I'm tired of trying to be nice. I've tried everything. I've been considerate, kind, angry, and pissed. I don't know how else I can tell him that I'm done with him! I've told him seventeen million different ways. For fuck's sake, I've told him too many times!

"No, you don't mean that!" Tyler growls at me and gets down on one knee. "Aziza, I am begging you to come back. You're my life, my love, my future. I want you to be my wife, to have kids, and grow old with you. I want to sit on the porch and watch our grandkids play in our front yard. Don't you want that too? Don't you want to be my wife? Please, I will change. Aziza . .

. will you marry me?”

He’s too late.

I might have believed him at some other time, but he is far too late for me to believe him. After everything he’s done, I can’t trust anything that comes out of his mouth.

“No. We don’t have anything together anymore. We’re done. We’ve been done. I’m not coming back to you this time, Tyler. I just wish you could see that.”

Rage and grief flash across his eyes at the same time. He rises up and shakes his head somberly, but at the last moment, he reaches out and grabs me by the throat. “If I can’t have you, why should he? I made you into the woman you are, you ungrateful bitch.”

I feel like I’m trapped in a box where I can only see things in slow motion. It’s taking forever for his words to truly register in my mind. His grip on my throat is growing tighter and tighter.

“Get the fuck off her!” Magnolia screams, and the next thing I know, there’s a heavy sound of shoes hitting against the concrete walkway.

I’m struggling to breathe, and fight or flight takes over me. I claw at his arm to get him to let me go, but he has an iron grip.

“Let her go before I call the cops!” one man shouts. Tyler tightens his grip even more, and I dig my nails into his arm until crimson-red blood is oozing back down to him.

“I’m already on the phone with 911,” a woman screams.

They’re trying to scare Tyler, but the way he’s looking at me right now shows me he isn’t afraid of anything. He’s staring at me like he wants me dead. “I made you into everything you are. Without me, you’d be nothing, you’d have nothing, and no one would give a shit about you.” His voice is filled with venom and hatred. This is the worst I’ve ever seen him.

He finally releases me, and I stumble backward, coughing violently as I try to catch my breath.

Tyler walks off toward the parking lot and gets the hell out of there.

“Are you okay?” Magnolia asks me, obviously worried.

I nod. “Yeah, I am.”

I’m okay, but Tyler won’t be when I tell Aesir.

He just signed his death certificate.

CHAPTER NINETEEN



AESIR

I've been chilling in my room playing video games for the last hour. Being with Aziza means I hardly have any game time, but I don't mind it. Although, I do have a hardcore craving to kill some motherfuckers in my shooter games.

I've been at it for a bit, so I decide to head downstairs and get a beer. I make my way out of my bedroom and head down to the main area. It's filled with almost all of our club members. Not too many women are here. It's just Starla, Meghan, and Rayna.

It's been so quiet since LeAnn left the club. She was always so loud and obnoxious. I appreciate the silence. It's a nice change. We have enough noise when all of the kids are running amuck. What none of us needed was another person to give us a headache. The kids do that enough.

I make my way over to the bar and take a seat. Regnor is behind it, and Starla is a few feet away from him, drying some glasses. "Want a beer?"

"Yeah, the darker, the better," I respond, glancing over at Starla.

She's not paying an ounce of attention to me or Regnor, which isn't like her. Usually, she's present in the moment, chatting with the people around her.

While Regnor grabs my beer, I casually glance behind me to see what she's staring so hard at. I spot it right away. Rayna's shooting pool with Ivar, and every time she bends down to take her shot, he's staring directly at her ass.

"You know better than that," I state clear as day, looking right at her.

She shakes her head and meets my eyes. "Sorry, what?" Her eyes are a

rich shade of golden brown, almost the same color as her tightly curled hair.

“You’re attached to him.”

Starla blinks a few times and doesn’t say anything at first. She knows she can’t deny it because I can see right through her bullshit. “I’m not trying to be. I know I can’t. I shouldn’t have ever—I know, okay?”

Regnor hands me my beer, and I take a sip, nodding. “I know. You know how this works out for *horas*, Starla.” I’ve never known of a *hora* to find her happily ever after with a member of the club. I do know Shiloh from the Reapers Rejects MC in Montana ended up shacking up with Hammer, one of the guys in the club, but things like that don’t happen too often.

I’m not trying to dissuade her, but she’s a nice girl, and I don’t want to see her get her heart broken.

“I know.” As she speaks, her eyes become glassy, and I’m pretty damn sure there are tears welling behind her eyes.

“Hey, don’t worry about it, sweetheart. You can always come climb in my bed when you’re lonely,” Regnor speaks up, trying to take advantage of this opportunity. He’s too stupid to realize his timing is way off. It isn’t the time or the place. Anyone should be able to tell that she has a thing for him.

Meghan comes waltzing up from behind me. I don’t even know how long she’s been there. “He might stare, but he’s not gonna touch. Magnus has had his eye on Rayna for a while. You guys can’t tell me you haven’t seen him flirting with her. And you know what? Magnus isn’t here right now, which means Ivar’s getting an eye full while he can. Don’t sweat it, okay?” Meghan’s trying to be supportive, and I get that. I just hope Meghan doesn’t get Starla’s hopes up.

I sip on my beer while Meghan and Starla chat, Regnor reminding them both his bed is always open. Gods, the younger guys these days have no shame. I’m not even old by any means. I’m twenty-four, but Regnor, Geirolf, and Tor are all between nineteen and twenty-one.

For the next half an hour, I’m shooting the shit with Regnor, and then everything changes. The clubhouse doors come open, and Magnolia hollers my name from the top of her lungs.

I turn around on the barstool the second I hear the panicked tone in her voice. She’s walking in next to Aziza, who has a deep red mark around her throat. What in the actual fuck?

I slide off my barstool faster like I’m the fucking *Flash* and race over to her. She has hardly any emotion showing on her face, which means it had to

be something traumatic. “What happened to you, baby girl?” I ask her in a soothing manner.

Her deep espresso eyes meet my own. “Tyler, that’s what happened.” Her voice seethes with intense anger and frustration. Clearly, something’s happened. I have to know, and the longer she waits, the more anxious I become. “He showed up while Magnolia and I were dropping off a wedding order. Gave me this big sob story about how he wanted me back, proposed, I turned him down, and then his true colors showed. He choked me. If it wasn’t for Magnolia and bystanders, I don’t know what would’ve happened.”

I wrap my arms around Aziza and pull her close, almost crushing her against my chest. She is the most precious thing in my life, my everything and that pathetic bastard put his hands on her. He has no idea what’s coming for him. Wrath, unlike anything he’s ever seen. A reckoning unlike anything he’s ever experienced is coming for him, and it’s coming today.

“Hey! What’s goin’ on?” Fenrir asks as he comes down the stairs with Runes.

“Aziza’s ex put his hands on her,” Magnolia fills him in, and I let go of my woman for just a moment.

Aziza turns to face them, and their expressions harden. They see how serious this is. They want Tyler’s blood as much as I do, and we’re going to make sure he pays for what he’s done.

I gave him a warning, one opportunity so it wouldn’t have to come to this, and he ignored me. I told him to stay the fuck away, and this is what he’s done. He’ll pay for his actions in the most tragic way.

“We don’t tolerate that. Aesir, Runes, myself, and Ivar are heading out with you,” Fenrir speaks up, anger heavy in his tone.

“I need you to stay here while I go handle this. Okay?” I hope she understands why I want her here. Some women insist on being involved, but I want her to be as far away from this as possible. If she were to come with us, I’d be too distracted making sure she was okay to do what needs to be done.

“Okay.” Aziza nods, wincing after a moment. Fuck, I hate him for causing her any pain. I need to make sure she’s okay, but I need to track that bastard down.

“Do you need to go to the doctor?” I ask, but before she can respond, Runes is speaking up.

“Gwen and Vail should be here any minute. They get off their shift around five on Saturdays.”

“Will you at least let the girls take a look at you?”

“Yeah. I’ll be okay, though.” She’s trying to assure me, but I don’t need her to be strong right now.

“I know you will.” I offer her a soft smile and pull her against me once more, pressing a kiss to the top of her forehead. “I need to go, but know how much I love you.”

“I love you.” Aziza pulls back slightly and looks into my eyes. “I want him dead, Aesir.”

I never thought I’d hear those words come out of her mouth. “There isn’t another option, baby girl.”

Aziza and I say our goodbyes, and then me and the guys are heading for the garage, ready to get this piece of shit.

When Vanir was tracking Tyler, I had him pull a whole bunch of information on him. One of which was his address. It’s a shitty little place on a back road outside of Tallahassee, which is perfect for what we’re about to do.

We all ride out over there, spotting a car in the driveway. We’re off our bikes in no time. Ivar and Fenrir head around back to make sure he doesn’t try to get away. Meanwhile, Runes and I are already on his front porch. There’s no point in knocking, so I turn the knob.

The door is locked, so I take a few steps back and kick the door in. The wood splinters and cracks from the force.

“Whoa! What the fuck?!” Tyler hollers from his kitchen, where he’s holding a butcher knife.

Does he actually think that’s going to scare us?

Ivar and Fenrir come in through the back door, which is conveniently on the other side of the kitchen. We have Tyler surrounded and I couldn’t be more satisfied.

“Oh, don’t act surprised. You know why we’re here. You couldn’t listen to me, could ya? Not listening is one thing, but putting your hands on my woman is why you’re dying today,” I snarl at him while I clench my fists at my sides.

“She deserved it. She’s ungrateful. I turned her into everything she is. All of her success is because of me!” Tyler’s roaring at the top of his lungs.

“Lies! Everything she’s accomplished is because of her. That girl is smart as shit, and a man like you only held her back,” Runes roars back, overpowering Tyler’s voice.

“You had no right putting your hands on her,” I snap, walking toward him. At first, he stays in the same spot, but eventually, he backs up against his stove.

“I had every right. She wasted my time and kept dragging me along.”

I laugh at the ridiculousness passing through his lips. “That’s where you’re delusional. She told you multiple times to leave her alone. You put your hands around her neck, and now I’m going to do the same to you.”

“You wouldn’t fucking—”

Before Tyler can finish what he’s saying, I knock the knife out of his hand and kick it across the room. My heart races with adrenaline with every second that passes.

Fenrir swiftly kicks it down the hall so it’s out of reach. None of us want him to grab any weapons, and I’m scanning the room to make sure he can’t pull a fast one and grab something else.

With one clenched fist, I slam it into Tyler’s face. There’s a crunching sound under the force of my knuckles, and his head rocks back into the range hood above his stove.

“You motherfucker!” Tyler roars again, almost like I’m going to be afraid of him.

“You’re pathetic, man. Actually, I shouldn’t even be calling you a man. Men don’t put their hands on women!” I snap, hitting him again.

I pin him against the stove and turn the closest burner all the way up to eight. I use all of my strength to keep pressure on him, but he’s struggling, and I keep losing my grip.

Runes comes up and holds his shoulders down, helping me keep him on the stove. “You fucked up today, you piece of shit.”

The burner starts turning red, and Tyler begins to groan from the pain. He thrashes against Runes and me, but it’s no use. We’ll only pull him off when we want to.

I know my brothers are just as pissed as I am. None of us tolerate men putting their hands on women. We’re all seething with anger, furious with Tyler’s actions. Runes holds onto Tyler with fierce determination. He’s one of the bigger guys in the club, whereas I’m not nearly as muscular as him.

I take a breath and try to calm down a bit, but it doesn’t work. Anger runs through my veins.

The scent of burning flesh fills the air as Tyler’s skin begins to sizzle and pop against the hot stove. “Come on! Let me go! I made a mistake.”

“You should’ve thought about that before you hurt her,” I grumble, my hand trembling as Runes and I fight to keep him down.

Tyler releases a guttural scream, and yet I feel absolutely no sympathy for him. He deserves everything that’s coming to him.

Once he stops screaming, he has a warning for us. “You’re all going to regret this!” He continues to struggle against our grip.

“We’ll regret nothing,” Runes snaps, grabbing him by the collar. He flips him around so we can continue to turn him into an over-easy egg.

We hold him down until the scent of his burning flesh becomes unbearable, then toss him onto the linoleum floor of his home.

“I have an idea,” Ivar speaks up, leaning against the wall while smoking a cigarette.

“What’s that?” Fenrir questions him.

“He choked Aziza, so he should die by strangulation.”

I like that idea. I take off my belt and tie it around his neck, yanking it until he looks like a dog on a leash. “Let me go. I won’t do anything. I’ll leave the city, the state, everything.”

“We’re well past that.” I pull as tightly as I can until Tyler chokes. He’s going to die, and Aziza will finally be safe.

My brothers all step aside, standing back, watching with cold eyes as Tyler struggles to take a breath. Ivar finishes the cigarette he’s on and lights another one. He exhales slowly, and the smoke dissipates in the air.

Runes has his arms crossed, a grim expression on his face. Finally, Fenrir stands and watches with amusement as Tyler finally gets what’s been coming to him.

I tighten my grip even more, and satisfaction rolls through me. His cooked face turns a deeper red from the lack of oxygen, and his eyes begin to bulge. He claws at the belt, desperate to find a way out.

But I don’t let go.

I let him struggle until he takes his last worthless breath.

CHAPTER TWENTY



AZIZA

It's been a week and a half since Tyler faced the music. I didn't ask Aesir how he did it, but I know he took care of it. Ivar didn't come back for hours, so I'm pretty certain he's the one who dealt with Tyler's body.

Christmas is coming up in a couple of days, and I've been packed with orders. Luckily, I've already finished baking, and I've delivered everything that was on my schedule. Anyone who didn't get a delivery is picking up tomorrow between nine and six, and then I'm off for a week.

Business has been better than ever, and I suppose I have to thank Magnolia. My clientele has increased by over forty-six percent since she brought me into the catering company. I've even been able to come up with a plan to pay her rent now that I'm making more money.

Yesterday she brought up opening the shop inside the building next door. Her club is there, and she wants to offer customers the option of having high-quality sweets. It'll also serve as a location where people can come and order whatever's in stock, but there are a couple issues I have with that.

I want someone who can work at the shop and be a secondary face for my company. A friendly face for Zizi's Treats, and right now, I have no idea who could qualify for that position. I know I'll figure it out. Who knows, maybe Magnolia has an employee who thinks could fit what I'm looking for.

"Hey. You have anything you need to do at the bakery?" Aesir asks as he comes up from behind me. I'm sitting on one of the many couches in the clubhouse.

I peer up at him and shake my head. "No, I'm good for the day. Thank you for offering, though."

“Of course, baby girl. I’m always gonna help out when I can.” He presses a quick kiss to the top of my head before proceeding to gaze down at me.

“I’ve never had help from a boyfriend before. It’s great.” I’ve only ever had shitty people in my past, but I’m glad he’s the one who gives me everything I’ve ever wanted. Aesir is the love of my life, and I know it.

“It’s cause I’m a man, sweetheart. When you’re struggling, we’re struggling, so I’ll do anything I can to help. And I mean *anything*.” Aesir comes around to the front of the couch and plops down beside me, throwing an arm around my shoulders.

“Anything, huh?”

“*Anything*,” he confirms.

“What about dressing up in some ridiculous costume and selling cupcakes at a big event?” I arch a brow, wondering if he’ll play along with me.

“Oh yeah, totally. Whatever I can to get you more business.”

“Hmm. I think you should do it.” I’m not even fucking around with him.

“What?” The playfulness drops from his face, and his cheeks start turning red.

“It sounds like a fabulous idea! Everyone will see how supportive you are of your girlfriend’s business.” Starla giggles from a chair across the way.

“Hey! You shut your yapper,” Aesir jokingly tells her, shaking his finger like a pissed-off elderly person.

“I’m not doing it.”

“You offered, so you’re stuck with it now.” Aziza shoves at me, and I smirk, shaking my head.

“Not gonna happen, baby girl.”

“What’re you two going on about?” Magnolia asks as she walks by.

“Aesir said he’d do anything to help me get new customers, so I suggested he dress up in a costume at a public event and hand out cupcakes,” I explain, and I notice Aesir staring right at Magnolia, widening his eyes, silently begging her to talk me out of it.

A shit-eating grin spreads across Magnolia’s face. “I think it’s a great idea. Kraken will do it, too.”

“I’ll do what?” Kraken hollers from the bar area while Everly colors in a book on a nearby table.

“You’ll dress up in a costume with Aesir and hand out cupcakes to get Aziza more business.”

“Uh, no. I didn’t volunteer for that!” Kraken is not having any of this.

“Oh, is this a club thing? Fenrir will pitch in, too!” Charm instantly offers.

“Runes will hate it, but he pissed me off last night, so I’m volunteering his ass for this.” Fern cracks up.

“See what you’ve done now,” Aesir grumbles at me.

“What? Thought of a great marketing idea?” He should know better than to tell me he’ll do anything. I’ll call him out on his bluff or force him to do something absolutely ridiculous, like dressing up in a costume.

“We’re having an open house at the spa after the New Year. Want to do it then?” Fern suggests.

“Yeah, that would be awesome!”

I already know I’m going to get him into a lot of shit with his brothers, but they’ll do it. I’m their family now, and they will do anything for family. “At least tell me it won’t be something too ridiculous.”

“I can’t do that.”

“Why the hell not?”

“Because you’ll take all my fun away.” I stick my tongue out at him like we’re two children playing around.

He shakes his head, regretting he said anything in the first place. He’ll only continue to get himself in situations like this. Or maybe he won’t. Maybe he’s learned his lesson.

“Mom’s really excited to meet you. She called me yesterday and said so,” I tell him.

“I hope she’s excited because you’ve told her good things.” I know he has to be nervous about meeting her. He told me a few days ago he’s never met anyone’s parents. He did meet Zain the other day, and that went smoothly, so I know this will, too.

“Of course, she is. You’re the best man I’ve ever met. She’s so happy I’m with a man who treats me well, respects me, and makes me happier than I ever thought was possible.”

“You’ve always deserved the best. I hope you know that.” Aesir knows how badly Tyler fucked with my head. But being with Aesir means that my confidence level has gone up exponentially. I feel like a new woman. A stronger, happier woman.

Aesir has shown me what I’ve deserved through and through. I just wish I would have been with him from the very beginning. I know life puts us through things for a reason. Maybe I needed to go through all of the bad to

get to the good.

Luckily, I'm fortunate enough to have him be the last lover I'll ever have. He's the man I'm going to have children with. I don't have a doubt about it.

Aesir is my everything.

EPILOGUE



AESIR

Two Weeks Later . . .

I'm fucking insane for doing this right now, and I know it. But, baby girl gets what baby girl wants. We're supposed to be at a local park. I have a fucking one-carat engagement ring burning a hole in my pocket. Magnolia and Rayna helped me plan everything.

"I know we're going out, but I *need* you so bad right now." Sex oozes past her lips, and we're already late, but who am I to deny her?

We're in her house right at her front door. It's closed, and while I could tell her we need to go, I know it would put her in a shit mood for the rest of the day.

"Fine, but it needs to be quick."

"If you hit it the right way it should be." Aziza winks at me, and I waste no time.

I pull up her red silky dress over her hips and yank her thong down. I unzip my pants, pull my cock out and push her against the door. I hike one leg up and plow myself into her with one hard thrust.

She pushes her neck back against the door, and I plant my hands firmly on her hips to hold her into place. Aziza shuts her eyes, and I pull out, slamming back into her as hard as I can.

Her body's shaking, and I glance down to see her fingers digging into the rim of the door. I ram my cock into her again, and she moans out my name. This speed and power is going to get her off quickly, but I want to make sure I'm not going to hurt her.

Fuck this, I need a better angle. I slide my arms under her thighs and pick

her up, shoving her back against the door. I pull out and position my cock at the entrance of her decadent pussy, rubbing the head back and forth.

She's soaked, and I need to be inside her right now. I push into her, and it's like her walls instantly tighten around me. I start thrusting into her, and she digs her nails into my back. "Fuck. Fuck me with your big, huge cock. Just like that, Aesir, please keep going. Please!"

Gods, I won't be able to last long. I love it when she talks dirty to me. I pick up the pace, pushing into her harder and faster. She's right on the verge of coming, and her walls grow tighter. I feel my balls start to tighten, and I bury myself deep inside of her.

Her legs tighten around my waist, and she moves her arms to wrap them around my neck. I can feel her body shaking as she comes, her juices running down my cock. I hold her there for a minute, trying not to come, but it doesn't work. I'm trying my hardest to not come, but it's hard when her pussy is squeezing me so tightly. I don't want to make her messy when we have to go, so I hold back my load, and she notices how hard I'm fighting it.

"Let me down!"

I do as she says and let her go. She instantly drops down to her knees and takes my cock deep into her mouth, bobbing back and forth. Gods, I can't do it anymore. I can't hold myself back.

My balls are screaming for release, and I let it go. I know my load is massive, and I fuck her mouth hard as it all comes shooting out. She moans over my cock, and the vibration feels so fucking good.

She swallows every last drop and licks her lips afterward, completely satisfied with herself. She even takes my cock in her mouth one more time to clean me off. "Fuck, I love you, but we gotta go! We're gonna be late."

"Fashionably late and well-fucked. Everything is fine, babe." Aziza winks at me as she rises, pulling her thong up and fixing her dress in the process. I tuck my cock away and zip up, then we're on our way to the park.

We arrive within ten minutes, and I walk her around to a pond. On the other side of the pond, in a wooded area, is a sign that reads, 'Will you marry me?'. I told Magnolia and Rayna to make sure it was a rustic theme, so I don't have the slightest idea what it looks like.

"You wanted me to get all dressed up so we could go to the park?" She raises her brows, questioning why we're doing this.

"Sort of. There's a taste test for a competitor of Magnolia's. She wanted someone to go undercover, and it's black tie, which explains the outfit

choices. They're doing it with some sort of rustic elegance theme, whatever the fuck that means."

"Oh, so we're like undercover agents right now," Aziza smirks, and there is so much excitement in her voice.

I can only imagine how much more excited she's going to be when she figures out what's actually going on.

We make our way around the pond and walk into the woods. It's lined with mason jars that have small tea candles in them, and we continue to follow the path.

At the end of the path is the sign that obviously points to why we're really here today. "Aesir," she speaks breathlessly, completely caught off guard.

Again, I do as I always do and don't waste any time. I drop down to one knee, pull out the ring box, and open it up. Inside is a beautiful oval-cut diamond ring with a rose gold finish. Something unique for the most special woman in my life. I tried to find something as unique as her, but I don't think I came close.

"You are my entire life, baby girl. I didn't know what I was doing before you, and I know this might seem fast, but I don't care. I know what I want, and that's you. I want you until the end of days. Would you do me the greatest honor and be my wife?"

"Yes. Yes! A thousand times, yes!" I slide the ring on Aziza's finger and rise up, kissing the woman I love more passionately than I ever have.

This is what true love looks like, and most aren't lucky enough to find it.

I'm glad we found each other, and I'm really glad I stuck to my guns and was prepared to sabotage anything Tyler did to get her back. Aziza was meant to be mine, not his.

RAIDERS OF VALHALLA MC
MEMBERS:

Runes, m. Fern

Children: Tor (Runes), Arik

Fenrir, m. Charm

Children: Emil, Oskar, Astrid (Fenrir's)

Kraken, m. Magnolia

Children: Everly (Kraken's niece – adopted)

Rati, m. Gwen

Vanir, m. Vail

Logi, m. Skadi

Dag, m. Esperanza

Aesir, m. Aziza

Magnus

Ivar

Regnor

Geirolf

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Dear Readers,

Magnus and Rayna's story is up next, and you won't have to wait very long to get it. It's releasing on December 28th, 2023.

If any of you are having difficulty downloading the full file of this book, please try these troubleshooting steps:

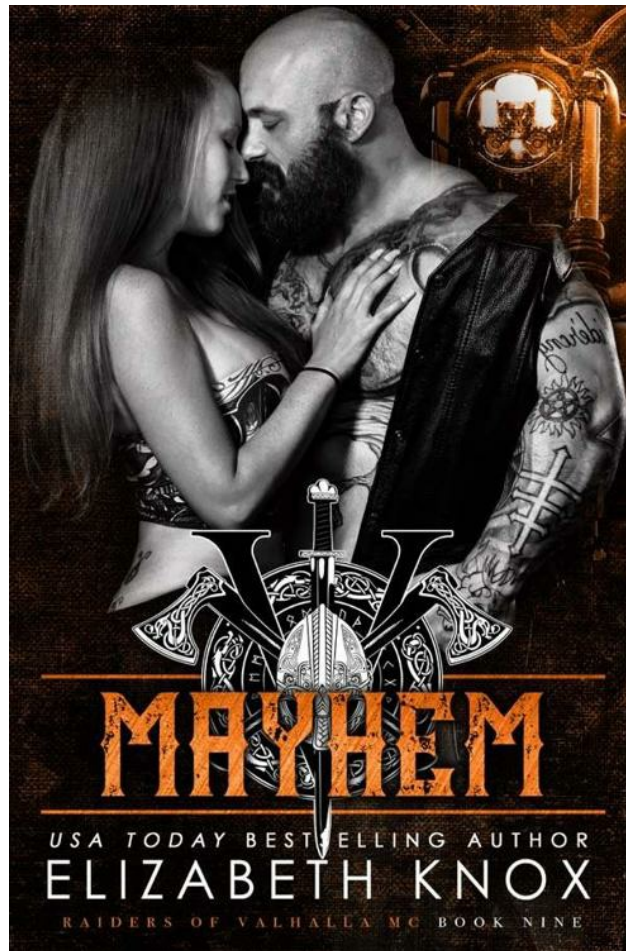
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Sabotage consists of 22 chapters total, including the prologue and epilogue.

UP NEXT: MAYHEM



Everything between us changed in an instant.

Magnus

With one of our enemies finally gone, we all thought we'd have an easy

couple of months until someone else rose from the ashes. What we didn't expect was for it to happen a lot sooner than we thought. It didn't take months. In weeks there was another snake we needed to take down. In the midst of learning about our new enemy, another one was closing in on the club. Rayna and her mother had been targeted by her step-father ever since he was released from a Federal penitentiary. What did he do first? He went right to her mother's house to get his long awaited revenge. Luckily, they were able to escape and came straight to the club. No one had been able to locate him. He was good at hiding, but I knew he was going to sneak out of the shadows and strike when we least expected it. He did, and he almost took Rayna's life in the process. She'd been on my radar for weeks, but I was trying to keep my distance. She was Dag's sister and I wasn't trying to get involved with her. I was doing a damn good job at staying away, but the moment her blood was coating my hands something changed. I couldn't let Rayna die, and somehow our lighthearted flirtation turned into the strongest bond I've ever had in my life.

Pre-Order [Here](#):

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth is a romantic suspense author most popular for her motorcycle club and mafia books. While Elizabeth loves to write she is an avid reader as well who reads a mixture of genres. She lives in the North-Eastern United States on a farm with her rescue animals. When she isn't working you can find her spending time with her family, camping, or binge watching the latest trending show on Netflix.

Make sure you join Elizabeth's [newsletter](#) so you can get special news, announcements, and sneak peeks into incoming books.

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Motorcycle Club Series:

[Reapers Rejects MC](#)

[Skulls Renegade MC](#)

[Raiders of Valhalla MC](#)

[Deathstalkers MC](#)

[Iron Vex MC: New York City](#)

[Knights of Retribution MC](#)

[Sons of Gods MC](#)

[Reapers Rejects MC: Origin Stories](#)

[Reapers Rejects MC: Second Generation](#)

Mafia Series:

[Mackenzies](#)

[The Clans](#)

[O'Dea Crime Family](#)

[Umarova Crime Family](#)

Organized Crime Series:

[Steele Bros](#)

Mafia / Security Series:

[The Mafia Brotherhood](#)

[Love Hack](#)