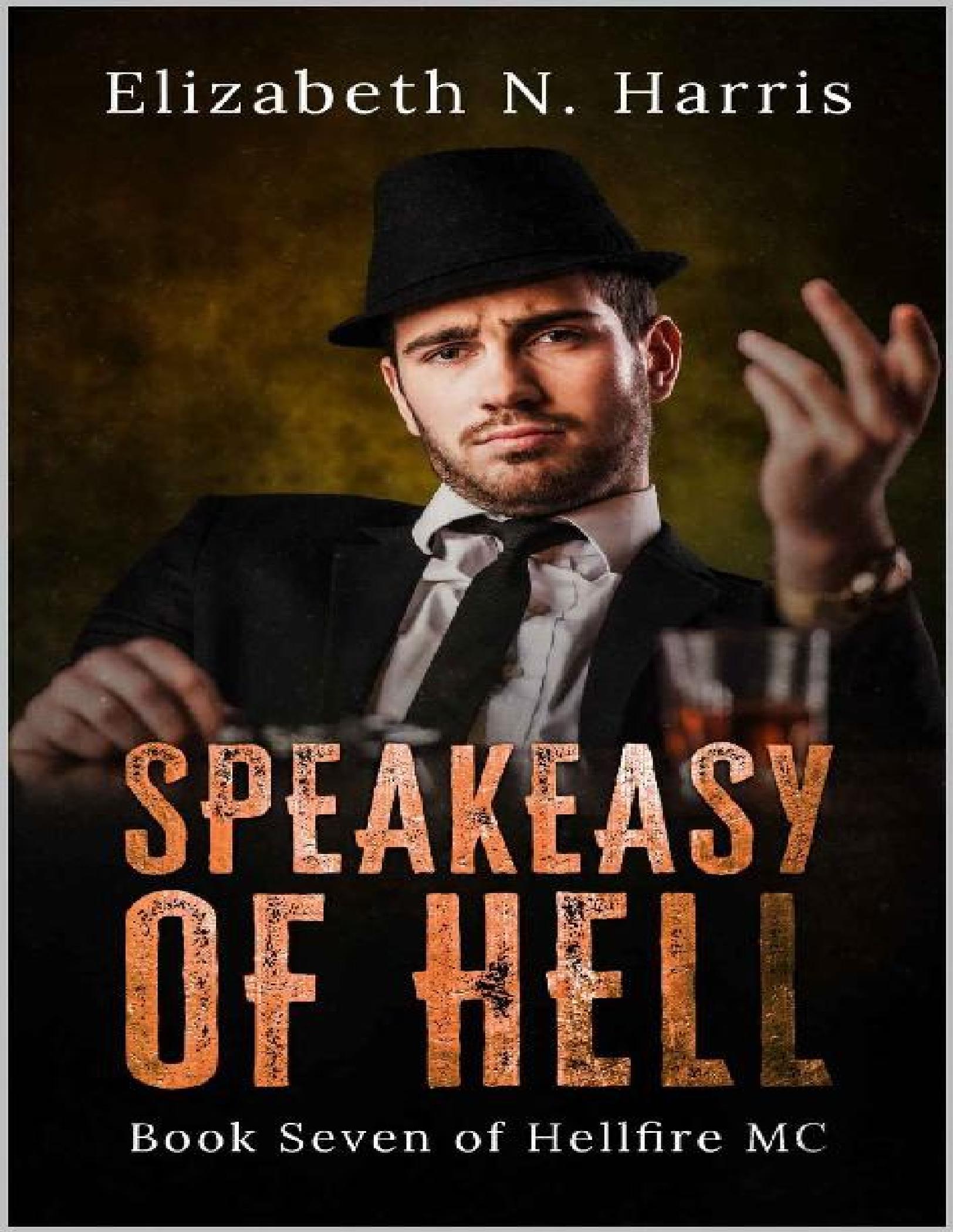


Elizabeth N. Harris



**SPEAKEASY  
OF HELL**

Book Seven of Hellfire MC

The Speakeasy of Hell.

Book seven of Hellfire MC.

Elizabeth N. Harris

ISBN 9781915977144

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Elizabeth N. Harris  
Speakeasy of Hell.  
Book seven of Hellfire MC.

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## Speakeasy of Hell.

He was often ignored, the quiet one who'd disappear when things got too much for him. Nobody knew where he went or why; they just accepted it because he was their brother. He liked the fact his brothers were finding their women, but he knew he was different. He couldn't afford to fall. Not for a saucy woman who loved the 1920s and had a sassy mouth.

She didn't care what people thought of her. Let them ridicule her and her style; she could handle that. She couldn't handle watching her three cousins be miserable in the life they lived, and so they made plans to escape. As sweet as sugar, but when sugar is burned, it turns dark, just like her. Once they gained freedom, she had no intention of allowing anyone to take it from them. But the darkness holds many enemies, as she was about to find out.

He didn't just fall; he dived deep and found he couldn't breathe without her. She became his muse, his obsession, and he needed her. All of her. Every dark, delicious inch. A sweet face holds many a secret, as he well knew. But to claim her, he'd not only have to battle her enemies but his own. And when face to face with your monster, who wins? Only time will tell.

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# Dedication.

To those who love the 1920's this is for you! To Jack for passing his exams.

To Sam, who was the life of the party, and his beloved wife Nicola. You were taken too soon, and the party will never be the same again. God needed an angel, and he called the man with the largest heart known to us. Your loss is profound, but you will always be remembered, for your laugh, humour and gentle spirit. And your kick-ass gaming skills!

Love,

Elizabeth x

## Thanks to the following people:

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

## A Quick Note!

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

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

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

*“You’re beautiful, truly stunning,” the words slipped from Levi’s lips. He couldn’t have stopped them leaving his mouth even if he tried.*

**Happy Reading!**



*Elizabeth N. Harris*

This book contains triggers around abuse of women and violation of their rights.

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

# Prologue.

January 2021

Madisen

The mantra ran through my head:

Head down, face impassive, a hint of grief.

Jere was standing next to me. We weren't touching, but I knew he remained alert. The rain continued to fall, but I couldn't show it bothered me. A Roderick never showed emotion, not even now. Inside, I danced with glee, but if Jere sniffed a whiff of that... there'd be hell to pay.

No, stick with the plan.

I watched as they began lowering the casket into the ground and only just withheld spitting on it.

Jere turned, and I moved with him. We were heading back to the house, where the real fireworks would begin. Through Cami, I'd ordered extra security who only worked for me. A smile nearly crossed my lips at the thought of the scenes to come.

For the following hour, Jere and I would greet mourners and welcome them to our home. Then Jere had scheduled the lawyer's arrival. Hence, fireworks. Because I knew what was coming, and the arrogant, blood-sucking, soulless bastard next to me didn't. But I still had a role to play, and twenty-five years of experience perfecting it didn't soothe my anticipation.

I stood by Jere's side as our father's acquaintances and friends, colleagues and enemies all paid their respect. A top crime lord had fallen. You showed your respects before trying to kill his heirs the next day. Jere wasn't anything like my father, though. He was weaker and spoiled, but he was the heir. I was nobody.

Not for long.

My heels clacked along the tiled floor behind Jere as we walked into

Father's study. The lawyer looked up as we entered and pursed his lips.

"I am expecting Miss Camille Roderick, her sister Tamsin Roderick, and Miss Brandy Carter," the lawyer announced, causing Jere to frown. This was unexpected, and Jere hated that.

"I don't think they are needed," Jere said, sitting in his elegant suit.

"I'm afraid they are," the lawyer insisted.

"You're not my father's usual lawyer," Jere responded with a glare

"No, your father swapped to us six months ago when he discovered... nefarious plans by his old lawyer. My name is Applegate," the guy replied, showing no fear.

There was a knock at the door, and my three cousins entered, looking unsure. That's right, girls, play the game.

Impassively, I stared at them and motioned for them to sit.

"I shall start with a letter Mr Roderick wrote a few days before his passing. It is short and sweet but, nonetheless, explains much of his will," Mr Applegate announced.

"Continue, we have guests outside," Jere said impatiently.

*"My dear children,*

*"No doubt my legacy will come as a shock to you. But I have several errors to make up for as I fear death stares me in the face. Camille, you sought a father's love and were turned away many a time. Your sexuality disgusted me, and I disowned you before I knew better. In hindsight, I made a severe error of judgement and hope you can forgive me."*

I glanced across at Cami as her jaw dropped open, closed, and then opened again. Jere sent her a dismissive stare before motioning for the lawyer to resume.

*"Tami, as much as I ignored your sister, you didn't even register with me. My brother's precious baby, and I shoved you away, ignoring all attempts of yours to claim my attention. I hope you can forgive a stupid old man."*

This time, I glanced at Tami and saw her sitting rigid, with dignified surprise on her face. You go girl, I silently cheered.

*"Brandy, I abused you the worst out of my nieces. You reminded me every*

*day of my beautiful wife and what I had lost. Instead of clinging to her niece, I pushed you away, and you didn't exist. There is no excuse for my behaviour."*

Brandy frowned and stared at the wall. Her response was what Jere expected, and he sneered.

*"Madisen, looking at you broke me. So much like your beloved mother, it pained me to see your face. You grew up without a father, and that is my biggest regret. But it can't be undone now. I wish you happiness going forward."*

Jere faced me, but I kept up the expressionless mask that I had perfected over the years. Jere snorted and turned his attention back to Mr Applegate.

*"Jeremy, I did you a huge disservice. You became a spoiled, petulant, entitled brat. I encouraged your weakness and spite and didn't teach you how to be a man. Well, it's time to rectify that,*

*"Accept these gifts in the vein they are meant.*

*"Oscar Roderick."*

"What the fuck is that meant to mean?" Jere exploded.

"The will is pretty straightforward," Mr Applegate said.

"Oh, get to it. We don't have all night. Just give us the bare bones," Jere dictated.

Mr Applegate sent him a disgusted look and continued. "Miss Camille Roderick, you were left the yacht *Sunrise*, the home in Crete, and two million dollars," Mr Applegate read.

Camille rose to her feet in shock as Jeremy gaped at her.

My eyebrows lifted in a sign of my own surprise, but that was all.

"Miss Tamsin Roderick, you have received the lake house on Lake Superior and a house in France. You have also been left Mr Roderick's Bentley and two million dollars," Mr Applegate announced.

"The fucking Bentley?" Jere screeched, and I heard the volume drop outside the door.

Inside, I gloated as my brother finally looked unhinged.

“Miss Brandy Carter, you received the ranch, which belonged to your father’s in its entirety, a house in Italy, and the Bugatti—plus, two million dollars,” Mr Applegate told her.

Brandy jumped to her feet in shock.

“There has to be some mistake,” she exclaimed.

“No, it is perfectly clear,” Mr Applegate announced.

Brandy shook her head in disbelief.

“Sit the fuck down,” Jere snapped.

Brandy retook her seat, looking shell-shocked as she slumped back.

“Mr Jeremy Roderick, your father left you the house in New York and one hundred thousand dollars a year; for the next ten years, this will be managed and held in a trust. He also left you fifty thousand dollars to start an enterprise of your own choice,” Mr Applegate said.

Jere frowned, but I knew what was coming next. Jere still hadn’t realised that was all he was getting. His ego hadn’t even let him consider it, I guessed.

“The rest of the houses, including this one and their contents, all go to Miss Madisen Roderick. As does the car collection, the two private planes, all of your father’s fortune—except the bequests he made—and everything else. The entire estate is granted to Miss Madisen Roderick,” Mr Applegate said.

The clock ticked loudly in the silence that fell. Nobody looked at each other. We were all in shock—or feigning it.

Then Jere detonated.

“Check that fucking will again!”

“There is no need. Your father signed this half a year ago. In front of six reputable witnesses. On their advice, considering how they believed you’d react, your father’s signature has also been confirmed as authentic by an independent firm. And it is, shall I say, watertight. If anybody here challenges it, they lose their right to their inheritance. And if anyone seeks to sign their portion over, they lose it immediately to a charity. The will is completely and utterly unchangeable. Your father added a note. He said, ‘It is time you became your own man’,” Mr Applegate added. “‘And to stop riding his coattails.’ He started off with less than half of what he left you, so good luck.”

Jere waited for a few moments and then launched himself across the floor at me. He knocked me backwards in my chair, and his hands grasped my throat.

Cami and Tami screamed as Brandy leapt on Jere’s back, trying to wrench

him off.

Mr Applegate rose to his feet and roared for help as my eyesight blackened and I gasped for breath.

My hands scratched at Jere's hold, and I dug my nails in as I tried to free myself from his death grip. My older brother looked completely deranged as the study door flew open with a kick, and two men in black charged forward, dragging Jere off me.

I scabbled backwards on my butt as Jere ranted and raved.

"I will kill you!" Jere screamed at me.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, son. The police are on their way, and I'll be giving a witness statement. Even if you killed your sister, it would all go to charity!" Mr Applegate thundered.

Outside the study, nosey people milled as officers barrelled their way through. A glance at the severe marking on my neck and Jere ranting, and they cuffed him within minutes.

Two paramedics came on their heels and began administering first aid to me. My throat was swelling enough that they readied me for transport.

As the cops dragged Jere out, Mr Applegate, Cami, and Tami ended the funeral wake while Brandy accompanied me.

Law enforcement passed Jere's car—the gaudy thing of course parked front and centre—and one officer glanced inside before stopping completely. The other cop was placing Jere in the vehicle and looked over at his partner's shout.

The fireworks I'd been waiting for were lit, poised for display. And as I was loaded into the ambulance, I saw Brandy's grin as the cops pulled out a stash of cash and drugs.

Yeah, Jere was fucked.

I love it when a plan comes together!

# Chapter One.

May 2021

Chance

“What do you mean?” he demanded, glowering at Rooster.

“The fucker sold the building out from under us,” Rooster growled. Chance leaned back, thoroughly pissed off. Hellfire had planned to buy a building next to the department store they’d bought. The idea had been to convert it into a bar. It would have been ideal next to the department store they’d converted, which had started to grow into a bustling centre even though they still had vacancies.

The entire top floor was an art gallery; it showcased works from artist from their state. Tati had hired a manager for it, and being from that community, he was doing wonderfully. They had staff working for them too, and the guy often toured the state, looking for new artists to showcase.

The basement was a fully outfitted studio, which, in all honesty, Chey and Celt rarely used as they’d one at home. But local bands were realising it existed, so it was booked for several weeks ahead all the time. Celt’s glass shop had also now opened, and if Celt wasn’t singing, he was blowing glass. He had maintained a fair stockpile, making a killing.

Diesel and Banshee both had large, spacious offices with an outer reception, and, if not out on site, you’d find Diesel there with his team. Banshee was usually around in the mornings and late afternoons while being out during the mid-afternoon.

Levi has settled into his studio once he’d the lighting perfect. Out of all the conversions, Levi’s had cost the most; he needed natural daylight, and compromising on that hadn’t even been an option. In the end, his studio had walls knocked down on two sides and skylights put in. He shared the top floor with the gallery; the spaces were unique and yet complemented each other.

A unit on the ground floor held the tattoo shop, with Thalia's clothing shop and Janey's home brewery store located there, too. Alongside them was Clio's friend Frida, who made the best chocolates ever. Chey's lotion girl, Maura, owned another unit near them, and a florist had moved in. Unusually, it was a male florist, but Durrant was a hell of a master at flower arrangements. Hellfire frequented him often when they pissed off their old ladies.

Tati's antique store then took up one-eighth of the second floor.

Clio's farm food supplier had taken a unit on the ground floor.

Hellfire had also invested in a print shop; they often used prospects to man it. The expansion didn't seem to stop for a while, and they'd also taken on a cookware store—which Chance had initially been against—but it was selling well, and a bakery had also opened inside. There were some units free still, however, Chance remained unsure whether to hire them out or install his own business. The second floor had half its space free, and the floor held several eateries and a child's care centre—again, all Hellfire-owned. It was a private pay, and the staff had been vetted deeply.

Chance had wanted to purchase the building next door to them. It had four storeys in total, and that didn't include the basement. He sought to open a club in the basement, a bar on the ground, and then save the other floors for whatever Hellfire came up with. The owner had strung them along before finally accepting an offer. Then pulled out the deal.

Now Chance stewed because he'd discovered the fucker had sold to someone else.

"He was demanding another twenty thousand," Rooster informed Chance, whose scowl deepened.

"Motherfucker," Chance growled.

"Revenge is sweet. Asshole's wife emptied his account and did a runner with the money. He planned to do the same to her, but she got in first," Rooster crowed.

Chance laughed; karma was a bitch.

"Any idea who bought it?" he asked.

"A woman called Madisen Roderick," Rooster answered and waited.

"Her name rings a bell."

"Her father was Oscar Roderick," Rooster elaborated.

"As in the crime lord who recently died in Florida?" Chance questioned, showing surprise.

“Yup. His heir was arrested for assaulting his sister, then busted for drug running. He has been refused bail, and she disappeared. Seems she’s turned up here,” Rooster said.

“Get Pyro on it. He’s the best we got at digging shit up,” Chance ordered.

“Pyro?” Rooster asked, looking surprised.

“Trust me. Fucker’s got skills he’s been hiding.”

“You say so, Prez. What we gonna do about the building?”

“We will wait and see what they plan to do. Should it be illegal, we’ll move them on. Without the extra twenty per cent.”

Madisen

Ignoring the looks people were giving us, my cousins and I walked down the street to the new property we’d built. It was big enough for what we wanted to do. We planned to open the basement as a speakeasy, as in a 1920s speakeasy. We wanted it to be for members only. It was going to be glamorous and decadent. The ground floor would hold a club based on the same era, open to the public. First floor would be split between a ladies’ club and a men’s club, again, members only.

The second floor would be a shop for clothing from that time with matching shoes and jewellery. Tami had plans and was already contacting suppliers to stock it. Cami would have the third floor as a dance studio to teach people the dances. And Brandy would open offices on the fourth floor to continue our charitable donations. A smile crossed my face. Oscar fucking Roderick would be spinning in his grave at watching what we were doing with his fortune.

His legacy died when we snuck out of Florida. His billions were ours and being put towards good causes. Brandy was in heaven, spending his hard-earned dirty money. All of us had sold the houses and everything else, and we’d bought a nice four-bedroom house toward the edge of Spearfish. Brandy and Cami shared a room, while Tami and I had our own.

Since moving there, my cousins had been more open with their relationship. Not related at all through blood—and only linked because of me—Cami and Brandy had been in a relationship since they were sixteen. Even though they hadn’t grown up together, discovering their love as unaware teenagers amid family politics, my uncle had severely frowned on it and separated them. Now, they could be free. And I loved it. Tami, much like me

and Cami, was dressed in a 1920s-day dress. We adored clothing from this era and rarely dressed in anything else.

Brandy, however, looked ace. She never wore dresses and always wore suits based on the men's style at the time, always tailored to a feminine shape. Brandy wore black and white brogues, pin-striped pants with a white silk blouse, and a matching striped waistcoat. She had a purple tie loose around her neck, and her short blonde curls had a hat balanced on top. Her arm remained raised with a jacket hooked on her finger and slung over her shoulder. Brandy was the very epitome of cool.

Cami wore a blue dress with matching Mary Janes, a coat, and a cute little hat. Tami wore the same in peach while I wore black and white. We could feel eyes on us, but we didn't give a fuck who said or thought what. After years of being suppressed, we could be ourselves. Screw everyone else. This was a fresh start after two years of planning, and nobody was going to ruin it.

My father's empire had fallen to pieces soon after Jere's arrest. I had sold off all properties, businesses, and anything else, including the car collection, and banked the cash. As soon as Oscar's colleagues noticed I owned everything, most disappeared, not willing to work for a woman. That suited me just fine. Several had tried to force me into marriage to gain control of the money, and soon realised that I was a Roderick for a reason.

We'd muddied our trail, but I knew anyone determined could find me, and my will had been written while I was in the hospital as a final precaution. A quarter of the money would go to my cousins, held in a trust, and the rest would be split between several big charities. Mr Applegate had been very thorough, making it watertight like my own father's had been. A smirk crossed my face as I thought of how Oscar's head would have exploded if he'd known what his stupid daughter had accomplished and my future plans.

Oscar had underestimated me, his mistake. I'd no regrets at killing the murderous, raping bastard, nor any at stealing everything he planned to leave my jackass brother. Jere was a clone of Oscar, and the world was better off without them both.

"You okay?" Tami asked, hooking her arm through mine.

"I'm perfect. Are you looking forward to seeing the plans?" I quizzed.

"Yes! I've found some wonderful seamstresses who can make my designs as well. It's a whole new world for us, Mads," Tami said gleefully.

Since Oscar's death, Tami was finally free to be the bouncy, beautiful woman she'd always been. No more cowering, no Tami let it all shine, and I

revelled in it. Even if what I did came to light, I'd happily do time to see my cousins in their glory. They were, so I was. That was all that mattered.

The four of us marched into the building we had bought, and I threw a glance over my shoulder and saw several men in leather cuts watching us. They belonged to an MC. I shifted my attention away from them and instead considered the car park opposite, which would come in handy for clients. I wondered if we would be able to arrange for it to be open late before turning back to our building.

The architect met us inside, a handsome Native American who looked us over but offered no reaction. BlackRock Construction had the best reputation in this part of South Dakota, and so I'd reached out. After several long calls with guys called Apache and Rock and their architect, I was ready to see the plans.

"Apache?" I asked almost hesitantly.

"Yeah. You Madisen?"

"I am. Thanks for meeting us. This is my cousin Brandy, who the office area is for. My cousin Tami, who the shop space is for and then Cami, who has the dance floor. Did you get my memo about putting some offices on the second floor?"

"Yeah, and made the changes. Here, we got several plans to look over." Apache turned to a dirty table and spread them out, using items from his pockets to stop them from curling up. He also had a pad with him.

"This is the floor plan for the speakeasy. Now, it is hard to imagine, but this pad contains images of what it would look like," Apache said, and I gasped at the beautifully drawn pictures.

"It's perfect," Tami exclaimed, clasping her hands in glee. I sent her an indulgent smile.

"Isn't it," I agreed.

"You happy with the plans?" Apache asked after several minutes.

"Yes."

"Okay, the ground floor. What we've done is cut some of the space from the club and put in a bigger reception. The stairs to the upper levels will have doors through which reception can buzz them in. You do not want all types coming and going. Or intruding where they don't belong," Apache said.

The increase in the reception area was minimal, so I agreed with the plans.

And so on.

An hour and a half later, we were shaking hands, Apache with a hefty

cheque to start the work. We all looked excited and amazed our ideas were coming to fruition. My cousins had suffered terrible lives until I made my move. Now, all I wanted them to do was live happily. None of us demanded much, and our building would give us everything we desired.

“I can’t believe this is happening!” Tami cried as Apache left.

“So exciting,” Cami agreed.

“Be nice to have a proper office to work out of,” Brandy complained, and I laughed. There was always one!

“I saw a really cute English café a few doors down. Should we try it out?” I asked to stop anybody from taking offence at Brandy’s doom and gloom.

Brandy shot me a swift grin, knowing what I was about.

“Sure, a nice English cuppa tea,” Tami said in a dreadful accent.

“Nope, lady!” I exclaimed as she skipped out ahead. For most of her life, Tami had hidden this beautiful side of her in case Oscar beat it out of her. To see her so light-hearted swept away any doubt I had over murdering my father.

“Come on,” Cami called, chasing after her sister. “You know greedy guts will get all the good stuff and not share!”

Never a truer word was spoken than that!

Chance

“I ain’t no errand boy,” Pyro growled as he entered Chance’s office and flopped into a chair.

“Then you should have kept those skills buried.” Chance sent him a smirk and leaned back in his seat.

“Never said anything to anyone about them before,” Pyro retorted.

Chance leaned forward on his elbows.

“How the fuck else could you discover the real truth and guilt behind those who are targeted by Justice?” Chance whispered, and Pyro glowered. “You gotta have skills, man, so shut up and put up. Madisen Roderick, is there gonna be a war over her?”

“Not that I can see. She was prime meat a year ago, and Oscar Roderick made it known he was looking for husbands.”

“Husbands in plural?” Chance interrupted.

“Yes. Alongside Madisen, there is a cousin from her mother’s side, Brandy Carter. Then there are Oscar’s brother’s two girls; Camille Roderick is the

older and Tamsin the younger. Seems Oscar decided to get rid of all four women, but he had a problem. It is rumoured, although not confirmed, that Brandy and Cami were in a relationship.”

“So, he was going to force two girls who were together to marry men?” Chance said, his disgust leeching into his voice.

“Yeah. Oscar didn’t give a shit about the female members of his family. Treated them like trash their entire lives. Makes what happened more shocking.”

Chance quirked an eyebrow.

“The old man had a change of heart. Left his heir with fuck all and the girls everything, including his billions,” Pyro dropped the bombshell.

“Wanna run that past me again?” Chance asked, bemused.

“Seems the guy died suddenly, massive heart attack. His son put Madisen in charge of organising the funeral, and all Oscar’s nearest and dearest came out to pay their respects. More likely to make sure the motherfucker was dead. The four girls and the boy, Jere, were taken into the study to hear the will, and then a bomb went off.

“Oscar left Jere a house in New York and one hundred thousand to run it and fifty k to start his own business. Nothing else. Everything left, Chance, and I mean everything, was left to his daughter apart from three bequests to his nieces. And he left them a decent home and two million dollars each, too.”

“What the fuck?” Chance said with a frown.

“Yeah, that shit doesn’t make sense. I think the girls had something to do with it. Within two months of being left the money, they sold all assets and banked the profits. And then charities started to get handouts.”

“Damn!” Chance exclaimed, his mind making connections. “You think this girl killed him? Then faked his will and began playing Mary Christmas?”

Pyro sent him a disgusted look. “Ain’t even gonna ask how you know about Mary Christmas. But yeah, the whole thing seems to be suspect. And then the brother got arrested for having enough coke hidden in his car that he was charged with possession of schedule two substances with the intent of drug trafficking. He’s going down for twenty-five years. Thing was? Cops discovered it when they nicked him for assaulting Madisen at the funeral,” Pyro added.

“Holy shit. So, is Madisen clean?” Chance pried.

“Apart from murdering her father, stealing his estate, setting up her

brother, and single-handedly dismantling her father's empire? Yeah, Madisen and the other girls are clean."

"Too clean," Chance said, sitting thoughtfully.

"Even more interesting, she shows no signs of wanting to run her dad's business. Madisen upped and walked away without a sign of interest. A few pushed their luck and got slapped back pretty quickly. Rumours are—Oscar's death is suspect, but nobody has evidence. And no fucker is talking, that's for sure. Everyone who knows Jere agrees the kid is dumb enough to have been carrying enough coke to put him away. But at his father's funeral? The timing? Smacks of a set-up.

"But no bull, he nearly killed Madisen. The little bastard choked her out right in front of a lawyer; Jere's going down. And a seriously powerful crime family has been shut down. As soon as Jere was arrested, Madisen quietly let his men go. A few rivals tried to force her into marriage and were cut off at the knees. Basically, the agreement is to leave her alone. Madisen's no longer important in their world.

"And the girl herself seems to want to be left with her cousins. She's opening a speakeasy opposite and has some other plans. I'll have them by tonight and will let you know. But can't see her causing trouble," Pyro said.

"Is Justice interested in her?" Chance asked cautiously. Justice, Pyro's alter-ego who loved burning and torturing people to death who deserved it, went after those who escaped legal justice and made sure they paid for their crimes. He was sought after by the police, and Chance knew, one day, either Justice would get caught, or Pyro would let go. Ever since Janey had come into Pyro's life, he'd been calmer and more settled. Chance hoped that would grow and Justice would fade away. God forbid anything happened to Janey.

"Nope. Girl's innocent. She may have murdered her father and stolen her brother's inheritance, but she stopped a murderous bastard in his tracks. We all know how many deaths were placed at Oscar's feet, and the fucker escaped justice each time. As far as Justice is concerned, Madisen simply did what he would have done," Pyro said.

It was fuckin' weird to hear Pyro speak about himself like that. But as Pyro explained, he and Justice were two different people. They just inhabited the same body. Chance knew that Justice had come from the trauma that Pyro had suffered as a child. But no matter what happened, Chance would always take his brother's back.

"No probs; everything good?" Chance asked.

Pyro looked at him like he'd gone mental.

"Not doing girlie shit, Prez."

"Ain't fuckin' girlie to ask if a brother's okay!" Chance snapped, bristling.

Pyro cocked an eyebrow and walked out.

Chance sighed. God damn, ornery bastard. Screw this. He wanted his wife and kids. Chance got to his feet and stepped out of his office. Time for snuggles, yeah, Chance Michaelson said snuggles.

Madisen

I regarded the guy opposite me. I was on a date and bored bloody stupid. At first, when I met him in the English café that a woman called Clio owned, it seemed like a good idea. Now I was wondering what the hell had made me agree to give him a date. The few times we'd bumped into each other for coffee had been fine. Brooker had been witty and charming, and I had agreed to meet at the café again for a date. Little had I known, it'd turned into a restaurant at night. When Brooker had invited me, it felt nice to be noticed. I felt normal for once.

Then, Mr Charming transformed into Mr Brag and Boost and Mr Egotistical faster than I could keep up. Brooker's charm now seemed smarmy and practised. He'd been pleasant when I arrived at the café, but when ordering the wine, he hadn't consulted me or even asked if I wanted wine. That had been alert number one. Then, when I looked at the menu, I discovered he was trying to order food for me I didn't like. When I challenged him and ordered my own, Brooker turned petulant.

Then Brooker proceeded to tell me all his accomplishments, which really made me struggle not to roll my eyes. Not once did Brooker ask anything about me; it might have been nice if it wasn't simply because of his ego. I found it very disconcerting to see such a change in him. Although I was used to being ignored and shoved into the background while men flexed their muscles—or lack of—it didn't make it any easier to stomach.

By the time the main meal arrived, I'd tuned him out as he droned on and nodded in appropriate places.

My gaze caught a man across the room to me. He looked as bored as I did, as his date also seemed unable to shut up. He was super-hot, with floppy black hair falling over his face, but the sides were shaved. Brown eyes twinkled as he rolled his at me, and his lips quirked into a smile.

I rolled mine back and saw he wore a cut over a black tee. It stretched tight across his chest, which was not overly muscled.

“Don’t you think so?” Brooker asked me, and I jolted.

“You seem to be the expert,” I replied, not knowing what he was on about.

Brooker was happy with that reply and carried on babbling.

I just about withheld a sigh as the guy across the room caught my attention again. He’d twisted to call a waitress. I saw his cut and read ‘Levi’.

Levi held my eyes as the bottle blonde he was with plumped up her breasts—they had to be implants—and flipped her hair.

A snicker left my lips before I could help it, and I instantly turned my attention back to Brooker. Oh God, how much longer would I have to sit there listening? His eyes caught mine, and I saw his arrogance clearly shining through. Brooker obviously thought I was impressed by what he had to say.

“Are you going to ask anything about me?” I inquired, my temper finally kicking in a little.

Brooker wore a self-satisfied smirk as if he had me spellbound. Honest puzzlement crossed his face when my words eventually cut through the peacocking.

“Um... sure. Where do you work?”

“I don’t at the moment,” I began and saw interest flee from his gaze. I nearly laughed as his thoughts shone clearly. He thought I was looking for a man to take care of me. Time to prove him wrong. “I just bought a building a few doors along from this. I plan to turn the basement into a speakeasy based on the 1920s. It will be a members-only area and the first floor a club based on the same year. That’ll be open to the public. The first floor we’re turning into a ladies’ club and separate men’s club, which, again, will be only open to members.”

“Interesting,” Brooker murmured, but I couldn’t tell if he meant it.

“The second floor is going to be a shop selling clothing from the 1920s and 30s. While the third will be turned into a dance studio, and the fourth will hold the offices for the charity I own and run,” I added. I smiled sweetly as his gaze dimmed a little before sharp interest shone again.

“And you own these businesses?” Brooker asked.

“Yeah. Alongside my cousins,” I elaborated.

“Ah yes, how pleasant. I imagine having them to lean on is helpful,” Brooker said indulgently.

What did he mean?

“Yeah, well, Brandy wants to control the offices as she heads the charity and is the public face of it. Tami is searching for stock and looking for quality items. No cheap knockoffs will make it through her doors. Her sister Cami has designed the dance studio and has our information leaflets; she is already signing people. I plan to run the speakeasy and club,” I replied.

“Your cousins are all women?” Brooker asked, sounding aghast.

“Yes, is that a problem?”

“No, of course not. I suppose you have wonderful male managers,” he answered condescendingly.

“I beg your pardon? Are you suggesting women can’t run businesses on their own without male input?” I snapped as the waitress cleared away our plates. Her head shot up, and she glanced between me and Brooker before offering a wink to me.

“Not at all. A pretty face at the front of a successful business looks wonderful. But come on, you honestly wouldn’t want to be running two clubs. They are such a niche area, it might be better to drop the theme and go with something more modern,” Brooker suggested as if his opinion mattered.

“We’ve performed the market research, taken online polls, and done door-to-door polling. A good eighty per cent of the potential customers asked were interested, and sixty per cent said they would enjoy a niche market like we are offering. Cami’s already halfway through filling her allocated slots for lessons. Tami has not only reached out to suppliers that sell what we’re looking for but also has contacted several seamstresses about making her own designs.

“Brandy has established local projects where my money can help and is searching abroad for more. She only has a small group, so the large, airy offices will be perfect for her team. I’m not some empty-headed bimbo who suddenly got an urge to open a club. I and my cousins have all done our research,” I said. My tone remained even.

Brooker didn’t acknowledge my comments. Instead, he proceeded to lecture me like I was a fool running around with money. I honestly don’t think he realised how insulting he was being, but my temper began to boil as he dictated to me how to run a successful business. By the time we finished dessert, I was ready to stab him with my fork.

Every so often, I caught Levi’s eyes and saw the laughter in them as he clearly recognised the emotion on my face while Brooker didn’t. Levi seemed more amused and interested in my table than his own date, whose mouth was

still running a mile a minute.

“Shall we order coffee or just go back to my place?” Brooker’s question stunned me as I gazed at him in surprise.

“Sorry?” I asked.

“I know you’re a little overwhelmed, I’m sure, but I like you and see good things for us. So, I don’t mind if you want to speed it up. You have obviously been impressed by everything I can offer you,” Brooker said, puffing his chest out.

My disbelieving eyes caught Levi’s as he began laughing, puzzling his date.

“You’ve hardly let me speak all night,” I stated, stunned at the audacity of Brooker.

“What can I say? I’ve never had a more attentive date before!” Brooker crowed as I gazed aghast at him.

Is that what he thought?

“More like bored stupid. You’ve hardly let me speak a word, and then when I did, you ridiculed my business—and my intelligence. However much you’re worth, I can assure you, I’m worth a hundred times more.” Brooker snorted, and my ire rose. “I am Madisen Roderick, heir to Oscar Roderick, and I inherited my father’s fortune. Billions, Brooker. So no, I think you have been rude, ignorant, and just plain boastful, and I’ve no intention of going to your place!” I whispered—clear and firm.

Brooker’s mouth worked, and nothing came out. Then, suddenly, he shoved the chair back and stood.

“If you are that rich, you can get the bill,” he snarled and stormed out, leaving me sitting there shocked at his damn rudeness.

“You’re shot of him,” the waitress said, approaching.

“Yes, I certainly seem to be!” I replied and then laughed as I asked for the bill.

## Chapter Two.

Levi

He couldn't help but be amused as the woman at the table opposite looked bored as fuck with her date. He'd yet to see her say more than yes or no in the half hour he'd been watching. Mind you, he was the same. The lady showed the same level of disinterest as him. He'd seen her around lately and assumed she was called Maddy.

Maddy's date rattled on much like Bambi, or whatever her name was.

Levi wondered how the hell he'd ended up on a date with the bimbo. It certainly hadn't been planned. He'd been in the gallery, dropping off a couple of paintings to Branson, the new manager. Brandi, Bambi, Sandi, whatever her damn name was, had been there and raved over his paintings. Levi stood silently as the woman chatted a mile a minute, and then next thing, he realised somehow he'd agreed to dinner with her.

Levi hadn't even been aware of saying anything, but she agreed to meet at Clio's café, as they did such, quote, 'quaint meals', unquote. He just about hid a scowl as she flicked her hair for the one-hundredth time and sighed instead. He'd give anything to escape. Bambi, he was sticking with that for now, hadn't shut up, nor had her flirting stopped. Nor her endless seeking of compliments. In fact, the airhead in front of him clearly thought the world revolved around her and expected Levi to fall into bed with her.

This girl stunk of a wannabe biker bitch, and he had no intention of falling into whatever trap she planned. She wanted some fun with a biker, to even catch one by the tail, and Levi had an honest desire to avoid that.

"I just adore a man who gives me his full attention," Bambi purred.

Levi barely refrained from rolling his eyes and took a bite of his steak and ale pie.

Bambi smiled, and Levi shuddered. She looked like a shark. It was seriously off-putting.

“Really? Seems to me all you do is talk about yourself,” Levi said bluntly. Bambi didn’t even look ashamed. She smirked.

“Well, my favourite topic is myself; after all, I am such a catch!” she twittered, and Levi gazed at her in disbelief.

“Are you for real?” Levi demanded.

“Of course. I’m popular; you don’t know how lucky you are I deigned to accept your offer,” Bimbo declared. Yup, Bimbo was now her official name.

“Lady, I didn’t ask you on a fuckin’ date. I got no damn idea how the hell I ended up here with you tonight. If you ain’t noticed, I have been wondering that all night while you blew your own trumpet. Jesus, I’ve not paid you the slightest bit of attention, but you’re so far up your own ass you’ve not even realised. How thick-skinned are you?” Levi demanded.

Bimbo puffed up, and Levi relaxed back. Two more minutes, and he reckoned he’d be free of her. His eyes watched as Maddy’s date stormed past him, and Levi assumed Bimbo wouldn’t be far behind.

“How dare you speak to me like that!?” Bimbo exclaimed.

“You’re nothing but fake. Fake hair, fake tan, and fake tits. Give me a real woman any day,” Levi retorted, and Bimbo stood up.

She grabbed her glass of water and slung it over him as Levi laughed.

“Bitch, you are banned from here. The owner is my prez’s old lady. Get your shit and leave. I’ll pick up the bill for your rabbit food!” Levi jeered, and Bimbo stormed out. “Thank God!” Levi sighed in relief.

A waitress came over and gave Levi the bill as he spotted Maddy sitting alone. He grabbed his bill and wiped his face as he saw her, sending him glances from under her eyelashes. Maddy couldn’t have missed the scene that’d happened.

“Hey, I’m Levi. How about we share a coffee, as our dates clearly did not wanna stick around,” Levi asked, stopping by her table.

“Hi. I am Madisen, um, I was about to go home and call it a night, but sure, I wouldn’t mind a coffee,” she said sweetly.

Levi made a note of her name. Maddy had been close enough. It was one woman’s name, Levi realised, he didn’t want to forget.

“Can I join you?” Levi asked, and Madisen nodded. “So we ended up with a pair of blowhards, didn’t we?”

“Oh, don’t get me started! He’s some idiot in banking and business and thought he could lecture me! Brooker was so insulting, and yet he did not even seem to realise it,” Madisen exclaimed, looking really put out. It was a

cute look on her.

“Nothing worse than disrespecting an intelligent woman. What business are you opening?” Levi asked, captivated by how expressive her face was.

“Oh, a speakeasy...” Madisen began, and Levi found himself listening to every word she uttered. He loved how her expressions matched the emotions in her voice and how her hands also talked for her. Madisen was cute and not the usual woman that would have interested him.

“So what do you do?” Madisen asked, winding down.

Levi shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

Madisen raised an eyebrow.

“At the moment, I’m an artist. I have a studio in the Hellfire building at the top. I also take two days off a week to do tattoos,” Levi admitted.

“The Hellfire building? Next to me?” Madisen questioned innocently.

“Yeah, you pissed Prez off with buying that,” Levi said, noting how Madisen paled a little.

“Hellfire is a motorcycle club?” Madisen asked as if she’d just seen his cut.

“Yes. We’re the only one in Spearfish. So, if you see a group of bikers, it’s likely to be us. Although we have a brother club in Rapid City, they go by Rage MC. And we have a lot of allies, so it could also be one of them.”

“I didn’t realise,” Madisen said in thought, and Levi wondered what was going through that mind of hers. Madisen hadn’t closed down, but there was a wariness in her eyes now.

“Hellfire is pretty easygoing. Don’t go out of our way to cause trouble, but we defend our property,” Levi stated, watching for her reaction.

“And I purchased your property?” Madisen asked, looking concerned.

“No. We wanted it for a bar, but the asshole wouldn’t sell to an MC. Fucker thought Hellfire was trying to take over Spearfish, so he refused. Next thing we heard was you had bought the building. Kinda pissed us off, as it would have been great to have a bar there. We’d have had most of our businesses in one place. Hellfire also owns the car park and garage across the road,” Levi said as he felt his expression change.

A year ago, a whacked-out cult blew the Hellfire clubhouse sky high. Rooster lost half a leg in the explosion, and Phoe and Drake’s son nearly died from a damaged liver. The kid was one hundred per cent now, but everybody remembered the close call they’d had. Celt had badly broken his arm; Klutz donated part of his liver; Clio had gone into labour early and lost her womb

as she'd begun to bleed out. Wraith and Slaughter had much lighter injuries. Pyro suffered a severe shoulder wound due to a pole stabbing through it.

They'd barely recovered when Fury surfaced. So far, most of Fury's attention had been on Rage, but Hellfire had encountered a few of the Venomous Fangs, and there'd been scuffles. Hellfire and Spearfish PD were on alert. Lone riders or pairs had been spotted in the previous week, and Hellfire had been checking and re-checking their security. Shit, at church last night, Chance discussed bringing Slaughter, Wraith, Bone, and Smokey on early as full brothers. Fanatic was a year behind them and would wait.

The vote went in the prospect's favour, and Chance and Bear were now going through applications to Hellfire. They wanted at least six more solid prospects. Levi hoped they found someone. Hellfire would only grow if they recruited decent people. Chance was looking for a guy with hacking skills.

"Did I say something wrong?" Madisen's soft voice interrupted his thoughts, and Levi shook himself.

"No. Our clubhouse used to be where the car park was. A cult blew the fuck out of it last year," Levi said as Madisen's eyes went wide.

"What?" Madisen gasped.

"Yeah. Alice, Diesel's woman, escaped them as a teen. But her family was rich, and they wanted her for the money. In trying to get Alice, they attacked us. Motherfuckers thought we'd hand her over. They were wrong. Hellfire and the feds brought the cult down, and we rebuilt. Just every so often, memories kick in; we'd some badly injured," Levi explained.

Madisen's mouth dropped open in horror.

"Does that stuff happen a lot?" she asked, concern clear in her voice.

"Yeah, you try to keep your area crime-free, and criminals do not like it. We don't get much crime here, but even so, assholes always wanna sneak in," Levi said.

"I didn't realise moving here would have so much drama," Madisen muttered, her tone sounding worried.

"Spearfish is a good place to live for most people. Hellfire just sticks its neck out to keep everything free and clear. We work with the cops and have a solid relationship with them," he replied.

"That's great to know. So you never said, is your... Pres... you called him? Is he mad at me?" Madisen asked.

"No! Pissed at the seller, not at you. We'll open a bar elsewhere. What brought you to Spearfish, anyway?" Levi pried.

“A new start for me and my cousins. We did not like where we came from, and no one will look for us here,” Madisen answered and then looked sick.

Levi chose to ignore that slip even though he wanted to pry deeper. He knew about her. Chance had updated them at church, and they all planned to keep an eye on the cousins. They didn’t want an organised crime family moving into Spearfish. He knew who her father was, the family name, and they’d been organised crime, but that was the bare basics, Levi didn’t know everything and wanted to. So far, the girls seemed on the up and up.

“So why a speakeasy?” Levi asked.

Madisen looked relieved.

“My cousins and I love the twenties and thirties. We dress from that era and style our hair and makeup the same. There’s something magical about it. So we decided to go with the flow,” Madisen said with a shrug.

“Gonna have a dress code?”

“Yes, no jeans, tees, and skimpy dresses in our club. It is going to be about classy attire and dignity, even self-respect,” Madisen replied.

“That means a lot to you,” Levi asked, and she nodded.

Before he could say anything else, her eyes caught the clock on the wall.

“Sorry, it’s nearly eleven. I have to get home. I’ve an early meeting in the morning.” Madisen lifted to her feet and smiled. Levi rose with her.

“Thanks for this evening. It made that ruined date a lot more enjoyable! At least it wasn’t a total waste of my time,” Madisen said with another shy smile.

“I’d like to do this again,” Levi replied and saw the hesitation on Madisen’s face. “Is it because I’m a biker?”

“No!” Madisen exclaimed.

“Then what’s stopping us?”

Just then, her phone rang, and she looked at it, puzzled. As she lifted it, her frown deepened.

“Excuse me,” Madisen said and answered the phone.

Levi listened as she asked hello and then identified Cami at the end of the call. Madisen didn’t repeat what was wrong but stated she was on her way home.

“Everything okay?” Levi questioned as Madisen ended the phone with a sigh.

“Yes, worried cousin. Sorry, I need to get back,” Madisen hedged with a look towards the door.

“I enjoyed tonight,” Levi murmured. Before he could ask for her phone number, Madisen smiled.

“Thank you for not making my night a bust, but I really must go. Thanks, Levi,” she said and then, to his amazement, scurried away.

Madisen

The panic in Cami’s voice had been plain to hear. I also knew that my cousins would be arming themselves to the hilt now. The bunch of blue roses that’d been delivered to our house meant only one thing: Millar Levitt was sending a message. It was one I would be only too happy to reply to.

Before Oscar died, he’d been planning to marry all four of us off. Despite the fact he knew Cami and Brandy were together, that hadn’t mattered to him. Happiness didn’t come into play. No, Oscar had been about selling his female folk to make liaisons in the crime world. Millar Levitt, a vile brute of a guy who had no problem raping a woman, had been picked for Cami. He’d discovered Cami’s favourite colour was blue and often sent blue roses.

Despite Cami telling him to his face she was a lesbian and never going to willingly sleep with a man, Millar hadn’t stopped. As far as he’d been concerned, Cami was his property as soon as Oscar had offered her. My dismantling of father’s world, and leaving it, clearly didn’t mean anything to Millar. He thought Oscar’s blood meant something—blood and title Cami offered him—and planned to proceed with Oscar’s plan.

I’d no intention of allowing that to happen.

I parked in my space, leapt out of the car, and nearly stormed up the drive. Tami met me at the door, and in a quick glimpse, I spotted a gun in her waistband, a shoulder holster hidden by her cardigan, and one strapped to her ankle. No doubt Tami also had knives on her body.

“He’s not having my sister,” Tami growled.

“Indeed not. There is nothing remaining of the Roderick crime syndicate, so I don’t know why any of us hold any more value. But Millar will be reminded of my previous warning,” I said firmly as I hurried to my study.

Once inside, I locked the doors and windows and lowered the shutters. Opening the top drawer in my desk, I pulled out one of my father’s favourite toys. A high-powered jammer. Turning that on, I walked to the safe and opened it. I grabbed one of the thick files and flicked through it before extracting a page. This would be enough of a threat for Millar to heed. I

turned the jammer off and loaded up my laptop before sending some information from a secure email. Once I knew it'd been read, which only took ten minutes, I picked up the mobile in the top drawer.

I waited another twenty minutes to ensure there was movement on my information and gazed at the phone.

It was my old one, the number that everyone from those days had. Hardly anyone had my new one. Flicking through, I hit Millar's number and waited as it dialled, my nails tapping on my desk.

Millar answered after the fifth ring, just as I knew he would. It was Millar's power play.

"Madisen Roderick, what a surprise," he drawled, and I heard the smug tone in his voice.

"Millar, I wish I could say what a pleasure this was. However, the truth is far from that," I stated with a clear chill.

"Your cousin was promised to me by Oscar," Millar said, dropping all pretence.

"As I explained to you before. None of us have anything to do with your world anymore. Cami's value to you is nothing. Forcing Cami to be your wife would be a sign of weakness on your part. That you married a lesbian and have to rape her every night. That would not be seen as strength, Millar, but a weakness. Marrying a woman you have to rape to sleep with you, your enemies would have a field day," I said, the chill still in my voice.

"Then we differ in opinion, Madisen. Most would see me as claiming my right and breaking the bitch," Millar growled.

"As of thirty minutes ago, information found its way to the McKenzies concerning your fifth warehouse. I picked a lesser target because I don't want a war, Millar. This is a warning. One that this time you should take seriously. I have no doubt the McKenzies are already on the move and raiding happily after you took that gun deal from them."

"You fucking bitch, Madisen!" Millar yelled.

"I warned all of you, leave us alone. We want nothing to do with any of you. We want to live our lives in peace. But should that peace be threatened, then we shall react in self-defence? You shot at us today; I retaliated. Please don't make threats. My father may be dead, but I have every single piece of information he had. And like him, I am not afraid to use it. My advice, Millar, is to forget Cami ever existed and find a nice little wife for yourself. Should you cross my path, upset Cami, or any of my cousins, you'll find the

McKenzies will receive a lot more information than I just sent them,” I replied.

“You know, Madisen, you would make a brilliant wife,” Millar said with slight admiration in his voice.

I shuddered.

“Any man who takes me by force will certainly never sleep under the same roof as me.”

“You’d slit his throat.” Millar chuckled. The chuckle made my skin crawl because it wasn’t mirth. There was curiosity and intrigue behind it. It was possible that I’d just re-directed Millar’s interest. And he was a man who needed several lessons to learn one thing.

So be it. I could dismantle his empire.

Millar had made the mistake of pissing off the Irish. And the McKenzies were after blood. Millar didn’t have time to move the goods in that warehouse before the McKenzies arrived. Both of us knew Millar had lost the warehouse, the goods, money, and workers there. That bunch of flowers had turned into a costly mistake.

“And something else. I hope we’re clear Cami is off-limits. I’d hate for you to suffer any further business loss,” I stated.

“An eye for an eye, Madisen,” Millar said and disconnected.

I threw the phone in the drawer as I sucked in a breath.

Millar’s taunt had been made to un-nerve me, and it had a little. But in that safe, I held my father’s true treasure. Information on the controlling families that’d been important in his world. As soon as Oscar croaked his last breath, I’d raided his vault and stole everything. Shit, his body had still been warm when I smuggled the papers out of the house and to a different location.

After the funeral, more than one head of opposing houses had contacted me. I quietly confirmed I possessed the information but didn’t plan to use it and then gave the person a part of my father’s estate as a balm. It helped that the McKenzies had quickly filled the vacuum created by Oscar’s death. When they’d phoned me, I offered Oscar’s drug-running shit, and they’d snapped it up.

A simple threat, that should my cousins or I be harmed or killed then the information would be released, immediately stopped any retaliation. Derek McKenzie had laughed and said he admired my balls. Then, to my surprise, he made it known that my cousins and I were off-limit and under McKenzie protection. It was Derek to whom I’d sent the information on Millar. And

Derek would know it was me.

Nobody else would dare contact the head of the Irish family with such intel. Derek's face flashed into my mind. He was the eldest of six brothers, no older than thirty-five. His reputation was ruthless and made the devil cringe in fear.

I'd once asked him if there was truth to the rumours he'd killed his brute of a father at eighteen. Oscar had been horrified and raised a hand. Derek had caught it and sent Oscar a warning glare. Then Derek had turned to me and smiled.

Calmly, he'd informed me no, he hadn't been eighteen. He'd been fifteen when he'd taken over the Irish. I knew Derek had spoken the truth. There'd been something in his eyes when he told me. He had held my gaze as Oscar spluttered apologies.

Finally, Derek had turned to him and demanded to know why Oscar was apologising for having such a diamond of a daughter. Then, in front of my father, Derek had promised me his protection should I ever call upon it.

The warning had been clear. Should Oscar retaliate against me for whatever reason, Derek would act. Oscar was one of the most powerful men in our state, but he was no match for a McKenzie brother. Especially the head.

Sadly, Jere hadn't heeded Derek and had beaten the shit out of me a day after. As I lay recovering in hospital, I was informed by Cami that Jere had disappeared. Forty-eight hours later, he reappeared—barely breathing.

Jere had never breathed a word of who'd taken and beaten him, but Derek, arriving to bring me a bunch of flowers, made the point. As did Derek's cut and bruised knuckles. Jere and my father had been very careful after that.

Honestly, I was surprised Oscar hadn't tried to sell me to Derek. Instead, I'd been slated for Riccardo Conti, who really wasn't interested in me. In fact, I thought he'd breathed a sigh of relief when Oscar died. This was because I knew Riccardo was in love with his sister's best friend, although he had done nothing about it.

A knock sounded, and I called out for whoever it was to enter. Cami poked her head around the door with Brandy's head above hers and Tami's under it. I rolled my eyes and laughed as they stumbled in.

"Did you speak to him?" Brandy demanded, her arm snagging Cami as she took a chair and pulled Cami onto her lap.

"The message was sent," I replied.

“Will Millar heed it?” Cami pressed.

I tapped my fingers as I thought about what Millar had said.

“Around you, yes. It just cost him his fifth lucrative warehouse. However, I think his interest was diverted towards me.”

“Shit!” Tami exclaimed.

“It’s not a problem. I can destroy him, and I have Derek, should I need him,” I added soothingly.

“Call Derek now,” Tami demanded.

“I’d rather not owe Derek a favour,” I replied.

“Do you think he would look for one? I always thought he had a soft spot for you,” Brandy asked.

“Maybe he does or doesn’t. The problem is, I don’t want to risk it. I can handle Millar, but should he become too much of a threat, then I shall exchange something valuable of Millar’s for a favour from Derek,” I said. That was a plan I could work with. I had a horrible feeling around Millar. Honestly, I believed Cami was safe from him, but Millar hated defiance and especially loathed it coming from a weak woman. Tonight, I’d caught his attention. That was a bad thing.

“Are you worried?” Cami asked quietly.

“No, but being on guard wouldn’t hurt any of us. Should Millar prove himself difficult and attempt to come after us, it would be stupid. But Millar, as we know, is that idiotic. So be on guard and be weaponed up at all times,” I stated.

“Not so difficult. We’ve all got our concealed licence,” Brandy agreed.

“So, how did the date go?” Tami demanded, changing the subject.

“A total disaster. A pompous, egotistical asshole,” I answered with a sigh.

“Then why were you out so late?” Cami asked.

“There might have been dessert,” I said and laughed. I’d never got Levi’s number, but no doubt we would meet again. We lived in the same town, and I owned a business opposite his. I was pretty certain we’d meet again one day soon!

Cami and Tamim both gave me a side eye while Brandy looked amused.

“Don’t tell me, you kicked asshole to the curb and then pulled another guy?” she teased.

“Maybe!” I chuckled.

Cami and Tami’s mouths fell open as their eyes widened. Brandy hooted and slapped her leg as I grinned secretly at them. Before I

trusted anyone from this Hellfire MC or even allowed them into my life, I wanted some background on them. Luckily, I had just the man to do it!

## Chapter Three.

Madisen

It was two weeks until opening day, and I was signing everything off in the club. Apache and BlackRock Construction had done a marvellous job. The entire building was 1920 authentic, and I was so happy. It had been a few weeks since my impromptu date with Levi, and we'd not crossed paths again. And to be honest, I'd been so busy I'd not had time. Cami, Tami, and Brandy had signed off on their floors a few days ago and had their furniture, etc., already being delivered.

The club was slightly behind because the lights I'd ordered had been delayed, and I really wanted them. They'd come from a genuine speakeasy, so there was no hesitation in buying them. Now Apache and I were on our final snagging list. I also liked the fact he guaranteed the work for three years and had an emergency contractor on call if we needed one.

We were checking out the main club when Apache looked up with a flicker of concern. I wondered what was wrong when suddenly his head twisted towards the entrance.

"Stay here," he said and disappeared through it. His partner, Rock, followed straight on his heels.

I blinked at the suddenness of their leaving and then bristled. Apache had given me an order and expected me to obey. Screw that! Nobody commanded me. As I strode towards the front, I heard what Apache had: loud bike pipes and hollering and screaming. Far more cautiously, I opened one door and peered through. In the middle of the street rode a gang of bikers, about twenty in all. They were spinning in circles and revving the bikes and shouting. To my horror, they fired guns in the air.

I saw people hiding behind cars and in shops as suddenly, guys from Hellfire appeared. They carried their own weapons and looked ready to rumble. I caught sight of Levi and held my breath, wondering if I was about

to watch a showdown.

The men from Hellfire took cover, and then someone shot at the bikers terrorising everyone. A man on a bike skidded, and immediately, bullets were being fired at Hellfire.

I couldn't believe my eyes. I was literally watching a shootout on the streets of the town I'd moved to. This entire scene shouldn't be happening.

Before I could react, I heard a shot from above me.

A biker's tyres exploded, and he crashed. His friends looked for where the bullet had come from, and I cursed as one spotted me. He pointed at me, yelled something, and one of them rode closer, parking up.

There was no doubt his intention was to grab me, but a bullet hit the pavement before his feet, and his surprised eyes searched.

I noticed one of the girls was shooting but couldn't see who. A sneer crossed his face, and he licked his lips, his sexual thoughts showing in his eyes.

"Get back inside!" Levi roared from behind a car.

I hesitated and then did as I was told, locking the doors as I sprinted for the stairs.

"Up here!" Brandy called, and I raced to her floor.

Cami was standing behind her, handing her a clip as Brandy dropped her empty one.

"Tami?" I demanded.

"She's above us. Go help her," Brandy ordered.

I didn't hesitate as I ran up the steps. I had no idea what the hell was going on, but out on the streets was a 21<sup>st</sup>-century recreation of the fight at the OK Corral. Sirens screamed in the distance as I reached Tami's side. She was hidden behind a screen, much like Brandy was and covering a family ducked behind a car. Their two children cried as worried parents covered them. The attackers were firing indiscriminately at anyone while Hellfire took time and aimed at them alone.

Police cars screeched to a halt, but the gang simply roared and fired at them. Cops dived for protection as Hellfire laid down cover.

Suddenly, a whistle blasted through the streets, and the men on bikes fell into a formation and, still blasting, sped off. I was shaking as the last one disappeared. It was the guy who'd seen me and tried to move towards me. He sent a look at my building before he lost sight of it.

"Is there anyone injured?" a police officer yelled, rising from behind his

car.

“Hellfire, check in!” someone else bellowed.

“Apache, call out!” Rock shouted.

From where I stood, I saw Levi stand up and shout his name and then begin to jog towards us. I raced down the stairs and flung open the door as he pounded on it.

Without a word, Levi reached out and hauled me into him for a hug.

“Fuck, see you standing there and thought you might get hit,” he mumbled.

“What the hell was that? What type of place have we moved to?” I shrieked, although it was muffled against his chest.

“This wasn’t Hellfire. That was a rogue club. Venomous Fangs. They’ve been trying to take over this part of South Dakota,” Levi announced, a big hand rubbing my back. It felt kind of nice, to be honest.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here?” Tami cooed from behind.

I realised I was still clinging to Levi and stepped away, straightening my dress. Tami’s wide-eyed gaze took Levi in, and then she winked at me.

“This is Levi,” I said lamely.

“Oh, the hero from the douchebag the other night?” Tami simpered, and I felt like slapping her. The only time she acted like this was when she was testing someone.

“Hero?” Levi demanded, cocking an eyebrow.

“From the douche canoe,” Tami elaborated.

“Ah yes, our disastrous dates.” Levi chuckled.

“Anybody hurt here?” a voice asked, and a tall Hispanic man stepped out from behind Levi.

“We’re all good, Lio. Anyone injured from the road?” Levi questioned, turning to the guy.

“No, it was fuckin’ lucky. Do you think the target was Hellfire or just to cause madness?” Lio sought.

“Chaos,” Brandy answered as she walked down the stairs. I noticed Lio give her an appreciative once-over. “I saw them arrive. They were aiming at people and the shops, and when that gang came out opposite, they began to concentrate on them.”

“We are a club,” Levi corrected Brandy.

“Whatever,” Brandy dismissed.

“No, lady. A gang is what those fuckers were. We’re a club governed by rules and regulations, and we work with the police, not against them,” Levi

said firmly.

“And speaking of cops, I’m Detective Emilio Hawthorne. My partner, Detective Justin Gold, is also here. If you witnessed everything, would you be willing to give a statement?” Lio asked.

“Sure. Ain’t got nothing to hide,” Brandy replied, and I winced. Lio’s eyes narrowed in curiosity. Her tone offered up that, usually, she had something to hide.

We were saved by Cami bouncing down and attaching herself to Brandy’s back.

“Does this always happen around here?” Cami demanded.

“No. But unfortunately, the Venomous Fangs are hitting towns and localities randomly,” Lio replied, studying her.

“It worth this shit? Maybe we should sell up and leave?” Tami asked, frowning.

“No!” Levi exclaimed, his gaze on me. A slight flush hit his cheeks as everyone turned inquiring eyes on him. “Spearfish is safe. Let us prove that to you. No need to start again after all your hard work.”

Aw, Levi was cute when he was scrabbling for an answer.

“We’ll see. I’m more worried about the guy who marked me,” I murmured, thinking back to his face.

“Marked you?” Levi demanded.

“Yeah, when he first saw me, something nasty showed in his eyes. When he was leaving, he kept an eye on my building. It was as if he was marking me,” I explained.

“That’s not good,” Lio stated as his brows drew together.

“These people dangerous?” Brandy asked.

“Yes. Very. There have been some skirmishes between them and local clubs, and they are also pushing against the police. There is no doubt the Fangs are ramping up activity. They want power and control of the towns, and we’re not about to roll over and show our bellies,” Lio said.

I exchanged glances with my cousins. The truth was, we could up and leave. The loss wouldn’t even be a drop in the ocean for us. But did we want to? I had begun to fall in love with Spearfish, and I enjoyed being around the locality.

“Could we do something?” Lio asked.

“Not really. Men like him, all they know is how to bully and take. I’ve experienced, hell, we have all got experience with those types of guys. We’ve

shot down more bullies than anyone can imagine,” Brandy replied.

“Well, I will give you mine and Justin’s direct numbers. Call us should you need to. And I’ll have some officers come over. As for security, I can recommend a top-notch firm,” Lio replied, speaking to me.

“No need. We had a guy come from Rapid City who did security here and on our home. Lance, he said he was former armed forces and rides in an MC too,” I replied.

“Fallen Warriors. Yup, one of the best. I think the only better are Hawthorne’s and Juno Group, and there’s not much between the three of them. Sorry, I never got your name?” Lio asked, turning to me.

“Madisen Roderick, this is Tamsin and Camille Roderick, sisters and my cousins. And this is Brandy Carter, my cousin from my mother’s side. Would you like our address?”

“Yes, please, all four of you, if you witnessed anything, would need to give statements,” Lio answered, distracted as someone called him. He bent his head towards us and moved towards the uniform who was rather animated and pointed at us.

A few seconds later, Lio jogged back.

“Sorry, I must ask. Did any of you use a gun during the firefight? Witnesses have mentioned seeing shots come from here?” Lio asked calmly.

“Yes. I did,” Brandy admitted.

“And me. We both have a licence to carry concealed. Neither of us hit anyone, but we were trying to keep those below us safe. There was a family of four, for starters,” Tami said and stared at Lio.

“Our actions were in self-defence. Bullets were aimed at our building, and so we protected our property and ourselves,” Brandy announced, and I saw Lio’s eyes flick towards her.

“Lawyer?” he asked.

Brandy grinned and bared her teeth.

Lio groaned but tilted his head.

“Appears the family were singing your praises for saving them. If everything checks out, you can keep your guns. But for now, I’d need them entering into evidence,” he announced.

“Not a problem. We have others,” Tami said with a grim smile. “And yes, we have a licence, and they’re all registered.”

I watched as Levi and Lio swapped glances, and then Lio left. We were on their radar, and I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing. Levi’s name being

bellowed made him also leave, but the look he gave me warned me it wasn't over.

Levi

"What do we know about the woman across the street?" Levi questioned Chance and Bear as he approached them. Police were rapidly closing off the road, and a crime scene was already established.

"Something shaking?" Bear asked, and Levi nodded.

"Nice lady, but with dark secrets. I can sense them. And the way they handled that just now? Ice cold," Levi replied. His gut was kicking in. Something was off with Madisen and her cousins. He didn't care what anyone said. Nobody was that calm after a firefight. Yeah he knew he had organised crime relations but even so, far too calm. Although, at first, Madisen had appeared shaken. He'd liked the feel of her in his arms, but she recovered too quickly. Almost as if she was playing a part.

"Discuss it inside," Chance murmured, glancing around at the milling cops. The street was swarming with them; even the chief was down, Wilson Holmes, and bellowing orders. Chance saw half his brothers, who'd responded when the first shots had been fired, giving statements.

"Lio! Heading towards the garage office, we'll be in there," Chance called to Lio, who was interviewing a growling Tiny.

"Catch you there," Lio replied and, sighing, turned his attention to Mr Grumpy.

Levi chuckled as Tiny glowered at the cop, and he followed on Chance and Bear's heels as they strode quickly towards the garage office.

"You know something," Levi said the instant he shut the door behind them.

"Yeah. Bear had the woman run when she bought the building. Not that she knew about it, but that fucker wasn't gonna sell to us! Whatever, fuckers probably spent all his money by now and regretting selling cheaper. But at the meeting we just gave you all the bare basics, didn't think we'd need to go into depth," Chance complained.

"Madisen," Levi said firmly.

"Her name is Madisen Roderick; her father was Oscar Roderick, a crime lord in Florida," Bear stated.

Levi blinked. Shit, even he recognised that name. There'd been a big deal in the papers about the asshole's death and his will surprising everyone. There had also been a follow-up story about how the brother had attacked his younger sister at the will reading, was arrested, and then got pinched for drug running.

"She's that Madisen Roderick?" Levi asked, astounded. How he hadn't put it together before, he didn't know and felt rather stupid. Before Chance had said she was Roderick's daughter and it had gone over his head. Nothing dumber than a man thinking with his dick!

"Yeah. Her cousins all check out, too. The four of them were brought up in that household, yet they seemed to keep themselves clean. None of them wanted anything to do with the father's enterprises," Bear confirmed.

"You sure she's good?" Levi questioned.

"As sure as one can be. Bear did a deep dive, and so did Hawthorne. Needed to know if we had the mob moving in opposite, came back negative. Girl dismantled her father's empire within months, sold everything, and moved. It was made very clear by all four girls they wanted nothing to do with it. With the son locked up and not in control of his dad's fortune, their sycophants soon drifted away," Chance confirmed.

"So Madisen is sitting pretty?" Levi inquired.

"Anyone would think so, but no. From what we could tell, they are determined to make their own way in the world. Each of them has their own business. Brandy is in charge of the father's billions and appears to be having a ball, giving his dirty cash away to charities. From what I can see, Madisen must have her father spinning in his coffin, and there's no doubt she's relishing pissing on his grave," Bear added.

"Damn, didn't see any of this coming," Levi muttered, scratching his goatee. He idly noted it needed a trim.

"Interested in her?" Bear asked.

"We met after two shitty dates, and we kind of swapped partners. Had a blast with her and was intending to contact her, but been busy. Seeing her today was a shock. Especially with bullets flying. But wanted to know her history before making a move," Levi admitted. He leaned back against the doorjamb.

"Don't think those girls are hit it and quit it," Bear warned.

"Know for a fact two are fucking each other. Probably a serious relationship by the way they look at each other," Levi replied.

“That reminds me. There were rumours Oscar had sold the four girls into marriages. Two took offence, as they were lesbians and in a committed relationship. The two you mentioned,” Chance said.

Levi narrowed his gaze. His brain worked overtime as he put together what Chance wasn't saying.

“You think the girls whacked Oscar?”

“Yeah. I do. Madisen coming into control of the fortune? Being left everything? And the old man dies before he officially announces the weddings? Too much co-incidence. Same as the brother going down for assault and drug running. I think one or all four of them planned it out and then sat back and watched Oscar topple. Even betting one of them whispered sweet nothings in his ear as he died,” Chance said.

“Shit. So she's a stone-cold killer?”

“Dunno. She looks clean to me, protective of her cousins, but if they are all each other has, that would make sense. Madisen strikes me as a person who'd cross lines to protect her own. And I believe she has. Those girls got nobody to call family but each other. Imagine watching your father forcing two lesbian cousins into a fake marriage where rape and beatings would take place... yeah, that shit didn't go down well. Can easily see Madisen making moves,” Bear agreed.

“But no proof?” Levi pushed.

“None. If Madisen planned it or the cousins, they kept it quiet. There's been no contact with any crime family since they left home. Madisen met four families in public once, and they were the four who were linked to marry the girls. After that, they all went their own way.”

“And no comeback?” Levi exclaimed incredulously.

“None,” Chance confirmed.

Levi ran his hands through his hair.

“Girl growing up in that household, knowing who her father and brother were? No doubt Madisen knows how to handle shit. What's the betting Madisen has something on each of them to make them stand down? Girl's gotta have something, or they'd have been taken as wives, willing or not,” Levi said slowly.

“Agreed. And whatever it is, is fuckin' powerful. Those families treat women as second-class citizens to be bartered and bought. The fact Madisen brought Oscar to his knees and dismantled his empire. Remember, that's something that should have taken years but only took a few months. Yeah,

she's got some serious shit on them. None of them would have backed off for anything less," Bear added.

"You want this woman, Levi?" Chance asked.

Levi pondered the question. He'd enjoyed his time with her the other night. But did Madisen have baggage he did not know about? He remembered her reaction to her cousin's call and how she changed. Levi had his own stuff to deal with; he didn't need someone else's crap. But then again, he had honestly liked the date.

"Dunno," Levi finally said with a shrug.

"If you're gonna get involved with her, and she is a decent person, you need your own shit squared away. Got no doubt there's something in Madisen's past that will trigger you. You need to be certain you can handle your problems when she dumps hers on you. If you can't, brother... let her go and move on. Madisen's a good-looking woman, but there's no doubt she has a suitcase full of skeletons, and the most recent is her father," Chance warned.

"Get that", Levi muttered.

He swallowed bitterly at Chance's soft mention of his own shit. Nobody but Chance knew about it. Well, perhaps Big Al. But his brothers remained in the dark. Everyone linked to Hellfire knew Levi fucked off when things got too bad. None of them pushed for a why, only because Chance was okay with it. Fuck, none of them even knew where he went, and he'd no interest in telling them.

But if he got involved with Madisen, how could he pull those same stunts? Levi's mind felt like it would blow, and he would lose all control. He'd become what he hated the most... a monster. He'd sworn an oath as a teen never to unleash the beast, and his trips were often much needed. But lately, they'd been more frequent. Chance hadn't said anything, but Levi had the urge to escape more.

A little voice piped up. But when he'd been with Madisen, he'd felt nothing but calm. There was no lingering darkness, no spiralling, no urge to kill. Levi knew what Pyro was and who his alternative persona was. He was one of the few who did know and accepted Pyro for what he was. But even so, Justice claimed justice... just not at the rate he had been doing. Janey accepted that. And still was able to love Pyro.

Could Madisen be his Janey? The one to calm the savage beast and keep it at bay? Or would he flip out on her? There were questions Levi couldn't

solve but needed answers to.

“Brother,” Chance prompted.

“My shit gets so dark that it even swallows the night, Chance. If Madisen is as clean as you say, then I’ll contaminate her,” Levi stated.

“Like I did with Clio? Bear with Thalia? Diesel and Alice? Levi, the problem is half of us accept our dark; the rest, like you, run from it. Time will tell if your dark eats you or you beat it. No matter what, you do you, and we’ll support that. But think about your options and what you want. Because sometimes, brother, what we want isn’t actually what we really desire,” Chance said sagely.

Levi snorted. It was rare for Chance to offer words of advice. But when he did, they were worth listening to.

## Chapter Four.

Madisen

I stood at the entrance of the club. The sign above the doors outside blinked the name, The Midnight Hour, which is what we'd decided to call the building. The doors were opening in minutes, and I was as nervous as hell. Despite the fact that Brandy had stuck her head out of the door and assured me there was a long queue, nerves still struck. As we were opening on a Friday night, I'd pulled in every single member of staff we'd hired. They would be needed to fill in application forms for the speakeasy downstairs. I was determined it would be membership only.

Our marketing package had gone out two weeks ago, and we'd drummed up lots of interest. Tami's shop had opened a week earlier and had been a roaring success. The moment it'd opened, she'd not been able to sit down as people came from neighbouring towns, all interested in the club. The online memberships had gone through the roof for the private area, which we'd named The Parlour. We hoped to quickly check the membership cards with their photo ID against those turning up with further ID and then hand them their memberships and let them in. Of course, some would arrive today who hadn't signed up, so the extra staff would be needed for them.

The VIP memberships had nearly sold out, which amused me to no end. Every single person signing up had been informed it was period dress and VIP. Member or not, they would be refused entrance should they not be fashioned correctly.

"You better let them in," Brandy called as she approached. As usual, she wore a suit cut with a woman's flare. On her side, in a gorgeous flapper dress, was Cami.

"What if we flop?" I gasped, suddenly feeling panicked.

"By that queue outside, we're not going to. But we may get a riot, so open the doors!" Brandy snapped.

I shook myself and nodded to the four bouncers.

They opened the double doors and then stood in front of them. There were two sections, one for VIPs and members and the other for the general public wanting to party. They began to slowly let individuals through. The entrance where they bought tickets and left coats was quite large, but this weekend, we were doing something different with it.

We'd set up tables in cubicles for people to sign with memberships or VIP memberships. Those who just wanted the club would be processed by the ticket office on the right-hand side. A girl waited to take coats and shawls and give out tickets for receipts. It was a little cramped, but it would have to do. We did have a private room for people to sign up in, but it wasn't feasible for opening night.

A limo pulled up, and I heard gasps as five ladies climbed out, escorted by gorgeous men. One man had two women on his arms, and Brandy muttered 'lucky guy'. He was older than the women, and his face stern, but he marched them up to the VIP door.

"Washington and party," he announced.

I moved forward instantly.

"Mr Washington, how nice to see you on our opening night. I am Madisen, the owner of The Midnight Hour. Please, come in. Your memberships have been prepared, and we just await comparing them to an identification you were requested to bring. Come this way," I said.

"This looks wonderful!" one of the women gushed, looking so excited. "I'm Kate Washington, James's wife, and this is my sister Tammy. Everything's so authentic, like we went back in time!"

"Thank you. That was our plan!" I responded with a smile.

I stepped behind a desk I was manning and opened a lock box. Inside, I pulled the cards for the Washington party, which consisted of James, Kate, and her sister. There was a large, threatening-looking guy called Adam and his wife Rina. Jaime Bryant and his wife Mandy smiled as they held out their extra identification, and finally, Jaime's sister Francesa and her husband Jason. This was a huge coup for me. James Washington was famous across South Dakota. The crime lord who got clean and became a major power player. I could see flashes of light from the pictures the paparazzi were snapping.

A second limo pulled up, and James cocked his head and then snorted.

"Oh, I can't wait to see this." James laughed as several more arrived

behind it.

Clearly, James knew something I didn't, and I craned my neck as a tall man exited the car. He was yanking on the tie around his neck and glowering as a beautiful woman exited.

"Drake Michaelson in a monkey suit!" Adam chortled and received a scowl.

James chuckled beside him.

"Phoe, you look freaking amazing!" Kate exclaimed as she rushed forward to greet Phoenix Michaelson with a warm hug and kiss. They were joined by the rest of the Washington ladies, who babbled quite happily as more women climbed out of the limo. Men stood around looking damn uncomfortable, and Drake Michaelson scowled at any paparazzi who dared get close.

Finally, James Washington swept his party away and down to The Parlour, and I busied myself finding the VIP memberships for the Rage MC men and women. Several of the Rage brothers preened and looked comfortable, but most stood stiffly and yanked at their suits. I was bemused at the amount of slaps the ladies dished out, stopping the guys from rumpling their attire too much.

As Brandy led them downstairs, more people entered. I was gratified to see the queue for the general club was just as long as it'd been when we opened. But the membership section was filling up. The Hawthorne's, names I knew, arrived as a family, and then Dylan Hawthorne's private investigators followed. Even though they all had memberships, some headed for the main club to check that out while the Hawthorne women, babbling loudly, walked downstairs.

By ten o'clock, I was able to take a break from admitting and confirming members' IDs, and I headed downstairs. Cami had been acting as hostess while I'd been upstairs, and now we could swap over.

Despite the fact the speakeasy could hold over two hundred and fifty people, it still held an aura of cosiness and privacy. On stage stood one of the acts I'd hired to sing, and a fog machine produced the illusion of smoke. Of course, this was a non-smoking building, but there was a set of stairs which led the members to an open space where they could smoke. This was available only to the members.

"This is amazing!" someone exclaimed as they grabbed my arm.

"Thank you," I said, recognising a woman called Marsha from Rage.

"Seriously, it's like we stepped back in time. Every single detail is present,

even the smoke! And those little gift bags we were handed on entering! The guys have already been up to smoke their first cigar!” Phoenix announced, smiling.

“Wonderful! I wasn’t sure about the cigarette holders I put into the women’s bags, but they were a done thing,” I replied.

“None of us smoke, but even so, we’ve put a cigarette in and held it between our teeth.” Phoenix giggled.

“The food is also so authentic!” Marsha enthused.

I’d spent a lot of time with my chef over the menu to ensure it was perfect. The feedback I heard felt wonderful. We served lobster canapes, the best crabmeat cocktails, prawn cocktails, devilled eggs, caviar rolls, oysters alongside calamari, truffles, and chicken wings. The chef had included sliders, dumplings, flatbreads with dips, tiny servings of fish and chips, and finally a chicken/tuna/egg salad. For desserts, we’d gone with simple cocktail cups, crème brulee, melon balls dipped in Sherbert, caramel profiteroles, and an ice cream of the day. There was also a cheese and fruit board.

“I’m so glad. People at speakeasys didn’t often eat full meals; they snack more than anything,” I explained.

“Well, those portion sizes are very generous, so trust me, we’ll be back!” Phoenix stated with a huge smile.

“I shall inform the chef. He’ll be pleased his efforts are appreciated,” I replied.

“James Washington owns several women’s clubs. You’ll have to join us there. We go once a fortnight. They’re like an old-fashioned gentleman’s club but for women. It’s funny because we actually do a lot of wheeling and dealing there!” Phoenix exclaimed, and she looked for someone. “Tammy! Can you give me a card for Madisen to join our club?”

“Of course,” Tammy said and dug into her bag before handing me a card.

“You have to apply, and we currently using a waiting list, but if you know the right person...” Tammy winked, and I laughed.

“It’s not what you know but who you know!” I teased, and the women chortled.

Just then, my earpiece went off, and I listened.

“Madisen, please go to your office. Brandy is on her way down to take over hostess duty,” Tami said with a hint of worry.

Extracting myself from the friendly ladies, I moved slowly but deliberately towards the exit. Brandy appeared and offered a sharp nod. Her face was

tight, and I could only hope I would not find trouble upstairs.

Before I could approach and ask what was wrong, a client stepped to her side and began talking to her. Shit, there went my advance system. Keeping a smile plastered on, I headed towards my office, which was on the club floor with a view overlooking the club. I opened the door and hissed as the tall, well-dressed, good-looking man turned to me.

“Hello, darlin’,” Derek McKenzie announced from where he sat comfortably.

“Derek, what do I owe this pleasure to?” I asked warily as I moved around my desk to sit down.

“Several reasons, Madisen, *a stór*,” Derek said, the Irish in his voice present.

“Would you like a drink, Derek?” I offered, keeping my hands in my lap and trying not to fidget.

“Tami was kind enough to get me one,” Derek replied.

“Derek, it is unusual to see you travel without bodyguards,” I replied.

“A *stór*, stop beating around the bush,” Derek said. His hand ran over his chin.

“Fine. What brings you here?”

Derek laughed, a rich, deep noise that had attracted many a woman. Not this one.

“Millar has stopped commenting and making remarks about marrying Cami.”

“That’s good news!” I exclaimed and then frowned. “But not enough to make you bring me it in person, so what’s the catch?”

“Clever girl. Instead, Millar is boasting he has set his sights on a new wife. One who would bring him power and breeding. Madisen, I think Millar has set his sights on ye. The other families deny making any plays.”

“Any other evidence?” I asked, unable to hide the concern in my voice.

“Unfortunately, yes. He’s sent four of his men to Spearfish. They’re lying low, but ye were the jewel in Oscar’s crown. Millar isn’t interested in your cousins; it’s you. I have sent an old friend to watch over ye,” Derek said, and I sat up.

“Derek, I have no old friends.”

“Just the one. Oh, I knew all along Riley’s role before you gave him to me. He has been incredibly valuable to my family. And his secrets will die with me, Madisen, as will yours,” Derek stated calmly, but I straightened sharply.

Derek's inference was he knew what I did to my dad. And knew my cousins and Riley's role in it as well.

"Derek..." I stopped, lost for words. Derek had over my head a hammer he could swing at any time.

"Let me tell you a story, Madisen. Many years ago, my father wanted a woman who was married to another man. Let's cut a long story short. He took what he wasn't offered one night while her nasty, abusive, piece-of-shit husband was away on *family* business. From that union sprang a daughter, my half-sister. And there is nothing I wouldn't do to protect her. Even cover up for her when she takes down a crime lord," Derek said gently.

A surge of emotion swept through me—disbelief, fear, hope, a maelstrom of emotions I could not pin down.

"We're siblings?" I whispered as shock took over.

"Yes, and I have always watched over ye. I couldn't make a move when Oscar was alive, but I could protect you to the best of my abilities. The reason ye weren't married off at eighteen was because I informed Oscar I wanted ye. I stalled him as long as possible, but in the end, he decided a liaison with the McKenzies wasn't gonna happen," Derek admitted.

"So you're my big brother? And Jere is my half-brother?" I asked as my world tilted on its head.

"That little eejit is going to pay for raising a hand to you. Trust me," Derek promised.

"Are you here to drag me back to that life?" I wouldn't go, never. I'd escaped, and I planned on staying free.

"No. Claiming you as a McKenzie would put a target on you, bigger than being a Roderick."

"Who knows about me?" I asked.

"My brothers and I. We're kinda elated to have a younger sister, even if she needs to remain in hiding, *a stór*. Nobody will ever learn of it unless you tell someone. Ye have McKenzie blood, Madisen, which means we protect our own. So, take the hand of your big brother and let me into your life as much as possible. Let me provide Riley to protect you while the family deals with Millar."

"Your accent comes and goes," I said idly, and Derek snorted.

"That's all you got?"

"What else do I say? I just found out my father wasn't my dad. Did he know?"

“No. Nobody except my father, and he told me on his deathbed.”

“So I’m not a Roderick but a McKenzie. Holy shit. Tami and Cami aren’t my blood cousins!”

“Ye love them like they’re your own?” Derek asked.

“Yes.”

“Then who gives a fuck about blood?”

“True. Blood never did me any good in that household. What do I need to do about Millar?”

“Be alert. If you see anything, call Riley. He’ll drop you his number. You’ll not see much of him; he’s been told to stay in the shadows. Unless you’re in danger, and then he knows to protect you. For now, carry on as if you are oblivious. My men and I will track down Millar’s guys and send a warning. And by the way, thank ye for a sweet deal. We earned some cash from your tip-off,” Derek said with a wink. He stood up and straightened his pants.

It was then I noticed he was in a 1920s suit.

“I intended to join the VIP list unless you have a problem?”

“No issue, but... Derek, I’m going to need some time to get my head around all of this. You dropped a bomb on me that I never imagined being possible,” I whispered.

“Ah, lass, I get it. Take your time, but ye have six brothers who’d dote upon ye if ye let them,” Derek said and walked to the door. “Will ye sign me up, *deirfiúr*?”

Sister in Irish. I liked that. Loved it a whole damn lot.

As we exited my office, two men fell into step behind us. Both of them, I recognised as Derek’s personal bodyguards. They were cousins of his. Kylian and Callahan. Kylian stared at me impassively, but Callahan sent me a wink before resuming his ‘don’t fuck with me’ face. After I signed them up, I left Brandy hosting the Parlour and returned to my office. Below me, people gyrated to the music fitting in with the 20s era, but they were a mere backdrop to my thoughts.

I had another brother, one older than Jere, who proclaimed to care for me. I didn’t know much about Derek and the McKenzies, except they were the apex family. Not even Oscar crossed their lines. Idiots like Millar tested them and got slapped back promptly. The McKenzies had a rumoured kill list to rival even the greatest mob lord. But there was one rule the family enforced above all others. Family, women, and children were off-limits. Only one man

had made that mistake. He had killed the only sister-in-law Derek had.

By the time the McKenzies had finished, not a drop of his blood remained. Nobody mentioned his name again in front of the McKenzies for fear of drawing their attention. Derek and our brothers made a statement that sent the entire underworld rocking. Our brothers, Jesus, I was a McKenzie. The youngest one, too. And worse, I'd sprung from my mother being raped. Not a calming thought, to say the least. No wonder she'd barely had much to do with me. Her focus had been Jere. But my father had most definitely loved her, my father, no, Oscar.

My mind awhirl, I settled in my chair to understand what had just happened.

Levi

"She serious about these monkey suits?" Big Al bellowed at Chance.

Levi hid a smirk as Big Al yanked his tie, and Tati slapped his hand for the fifth time.

"Yeah, Wraith reported several people have been turned away. Even Drake and Rage are wearing them," Rooster replied.

"Fuck me!" Big Al complained.

"I think you all look freaking amazing," Clio stated. Chance glowered, but it faded at the heated stare Clio sent him.

"Honestly?" Pyro asked.

"Baby, if we didn't have to attend, I'd be showing you just how hot you are. Like real-life gangsters," Janey said.

Pyro smiled slightly, and even that was a miracle considering how miserable a fuck he usually was.

"Your auras and those suits. Total badass. All you need are tommy guns," Thalia added, and Levi twisted his head to see her practically drooling over Bear. Chey was eyeing Celt like he was her favourite dish on the menu, and Alice was plastered to Diesel's mouth as her hands roamed freely. Well then, no more to be said on that subject. Levi's gaze caught sight of Sallie-Anne running her fingers down Banshee's butt and squeezing. Damn it, these suits clearly made every single old lady horny.

Levi hoped Madisen would have the same reaction when she saw him. Despite him not knowing if he wanted her or not, he did want a reaction. Levi had come to terms with the fact he was seriously attracted to her and not just

Madisen's curvy body. He liked her humour and straight way of talking.

"Can we go? Phoe has been there for a couple of hours, and she said it is freaking amazing. The food is to die for!" Thalia asked, and all of Levi's brothers perked up.

"They serve food?" Big Al rumbled as he hooked Thalia into his side.

"Yes, Phoe said it's themed food to fit in with the atmosphere. She thinks Rage are trying to empty the kitchen because they keep ordering shit," Clio answered, glancing at her phone. She snuck closer to Chance and glanced at him for reassurance. Chance reached out and hauled her into him.

Levi noticed that Clio seemed to be reverting to her pre-Hellfire state. Ever since Dax had been ripped from her stomach and Clio nearly died, Clio had become uncertain and tentative. That horrific day had scarred all of them; some clearly, like Rooster with his missing leg, but some were internal, like Clios. Levi had disappeared for a month, painting his nightmares before returning clearer-headed. The beast had been tamed.

But that day stayed with them all. Fanatic had changed the most. The funny, smiling guy had gone, and in his place was a grim reaper. Fanatic nearly died twice, once in the bombing and then again in the surgery where he needed a new liver. Luckily, there'd been two matches, almost unheard of, but Klutz and Drake had matched the prospect. Klutz had won the battle to donate, as Drake was needed to run the MCs while Chance recovered from what had happened to Clio and watched over Dax.

A year had nearly passed, but the wounds were still as fresh as yesterday. And now Fury was amping up his shit. Something big was coming, but we didn't know what. These stupid skirmishes were just that, tests to see how we handled them. Fury wanted Rage with a burning desire and for the rest of us to fall at his feet. That wasn't gonna happen, but we were all alert, and the incident the other day had been another asshole test.

Levi knew that Chance was worried about Clio. It had been a year now, but she was weakening instead of getting better. None of Hellfire knew what was going to happen, but they wanted Clio to be strong. Tati was carrying most of Clio's weight, but Clio needed to get her head back in the game. Of course, nobody could tell Chance that. He'd tear them limb from limb if he thought we were denigrating his precious wife.

It was that thought that made Levi pause. Was it right to attempt to bring any woman into this life? There was no guarantee that any of them would make it. Each brother walked around with their eyes constantly roaming and

always alert. The only time they relaxed was in the compound they were building.

Levi caught Rooster's eyes as they began filing out. He saw the same concerns as his, but it didn't make Levi feel any better. Rooster was one who'd lost a lot. The explosion had damaged his left leg, and it had been amputated below the knee. Luckily, Rooster had his three boys, his sole reason for living, or Levi had no doubt he would have eaten a bullet. The guilt consumed Diesel over the decisions he had made that day, as it consumed Chance for disappearing when his club needed him.

But Clio and Dax had needed Chance more, and Hellfire had understood. If Chance were distracted, then Hellfire would be weak and easy to pick off. Drake had covered for his cousin while everyone reeled and then healed. Levi knew Pyro had gone dark for a couple of months before Justice was sated, and Janey yanked him back from the abyss. The old ladies had clung to their men and to the rest of the Hellfire brothers. None had been able to turn around without finding one up their ass. But it had pulled them through the uncertainty.

Even Maylene Dixon, Clio and Thalia's grandmother, Rose, Shotgun's gran, and Willoughby, Alice and Janey's grandfather, had stepped up to offer support. They were all family, despite Diesel and Pyro complaining about Willoughby's plans for them. It amused all of Hellfire that Willoughby had latched onto them to continue his business when he died. In all honesty, it was quite amusing how Pyro and Diesel had taken to learning the business. Nobody would ever have foreseen two bikers becoming corporate sharks, but they were both leaning that way.

Thalia elbowed him in his side in the limo that Phoe had sent for them. There were several considering the numbers of Hellfire, but he was in the first.

"Are you looking forward to seeing her again?" Thalia asked.

"Who?"

Thalia gave him a disgusted stare.

"Madisen. Don't bullshit me, Levi; we all know you're interested in her," Thalia stated as she waved her hand. Her missing finger caught his attention. Not even Thalia had escaped unscathed from her adventures. Damn, most of their women had been involved in drama, and it had left scars on them too.

"Don't push, woman," Levi growled, and Thalia let loose her tinkling laugh. Levi's lips twitched as her laughter was impossible to ignore.

“Dum dum dum, another one bites the dust,” Thalia sang softly, and Levi’s scowl grew.

“Shut up and let things play out. Madisen has her own history. And one that’s not compatible with ours,” Levi replied.

Thalia leaned forward and held his eyes.

“If she’s worth it, then go for it. Just take your time. All of Hellfire got scars,” Thalia whispered, and her eyes dropped to her reconstructed breast.

“And those scars make some of us even more beautiful,” Levi said, kissing the top of her head.

Thalia laughed as Bear snarled and covered up Levi’s peck with his own.

“About time you realised that. Not all scars are ugly. Some are beautiful because we’re still here,” Thalia whispered, and Levi nodded.

He smiled as he thought of the spoiled brat he’d first met when Thalia came seeking Clio. Now, she was a woman who could survive anything and kickass while doing so. Levi felt proud to call her sister.

## Chapter Five.

Levi

The club was heaving when Levi arrived. The queue still wound around the block, and Levi nodded in satisfaction. Happy Madisen was getting a hell of a kickass opening night. Phoe had arranged for them all to have VIP memberships, although he didn't expect his brothers to frequent the speakeasy often. Dressing up was not for them, even though Levi quite liked his suit.

Cami met them at the doors and ran through their memberships pretty quickly. As his brothers filed past, Levi caught hold of her.

"Where is Madisen?"

Cami stared into his eyes and bit her lip before answering. "She's in her office. An unexpected guest turned up earlier, and she has been in there ever since," Cami finally replied.

"Where's her office?" Levi asked with a pang of alarm racing through him.

"I'll take you," Cami said and began walking. Levi dogged her heels until she stopped at a door. "In there." Cami held his eyes for a few moments.

"What?" Levi demanded.

"Are you serious about her? Because if not, please walk away now. Madisen doesn't deserve any badness in her life. She's dealt with enough."

Levi snorted at how blunt Cami was.

"I'm serious about getting to know her. I can't tell the future, but let's say I'd like to see where this goes," Levi replied.

Relief hit Cami's face, and she smiled.

"Go get her tiger," Cami said and disappeared.

Levi knocked once and then pushed open the door.

Madisen was sat in a huge wingback chair and seemed startled to see him. Levi's breath caught in his throat at how gorgeous she looked. Every time he'd seen her, Madisen had been dressed in period clothing, but tonight she'd

gone all out and made him speechless.

“Levi?” Madisen said, her own eyes wide as she took him in.

Levi shook himself and stepped inside.

“You’re beautiful, truly stunning,” the words slipped from Levi’s lips. He couldn’t have stopped them leaving his mouth even if he tried.

“Thank you. You look dapper yourself,” Madisen returned with a shy smile.

Levi stared for a few more moments before walking across and taking the chair opposite her. His gaze fell upon an empty whiskey glass and then Madisen holding her own.

“Is everything okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” Madisen answered too quickly.

“That was a shotgun answer,” Levi teased. He studied her face carefully. Madisen did not seem too upset. More... stunned? “Cami said you had a visitor that upset you?” he pried.

“Not quite, just landed a huge surprise on my lap. Have you seen The Parlour yet?” Madisen rose to her feet.

Levi cocked an eyebrow at her rather obvious change of topic but didn’t say anything. He could see the challenge in her eyes to push her, but she’d shut him down quicker than he could blink.

“Nope, but looking forward to it. I don’t dress in this shit every day,” Levi teased as she rounded the desk. She passed by, and Levi reached out and snagged Madisen’s arm instinctively. “If you need a shoulder, I’m here. But let’s go show you my fancy footwork.”

Madisen threw him a cheeky grin over her shoulder.

“We’ll see about that!”

Levi couldn’t wait to show her how he secretly expressed himself. He practised alone in his cabin in the woods sometimes; it was his go-to escape. Painting and dancing. But he’d never admit that to his brothers. It was bad enough that they were about to watch him let that side of himself out for Madisen; he could only imagine the teasing he’d get tomorrow.

Madisen

I gasped with happiness as Levi twirled me one more time before hauling me against his body in time for a slow song to come on. I seriously needed that. For the last thirty minutes, Levi had spun me around the dance floor. His

skills were beyond belief. Even his club looked on in amazement as he performed the steps to several dances perfectly.

“Where did you learn to dance so well?” I panted and laid my cheek against his chest. Levi’s strong arm clamped around me, pulling me closer.

“As a child. I danced until my late teens. It feels like only yesterday I performed these moves,” Levi admitted.

“I don’t think they knew?” I murmured, nodding towards his club.

“Nope. Not something I discussed with them,” Levi rumbled against my ear. I loved the feel of that.

“Why not?”

“Because how I came to dance so well is my story. And not one I am ready to share,” Levi answered abruptly.

Ouch, I felt the slap in his words. I refrained from commenting as the dance drew to a close, and I stepped away.

“Thank you for giving me a break from hosting. But I have to return to my duties. There are rounds I must make,” I said calmly. Regret shone on Levi’s face; he knew the way he’d spoken to me had caused damage. Nobody spoke to me like that anymore.

“Madisen—” Levi said ruefully.

“No, everything is fine. I enjoyed our dances, but honestly, Levi, I have to check on my customers,” I replied.

With a swift turn, I took my leave of him.

Levi’s eyes burned into my back as I moved towards a table where the Chief of Police sat with his wife. They smiled as I approached, and I plastered a welcoming smile on my face.

It was three a.m. when we arrived home. Tami had someone opening the shop for her in the morning so we could easily sleep in. As we climbed out of Brandy’s car, I saw a shadow on the porch and frowned. It was low to the ground, and I realised it was a package.

“Bit late for a delivery,” Brandy stated, puzzled.

“Yeah, can’t disagree there,” Cami replied tiredly. We stumbled up the steps to our porch, and I picked up the box. A funny smell drifted from it, and I quickly placed it back down.

“Tami, Cami, go inside,” I ordered, eyeing it and suddenly alert. A scent wafted from it that was unpleasant, and I had a horrid feeling I knew what was in the box.

Cami went to argue.

“Inside, now. Madisen runs our family. Do it,” Brandy snapped.

My eyes shot to her in shock. We never organised ourselves like that. We’d bonded out of desperation and a need for love. None of us had ever tried to rule to roost, but Brandy clearly thought I was in charge. I studied the other two as they sent Brandy a shocked glance, and then, to my surprise, they walked into the house.

“What the fuck, Brandy?” I hissed.

“I think we both know there’s something dead and nasty in that. Cami would have nightmares, and Tami would break down. They’re still soft despite the life we lived. I’d rather keep them that way, wouldn’t you?” Brandy replied and pulled a flick knife from her ankle.

I set the box down on a small table we had on the porch as Brandy approached.

“You don’t need to see this shit either,” I reminded her.

Brandy sent me a long look.

“You forget. Oscar was far worse to me than any of the three of you. He broke something inside me, but Cami heals it. I’d rather keep the love of my life the way she is. Yeah, Cami is jaded and experienced, but she’s also naïve and cute. Cami and Tami kept their innocence because you and I protected them, Madisen; let them keep it now. They’re strong, but there’s still that part of them that will get excited at Christmas and birthdays.”

I couldn’t deny Brandy’s words. How Oscar had treated her was awful. He’d made sure Brandy knew she was a burden, and without him, she’d have been in care. Oscar informed her that she wasn’t worthy of his love and attention. He’d rarely allowed Brandy to buy new clothes, and she wore my hand-me-downs, which often didn’t fit her as she was taller. I grew wise and began buying bigger sizes and then claiming to have lost weight, so Brandy got new clothes.

Despite his money, Oscar was a nasty fucker, with no shame in how he treated his nieces. I’d even consider agreeing to the fact that Oscar thought he owed the very air they breathed. Brandy slid the box towards her as I jolted and cut it open. The smell was far worse when she peeled the flaps, and we both stepped back, gagging.

“Is that...?” Brandy asked, horrified.

“A heart? Yes,” I answered grimly, grabbing my phone. I dialled 911 without thinking and reported what was on my porch. The dispatcher said to

get inside the house and wait for the police to arrive.

As we stepped inside, Cami and Tami both pounced.

“What was in it?” Tami demanded.

“A heart,” I replied, still shocked.

“A human one?” Cami asked.

“Cami, I did not study the damn thing! It was a heart!” I snapped, and Cami looked abashed.

“Sorry, didn’t mean it like that. But who the hell would send us that?”

“Not us. Me. The parcel was addressed to me,” I said.

“You think it’s Millar or someone from the past?” Tami demanded, her mind making the same connections as mine was. This was something one of Father’s allies would have done. Shit, it was something Oscar would have easily done.

My hand twitched towards my phone. How convenient was it that Derek was in town and this bloody, decomposing heart had been sent to me? Could this be a warning from Derek? Keep my mouth shut about my parentage, or else? But that didn’t make sense. Derek had seemed to embrace our relationship and had only wanted to protect me.

“I need some privacy,” I whispered as I walked towards my study. “Call me when the police get here.”

I dashed to the desk and pulled out my old phone. Turning it on, I sent Derek a text and waited. Moments later, a reply came, despite the time of morning.

“On my way. Lock all doors and windows and check the cop’s ID should they arrive before me,” I muttered out loud, reading the message. “No, you don’t need to come,” I spoke as I typed. Something I only did when scared.

“Family,” I whispered Derek’s reply. Shit. I better warn the girls. I dashed to the kitchen where they were. All three looked up, concerned.

“Derek McKenzie is coming. I’m his sister,” I blurted, and three sets of raised eyebrows flew into hairlines.

“Say what?” Cami asked.

“His dad raped my mom, which makes us half-siblings. Derek knew because he forced his father to confess a lot of shit on his deathbed, I guess. He only told me tonight,” I babbled.

Tami sat heavily on a chair.

She gasped. “You’re a McKenzie, not a Roderick?”

“According to Derek, yes. I want DNA testing done, obviously, but Derek

is pretty much convinced. And he's in town. And coming here. I texted him," I continued.

"Okay, fall apart later," Brandy ordered. She grabbed a mug and shoved it into my hand. "Coffee."

"That means we're not really cousins," Cami announced slowly as she worked it out.

"We will always be family. Always be cousins; nobody can take that from us," I said fiercely, grabbing her hand and holding it tightly. Cami held my eyes and nodded.

"Family," she murmured.

"We swore an oath to each other. That hasn't changed. We survived and thrived. Got to remember that Cami, Tami, together we came through it. That makes us more family than some random blood cells," I growled out.

"Not just some random blood cells if you're a McKenzie. And Derek is so hot!" Tami grinned, fanning herself.

I rolled my eyes at her.

"No, seriously, tell me a woman who wouldn't bed him? A straight woman, Brandy, before you open your mouth!"

"Hell, I can honestly say if I flipped that way, I'd do Derek in a heartbeat. He's a heck of a good-looking man," Brandy admitted with a shrug.

A slightly hysterical giggle left my lips. This was not happening. My cousins were not discussing if they'd fuck my new half-brother! However, they clearly were. They bickered over my head for a few minutes as my thoughts raced. Was this Millar's reply after I warned him off? It was an old-fashioned method I was very familiar with. Only it usually involved human digits or heads. A heart was accompanied by some form of identification. The girls argued around me as my mind tried making connections and kept failing. I'd only crossed Millar mildly, and surely he wasn't stupid enough to try this?

But I had also upset Hellfire MC. They'd wanted my building for their own bar. Despite Levi seeming decent, was his club behind this? Had they sent Levi in to find a weakness? Fuck, my upbringing had made me more suspicious than a normal person.

A loud, imperative knock caused me to jump. Tami moved to answer, and Brandy waved her back, pulling her gun. Brandy checked the spy hole, and a confused look crossed her face.

"What the fuck?" she muttered and opened the door.

A bulky male stepped inside, moving Brandy aside, and a sharp, keen gaze took the four of us in. His shoulders relaxed as Tami, Cami, and Brandy all stared at him in something akin to disbelief.

“Good, you’re all safe. Now stay in one place while I check the house out,” Riley ordered and disappeared.

“Tell me I’m not hallucinating,” Brandy whispered.

“No, seems Derek put Riley on our protection but didn’t inform us,” I replied.

Three pairs of eyebrows shot into hairlines once again.

“Derek did what?” Cami demanded.

“I only found out tonight,” I snapped. I ran a hand through my hair as I watched Tami carefully. Nobody but me had ever guessed, but Tami had been crazily in love with Riley. Strengthened by the risks he took to help us get free. But Riley had kept Tami at arm’s length. Why, I didn’t know or pry.

As Riley walked out of the kitchen, he stepped past Tami, and I saw the glance he sent her. Fuck, in that instance, I knew Riley wasn’t immune to my cousin.

Minutes later, Riley came downstairs and motioned us into the living room.

“Your security is shit. I checked outside. Found three different areas you’ve been watched from. I’ll be speaking to the boss about upgrading,” Riley announced.

I barely refrained from rolling my eyes. Back five minutes and giving orders! Typical. His phone rang, and he answered it.

“Yeah, boss. I’m here... Confirmed signs of trespassers in three places... Nope, security is crap,” Riley said with a glower at the four of us.

After living in a prison before, we didn’t want to live in another, so maybe we weren’t as tight as we should have been. Guess that will change now with big brother riding to the rescue. And for once, despite my independence, that felt really nice. Someone was looking out for the four of us.

“Derek is on his way, and he is calling a security expert,” Riley said shortly, giving Tami the side eye.

“At this time?” I asked, bemused.

“With the money he’s about to throw down on a security system? Yeah, they’ll come at this time of night,” Riley growled.

A knock interrupted me before I could reply, and Riley barrelled ahead of me before I could reach the door. He checked who was outside and then

relaxed as he opened the door, and I saw Derek standing there.

“Are you ladies okay?” Derek asked as he walked into our home. I was quite surprised at his appearance. He wore old, comfortable jeans and a tan turtleneck jumper. His gold wristwatch that his grandfather had given him gleamed on his wrist as he ran his hands through already dishevelled hair.

“We’re fine,” Brandy replied for all of us.

“Where’s the package?” Derek demanded.

“Outside on the table,” I answered.

Derek nodded at Riley, and they both stepped out. I saw Kylian and Callahan standing, two silent shadows watching the street. The door closed, and we swapped glances with each other.

“Well,” Cami said before we began laughing. It seems the alpha males were here to take care of us.

The door opened again, and Derek walked back in with Riley, a grim expression on his face.

“I’ve phoned Dane and Daithi. They will be here within twenty-four hours. Your cousins know?” Derek asked.

I nodded. Dane and Daithi? They were the youngest two brothers of the McKenzies and both highly dangerous. Daithi, the youngest, was supposedly nuts. If Derek had called in the two psychos’ of his family, that meant shit was serious.

“Good. None of you go anywhere alone. If you’re going out, stay in twos and take one of my men with you,” Derek ordered.

I stepped closer and held Derek’s eyes.

“That was human, wasn’t it?” I whispered.

Derek flinched and nodded.

I felt my face pale, and I went lightheaded. A human heart. Somebody had murdered someone and sent me their heart. Jesus, I left this life. How the hell was I in this situation now?

Another knock made me jump, and Riley once again beat me to the door. This time, it was two uniformed police officers. Tiredly, I rubbed a hand over my face as Riley began explaining what happened and waved towards the box. Brandy hustled Cami and Tami into the kitchen to make drinks while I perched on the edge of the sofa as Derek sat next to me, rubbing my back.

“Who is this?” I whispered.

“Don’t know, Madisen, but I will soon, darlin’. That I can promise,” Derek said, a hint of Irish coming out in his voice.

“A stalker? Or is this Millar making moves?”

“Ye do not wanna be worrying ye head over it. Dane and Daithi will protect you alongside Riley. Davin, Declan, Dai and I’ll work hard on getting answers.”

An idle thought popped into my head.

“Why do your brothers have Irish names, but yours aren’t?”

Derek looked at me like I’d lost my mind before chuckling.

“Got a heart on your porch, and ye wondering why me name ain’t Irish? Madisen, Derek is how everyone knows me. Family knows me as Diarmuid, me real name. But only me brothers and cousins know that,” Derek explained.

“And the Irish is strong now,” I muttered as he laughed again.

We were interrupted by the two officers who walked in, concerned.

“Miss Roderick, I am sorry for what you found tonight. I’m Officer Jagers, and we have had to call a detective in, even though it is early hours of the morning. We’ve got concerns around the...” the officer broke off, looking uncomfortable.

“You think it’s human?” I murmured. Derek had already confirmed that it was, but I didn’t want to land Derek with unwanted attention.

“We’re just making sure, Ma’am. Better safe than sorry. I’m Officer McNamara. Can you tell me if you’ve had any fallings out with anyone recently?” the second officer questioned.

“Not really. I had a bad date the other night. He was rude and opinionated, but he left when I put him in his place. But real arguments or grievances? Only my brother springs to mind,” I answered as Derek stiffened beside me.

“Your brother?” Officer Jagers asked kindly.

“He was cut out of my father’s will and then arrested for drug running. Jere’s in prison as we speak,” I replied.

Jagger’s eyebrows shot up.

“Can we take his name and ensure he is still locked up, Ma’am?” McNamara quizzed.

“Sure. It’s Jeremy Oscar Thomas Roderick.”

“And who are you, sir?” Jagers asked as McNamara made some notes.

“I’m Derek Mackenzie. An old friend of Miss Rodericks. I was in town to celebrate the opening of her new business when I was alerted to this incident,” Derek replied.

Neither guy showed recognition of Derek’s name. Why should they? His

empire was far from Spearfish, and nobody would expect to find the head of the Irish family here. There was another commotion at the door, and a man I recognised walked in. Lio Hawthorne. He looked tired but was dressed sharply.

“Miss Roderick, we meet again,” he announced with a smile.

“Hello, detective,” I replied.

“Please call me Lio. My partner Phil, if you remember Detective Gold, is outside with the item. I am afraid to say we’ve had to call in a crime scene investigation, and your front porch is off-limits. Do you have another entrance you can use?” Lio explained as he sat down. His gaze flicked to Derek and the soothing movements of Derek’s hand.

“Yes, we do,” Brandy answered for me as she swept into the living room carrying a tray. Kylian and Callahan were behind her and took a place on either side of Derek and me. Riley must have remained in the kitchen with Tami and Cami.

“May I take your name, sir?” Lio asked, but I saw his sharp gaze studying Derek. Lio sensed the man in front of him was dangerous. Derek repeated what he’d told Jagers. Recognition flared in Lio’s eyes, and he tilted his head towards Derek.

“And you’re an old friend of Miss Rodericks?” Lio questioned.

“Yes. Since she was a little girl who never knew when to shut her mouth and show respect.” Derek chuckled as I blushed. “Madisen was the bane of her father’s life.” Derek’s tone showed exactly how much enjoyment he took from that fact.

“I wasn’t that bad,” I demurred.

Derek’s richer and louder chuckle made my blush deepen.

Lio coughed and then took the coffee Brandy offered him.

“Sorry, it’s coffee, but at this time of the morning, we should all be asleep. I thought we might need the kick,” Brandy said and motioned towards creamer and sugar on the tray.

“Thanks,” I replied and stifled a yawn.

“Do you need Cami and Tami? They didn’t see anything apart from the parcel on the doorstep, and they are tired,” Brandy asked.

“No, we can interview them tomorrow,” Lio answered as Phil Gold entered the room. He sent Lio a look which the cop seemed to understand. Lio’s shoulders slumped and then straightened.

“I am sorry, Miss Roderick. It’s been confirmed. The heart is human,” Phil

announced softly, and I collapsed against Derek, who wrapped an arm around me.

Brandy let out a horrified gasp and then left. No doubt to send Cami and Tami to bed.

Damn it. I had hoped Derek might be wrong.

“I need to ask some questions,” Lio said and settled in.

With effort, I hid my yawn and prepared not to meet my bed for at least another hour.

## Chapter Six.

Madisen

“How are you feeling?” Derek asked the next afternoon, his voice warm.

“Tired. That was a hell of a night,” I complained.

“Yes, I understand that. Dane and Daithi have landed and are on their way to you. I did notice you had some spare bedrooms, if you can put them up. It would make protecting you easier,” Derek replied. But it was more an order than a suggestion.

“I’m not sure, Derek. It feels like we’re being invaded by McKenzies. And that in itself is a threatening aspect,” I said honestly.

Derek fell quiet.

“It was hard for us to stand on the sidelines all those years watching Oscar and Jeremy abuse you. Oh, we know there was physical as well as mental and emotional. But if we’d made a move back then, you and your cousins’ lives would have been in serious danger. Can you imagine how it felt to all of us that for twenty years we had to sit knowing our sister was in dangerous hands?”

“Madisen, we want to know you better, claim you as ours, but we can’t do that. It would put you and your cousins in too much danger. A female McKenzie would be highly sought after. But we can place you under our protection, and it’s something we’ve done in the past so nobody would raise an eyebrow. As hard as all this is for you, and as new as everything is, please remember that for twenty years we knew we had a sister we could not claim. All we’d like is some quality time with you and your cousins. Because if they’re your family, then that makes them ours, too,” Derek said sincerely.

Shame bit into me. I was considering it all from my side. It must have been horrendous, waiting on the sidelines and having snatched moments with me. I couldn’t imagine losing one of the girls and knowing she was family, but I

couldn't claim them as such.

"Sorry. I made this all about me, and it is not. It's about all of us. Daithi and Dane are welcome to stay here. But they can keep their horny mitts off Tami," I warned, and Derek laughed.

"Yes, our two youngest brothers are man whores," Derek said with a grin. "But a certain bodyguard might have something to say, anyway!"

"Would you be okay with that?" I asked.

"Riley was yours before he was ever mine. I took him on because of how loyal he was to you women. Despite constant prying and threats, that guy never once allowed anything to slip. If he became family, I'd be honoured to call him brother. Riley has always protected you girls, even when working for me," Derek said with approval.

"Good. We like him too. And maybe Tami more than likes him," I mused. A glint lit in my eye. We did have some spare bedrooms, Riley needed to stay with us too.

"Leave me out of your matchmaking!" Derek warned.

I sniggered as Derek tousled my hair and then turned to the window as he heard a car arrive.

Moments later, I was held tightly between Daithi and Dane as they murmured into my ear. It was clear, for both of them, this was an emotional moment. The first chance they had to hold their baby sister. Not saying it wasn't sentimental for me too, it was. The love that poured from the two stunningly handsome youngest McKenzies was beyond belief. I felt it flow over me and settle deep. Finally, I had brothers who gave a shit about me.

Brandy, Cami, and Tami all stood watching. None of them said a word, but I saw the tears in their eyes.

Daithi broke off with a wicked glint in his eye and snatched Brandy up and held her as she grunted threats against his broad chest. Dane laughed when she was let go and grabbed her next.

"If you belong to Madisen, you're ours too," Dane muttered to Tami, who looked overwhelmed as she was next in line for a hug. Cami had tears of happiness in her eyes and held onto Daithi as tightly as he had her. It was a known fact that all the McKenzies were protective of women, and they only had one female cousin in their family. Eimear was spoiled and much loved by her cousins and heavily guarded.

"Have you told Eimear?" I asked with her on my mind.

"Oh yes. We had to stop her flying out. You'll find Eimear's ecstatic at

having a female cousin that we can focus half our attention on. In fact, don't be too surprised to discover Eimear directing us in your direction a lot," Derek said with a snort.

"Yea, she thinks we'll be splitting our attention," Daithi grunted. "Girl's wrong."

Brandy chuckled as Cami twittered.

"How fun to have a male who actually cares," Cami drawled.

"Girl, give it four weeks and you'll rue those words," Derek retorted, and we laughed.



As I approached the speakeasy, I caught a glimpse of a car pulling up alongside. A quick flash was all I got before Dane and Daithi firmly placed themselves between me and it. I lifted an eyebrow as two hulking men swamped me, and I disappeared behind them. Slightly irate but highly amused, I jabbed my brothers in the back and received twin grunts.

"Who the fuck are you?" Daithi demanded in his typical growl.

"Detective Emilio Hawthorne. I'd like to speak to Miss Roderick, please. And at the same time, you can tell me who you are," I heard the guy reply.

"That's the detective," I said, jabbing them both again.

"Inside, not in the streets," Dane ordered.

"Add a please to that. I ain't a minion you can order," Lio replied testily.

Opps, let's not start off on the wrong foot, I silently pleaded. Derek's words from earlier rattled my brain, and I was starting to see what he meant. Yup, my brothers were overly protective.

We walked past the bouncers on the door and headed towards my office. As soon as I entered, I pointed Daithi and Dane to sit on the sofa and invited Lio to take a chair opposite me. Lio sent the two a stern glare but showed his balls as he sat with his back to them. It had to be uncomfortable knowing dangerous men were at your back, but Lio didn't flinch.

"There was a parcel this afternoon. We were called while you were at home," Lio said without any preamble.

"Another one?" I gasped and paled. "A heart?"

"No, this was a teddy bear. It had chocolate hearts with it. Totally at odds with the first."

"Why would the cops be phoned for that?" Dane demanded.

Lio didn't turn around.

"Because the letter that came with it fell out of the box and a member of staff read it and called us. Madisen, is it possible you could have two stalkers? The first box with the heart contained a threat. This second one was complete obsession," Lio questioned.

Two stalkers?

"I'm not sure," I stammered.

"You think that's possible?" Daithi asked, leaning forward in concern.

"We've either got a stalker with duo personalities or two stalkers, in my opinion," Lio replied. "Are you going to tell me who you are?" He finally looked at the men.

"Daithi and Dane McKenzie. Friends of the family," Dane answered, pointing at himself and Daithi.

Lio's eyes widened, and he faced me.

"Are they here with your permission?" he quizzed boldly.

"The alternative being we are forcing ourselves on Madisen?" Dane exclaimed dryly.

"Yup," Lio confirmed and turned his body to hide them from my line of sight. "Truth, Madisen."

"They're here by invitation. We are old friends," I said somewhat honestly.

"Okay. So, back to the problem. Do you think it's possible you have two stalkers?"

"I left my father's life behind. I've no doubt you know who I am if you recognise Dane and Daithi's names. There is nothing tying me to him or Jere now. I was never a part of their world, just a commodity. Same with my cousins. The only thing I can think of is my father's arranged marriages for all four of us. The three Brandy, Tami, and I were scheduled to marry took our breaking it off okay."

Dane snorted, and I shot him a look.

"They didn't take it fine, but they had no choice. It was clear you were leaving the life, and a few words in stubborn ears went a long way," Daithi added innocently.

Well now, I'd tackle him about that statement when Lio wasn't present.

"But there are four of you," Lio stated.

"Cami's supposed fiancé contacted her a few days ago, making threats. I warned him off and mentioned McKenzie protection," I said, again, somewhat honestly.

“Cami’s ex-fiancé is still chasing her?” Lio asked.

“I wouldn’t say he’s her ex. Cami never agreed to the marriage. She’s in a relationship with Brandy. There’s no blood tie between them. Brandy is my cousin on my mother’s side, and Cami and Tami are on Oscar’s. But Oscar was trying to force her to marry a guy called Millar Levitt. After I warned him away, he hinted he’d switched his attention. I got the impression he meant me.”

“And I gather this Millar Levitt is an acquaintance of your father?” Lio asked.

“Yes. An unsavoury one. He did not care Cami was a lesbian. He’s the type of man to think that a woman has no rights except to please him,” I replied.

“So, Levitt is one possibility. Can you think of any others?” Lio inquired.

I thought for a few moments and then shook my head.

“No. I’ve had a few dates that didn’t go anywhere. There was that biker who seemed to give me the eye during the attack, but other than that, nothing,” I answered.

I was stumped. Sure, Millar could be one stalker but a second? That didn’t make sense to me. I’d not really interacted with men since moving there, and there’d certainly not been anyone left behind at home.

“Nobody else?” Lio asked.

“No, sorry, I’m out of ideas.”

“Okay, well, if you think of anything, I hope you’ll bring it to the proper authorities,” Lio said with a sharp glance at Dane and Daithi.

They both sent him an innocent smile, and he rolled his eyes at them. Lio took his leave, and I gazed at my two brothers.

“Do you really think Millar is behind one of these?” I finally asked.

“Possibly. The man doesn’t like hearing no and the way he spoke about Cami... It was like she was his possession. Millar wouldn’t have liked losing her, that’s for sure,” Dane answered.

“No, and it’s highly probable he would switch his attention to you. He’d see his right to fuck his cousins as part of his marriage rights,” Daithi replied, and I wrinkled my nose. Disgusting, man.

“Over my dead body on both counts,” I snarled, and Dane grinned.

“There’s the McKenzie spirit,” he said.

I blew a raspberry at them, and they laughed.

“I’ve got work to do,” I hinted.

“So get on with it. Derek has someone coming to check security here, and they are already at your house. Riley and Brandy are dealing with them. Derek is escorting Cami and Tami here, so they are safe. I’ll wait here while Dane takes a walk around your building,” Daithi said.

“What, you’re going to sit there while I work?” I asked, surprised.

“Fuck yes. From now on in, you are not alone until we catch this threat,” Dane retorted so firmly there was no arguing with him.

“Fine, don’t blame me if you’re bored,” I exclaimed and opened my laptop.

Half an hour later, Cami and Tami popped in before heading to their respective areas. Each had an office on their own floor. Around midday, I was startled when the receptionist at the front of the building appeared carrying a big bouquet.

“These just arrived,” she announced with a sly grin and handed them to me.

I frowned at them and opened the card.

“Looked forward to dancing with you, next time, my love,” I read out loud and dropped the card.

“That’s not Millar,” Daithi said firmly. He turned to Claire. “Who delivered these?”

“A delivery man. They’re not from a florist in town. They’ve been ordered online,” Claire replied, worried.

“Shit,” Daithi swore.

“Is something wrong?” Claire asked.

I was going to reassure her, but Daithi spoke first.

“Seems someone is stalking Madisen. Can you keep an eye out for anyone lurking or looking suspicious and please alert security at once should more gifts arrive? A rather nasty one was left at Madisen’s home last night,” Daithi explained. He withdrew his phone and tapped on it.

Claire nodded and exited quickly. Poor girl, not quite what she signed up for.

“Dane needs to gather your security and get them on board,” Daithi suggested as he typed a reply.

“We’ll have to tell Detective Lio,” I replied, and Daithi shook his head. “We have to. Not sure who sent these, although I’d say the guy who sent the teddy.”

“Wait a moment. Claire said these are from an online company, but the

note is handwritten,” Daithi ordered, studying it but not touching it.

“All the more reason to check. Lio has the first note; he can match the handwriting,” I stated.

“Except for a handwritten note to be attached to these, the guy must have been close to pass it to the person delivering. Do you have surveillance outside?”

“Yes. Two cameras, each facing the opposite way down the street,” I answered, rising to my feet.

“I will get Dane to check in the office. We’ll stay here. I’ll also text him to bring food. It’s getting late, and you need some dinner. After the night you pulled this morning, I’d suggest three more hours here and then home,” Daithi said in a ‘don’t mess with me’ tone.

Honestly, I was tired, but I hated the fact I’d lost all morning and some of the afternoon to sleep. Daithi was right nonetheless. I needed to get back into my routine.

By the time Daithi ordered that it was time to go home, I was yawning heavily, and my spreadsheets were a blur. Cami and Tami were waiting as an SUV pulled up, driven by Dane, and we piled in. I saw several new cameras on the front of our house as we pulled into the drive but didn’t comment. An hour later, excusing myself, I hit the sack, shattered.



A commotion made me jump out of bed. I could hear cursing from the front of the house, and a car pulled on the drive. Shrugging on my dressing gown, I hurried downstairs to find lights on and Brandy appearing with a gun. Um, I should have grabbed mine.

As we walked to the front door, it blew open and Daithi entered, looking angry. We both stepped back as Daithi stopped when he saw us and, with a struggle, rearranged his features.

“What happened?” I whispered as Dane appeared behind him on his phone. I saw a third figure outside and guessed it was Riley.

“Asshole A made a drop off again,” Daithi said.

Fear clutched my gut, and I didn’t want to ask, but I had to.

“Another heart?”

“Not quite,” Daithi grunted. I could see he did not want to tell me.

“Daithi!” I snapped.

“Breasts,” he finally replied.

My mind went blank. Did he just say breasts?

“As in, a woman’s?” I asked dumbly.

“Yes. Police are on their way. Madisen, sit down,” Daithi ordered gently.

“Why?” Shock started weaving its way through my system.

“Because I think it is two victims that have fallen to this sick fucker,” Daithi answered.

My legs gave way, and I began crumpling to the floor. Two victims? Was Daithi saying there was someone killing women and sending me their body parts? What weirdo did that?

Daithi leapt forward, caught me, and carried me to the sofa. My mind whirled with the information. Nobody I knew would do this shit.

“Was there a note?” Brandy croaked, looking as pale as I felt.

“Yes. A warning. If Madisen doesn’t submit, this is a mere example of what would happen to her,” Dane said grimly.

“Thought we weren’t going to tell her,” Daithi complained.

“She has to know,” Dane argued.

“Dane’s right,” I added, heading off a fight between them. “Despite how horrific this is, if I don’t know, then my guard is down and I’m an easy target.”

“You have us,” Daithi snapped.

“I also rely on myself. I barely know you, yes we’re related, but how many times before this have we interacted? The only people I know without doubt I can rely on are my cousins and myself. Trust in this relationship needs to be built, but hiding shit from me will damage that.”

Neither Daithi nor Dane liked that, but I saw two emotions flit across their faces. One was resignation and the other was stubbornness. They didn’t want to accept what I’d said, but they recognised it. The McKenzies were stubborn assed alpha males who liked nothing more than to protect their women and throw their weight around. My stance threw them, and they knew they had a line to walk. I wondered how far they’d push my boundaries.

Before anyone could answer, flashing lights bounced off the walls and a black and white pulled up. Two uniforms got out and headed our way. I recognised them from before, and one of them approached with trepidation.

“Dare I ask?” McNamara said, and his tone rankled a little.

“In the box. I think you need to phone your detective. This is escalating at a worrying pace,” Daithi replied.

“How bad?” Jagers asked, eyeing the parcel.  
Dane was short and succinct. “Bad.”  
“Shit. Call Lio and Phil,” Jagers ordered McNamara.  
I sighed. Once again, I was in for a long night.

Levi

“Hear cops are dealing with something dodgy,” Tiny said, sitting at the table in church.

“What you hear?” Chance demanded.

“Those girls across the road. The ones who bought our building. One of them has picked up a stalker. Sent a human heart and now a pair of breasts,” Tiny explained, leaning back in his chair.

Levi sat up. What the fuck?

“Huh?”

“Speaking to Jagers. He was telling us they’d been called out two nights on the trot in the early hours. Seems one has got a nasty stalker who enjoys sending body parts and threatening letters. He asked me to mention it, to keep an eye out over the road. Lio thinks there are two stalkers and different items are being sent there,” Tiny continued.

“You know which one?” Levi demanded, his spine prickling.

“Madisen, I think he said the name was,” Tiny replied.

“Fuck!” Levi exploded.

Chance sat up straight and stared at him.

“Something you wanna tell us, brother?” Chance asked.

“Got an interest,” Levi stated shortly.

Chance’s eyebrows rose.

Levi held his gaze, knowing what was coming.

“How much of one?” Bear demanded.

“Enough. Think I’d take any random woman dancing?” Levi replied.

“Shit, another one bites the dust.” Bear chortled.

“Shut up. Tell me what the hell is going on,” Levi snapped.

He was not one to wear his heart on his sleeve. His emotions were his own to own and none of his brother’s business. All Hellfire needed to know was he had an interest in Madisen. Shit, Levi wasn’t sure how much an interest he even wanted. He hadn’t been looking for a relationship, but it seemed he was heading for one, and he was unsure how he felt. Until he knew for sure, Levi

wanted everything kept to himself.

“That’s all I got. Jagers said that two nights on the trot somebody dropped a parcel off at their home. The first held a human heart, the second had a pair of breasts. But during the day, she also received a teddy bear and chocolates and a bunch of flowers delivered to the club. So Lio thinks there’s two with different ideas about her,” Tiny explained.

“Fuck me,” Levi muttered.

“Nah, not my type,” Diesel chipped in, and Levi sent him a dire look. Ever since he’d claimed his brother, Diesel had been positively jolly. And Levi didn’t like that. It was time his brother returned to his dour self.

“Not the time or place,” Levi growled out.

Diesel smirked.

Levi shook his head in almost despair. Now Diesel appeared to be developing a sense of humour. Shit wasn’t right.

“So we’ve been asked to keep an eye out?” Chatter piped up.

“Yeah. They’re upping security at the home and business. Seems Madisen has some powerful players in her corner. The McKenzies, top crime lords in Florida, have appeared at her house. Three of the brothers, their top bodyguard and two cousins of theirs. The girl has contacts and doesn’t seem to be afraid of using them,” Tiny replied.

“She’s mob?” Pyro exclaimed, shoving his chair back. “We don’t want shit with them when we’ve got the Fangs.”

“She ain’t. She’d be mafia,” Levi muttered.

“Oh, that makes stuff so much better,” Shotgun murmured and avoided Levi’s gaze.

“If I claim her, Madisen would be Hellfire,” Levi said loudly.

“Never put an old lady to a vote. Did away with that, as I believe you can all make your own choices. Right or wrong, we respect them. But mafia, Levi, that shit ain’t gonna wash here,” Chance warned.

“Madisen left the life. You know what you told me, Prez. Now we refuse her? Because she has called for help and protection?” Levi demanded.

“If she’s calling in guys like the McKenzies and they are answering, Madisen hasn’t left the life,” Chance retorted angrily. “We ain’t taking on the mob, mafia, or whatever the fuck the McKenzies wanna call themselves. Venomous Fangs are making moves, and we can’t be fighting on two fronts.”

“Oh, but if it was Clio? Or wait, didn’t Alice get our fuckin’ home blown sky high? That shit’s okay. But as it’s me and I want someone, we get a

different tale,” Levi yelled. Anger hit him hard.

Had they forgotten the cult already? Fuck him and them. If Levi wanted Madisen, he was going to claim her and screw this bullshit about voting on her.

“Watch your mouth,” Chance warned softly.

“Watch your own. Nobody ran from Alice or Sallie-Anne when we discovered their connections. The McKenzies could be valuable allies. But no, I finally step up and say maybe I want something and you all turtle up and hesitate. I never once hesitated with any of your women. Not once. But I see how it is,” Levi exploded.

His head felt like it was turning inside out. The frustration he kept bottled up, the dangerous anger was trying to escape the tight control he had on it. They thought Pyro was bad, Levi held a serial killer deep inside him screaming to be released. He had to get out of there, go to his place before the fucker escaped and bloodshed rained down upon Spearfish.

Without a word, and ignoring his brother’s protests, Levi rose from his chair and fled. He hit his bike with Chance bellowing at his heels and roared out. He couldn’t be around Hellfire right now.

## Chapter Seven.

Chance.

Jesus, was that how his brother was thinking? Chance was more worried about fighting on two fronts. Was Levi really interested in Madisen, or was it lust? Levi was never a guy to discuss feelings; oh, he showed fondness towards the old ladies, but he never discussed emotions. None of them did, but Levi was buttoned up tighter than any of the others. Only Chatter would rival Levi's close-lipped tightness.

Chance returned to church, pissed Levi hadn't stopped and listened to him, and ended the meeting. The old ladies were waiting, and as he walked into the rec room, Clio flew towards him. Her face was pale, and she was shaking slightly as she curled into his chest.

"What happened to Levi? Why did he storm out like that? Why did you chase him?" Clio demanded as she buried her face in his chest.

Chance wrapped his arms around her, a slight frown on his face. Clio seemed overly upset by their disagreement.

"He's got his knickers in a twist over a woman," Chance rumbled.

Clio stiffened.

"Who?" she whispered. "Do we need to reach out to her?"

Chance loved the way Clio's heart would expand to include the new women his brothers were bringing into the club.

"Maybe not yet. We are not sure about her. Madisen has mafia ties, and we're wary," Chance murmured. Clio turned to a statue in his arms.

"Mafia?" she whispered.

"Yeah."

"You can't let her in!" Clio shrieked, pulling away from Chance, so suddenly he jumped.

"Babe," Chance rumbled, reaching for her.

"No!" Clio screamed, and Chance froze at the wild look in her eyes. "No

more threats. A cult blew us up, nearly killed some of us. Fanatic was badly hurt; Rooster lost a leg. No more danger. We have lunatics from the Fangs chasing everyone, wanting what we've got. So much danger and death. Tell Levi he's not to have her; she's not welcome!"

Around them, silence fell as everyone turned to watch. Shocked expressions crossed the old ladies' faces, and on two of them, guilt shone. Alice and Sallie-Anne looked horrified. Sadness and concern showed on his brother's faces too.

"Baby, it's okay. If Levi brings her in, we'll make sure everything is safe beforehand," Chance soothed, reaching for Clio. She wrapped her arms around her tightly as she backed away. A noise like a wounded animal escaped her, and Chance froze on the spot.

"No. She stays away; no more death. Look what happened to me. I'm barren because of them. If any woman brings trouble with her, she's not welcome here. No more danger, no more risk, no more impact in our lives. Tell them they can only date safe women," Clio demanded, waving her arms wildly before re-wrapping them around herself.

"Baby, where is this coming from? I can not dictate who dates who," Chance asked gently. His concern was way past overload, and it was taking all his effort to keep calm. Shouting at Clio certainly wouldn't help her.

"Don't you understand? All girls bring to Hellfire is drama and death. I can't take it anymore. I'm useless, ugly, and barren! Why are you still with me? I can't give you any more kids, and now you want to bring in more women with danger attached to them. No! I won't allow anyone else to destroy our lives. What about the babies? She could be a threat to them."

Chance winced as Clio's voice reached a piercing shriek. He could see her working herself up but couldn't stop her. Chance didn't have the words. Luckily, someone did.

"That's enough!" Phoenix snapped as she marched forward.

"No, it's not. Not everyone can afford security like you. This has nothing to do with you; you are not an old lady; you're a sister, and I gotta protect them. Keep your nosey beak out of my shit!"

Chance hissed as Phoe raised a hand and struck Clio hard. But not hard enough for what happened next. Clio's eyes rolled up, and she sank to the ground.

Phoe leapt forward and caught her before she landed and banged her head.

"What the fuck was that?" Bear demanded into the silence.

“The reaction of a woman who’s bottled everything up to remain strong,” Phoe answered as Chance snatched Clio from Phoe’s arms.

“Shit, Clio’s completely out of it,” Chance murmured as he hefted her up.

“Clio needs help,” Phoe said calmly.

“She’s had it; I’ve been there constantly,” Chance defended himself.

Phoe held a hand up.

“Clio done counselling for three weeks, told you she was fine, and blew it off. Three weeks isn’t enough to scrape the surface. Clio went through hell, and I’m betting she stopped therapy because she thought it showed weakness. Chance, Clio’s still in her twenties and lost her ability to have children. She wanted to give you a whole herd of them. Everything has to be hitting her at once. After the attack by the cult, none of us got a breather before the Fangs began making moves. Clio’s overloaded,” Phoe said.

“What do I do?” Chane whispered, holding her gaze.

“Call a doctor, get her diagnosed. I bet she has PTSD, guilt, and an overwhelming fear. Clio wants to be strong, but she has not healed from the events last year. She’s shoved everything aside to continue being the head old lady instead of licking her wounds and letting them heal,” Phoe answered.

“Chance, take Clio upstairs. She would be mortified that everyone is witnessing this,” Tati ordered.

Phoe and Tati exchanged worried glances, but Chance was already moving. They were right. Clio would die if she realised she’d been surrounded by Hellfire when she broke down.



Chance lay Clio down on their bed. Clio lay as still as the dead, and Chance found himself checking for a pulse. Reassured it was there and steady, Chance brushed the hair away from her face.

Had he been so caught up with rebuilding Hellfire he’d not noticed Clio spiralling?

“No, we all missed this, not just you,” Phoe said from his side.

“You didn’t,” Chance grunted.

“To a degree, I did. I knew she was holding things back, but not to the extent of this. Damn, Chance, I thought Clio was happy with two children. But it sounds like she wanted more. I can only imagine her sense of failure.”

“She did not fail me. I have a daughter and a son. Clio never failed me!” Chance bit out angrily.

“But in her head, she did. Did Clio ever speak about family?” Phoe pried.

Chance’s anger was swelling.

“She once mentioned having a large family, lots of babies, and some dogs,” Chance said slowly.

“And that’s what’s eating her. Chance, I lay you my fortune that Clio wanted to give you a brood of kids. And because of the hysterectomy, she feels a failure. You and Drake grew up with just each other. And now, she wanted a herd of kids to give you more. Bless her heart. She wanted to give you a huge family so you’d never be alone again,” Phoe said and patted him on his shoulder.

Chance felt stunned. Was that the reason behind Clio’s nerves and breakdown? Shit, how had he missed that? Was his woman stressing that she thought because of her operation, she’d failed him? Fuck, Chance didn’t give a fuck how many kids they had, as long as Clio was alright. That’s all that mattered to him. Clio surviving and being happy.

He’d tear the world apart just to make her smile. Maybe it was time he reminded her how important she was to him.

Levi

Levi watched the sunrise, a ball of golden and blush colours. The sky pinked and then began to slowly blue as the sun continued to lift. Laid back on a log bench, he watched, allowing peace to seep into his soul. This was what he needed to contain the monster inside. In light of this beauty, the animal he barely constrained subsided and hid. It only liked ugliness and cruelty, and this tamed it like no other.

It was time to return to Hellfire. He’d painted himself into a fury during the day, while at night, he danced to burn his excess energy. Once more, Levi felt balanced, but who knew how long it would last? The times between sessions seemed to be getting shorter. Levi didn’t want to consider his tight control becoming loose, but it was a possibility. One that made him shudder.

Despite the fact that no one talked about it, Levi was well aware of Pyro’s alter ego, Justice. Pyro controlled Justice with an iron fist, but what Levi controlled was nothing short of a raving lunatic of a serial killer. Levi had

never let it loose, but should he, the world would bleed. It was an aspect of his character nobody had ever seen or knew existed. His time in the mountains held the demon he carried, and that was all that mattered.

The sun touched his skin, warming him, and Levi shut his eyes. This sense of peace couldn't be bought or faked.

Around him, the world lit up in all its beautiful colours; a sight Levi had witnessed time and time again but never failed to admire. He wasn't religious, but when faced with a sunrise like that, God was hard to dismiss. Even with his lids closed, Levi knew the colours around him off by heart.

Checking his breathing, Levi opened his eyes and let the beauty sink into him. Killing the darkness one sunbeam at a time.



“You're back,” Chance grunted as Levi rolled into the compound. Levi offered his own grunt. A little bit of the anger at how his brothers had reacted to Madisen returned. Not enough to rile the beast, but enough for Levi to remember he was pissed at all of them.

“Always come back,” Levi replied as Chance continued to wait. Levi sat on his bike and stared at his president. He was more than ready to ride out again should he need to.

“Staying or going?” Chance demanded.

“Depends on what stupid thing is going to come out of your mouth next,” Levi stated, and, to his surprise, Chance broke into a grin.

“Says the asshole who runs to a cabin in the woods.”

“I'd kill someone if I lost it. Ain't gonna risk that being a brother, old lady, or a kid. I'm rage blind,” Levi retorted and crossed his arms.

“Yeah, you're rage blind. You still shouldn't face shit by yourself, but you do.”

“Because, Pres, if I lose control, how many of you will die before you stop me? Alone, I can work out the anger, beat the beast back into submission, regain normal. Around people he wants to harm. If my control is weakened, it wouldn't take much for him to break through,” Levi said.

Chance nodded as he spoke. Levi knew Chance already knew this; they'd spoken about why he needed to run. Once it became clear how bad Levi's dark was, Chance got used to Levi disappearing. The woods soothed the monster, as did the activities Levi did to regain control. Chance wouldn't

admit it, but Levi also knew he thought he was a far better artist when the beast was in control.

“Shit’s happened. Clio broke,” Chance rumbled.

Levi looked up, startled.

“Say what?” Levi asked.

“Clio had a breakdown. Got her into therapy, but she’s a mess. Clio’s bottled shit up, and when you left, she freaked.”

Levi wondered if Chance was blaming him for Clio’s health. If so, then Chance could fuck the hell off. Levi was not responsible for Chance’s woman as much as he cared for her. He waited for Chance to speak.

“Was wrong about your Madisen, handled that badly. Was thinking of the shit we’re facing and not of a brother’s heart. Put me in a place I didn’t like, brother, and made me realise how grimly we are all holding the fuck on. Decreed Sundays are family days; no fucker works anymore. We got employees; we use them. Sundays are to be around family at the compound. Everybody agreed mornings are for groups: men, women, kids. Afternoons for men to watch over children, and evenings for all of us. No outsiders.”

“That voted on?” Levi asked. As usual, whether he was present or not, shit still continued.

“Diesel proxied your vote,” Chance said, looking uncomfortable.

“Then why so worried?”

“Because you are pulling back, brother. Felt it when we didn’t land the right way to handle Madisen. Feel it now.”

“Chance, you’re being overly sensitive. Drop your balls before Clio divorces you for growing a pussy,” Levi retorted, unwilling to speak to his brother.

“Fuck you, ain’t gonna distract me with that, bro. Talk to me,” Chance demanded.

Levi rocked back on his bike.

“Don’t wanna.”

“Well, you gotta. The therapist says we all need to talk more instead of brushing over shit. I got Big Al sitting down with your brothers and talking stuff through, but a couple, Pyro, you, I am dealing with directly.”

“Because we’re whack jobs,” Levi stated, readying for a fight.

“Because I’m the only twat who knows the ins and outs of your problems. Others might know bits and pieces or guessed, but the full truth? That’s me and me alone. Wanna talk to Big Al? Fine, say so,” Chance challenged.

Fuck. Levi didn't want to talk to anybody. His shit was his, that was that. Levi didn't need to discuss anything with anyone.

"This talking crap is compulsory?" Levi demanded.

Chance let loose a grin, and Levi groaned.

"Fine. But don't expect tears and fuckin' girly bullshit," Levi warned.

"I expect ya to speak and talk your stuff through," Chance grumbled.

"Dunno. My way has always worked until now," Levi complained.

"Brother, I have kept my distance, given you fuckers all the time in the world, to come to terms with some of your dark shit. There's four of you who scare the hell out of me. You got beasts in you. I've kept back and let you sort it your own way. But you're claiming women, and not all of you will be lucky enough to claim somebody like Janey.

"Do you think Madisen could handle your monster inside? He's never been let free, but what if he blows and that girl's caught in the middle? Your control on him is so tight it's rigid. And rigid snaps. Talking about shit can help. Someone will be in your corner. And when you lose it, that person will take you down no matter what it takes, as long as it protects your woman," Chance said softly.

Levi frowned. He didn't like this side of Chance. Oh, he knew it existed, but it was meant to be aimed at the women. Not the brothers. A flash of intuition hit Levi, and he suddenly realised why Chance was being soft. He was scared. Levi searched Chance's eyes and saw it, hidden behind the stubbornness, the flicker of fear. Chance had faced hell last year, and it had come back to haunt him in Clio.

Chance was frightened of this growing war with Fury, and he didn't want to lose anyone. Fanatic and Roo's injuries had driven home Hellfire were human and, more importantly, were touchable. They could be harmed; they could be killed, and that scared the shit out of Chance. Levi suddenly realised just how invested Chance was in all his men. Yeah, it was obvious Chance loved and protected those who made up the club. But now Levi saw the feelings went beyond the MC.

Chance honestly thought of them as blood brothers. There was no deeper tie for Chance than the Hellfire brothers. He loved them as much as he loved Drake, and that was saying something. The fact smacked Levi in the face. The rough and tough President of Hellfire was genuinely frightened of losing someone. Whether to Fury or the beast they carried inside. Chance needed this control, and Levi could give him it.

“Okay. We’ll talk. But don’t expect deep, meaningful stuff, just it wouldn’t hurt to make sure I got the monster under control,” Levi said.

Relief flooded Chance’s eyes, and Levi knew he’d done the right thing. Talking about personal shit with Chance would be just as uncomfortable for Chance as him. But Chance needed this, that deep down, his brothers would make it. Fuck, Levi knew how Pyro handled problems. Was Chance frightened that Levi might go the same way? Chance needed Levi to reassure him by talking, so Levi could give him that.

But for now, he had to check on his girl.

Madisen

I heard the roar of pipes and looked up and noticed a lone rider enter the car park opposite my building. I peered out of the window and saw Levi swinging a long leg over the bike as he parked it. Without speaking to anyone, Levi jogged across the street, aiming directly for my building.

My heart sped up a little, and I fluffed my hair. Quickly, I checked my makeup and removed a smudge just as someone knocked. I called an enter, and Levi strode in with a cheeky grin on his face.

“Hey,” he said.

“Hi,” I responded as he shut the door and took the seat opposite me.

“How’s things going?” he asked, his gaze keen.

“The Midnight Hour is making more money than I expected,” I replied cheerfully.

“Great to hear. And the stalkers?” Levi inquired.

Wow, talk about direct.

“Who told you?”

“Baby, Hellfire gets to hear everything. Four girls having issues with two nut jobs becomes our business. Especially if they’re on our street. Hellfire’s been watching you this last week while I was away,” Levi replied coolly.

My brows snapped together in a frown. Hellfire had been watching us? What on earth for?

“Why?”

“Why what, babe?” Levi drawled, holding my gaze.

“Erm, why have you been watching us? What’s in it for you?”

“Making sure the woman I want to get to know is safe is my reward. There’s been more shit delivered here, hasn’t there?” Levi asked.

I wondered which statement to tackle first. Did I want this rough-and-tumble biker interested in me? It was great watching him from a distance, but Levi frightened me. He had more power than he knew over me. And shit, no lie, I'd missed him this week.

"Where have you been? You say you want to get to know me, but you disappeared on me," I asked calmly.

Levi smiled, and I nearly winced. Fuck, he had dimples. God, that made him even hotter.

"Sometimes I need to get away. When I'm overloaded and about to lose control, I go to a cabin. There I paint and dance until I am back in control. I'm trusting you with the information," Levi said openly.

Crap, that level of honesty hit home. I could only give him the same.

"There were fingers delivered to my house the other night. The police think they're dealing with a serial killer and stalker. But the one delivering shit here is totally different. He's sending flowers, and teddy bears etc. One's trying to scare me to death, and the other is trying to woo me. Detective Hawthorne is convinced I have two stalkers. God knows where from."

"No leads?" Levi asked thoughtfully.

"None. Despite the extra security, they seem to be able to avoid it. We've caught a couple of images of guys wearing hoodies, but they avoid their faces being captured."

"And your friends?"

"Riley, Daithi, and Dane are still here. Derek has returned to Florida, where he was needed. He calls daily," I said honestly. "Why do you feel out of control?"

"It's trauma from my childhood. Instead of being offered help, I was left to suffer, and it created a monster. When I feel my control slipping, I head to the mountains, which have always calmed me. How close are you to the McKenzies?"

I smiled at the question for a question we seemed to be swapping.

"I would have said in the past, not close. But since my father died, we've become better friends. They are looking out for us," I answered.

Levi sent me a long, considering stare.

"Should I be aware of any relationship between you and one of them before I make a move?"

"Oh God, no!" I exclaimed in horror.

Levi chuckled at the look on my face.

“That said rather a lot,” he replied.

“Sorry. But no, there is nothing like that between us. The McKenzies are friends and close... I don’t know a word to describe us. We’re friends,” I exclaimed lamely.

“Then there is no problem if I take you for dinner?” he asked.

“None,” I said with a happy smile.

“No time like the present,” Levi suggested, standing and putting out a hand.

I closed the file in front of me and placed mine in his. He helped me to my feet and grabbed my shawl from the coat stand.

“What do you fancy eating?” Levi questioned as we exited the office. I paused and sent my cousins a message before leading the way to the front doors.

“I’m easy,” I replied and then blushed deeply as Levi chuckled, amused. “Not like that! I meant I eat most things.”

“So do I,” Levi said with a wink.

I reddened even deeper. This guy had game.

“Food, Levi!” I chided as he threw his head back and laughed.

“Come on, let’s feed you,” Levi stated before my blushing got worse.

## Chapter Eight.

Madisen

As Levi and I walked down the street, he kept me amused. We'd had another great meal filled with fun conversation and laughter. I was really attracted to a man who could make me laugh, and Levi certainly could do that.

Levi guided me towards the car park Hellfire owned as I parked my vehicle there when at The Midnight Hour. I was busy laughing at a story he was telling me about one of his brothers called Tiny, who looked like the Hulk, when he stopped.

His hand gripped my arm, drawing me closer.

"This isn't Fangs' territory, so take a walk," Levi groaned as someone walked out of the shadows.

"This ain't got shit to do with Hellfire. Fuck off, bud, before I make it personal," a voice growled back.

Levi angled his body to put himself between the stranger and me.

"This is Hellfire property," Levi retorted.

"Ain't here for you, so back away, asshole. Just want the girl," the shadow mumbled and stepped into the light.

I flinched as I recognised him.

"That's one of the gang who was shooting up the street," I announced, recognising the dirty biker.

"Madisen has nothing to do with you," Levi snapped.

"Don't see no property cut. Means she's free snatch. And I want a taste of that. Clean and classy, she'll love the dirty I got to give her," the biker sneered.

"Told you to walk away. You're not putting your hands on her," Levi said, and I sensed him gearing up.

I clutched at Levi as several more shadows appeared, making a total of seven men in front of me.

“Hellfire pussy. You can’t take us all. Now, let’s not break ya pretty face and just hand her over. Who knows, if there’s anything left of her once I am done, I may send her back your way,” the biker said, smirking.

“You can fuck off. I’m not going with you,” I shouted, and the biker laughed.

“Who’s gonna stop me? Hellfire pussy? You’re outnumbered, seven to two. Now, I don’t wanna mess up that pretty face of yours, but I ain’t bothered with a few bruises. Just step over here, and we’ll let pretty boy walk this time. He ain’t got much longer to enjoy this planet before the Fangs come for him anyway,” the biker said arrogantly. He grinned at me and licked his lips, and I shuddered.

Levi glanced towards the Hellfire car park and then back at the men now surrounding us. One reached out to grab me, and I moved closer to Levi.

“She is a pretty one. Bet that snatch of hers is something sweet. I’ll take a few rounds when you’ve finished, Clamp,” a second biker added.

“Lizard, I bet she’d like a train of our brothers. Looker like that, she’s gonna be easy to fill,” Clamp said with a leer.

In one smooth move, Levi pulled a gun as I reached for my own. Moments later, our two guns were outmatched by seven.

“Now, why make this nasty? We just wanted the snatch. But you gotta try to prove your balls are bigger than mine. That means we’re still taking her, but you’re gonna be in a pool of blood crying like the bitch Hellfire pussy is,” Clamp snarled.

I gaped as, moments later, his shoulder exploded in a red mist, and he collapsed to the ground, yowling like a scalded cat.

“Your mistake was thinking she’s alone,” Riley announced from the darkness as two more men dropped.

“And that Hellfire walks alone,” said someone else, and two more shots were heard. The remaining two began looking for a way out when one fell to the floor, unconscious. The last man stood fired blindly, and Levi took me to the ground, his body covering mine. Two shots rang out, and the guy slowly fell backwards like a felled tree. A bullet had landed straight between his eyes.

“Tiny, help tie these fuckers up. Madisen, call the police; you, whoever the fuck you are, guard Madisen,” Levi ordered as he placed a foot on Clamp’s

wound and ground down.

Clamp yowled again, and I stepped back against Riley, keeping my weapon out. No way was I putting it away with these assholes there. Who knew how many were lurking? I did as I was told and pulled out my phone and dialled the police. Meanwhile, the man called Tiny and Levi were tying up the men on the ground.

“Use these,” Riley said and threw them some zip ties.

Levi offered a nod and proceeded to cuff Clamp with them.

“Who the fuck are you?” Levi demanded as he moved on to the next person.

“Bodyguard. Daithi and Dane are watching the cousins, and I was on Madisen tonight. Name’s Riley.”

“Thanks for your help, Riley. Did you see any others?” Levi asked.

“Nope. Saw those assholes moving into place to ambush you and hung back until it was time to make a move. Think this motherfucker is one of the stalkers?” Riley inquired.

“Hate to say it, but no. This is Fangs’ style, snatching women off the street. They wouldn’t stalk Madisen,” Levi replied.

Tiny offered a grunt in agreement.

“So, still got two out there. Aw fuck,” Riley complained. “Madisen, gonna call in to Daithi. Keep alert.”

I nodded as my eyes scanned the walkway. Where the hell were the police? Minutes were ticking past before we saw flashing lights in the distance. About time. A black and white screeched to a halt, and a uniform jumped out. His quick gaze took in the scene before a smirk crossed his face.

“Looks like you caught some cop killers,” Jepson said, approaching fast.

I relaxed a little at seeing him. Hopefully, he’d take these fuckers away and make sure they never saw the light of day again. The insinuations of Clamp’s words hadn’t been lost on me.

Levi

“They were trying to take Madisen. Threats of rape and torture,” Levi explained shortly, relaxing as he noticed more black and whites coming towards us.

“They’re the first Fangs caught since...” Jepson broke off as his face twisted.

Levi felt his gut twist for the guy. Despite Justin Goldberg being an RC cop, they felt it there in Spearfish too. A brother in blue had been murdered in cold blood, and there in front of Jepson were seven of the gang who took part in that murder.

“Justin Goldberg,” Levi replied softly.

“Yeah, a brother,” Jepson responded as several more officers approached.

“Asshole,” an officer mumbled, kicking one of the downed men who had begun to stir. Nobody said anything.

“Shame so many answered the call,” Jepson muttered within earshot of Levi. He held Levi’s gaze. “Would have made my day to make this scum disappear.”

“Karma will be waiting for her turn,” Levi said shortly, and Jepson nodded.

Levi had just confirmed without words that as soon as these pricks were free, Hellfire would be there.

“Karma wants to be a big fucker who wants to make a supposedly hardcore biker his bitch,” another cop stated.

“A wagon’s on its way and ambos. Was anybody other than these assholes hurt?” Jepson asked. His gaze wandered as a car pulled up, and detectives Lio Hawthorne and Phil Gold climbed out.

“Anyone dead?” Lio questioned, approaching.

“One. Tried to snatch Miss Roderick. Others are all wounded,” Jepson answered.

“Any of ours injured?” Gold asked.

“None,” Levi replied.

Gold offered him a short nod and toed Clamp, who was still screeching.

“Shut the fuck up, asshole. At least you’re breathing. Justin Goldberg isn’t,” Gold spat.

“Police brutality!” Clamp shrieked.

His cry was met with snorts.

“Yeah motherfucker, you ain’t gonna get sympathy here. Your brothers are cop killers. Maybe one of you is who pulled the trigger. Dunno. Don’t care. Just shut the fuck up, or there might be an oops. You resisted arrest—bullet,” Lio warned.

Levi snorted, amused.

“Funny, someone shone a light in my eyes, and I was blinded. What about you, Tiny?” Levi asked.

Lio nodded solemnly.

“Strange how that shit happens. Like a cop’s gun accidentally misfiring,” Lio said.

“Motherfuckin’ assholes!” Clamp yelled.

Jepson stood on the bullet wound again and dug his heel in.

“Sorry, didn’t see you there,” Jepson exclaimed without an ounce of remorse.

“Could we get their statements so we can go home?” Riley demanded.

Lio turned a judicious eye on him before nodding. Moments later, I was with a uniformed officer taking my statement as the wounded were loaded into ambulances, and Lio took over the crime scene.

Brandy

The noise came just outside the kitchen window, and she peered through it, concerned. Brandy squinted her eyes and tried to see into the darkness, but no go. Shivers ran down her spine, and she stepped back and turned the light off. That was better. Without the glare on the window, she could see now.

A sudden movement outside made her jump, and she noticed a white face in the bushes.

Smothering a squeal, Brandy moved swiftly into the living room where Daithi was with Dane, Cami, and Tami. He took one look at her pale face and leapt to his feet.

“What?”

“There’s someone outside the kitchen. I saw them peering through,” Brandy replied.

Dane and Daithi swapped glances.

“The three of you lock yourselves in the bathroom upstairs and don’t open it until you hear our voices,” Dane ordered. He and Daithi slid weapons from their waists and walked out.

“You two, go. I am going to help them,” Brandy stated.

“Like fuck, Brandy. You have to come with us,” Cami said with fear in her eyes.

Brandy cupped her face gently.

“I’m more dangerous than anyone out there, and we both know it. Go with Tami and hole up. Make sure you grab your guns on the way. Go!”

Cami opened her mouth to argue, but a bang against the side of the house

made her hurry away, grabbing Tami as she did. Keeping her weapon at her side, Brandy moved towards the front door, knowing Daithi and Dane were outside. She wasn't worried that Madisen might walk into a situation as she'd received a text from Riley saying Madisen had gone on a date. Riley would let them all know when Madisen was returning.

Slipping out the door quietly, Brandy scanned the drive and surrounding area. Not seeing either of the brothers, she began making her way to the back. A loud grunt made her pause, and then the sound of a body hitting the floor. Brandy lifted her weapon as she heard running footsteps. A tall, dark figure came around the corner and skidded when he noticed her with her gun raised.

Brandy didn't hesitate. As soon as she saw it wasn't Daithi or Dane, she lunged forward and grabbed the stranger's arm, turning her body as she did. He flew over her shoulder as she bent and threw him. The intruder wheezed as he landed but struggled to get to his feet again. Brandy calmly stepped forward and kicked him straight in the nuts.

The wheeze became a strangled scream as he doubled over and clutched his groin. Footsteps echoed behind her, and Daithi skidded to a halt as he came face-to-face with the business end of Brandy's gun.

"He clobbered Dane. Can you check him?" Daithi asked.

Brandy paused and then scurried around to the rear garden.

Dane lay on his back, his arm across his eyes and grumbling.

"Are you okay?" Brandy demanded as she dropped to her knees and removed his arm. She winced at the long cut she saw there. Whipping off her cardigan, she balled it up and held it to Dane's head.

"Fucker got the drop on me," Dane complained. "I'm going to beat his ass."

"Already did that. Dane, can you sit up? How many fingers am I holding?"

"Yes, and three. Now let me up. That prick is strong and fast."

Brandy helped Dane to his feet and watched him weave his way back to his brother. Dane was standing over the guy who was now hogtied, and as Brandy passed, she kicked him in the ribs. He'd stopped wheezing from the kick to the nuts, Brandy noted. Well, she could make him scream like a bitch again should she need to.

"Who is he?" Dane asked as Brandy peered closer.

"No idea. I don't recognise him," Brandy answered, puzzled.

"Look, this is a mistake. Madisen and I are dating," the man on the floor shouted.

“Pretty damn sure you’re not, as Madisen’s out on another date tonight,” Brandy responded cheerfully.

“That’s a lie,” the guy yelled.

“Nope. She is out with a biker,” Brandy said, grinning.

The man thrashed around on the ground as they watched.

“She’s not dating him. They had dinner together once because I upset her. We’re fine now. Madisen’s been receiving my gifts I sent her at the club. I came here to tell her tonight that she’s forgiven, and I’ll take her back,” the guy shouted.

“Who the fuck are you?” Dane growled out finally.

“My name is Brooker. Will you let me sit up?”

“No,” Daithi replied shortly.

“Brooker. Oh, hell no. You’re the idiot who took Madisen out to dinner and then proceeded to lecture her on how to run a business and didn’t listen to a word she said? And then thought with your overblown ego that Madisen was so into you she’d fuck you on the first date?” Brandy’s tone was scolding, and Brooker winced.

“She took my gifts and clearly forgave me. Not my fault she was mesmerised by me,” Brooker yelled.

“This is Madisen’s stalker?” Daithi asked disbelievingly.

“Look, dude. I know you’re fucking one of those girls, that’s fine. But stay out of my and Madisen’s relationship. Like all women, she just wanted a bit of fuss before accepting I’m her man.”

Dane rolled his eyes at Daithi, who didn’t know whether to be insulted or amused, Brandy thought.

“Brooker, Madisen, never accepted your presents. She gave them all away and contacted the police about an unknown stalker.” Brandy sighed.

“Shut your filthy mouth, bitch. Madisen knows who she belongs to, and that’s me. She is playing hard to get, like all bitches. But she accepted the shit I sent her, and now she’s gotta accept she belongs to me,” Brooker growled.

“Delusional,” Dane muttered.

“Fuckin’ crackpot,” Daithi agreed.

“Dimwit,” Brandy threw in.

They were still spewing insults and belittling Brooker when Madisen’s vehicle pulled on the drive, followed by two men on a motorbike and Riley behind them. Brooker immediately began shouting at Madisen, who climbed out of the car, looking puzzled. Levi jogged to her side and wrapped an arm

around her waist, causing Brooker to spew venom.

“Who the hell is that?” Madisen questioned, approaching.

“Don’t you recognise him?” Brandy asked, amused.

Madisen peered closer at him and gasped.

“Oh my God! It’s that twat from the date. The one who kept talking about himself and didn’t ask me anything. He thought he could tell me how to run a business,” Madisen exclaimed.

“Shush, woman. You’ve been forgiven for how you acted. And you accepted my gifts,” Brooker said arrogantly.

Without a word, Daithi leaned forward and punched him, knocking him backwards. Brooker began shouting and screaming as Dane hauled him back upright.

“You decided to be such an asshole that when I challenged you, you stormed out and left me to pay your bill. Yeah, I’ve no interest in seeing you again,” Madisen said with disgust.

“You didn’t tell us that part,” Brandy crowed as Madisen looked disgruntled at the reminder.

Madisen

Damn, what a night. First, those assholes on the bikes and now this blinking idiot. Was I cursed? Tiredly, I ran a hand over my face. I leaned into Levi and let him take my weight. The sight on my front lawn was beyond belief. That loud-mouthed twit who I’d erroneously dated was mouthing off at my brothers and cousin. Brooker was trussed up like a turkey. Dane held what looked like Brandy’s cardigan to his head, and I was appalled to see blood on it.

“You attacked my f—friends?” I gasped as anger flared.

“No. I was looking for you,” Brooker spat. “Fuck knows why.”

“Through the kitchen window,” Brandy challenged.

“So what? What I do with my woman is my business,” Brooker yelled.

“Ain’t your girl!” Levi stated, entering the argument.

“The hell she isn’t. Madisen went on a date with me and then accepted my gifts,” Brooker argued.

“You think buying a woman a gift makes her yours?” Tiny asked, sounding confused.

“Of course it does. Women like that shit. And once they accept, well, dude,

you are in,” Brooker explained.

“In what?” Levi questioned.

“In her life.”

“Let me make this very clear in case I didn’t last time. I’m not interested in you. You’re rude, arrogant, stupid, and an utter asshole. I don’t want to be near you, around you, or receive gifts from you. If you’re the one sending them to the club, then I gave all that tat away. Why on earth do you think I’d wanna be with you after I kicked you to the curb?” I asked, astounded.

“Babe, please, look at me,” Brooker said confidently, despite being tied up.

“I can’t deal with this!” I complained. “Not after what happened with those biker assholes as well.”

“Biker assholes?” Daithi growled out, turning to me. Aw shit! Big brother mode kicked in.

“It’s all handled. One dead and the others wounded or behind bars,” Levi replied.

“And how did our little... friend become the target of an outlaw gang?” Dane demanded.

“Because there was a shootout in the street with them. It happened a few weeks back,” I said, trying to calm all the alpha males down.

Levi was revving up, and Tiny behind him was hulking out, seeing Daithi and Dane as a threat. In response, Dane had dropped Brandy’s cardigan, and I winced at the cut on his head, but he, too, was squaring his shoulders. Meanwhile, Daithi had become all lean and mean.

“Shoot out?” Dane hissed.

“Okay, stop. All of you. You two, back down; remember what we spoke about?” I said, pointing at Dane and Daithi. Brandy stood by them, looking amused by the whole situation. I could have thumped her.

Levi and Tiny clearly had no intention of backing down as they gazed steadily at Dane and Daithi, who threw dangerous looks. I breathed a sigh of relief as flashing lights announced the arrival of the cops. Jepson looked highly perturbed by the scene on my lawn, and then he, too, began to grin.

“Another stalker?”

“Not funny, officer,” I griped.

“So we’ve caught two. Which one is this?” Jepson asked.

“This is the one leaving flowers at The Midnight Hour. I went on one date with him. He proved himself an arrogant asshole, and I kicked him to the curb. However, he seems to think that sending gifts made shit okay, and now

he owns me,” I snapped, annoyed at the men around me.

Jepson couldn't hide his amusement.

“Arrest him and throw the book at him!” I demanded. “Oh, and add assault to Dane. Looks like the big alpha baby took a crack to the head!”

Dane howled his denial while Daithi grinned.

Dane smacked Daithi on the back of his head before I glared at Tiny and Levi.

“You can put your teeny weenies in your pants. Dane and Daithi are family to me, and nobody's having a pissing contest over me. You said you want to date me, Levi. Welcome to the shitshow of my life. You wanna be a part of it, then get used to the McKenzies being around! And you two! Our connection doesn't mean you throw your dicks and dictate what I do and who I go out with. The four of you get over yourselves!” I yelled.

My temper was rising because of the suddenly amused smirks the four were sharing. God! Men!

Riley stepped forward, and I pointed at him.

“Don't you mess with me, Riley! You know what I am capable of! Now, Officer Jepson, please arrest, charge, and lock up that sad piece of shit. I'm going to get a drink! And keep them busy by taking their statements, or I might bash one of their brains in!”

“Yes, ma'am,” Jepson said. As I walked away, I heard him whisper to Levi, “Damn, dude, you got a spitfire on your hands.”

Levi snorted. “Yeah, she is a wildcat, and she's all mine,” Levi replied. I didn't have to turn around to know that he was staring straight at Dane and Daithi as he made that statement. Their snorts of disgust said it all!

## Chapter Nine.

Madisen

I took a big swallow of my wine as Tami made eyes at me.

“That bad?” she asked.

In return, I took another huge mouthful and rolled my eyes.

Cami snorted beside her.

“Can’t you feel the alpha vibes rolling off of those outside? By the way, the twat is ranting about you belonging to him,” Cami said.

“Gah,” I muttered, wondering whether to storm out and kick him in the nuts. Brandy may have already done so, but I’d still get the pleasure of watching him squirm.

“Are you okay?” Cami asked, peering at me.

“It’s been a long night. You remember those bikers who were shooting up the street and that ugly-looking brute who winked at me? Yes, well, they came back tonight to claim me. Like fuck. That ended up with one dead and the rest injured, and then I returned to this shit,” I whined.

My cousin’s eyes widened, and I laughed without amusement. Yeah, it wasn’t funny anymore. Tonight had opened my eyes to how serious this was. I’d been kinda ignoring the whole situation. The parcels delivered to my home had been traumatic and horrific. Nobody wanted body parts sent to their safe place.

I wanted to believe the biker was behind them, but deep down, he wasn’t. Clamp wouldn’t have approached me at The Midnight Hour if he knew my address. Logically, that ruled him out as much as I hated that fact. This meant, after Brooker, who was responsible for the gifts at the club, and a seriously overblown ego, I still had a dangerous stalker out there.

The men walked in, followed by Detective Lio. All of them looked serious.

“Well, this is a cluster fuck, isn’t it?” I said, swallowing another huge gulp of wine. “Brooker’s the harmless stalker, but the main one is out there.”

“I wouldn’t call Brooker harmless if you heard his plans for you,” Lio stated.

“I’d have broken his balls within a week. Brooker is no threat to me, but that Clamp and this unknown are,” I replied.

“No doubt Madisen would have crushed that idiot within a day, but it does not answer the main threat to her,” Dane said.

“No, it doesn’t, and we’re not finding DNA on anything that’s been left so far,” Lio admitted.

“So you have nothing?” Daithi demanded.

“We’ve got the gifts he left for Madisen, which tells us a lot. But DNA, no, we don’t have anything to tell us who this is. It’s a sick fuck, for sure. These women were alive when mutilated,” Lio said softly, watching my face.

The blood drained, and I blanched. As did my three cousins.

“Alive?” I whispered.

“Yes.”

“Shit!” I exclaimed and dashed for the toilet. My dinner came back up in a spectacularly nasty way as I vomited. Whoever was doing this was cutting body parts off of women while they were alive. Who the fuck did that? I had no idea who this stalker was or what I’d done to attract him. Was he a stranger? I’d love to think so, but my gut was telling me he was someone I knew. Cutting off body parts was something my father would have done. This was too close to his methods to be random.

“Babe, are you okay?” Levi shouted through the door.

Wonderful, we’d had a nice evening, and now I was in here puking my guts up. What must he think?

“Give me a few minutes,” I called back as I tried to control my breathing. I hated that wrenching feeling that left you breathless when being sick. After a few more moments, I stood up and grabbed some mouthwash from the cupboard and rinsed the nasty taste from my mouth. Spraying some air freshener, I opened the door and was hauled into a strong pair of arms. Levi held me tightly; I clung to his cut.

“Whatever this fuck is doing, we’ll stop him,” Levi promised, one hand rubbing my back. I curled into him, seeking his heat and comfort. Everything was finally sinking in, and I didn’t like what I now faced. Somehow, I’d managed to keep a distance from what was being delivered to my house. But Brooker had managed to do what nobody else had. By invading my safe space and peering through my windows, he’d driven home how dangerous

my situation was.

What if it hadn't been Brooker? What if it had been this maniac? My cousins and I weren't safe, not even with Dane, Daithi, and Riley there. Brooker had still approached the house, knowing the guys were there. Sure, he was more about ego than insanity, but this other guy was insane.

Levi carefully steered me towards the living room, where everyone waited.

"We are not safe here," I murmured.

"I'll make your world safe, baby," Levi promised as he rested his chin on my head. "I swear to God, nothing will harm a hair on you."

"We'll rain Hellfire upon them," Tiny agreed from behind.

"And we're here," Daithi added, not to be left out.

Levi shot him a stare over my head.

"My question is, is the house safe for the girls?" Tiny rumbled.

"Nobody's going to get past us," Riley answered.

Levi and Tiny both sent a pointed look at Dane, who growled.

"Don't start pissing the both of you," Lio warned with a glare. "The main thing is the women are okay. Now let's not swing our dicks to see who has the biggest. It's a valid question. Are the ladies safe here?"

"Yes. We've got cameras and sensors up," Dane replied grumpily.

"Yet Brooker was about to get past them. How?" Lio challenged.

"Good question," Riley responded. He slipped outside with Daithi on his heels.

"What would you like to do?" Lio asked me.

"Finally, somebody with a brain who considers our own thoughts and feelings," Brandy said with a healthy dose of sarcasm.

She received fire looks from all the men in the room, apart from Lio.

"I want to stay at home," I replied as Tami and Cami agreed.

That didn't sit well with Levi. I felt the pissed-off vibes flowing from him. He was gearing up to argue.

"Look, this is our home. We know every nook and cranny and the escape routes better than anyone here. If we get trapped upstairs, there are four routes to flee to. Down here, there are multiple exits. Let's not mess around. Don't underestimate me. I didn't grow up in that shit life without learning to protect myself and my cousins. We grew up in a male-dominated world and were thought nothing of less than chattel who had to obey the big bad alpha in charge.

"We learned to survive before we could walk. This house may be much

smaller than what some of you are used to, but believe me, it's our fortress. So stop the posturing and work with us, or walk out that door and let us protect ourselves. It is entirely your choice!" I said with fire.

Tiny sent me an approving glance while Levi scowled. Lio nodded his head even as Dane frowned.

"For now, I'll agree, but much more, and we won't be able to stop Derek from returning. And my big brother will not allow a threat to come to you girls," Dane warned.

"Any further shit, and they'll be packed to Hellfire," Levi stated and sent Dane a challenging look.

I rolled my eyes at them.

"Enough. Nobody, not even Derek, dictates where I go," I said clearly.

"Not going to listen to your big brother?" Tiny questioned casually.

My cousins and I froze and gaped at the huge man. Even Lio and Levi stared at him, surprised.

"Oh, come on, can't you see it?" Tiny asked. "She has exactly the same colour eyes as Dane and Daithi. Madisen has Daithi's hair colour. Anyone can see they're siblings."

My mouth opened, shut and repeated those two actions. Lio and Levi were staring at me and clearly studying me. Dane was moving to stand in front of me as Daithi and Riley came back in.

"What's happened?" Daithi demanded, standing next to Dane.

"They know who Madisen is," Dane growled out.

"How?" Daithi said, his hand going to his waist.

Daithi was prepared to pull his weapon on the cop and two bikers.

I stilled him.

"Because you look alike, dumbass. Same eyes, all three of you and your hair colour," Tiny explained, totally relaxed.

"Holy fuckin' shit. How long have you known?" Levi exclaimed.

"A few weeks. Derek came to tell me at the club," I finally admitted, holding Levi's gaze. "Think you can handle a twice-over Mafia princess?" I demanded.

"Ain't frightened," Levi shot back.

"Fucking should be. Wait till you see her pissed!" Brandy muttered.

"That's why the McKenzies are here in force?" Lio mused.

"Forget what you heard, cop. That was never mentioned. Should Madisen's true parentage get out, she'd be a huge target. Our enemies would

tear Spearfish apart looking for her,” Daithi warned as Dane tapped on his phone.

“Derek will be flying in in two days. He’s not happy,” Dane announced.

“I imagine not. But it’s better out there so we all know what script we’re reading from,” Tiny said unrepentantly.

“So what’s next? Blackmail?” Brandy demanded, her arms crossed over her chest.

“What the fuck?” Levi exploded.

“The McKenzies have a secret sister. Somebody they’d go to war for, someone very valuable. So you sell Madisen to the highest bidder?” Brandy exclaimed.

“Not likely, lady. You don’t know shit about Hellfire, but we don’t sell innocents, not for nothing. Hellfire stands between innocents and those who want to harm them. We lost our fucking clubhouse a year ago, and several of our brothers were badly injured protecting one woman from a cult. Hellfire would die before we give up an innocent,” Tiny spat.

I gazed at him calmly.

“And who decides if I’m innocent? I lived that life before I could escape,” I replied.

“You escaped. Innocent,” Tiny said as if that explained everything. I glanced at Levi, and he pretty much looked the same as Tiny. Confident in my innocence. What would they say if they learnt I was a murderer? That I’d arranged the demise of the man I once called father.

“So, let’s agree, we’re staying here and upping the security,” Cami said, speaking for the first time.

Daithi nodded.

“Yes, Derek will be bringing extra guards,” he confirmed.

Wonderful, more black-suited alpha males.

“Going to bed. I’ve had about enough,” I said.

“I’m sleeping here. On the couch if you don’t have a bed, but I am not leaving you alone tonight,” Levi stated.

Weariness flooded me.

“Fine, I’m not in the mood to fight. The boys can get you bedding,” I replied and walked away. The night had started off wonderfully and then, like everything else, turned to crap.

Levi

He could not sleep, not knowing Madisen was sleeping somewhere close by. Levi wanted to know if she slept naked or wore silky nighties against her creamy skin. Her skin was soft and lightly scented. The smell alone drove him wild. Grumbling, Levi adjusted his dick. Fuck, he couldn't even go and jerk off to relieve the pressure and the images of Madisen sprawled over her bed. Shit, he moved his cock again. The cotton of his boxers was irritating him.

Levi had been shocked when Tiny had outed Madisen. He'd not seen what his brother had. In fact, Levi was worried there had been a romantic tie between Madisen and the McKenzies. Instead, he was relieved there hadn't been and that she was most definitely single and free to claim.

Around Madisen, his monster subsided, almost turning into a purring kitten. That was something he'd not experienced before, and he loved the way she calmed it. There was no concern that the beast would hurt Madisen. It literally became a baby near her. Levi was relaxing into his feelings for Madisen. He just hoped she was beginning to feel something for him.

Even if his feelings were deeper than hers now, he could be patient. Madisen would need to be courted; shown she was loved. Levi knew following his base feelings would put her back up and make her reticent. Madisen was strong within her own self, and she clearly didn't need anyone to look after her. No, Levi must treat her as an equal. He'd seen the stubbornness in her eyes tonight. She'd been fully prepared to fight him for what she saw as her right to make decisions.

Levi also noticed that the four women were stronger together. There was a bond between them that he recognised as one Hellfire had. It was unbreakable, and, should Levi interfere, he would be the loser. No, he'd have to help Madisen nourish that bond and it would help bring the girls into the Hellfire family. Madisen's links to the McKenzies would need to be confessed too, but he knew his prez would keep those quiet.

His girl was anything but simple.

A smile crossed his lips. Yeah, Madisen was the type of complicated Levi had always tended to avoid, but in Madisen, it was one heck of an attractive package. Madisen was his kryptonite. And he was looking forward to conquering any qualms she had. Because whether she realised it or not, she was his.

Madisen

It was three days after the attack by Clamp and Brooker, and I was going out of my mind. It didn't matter where I was; I had a shadow. If it wasn't Daithi, Dane, and Riley, I had Derek's new guards. And if I escaped them, then bugger me, Hellfire was up my ass. Now, that had been one heck of an interesting meeting. Chance and several of his officers, alongside Levi, had arrived at the club and asked the guard to call my brothers. Of course, Derek and the other two came charging in.

The two sides squared off against each other, all of them waving their dicks around and trying to see whose was biggest. Meanwhile, I, the poor helpless woman, sat surrounded by egos, unable to help herself.

Yeah right.

I blasted all of them and sent them to The Parlour to sort themselves out. When they returned an hour and a half later, it appeared they'd come to an agreement, one which I wasn't happy with. And was fully against my wishes.

But neither Chance, Levi, nor my brothers were going to budge on their overprotective stance. What none of them knew was I had an escape passage in my office. And after locking myself in, I planned to grab a breath of air without being surrounded by thugs. Dane looked bemused as I growled at him and slammed my office door shut. I locked it and then unlocked it several moments later when Dane threatened to break it down.

Angrily sticking my head out of the door, I yelled at him. I had to work and to leave me alone. He and Riley both swapped amused glances and then took their macho stance outside. I completed my usual routine, making a coffee, moving things around so they'd think I was normal, and then headed for my hidden exit.

As soon as I slipped through, I felt the tension escape my shoulders. I was alone at last. From memory, I walked slowly through the dark tunnel using my phone to light the way and finally came out into the hallway where the backdoor was.

There were no windows or offices down there. It was just merely a fire exit. I reached up, turned the alarm off, and opened the door. I kept the key in my hand as the door slid slowly shut, and I leaned back against the wall. Taking several deep breaths, I felt the panic that had been building subside. There were no guards, no overbearing bikers, and no other protective brothers. For a few moments, I was able to relax and take five minutes for

myself.

This had been a whirlwind year, and while I'd thought I was coping, this, on top of everything, was starting to drag me down. I'd never been one to allow emotions to rule me. Especially around my father. He hated any display of emotion, and so my cousins and I learned to hide our feelings. Since our freedom, we'd become more open and freer, but even still, it was deeply ingrained that feelings were weakness.

Oscar Roderick had been an asshole of legendary proportions. I leant my head against the wall and drew in several deep breaths. He was dead and couldn't get to us from the grave. The girls and I had his dirty money and were doing good things with it now. Wiping out his black-hearted deeds. My mind tried to flash back to those nasty, darker memories, and I shoved them away. I would not dwell on him. Oscar was dead to me and needed to stay that way.

Yeah, sometimes I still thought of him as a father. That was something I was trying to train myself to stop. The line often wavered between Dad and calling him Oscar, but I was beginning to refer to him as Oscar more. Although I couldn't say my real father was any better. Derek's statement about my mother being raped was horrific, and my heart bled for her. My poor mom hadn't had a good life, being married to Oscar and fathering an asshole like Jeremy and then being raped. When death came for her, I bet she'd welcomed it.

Long ago, I'd stopped shedding tears for her, but the heartbreak didn't end. I could remember the suffering and the upset, how Oscar spoke to us with clear distaste. Yet miraculously, he'd taken in Brandy, who was no blood tie to him. Of course, now we knew he had planned to use Brandy to shove into an unwelcome marriage so he could tighten control of some of his so-called allies. Those same allies who'd come and gloated over his grave.

The same guys who stood open-mouthed as I carefully and easily dismantled his empire. They'd all thought I'd continue his work. Their surprise when I hadn't done so had sent shockwaves through Oscar's community. Oh, but they'd snatched up the slice I'd offered them quick enough. Men like Millar—greedy, soulless bastards. And even the McKenzies had taken their own part. What they had done with it, I didn't want to know. Especially if it was still illegal.

But out of all the families and criminals Oscar had known, the McKenzies had the most moral code. There were some things they wouldn't touch or

tolerate. So maybe my brothers weren't all bad after all. They seemed worried about me, which, other than my cousins and Riley, nobody had given a shit about me. The care and fondness, even love, my brothers were showing me, was alien. Jere certainly hadn't cared, and now I had Derek, who looked at me like I'd hung the moon. His baby sister. The youngest sister of the McKenzies, to be loved and cherished.

Then there was Levi. On the surface, he was the type of man I'd have dated to piss Oscar off. If I'd had the balls. But underneath was a fascinating guy, kind, caring and considerate. On our dates, he'd treated it like a real date, unlike the dates Oscar had forced me on. Instead of being made to sit there like a pretty doll without an opinion, Levi delved deep into my thoughts and ideas and listened. He made suggestions and did not take offence if I disagreed with them. Men of Oscar's ilk. Well, they would have flipped the fuck out if I'd talked or argued with them like I did with Levi.

It didn't hurt I found Levi drop-dead gorgeous. The man was a hunk. Sex on legs, a real Adonis, pure alpha male, wrapped up in a silky, sexy package. I wanted him, and I could admit that. Sparks flew between us, and although we'd barely even kissed, I knew when he took me to bed, I'd see fireworks and stars. The heated looks Levi would send me over dinner or how he would discreetly adjust himself told me everything I needed. Even now, thinking of those looks made heat pool between my thighs, and I wanted to touch myself to relieve the pressure. But not here, not now when I could be seen.

I jumped as the door opened, and the man who got me into such a state flew outside with Dane on his heels. Their panicked expressions turned to relief and then anger.

"Where the hell have you been?" Dane demanded.

"Out here, getting a breather," I replied.

Levi moved forward and cupped my face. Despite his frustration, there was worry in his eyes.

"For God's sake, what happened now? Won't this constant drama stop?" I demanded.

"Brandy's been shot. We need to get you to the hospital," Levi announced gently.

Ice flowed down my gut. Brandy had been shot.

"Wha..." I stammered.

"Tell you in the car," Dane said and began hurrying me back inside. We tore through the club at a jog, and Daithi was waiting with an SUV outside.

We piled into it, and Levi hit his bike, and we roared off together.

“Tell me,” I demanded through stiff lips.

“Brandy was sleeping when a noise disturbed her. She walked downstairs, and Riley told her to hole up. Instead, Brandy got her own weapon, and while Riley went out the back, she went out the front. There was a dead racoon on the porch; its guts spilt open, and blood smeared everywhere. Part of it had been nailed to the door; the other half was on your porch. There was blood all around the house. More than one animal had been killed.

“Riley took down two guys in the yard. But Brandy found a third. He shot at her before she noticed him and missed, but Brandy fired as he took his second shot. He’s dead, and she’s taken a bullet to the shoulder. They rushed her into surgery. Do you recognise these men?” Dane demanded, shoving me his phone.

“No,” I said after a few moments of studying them. “Do you?”

“No, Derek is having them run, and the police are at the house. They’re holding Riley and taking his statement, although he’s about to rip their heads off if they do not let him leave soon. He wanted to go with Brandy to the hospital, but a couple of uniforms we didn’t recognise held him back,” Daithi said grimly.

“Oh shit,” I muttered, knowing how Riley would take that.

“Yeah, it’s going down a storm. Riley ain’t amused,” Dane replied.

“And then we discovered you were not in your office and thought you’d been snatched,” Daithi snarled with a glower.

“I just needed some air. I couldn’t breathe because you’re smothering me. You mean well, I know that, Daithi, but please, I also need some alone time,” I replied, feeling guilty.

“Ain’t gonna be getting that until the asshole behind this is caught,” Dane muttered.

I pursed my lips, unwilling to argue. As much as they cared, they were forgetting something. Blood or not, I’d been brought up as Oscar Roderick’s daughter. I could handle myself!

## Chapter Ten.

Madisen

Frustrated, I paced back and forth in the small private waiting room we'd been directed to. Brandy was in surgery, having the bullet removed, which had lodged in the bone. An easy enough operation but still worrisome for me. Derek had shown up with Tami, and we were waiting for Cami to appear. I was surprised she'd not arrived before now, but she would come. Because of her love for Brandy, not even the devil would stop her. Riley was collecting her and bringing her there safely.

The doctors had reassured us that Brandy would be fine. Which was a huge relief. I wanted to rant at her, but she had done as she was taught. Protect her family and herself. I'd have done no different in her position.

However, my brothers thought differently. They were going to have to learn that we could defend ourselves and that we were independent women. We'd listen to advice but wouldn't take their crap about not being able to protect ourselves.

An hour ticked past, and a doctor came to inform us that Brandy was in recovery. I gave a sigh of relief, which quickly became worry.

"Where's Cami?" I asked, concerned. "She should have been here ages ago."

"Riley was bringing her," Dane replied.

Derek and I both pulled out our phones and dialled. Cami's rung out, and by the expression on Derek's face, Riley's did the same.

"Where is she?" I demanded of no one.

"I'll call Chance," Levi said.

"What will that do?" I inquired, my agitation rising.

"He'll send my brothers out to search for her and Riley," Levi explained and then held a finger up as he began speaking into his phone. Moments later, Levi turned to us.

“Chance is sending men out. A missing woman is a priority. Keep trying to call them,” he announced. Derek arched an eyebrow and said nothing.

My worry escalated as minutes ticked by, and my concern grew. Cami would never ignore the fact that Brandy was hurt, and I recognised something bad had happened.

“What else?” I muttered, and Levi looked up.

“Babe?” he asked.

“What else, Levi? These last few weeks have been nonstop drama. We escaped that back in Florida. But since that shootout in the street, everything seems to have gone wrong. These stalkers, this cruelty, the women being killed. It’s one thing after another, and I keep asking myself, what’s next?” I complained.

“Let me tell you a story about Phoenix, our sister in Hellfire,” Levi said. For the next twenty minutes, Levi kept my mind occupied with regaling me about Phoenix Michaelson. After hearing about her and then a woman called Artemis, I began to be thankful my problems seemed so small compared to theirs.

Levi’s phone rang, and I leapt to my feet as he snapped an answer into it. He listened, and his shoulders relaxed, and I guessed it was good news. He cut the line and looked at me.

“Chance found them; they’re on their way with an escort,” Levi exclaimed, and a smile broke out across my face.

“Thank God,” I breathed. And then Levi’s words hit me. “An escort?”

“They ran into trouble, but everyone is safe,” Levi said, taking me in his arms and rubbing my back.

“What is going on here?” I erupted, and Levi made soothing noises.

“I intend to find out,” Levi promised.

As I clung to his cut, I nodded.

Ten minutes later, Cami dashed into the room. She had a cut on her head but appeared fine. Riley followed close on her heels; only he looked far worse.

“What happened?” Derek demanded.

“We were carjacked on the way here. A truck forced us off the road, and someone tried to grab Cami. I fought him off, and he jumped in the car and fled. He said something worrying, that if he took Cami, then Madisen would give herself up to save her,” Riley explained, and I clung to Cami.

A gasp left me as Riley’s words sunk in.

“Cami fought like a bitch. If she hadn’t, he’d have got her into the motor,” Riley said with an admiring stare.

“So, Madisen’s cousins are being targeted for Madisen to give herself up?” Derek mused.

“Looks like it, boss. Any news on Brandy?” Riley questioned, sending me a concerned stare.

Levi moved away and was talking quietly into his phone. Two of his brothers had taken up stances by the door. Their looks were threatening, and it was clear they would not take any shit.

“What does all of this mean?” Tami asked.

“It means someone knows you all are Madisen’s weak link,” Derek spoke, and there was anger in his voice.

“How’s Brandy?” Cami demanded.

“She’s in recovery. Come, I’ll take you to her,” Tami said.

The sisters walked away as Levi approached. There was a stern expression on his face, and he looked like he was gearing up for an argument.

“I’ve spoken to Chance. I’m taking Madisen and the girls to the clubhouse,” Levi stated.

“Yeah, we can pick them up in the morning,” Daithi replied.

“No, they’re gonna stay there until this shit is over,” Levi said.

“Not happening,” Dane snapped before anyone else could reply.

“Wanna bet?” Levi shot back.

“Hey, don’t I get a say in this?” I demanded.

“No!” both Levi and Derek answered.

“Oh, you two Neanderthals can stick your attitude right up your ass,” I replied, spoiling for a fight.

“Madisen, this is not the time for an argument. As head of the family—” Derek began.

“Your family, not mine,” I snapped.

Hurt flashed across Derek’s face, and I regretted my words immediately. But I had to make a stand. I was head of my family, meaning the girls. The McKenzies were new to me, and while I welcomed their addition, they had to learn their place in the scheme of things.

“I understand,” Derek replied with dignity. He stepped back as Dane and Daithi stared at me, expressionless.

“I have a say in what happens to my cousins and I. Don’t ignore my opinions because I have boobs and a pussy. Nobody disregards me or my

feelings,” I stated firmly.

Derek bowed his head while Levi’s mouth opened and then shut. Whatever he’d been about to say, he cut off.

Levi

Damnit, Madisen was irresistible. All fired up and ready to blow, she was walking sex. Levi felt himself begin to harden and thought of Tiny naked, and his hard-on wilted instantly. Yeah, that shit worked, Levi thought with an inner smirk.

“What are your thoughts?” Levi asked. He’d been about to demand she come to Hellfire and overrule any objection Madisen might have raised. But he sensed her steel and knew not to push her right now. Madisen was balancing on the edge. And if he forced her hand, she’d either lose her precious control or snap completely.

“We need to up our personal security,” Madisen replied.

Levi nodded. He didn’t disagree there.

“And we’re not leaving our home.”

Levi instantly baulked, and he saw her brothers do the same. That statement hadn’t been well received.

“Obviously, despite our added measures, we can’t protect the home. Not without putting an army on it,” Derek stated.

“So put an army on it,” Madisen replied agreeably.

“You’d agree to that?” Derek asked, sounding surprised.

“I said I wanted an opinion, not that I was stupid or against protective measures. Two men on each of us and a team of guards on the house twenty-four-seven,” Madisen suggested.

“I agree,” Levi exclaimed. “And I’ll be staying with you at all times.”

Levi noted Derek’s expression. It was not a happy one.

“That’s my baby sister,” Derek hissed.

“And I ain’t laid a finger on her Madisen didn’t want,” Levi retorted. His remark got the reply he was looking for. Anger flashed across Derek’s face.

“Enough. Stop baiting each other. Brandy’s had a gunshot, and Cami nearly got abducted. Your silly squabbles over ego have no place here,” Madisen interrupted us.

“You’re right,” Derek responded.

“Sorry,” Levi said, but he wasn’t.

Any further fighting stopped when someone knocked at the door. Madisen's jaw dropped open when she saw who was standing there.

"What the fuck?" Derek spoke, and his tone matched the surprised expression on Madisen's face.

A tall guy in a suit walked in with two men behind him. Shotgun and Celt immediately blocked their action and squared off against them. The man flicked his fingers, and his guards stepped back.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Derek demanded in a deadly tone.

"I was visiting the area and heard what had happened and decided to check Madisen was okay. We're old friends, after all," the guy replied.

"Not fucking likely, Millar," Madisen fired.

Levi snapped to attention at her tone. Madisen did not like this fella. He moved to her side and was gratified when she nestled into him. Millar's eyes narrowed on them.

"Now, really? I was going to be family." Millar smirked.

"That was never gonna happen," Madisen replied.

"I was Cami's fiancé," Millar said angrily.

"Her potential rapist, you mean?" Madisen snapped. "Cami is a lesbian, and you were fully prepared to marry and rape her."

Derek let out a low growl, and Millar didn't look so smug.

"You've no place here. The Roderick girls are under McKenzie protection," Derek stated.

"I came to check they're okay. That's what friends do," Millar replied in a smarmy tone.

"No friend of mine," Madisen muttered.

"Seems you ain't wanted," Celt said from behind.

"Take your fancy-assed self and vanish. We don't approve of rapists here," Shotgun agreed.

"I came in peace," Millar replied, not looking as cocksure.

"Isn't no peace between us. But I can escalate the fragile relationship to war," Derek said with a shark's grin.

"No need, McKenzie," Millar shot back. "So which Roderick are you sniffing after? I know that you once thought of marrying Madisen. You back in her panties?"

"Don't be so damn crude," Madisen exclaimed.

"Oh, come on. Everyone knew Oscar wanted you two to shack up," Millar sneered.

“You’re disgusting,” Madisen said.

Levi couldn’t disagree. Of course, this prick had no idea of the relationship between Derek and Madisen, but even so, the leer on his face was vile. Levi was seconds away from planting his fist in the asshole.

“Looks like things are interesting around here. Make sure I get a wedding invite,” Millar said before leaving.

“Now, that was interesting,” Derek mused.

Levi wondered if Derek was thinking the same as him. Millar clearly had an interest in Madisen. Levi had seen the lust in his eyes. If Millar wanted to keep breathing, then he better stay far away from his girl. She belonged to him, and he’d kill anyone who laid a hand on her.

Madisen

I waited until I got home until I confronted Levi. The sheer audacity of expecting he can move in when we’d barely even kissed was astonishing. Before I could say anything, he turned to me in the kitchen while we were alone and spoke.

“Madisen, I care about you a lot. That ain’t something I say or admit to easily. I know we can have something special if we give this a chance. But that guy tonight, he had lust and hate in his eyes. He wants you badly. Baby, I can’t let anyone hurt you. It would unleash a monster, and I wouldn’t be able to control myself. So, I’m begging ya, let me stay for a few days. Please,” Levi said, and I heard the emotion in his voice.

Levi’s heartfelt plea took the wind out of my sails, and my temper subsided. Shit, how could I argue with him?

“Okay,” I replied, resigned. “But you do not throw your weight about. I don’t know how the women in your club act, but I’m not a no-yes woman. I have a brain and independence and won’t allow anyone to diminish my thought processes or abilities. If you can respect me and listen to me, we’ll be fine.”

“Madisen, I ain’t gonna lie. You arouse my basic instincts. I wanna lock you away and smother you in love and protect you. But I recognise you’ve been alone for a long time and learned to survive on your own. If I tried to do what my gut tells me, I’d ruin what we have. So, I’m controlling those feelings and thoughts and hoping you’ll meet me halfway.”

“I’ll do the best I can, but lay the law down and prepare for a fight,” I said

with a sigh.

Levi smirked and stepped into my space.

“Gonna kiss you, baby,” he muttered.

His lips met mine, and a flutter started between my legs. They were firm and cool, yet the kiss was anything but. He tasted of mint and coffee, two scents I really liked. He didn’t do sloppy kisses, but oh boy, my toes curled. I’d heard of kisses that were so hot this shit happened, but I had never experienced it. Until now.

Levi turned me into a clingy, breathless woman, completely absorbed in his smooch and the sensations he aroused. I’d had sex twice and found it a rather sterile thing, but this, the heat, the yearning, hard nipples and soaking panties, was all new to me.

When Levi ended the kiss, his eyes were smiling as he held my gaze.

“Now that’s a beautiful look on you, baby. I can’t wait to see you when we do more,” Levi murmured as his mouth claimed mine, and he kissed me senselessly. An annoyed cough broke us up, and Levi offered me a smug grin before I turned in his arms, and he wrapped them firmly around me.

Derek gave him a death stare, and then his gaze softened and looked at me.

“Okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” I whispered as I blushed deeply. For a brief moment, amusement crossed Derek’s face, and then it disappeared.

“We need to plan. Millar turning up is unexpected. Declan is looking into why he is here, because there’s no reason for Millar to be in South Dakota. All his business is done in Florida.”

“You think he’s after Madisen?” Levi stated as his two brothers entered the kitchen. I now knew their names were Shotgun and Celt.

“Yeah, I do. Madisen may have walked away from Oscar’s business, but marrying a Roderick has power. And add to the fact there is Oscar’s fortune resting within Madisen’s hands. That’s a tempting target.” Derek nodded.

“And one any asshole would crave,” Daithi added with a sideways glance at Levi.

To his credit, Levi didn’t look bothered by Daithi’s dig.

“Dude, I got my own millions. Madisen won’t want for anything when she marries me,” Levi stated firmly but casually.

Oh, fuck, vibes hit the kitchen hard.

“Who the hell said you could marry my baby sister?” Dane demanded from behind.

“You think I am hanging about for a shag? Going through all this shit with her just to get laid. Dude, no offence, I can get a fuck anywhere. I’m claiming your sister, but I am taking it slow, respecting her feelings and thoughts. Do not make me a pussy, just a man who wants nothing more than to see his woman blossom under his attention,” Levi retorted.

Derek raised an eyebrow.

“And if I don’t approve?”

“As Madisen said, you aren’t her boss. She’s her own. She knows I wanna date her with an eye to making it permanent; ain’t hiding shit from her. May not be a suit like you or have your ties, but Hellfire is no slouches if we call on allies. Madisen will be protected and loved here,” Levi announced, folding his arms.

“You and I, mate, need a talk,” Derek said firmly. “Madisen, would you like to order food for everyone? Us McKenzies will eat anything sweetness.”

“Remember, I’m my own woman!” I stated and saw Derek smile briefly.

“I know, Madisen; believe me, I know!”

Chance

He watched as Clio curled into a ball and stared at nothing out of the window. Since her breakdown, she’d been quiet and not herself. She had pulled away from the tearrooms and everyone else. Chance knew she’d been shutting out the old ladies and her siblings. Not even her beloved brother Rain had got through to her. He was at his wit’s end, even calling Maylene, Clio’s gran, for help. But Clio had sat silently through Maylene’s tirade, her head bowed and her face vacant.

Chance was losing everything precious he loved about his wife, and he didn’t know what to do. He’d tried to talk to her; Phoe and Tati had, too. But Clio was lost in her own world. He guessed she was depressed, but Clio was unreachable. Louisa ran towards him and tackled his legs, and, with a forced smile, Chance bent and picked up his baby girl. He looked behind her for Dax because the boy wouldn’t be far behind his sister.

Chance spotted Dax heading for him at the speed of a runaway train and swooped down and picked him up, too. Quietly moving away from his wife, Chance murmured to his kids. They were understandably upset, not knowing what was wrong with their mother, and the club had rallied around the confused children. But they missed their mom.

Chance played for an hour until Thalia came to put them to bed. Chance heard her arrive ten minutes after he'd taken the kids to play.

Thalia shook her head as she walked towards him. She'd got no further than he had.

"You're going to have to make the hard choice soon, Chance," Thalia said sadly.

Chance knew what she meant. Maylene had approached it first. That Clio might be so traumatised she needed a stint in a specialist centre. Chance refused to think of it as anything else.

"Ain't doing that to her," Chance rumbled.

"And this shit ain't helping her. You and I often don't see eye to eye, but where Clio is concerned, we both love her and want the best for her. You gonna have to consider if what she's doing is healthy because it is not. Not for her, you, or those kids. They just want their mom back. They don't understand why Clio won't interact with them, and when she does, it's pathetic," Thalia whispered to him.

Chance flinched. Thalia was correct, of course. Not even her beloved children roused her. They had gone behind everyone's backs and checked out a secure hospital that dealt with trauma. Chance had blown his top, but they had held her stance until he realised she meant well. Clio's distress affected all of Hellfire. His brothers felt helpless, and his kids were motherless. As for Chance, he felt rudderless. There was a lot of 'less' around. Too much.

Clio had retreated the moment she had awoken from fainting. And nobody had been able to reach her. Chance stood again in the doorway, watching her stare at nothing. He wasn't sure if it was the hysterectomy that hurt or what they'd witnessed. Or the fact after dealing with a cult, they now had the Fangs after them. Clio had been strong. Yeah, he mused, she'd had to find her feet, but she always had that inner strength. Now, it was gone.

"Clio," Chance said as he stepped into the room.

Clio didn't even acknowledge him. Lost in her thoughts, as she was wont to do lately. Chance frowned. This had to end.

"Clio, talk to me," he demanded, allowing a little of his frustration to leak into his voice.

Once more, Clio ignored him.

"You start coming out of this funk, Clio. I'm gonna have to deal with shit, and you won't like it. I can't let you wallow in whatever's bothering you. You need help that I can't fuckin' provide. You don't even look at me

anymore, woman. Have you fallen out of love with me? Is that it? You blame me for what happened?” Chance said louder.

He hoped she’d respond, but instead, her gaze remained unfocused, and there was no reply. Chance drew in a deep breath. Maybe Thalia was right.

Clio

As soon as Chance left the room, I heaved a sigh of relief. I knew I was hurting him but couldn’t stop myself. All my dreams and hopes lay dashed to pieces in the dust. Ever since we’d first met, giving him a large family had been all I wanted. Instead, Chance got two children from me, and that was it. Two kids. At least we’d had one of each.

My thoughts plagued me—that maybe he’d be better divorcing me and finding a woman who could give him what I wanted him to have. The huge, happy, noisy family with kids that doted on him. Kids that stampeded the door every time he came home and yelled Dad at the top of their lungs.

Large, fun-filled family barbeques, with Chance and the kids in the pool, grilling together, and Chance with several princesses curled on his lap. That had been my dream for him, and a sickening cult had blown it up and stolen it from me. After everything I’d suffered, surely I deserved my dream. Chance kept telling me Louisa and Dax were plenty; even Louisa had been enough. But I didn’t think so. He deserved more than what I’d given him.

Self-hatred curled around my heart. I knew I was a failure. My son, Chance’s precious legacy, had been ripped from my stomach, and then I’d nearly died. When I woke, Diesel had made the decision to take away my womanhood. At first, I’d hated him; I hadn’t even been able to look at him, but I realised he’d done what he thought was right. Diesel hadn’t known my dreams; Diesel hadn’t realised I’d rather have died so Chance could move on and find a woman with a complete womb and able to provide those kids I dreamed of.

I was a shell of myself. And the quicker I died, the better. Chance would get the happily ever after he deserved.

## Chapter Eleven.

Madisen

A week had passed since the incident with Brandy and Millar, and there'd been no further sign of Millar. I'd asked Derek if he thought Millar was capable of killing women and slicing them up alive, and Derek had regarded me with a blank expression. He finally told me that several of Millar's ex-partners had gone missing, never to be seen again.

In my mind, that put Millar firmly at the front of suspects. Detective Lio had checked in a few times, but nobody told him about Millar. I knew that Derek would take care of Millar himself should he prove to be the culprit. Millar was proving himself to be an asshole, but things had calmed down.

Levi stayed in my house as planned; numerous times, he snuck into my bedroom and gave me a few more kisses. He was content to take things at my pace, which was slightly frustrating because I wanted things to move quicker than they were. Levi had lit a fire in me and delighted in stoking it before letting me find relief either through his fingers or mouth. But he didn't go any further.

According to Levi, he wouldn't fuck me with my brothers and cousins in the same building. I guessed that was fair enough, although it really made me want to chase my brothers out. And then head to a hotel with Levi. I couldn't exactly kick my cousins out of their own home! It was starting to look like a tempting idea. The 'gifts' being dropped at the house had stopped, as security had been so ramped up; not even Spiderman could get through it. Everywhere my cousins and I went, there were two guards on us. At all times.

The good news was The Midnight Hour, the shop, and the dance studio were going great. They were hugely successful, more than we'd ever believed. There was even a waiting list for dance lessons. Everybody wanted to be where the elite of our part of South Dakota had been seen and were seen more than once. However, waiting for Millar or the stalker to make their

move was wearing on our nerves. Apart from the McKenzies and Levi, everyone was on edge.

Today, I was driving us to work with Tami, Riley, and Dane. Dane was taking the front seat next to me, while Riley was in the back with Tami. The only complaint had been that I insisted on driving us. Levi rolled his eyes but wisely kept his mouth shut. He would, of course, considering we had a date at his studio tonight. I wondered how that would look, but any questions I'd asked he sidestepped. Smart assed man!

"Watch your speed," Dane muttered as I pulled out.

I sent him a disbelieving stare and was tempted to floor it. I knew the car would respond, but I resisted and drove sedately towards work. It was funny how tense Dane was next to me. My brother clearly didn't like the fact I was in charge of the powerful vehicle, and I could see his fists clenching on his lap. I was deciding whether to tease him a little by weaving back and forth when I saw a vehicle coming up fast behind me.

"Dane, behind," I said, keeping an eye on the road but watching the truck.

"Floor it," Dane replied calmly.

Riley had already covered Tami with his body.

"Okay," I muttered and hit the gas.

"Faster, Madisen. Fuck the speed limits. This fucker is heading for us," Dane snapped as he pulled his weapon. "Keep the car straight."

Dane opened the window, leaned out, and fired a warning shot into the air. Instead of making the truck back off, which it would have done if it had an innocent driver, it sped up. I pushed the gas again, and my car leapt forward.

"Dane," I gasped as I hit eighty. "There's a bend half a mile up ahead. If I slow, he'd hit us, but if I take the bend at speed, I will lose control. It's a sharp turn."

"Slow down at the last moment, and I will cover. Head straight for the cops, don't stop Madisen," Dane ordered.

With a hard swallow, I nodded.

The turn appeared, and obeying Dane, I slammed the brakes on. My rear tires skidded, and my rear end fishtailed. I struggled to control the car as Dane fired rapidly, making the truck back away when he shattered the window. Just as we came out of the turn, I regained control. I hit the gas once more, but too late.

The vehicle barreled around, tires screeching, and smashed my rear end with a glancing blow. As I was accelerating, that was all it took for me to lose

control. Tami screamed, but my concentration remained on keeping my car on the road and not being forced off where I might flip. The truck came thundering towards us, and I eased off the gas and wrestled the steering wheel. As soon as I felt control, I slammed my foot down, and the car leapt forward. Someone was kicking the broken windscreen out, and it gave me a head start.

I flew down the street as Dane mumbled encouraging comments and kept an eye over his shoulder. On a straight road, the truck couldn't catch me.

I accelerated way past speed limits and headed towards town. The distance between us lengthened, and the tension left my shoulders.

"Good job Madisen," Dane praised.

"Thanks," I muttered.

Out of a side street, another SUV pulled out in front of us just as I reached the junction. I screamed as I yanked the wheel to one side and hit the brakes. Dane's hand covered mine as we wrestled the wheel to keep on the road and not flip into the ditch alongside us. My foot pumped the brakes as the car skidded and fishtailed. The truck hit us from the side, and Dane threw his body over me, pulling my head and shoulders down as we hit the edge of the ditch and flipped.



A loud noise pierced the darkness, and I blinked and winced as the sunlight hurt my eyes.

"Miss, miss, it's okay. I've called for help. Don't move," a voice ordered urgently.

I lifted a hand and waved.

"The gentleman's neck is at an awkward angle, miss; I wouldn't suggest moving," the voice said. I became aware of a heavy weight covering me.

"Dane," I groaned.

"Sorry, miss?"

"His name is Dane. Is he okay?"

"He's unconscious, and his neck doesn't look right to me," the guy answered.

"What's your name?" I muttered.

"Errol, miss."

"My cousin's in the back," I stated, feeling fear hit me. Shit, Tami and

Riley!

“The lady is alert, but not the other gentleman,” Errol responded.

“Tami!” I croaked.

“I am here, unhurt. Riley took most of it,” Tami said, sounding remarkably calm.

“Riley?” I shrieked. There was no answer.

“I’m trapped under him. I don’t think I can move in case I make his injuries worse,” Tami exclaimed.

“Same with Dane. He’s covering me, but Errol said his neck doesn’t look right.”

Panic hit me. What if Dane had snapped his neck? Was he dead? Paralyzed?

“Errol, the men, they have a pulse?” I cried.

“Yes, miss, I checked straight away. I can hear sirens. Help is coming,” Errol stated.

Outside, sirens screeched to a halt, and I heard another man introducing himself as Mack, telling me he was a paramedic. He asked me questions while I listened to Tami answering someone else. Dane’s weight was lifted from me, and I saw he remained unconscious. I was trying to control my panic but felt it slipping.

“He’s alive?” I gasped. Mack reassured me he was.

Thank God. I hadn’t just discovered my brothers to lose one.

“He is seriously hurt, though, Madisen; he’s going in the first ambulance,” Mack said as his hands gave me a check over.

“Let me out. I’m going with him,” I whispered.

“Can’t do that. I think you’ve got whiplash and a dislocated shoulder,” Mack responded, and it was then I became aware of the pain my body was in.

“Shove it back in,” I demanded.

Mack shook his head and stabbed me with a needle.

“That will help with pain, but we’re taking you straight to the hospital.”

“Not disagreeing, but I want to go with Dane,” I said again.

“Dane’s already left. Do you have a next of kin for him? Are you his wife?” Dane questioned.

I rattled off Derek’s number, which was the first that came to mind. Mack repeated it to someone, and then I was being supported out of the wreck and laid onto a gurney.

“Riley and Tami,” I asked, clutching Mack’s arm.

“Tami is fine, no injuries, but she’ll be checked over at the hospital. Riley is awake, but we know he has broken bones. They’ve already left,” Mack said kindly.

“The guy who helped, Errol?” I quizzed.

“He’s giving a statement. He saw everything,” Mack informed me. What a nice man Errol was. He’d been so kind to me.

“Thank you.”

Mack and his partner loaded me up in the ambulance, and sirens blaring, they took off. Mack sat in the back with me as he continued to monitor my vitals and check me over. I was surprised when suddenly we slowed down as we came up to town.

“What’s going on?” Mack ordered of his partner.

“Roadblock and men in the road with guns,” he answered, and I heard the squawk of a radio. The guy was calling it in.

“Reverse!” Mack demanded.

“Too late, there’s someone behind us,” his partner replied in a calm tone. The back door of the ambulance flew open, and I gazed into a pair of callous brown eyes.

“What the fuck, Mill—” I exclaimed.

“No names! Or they’ll die,” Millar stated. The bottom half of his face was covered by a mask, but it was him.

“This woman is injured. Madisen needs a hospital,” Mack said, bravely standing by my gurney.

“She’ll see one; get up, Madisen,” Millar demanded.

“She has a dislocated shoulder at the very least and whiplash!” Mack explained.

“Ain’t your problem unless you want to make it one?” Millar replied. “I’ll not ask again. Move before someone pays the price.”

Millar meant the threat. I could see it in his eyes. I struggled to get up, and Mack helped me. As I leant into Mack, I whispered in his ear.

“Contact Levi at Hellfire.”

“Done,” Mack murmured. He supported me out of the ambulance, outrage and anger showing in his frame.

“Don’t get ideas, asshole,” Millar warned. He moved towards me and took my bad arm. Without warning, he wrenched, and I screamed and hit my knees as pain shot through me. Millar had popped the shoulder back in, but fuck that had hurt. I heaved and threw up on account of the pain, and Millar

jumped away and checked his shoes.

“Get her in the SUV,” he ordered one of his men. The guy nodded, and, grabbing my good arm, yanked me into a black motor.

“Don’t try to be heroes. You’ll die, and she’ll regret it for the rest of her life,” Millar warned and headed towards me. He climbed into the back seat next to me and handed me a pack of mints.

“Freshen your breath,” he snapped, sending me a look of disgust.

“Fuck you,” I replied but took the mints. There was a nasty taste in my mouth. “Derek’s going to rip your fucking throat out.”

“Derek will not give a shit when you’ve got my ring on your finger,” Millar retorted as the SUV sped off.

“Won’t stop Derek from making me a widow,” I said with smugness in my voice.

“Won’t stop me making myself a widower if you don’t shut up. As soon as you sign the wedding certificate, everything you have becomes mine.”

“Wrong, I have a will in place.”

“No, Madisen, did you think I wouldn’t cover that? Alongside a marriage certificate is a brand new will,” Millar said, sounding far too happy,

“I’m not marrying you.”

“How much do you want to bet on that?” Millar demanded.

“My fucking life!”

“That can be arranged, although, before your death, I intend to sample the goods.” Millar grinned.

One thing was for sure, I’d die before I let him rape me. My mind was working overtime as Millar drove away with me. There had to be something I could do. I glanced down at my hands. If my dominant hand was broken, Millar couldn’t force me to do anything. A smile crossed my lips. Easily done.

We exited the main roads and began taking single lanes, and I wondered where the hell we were heading. Millar was now ignoring me, and I was looking for something to identify where I was. There was nothing.

I saw the roof of a house through the trees, and we pulled up outside a modest four-bedroom home. The driver got out and opened Millar’s door while the other guard opened mine. I struggled out and clung to the door. The guard stepped back and, taking a deep breath and gathering my courage, I placed my hand on the car. With all the strength my damaged shoulder could muster, which was still a lot, I slammed the door on it. My scream was

drowned out by Millar's bellow. It didn't matter. The incredible pain swept through me, and I managed a second slam just before I passed out.

I came to.

Millar glowered at me as another man bandaged my hand.

"You fucking bitch," Millar growled. The other guy stood up and walked away to the door without a word. "This would have been over for you in a couple of days. Marry me, sign the will, and a quick bullet to the head. Now you're gonna suffer until you can sign, you dumb whore."

His fist came towards me, and I couldn't even move, as I was still disorientated. It connected, and tears flooded my eyes at the pain.

"I will die before you ever marry and rape me," I promised as I felt my lip begin to swell.

Millar grinned, and his fist slammed into me again.

"If you beat her now, it's likely you'll kill her," the guy who'd been wrapping my hand stated calmly.

"I'll wait a few days. The anticipation will make it all the more enjoyable," Millar exclaimed.

Yeah, right, I thought mulishly. That gave me time to escape. Or for Derek and Levi to find me. Because there was no doubt in my mind they'd come for me. Both of them. And Millar would burn.

Brandy

"Where the fuck is she?" I yelled at Derek. There was a sinking sensation. The paramedics had called in Madisen's kidnapping an hour ago, and the news had reached us soon after. Derek was already on the way to the hospital when he got the second call. The paramedic Mack had identified the man as having a name beginning with Mill. There was only one person it could be. Fucking Millar.

"How the fuck do I know, Brandy? I have my people out searching right now," Derek snarled back at me.

I stepped backwards. The danger signals coming off of Derek were off the chart. He had a brother in surgery for a brain bleed, and Riley had broken his spine. He'd walk again but was out of commission. Both were under the knife, even as we argued.

"Dai, Davin, and Declan are flying in. They're bringing an army with them. We'll find her," Derek spat.

“And you’ll kill him slowly,” I whispered, stepping closer. “You tear him apart piece by piece. Slice the skin from him and make him suffer.”

Surprise shone in Derek’s eyes, and then approval flared.

“You’re my type of girl, Brandy,” he muttered.

“Lesbian.”

“I know that, brat. I meant you’d have been a fine addition to my guards. But being my family is more important, and I’m glad you are a part of it.”

“Find her. Mack said he thought Madisen had more injuries than he diagnosed. She could be bleeding out right now.”

Worry swamped me. Mack had described in detail to Derek, Levi, and I Madisen’s injuries. She was badly hurt and in the hands of a maniac. We had to save her. I couldn’t lose my cousin after all the shit we’d been through.

“Hellfire and our allies are out. Chance has called everyone in,” Levi said, approaching.

“And who does that comprise?” Derek asked sarcastically. It was obvious he only expected a few people. Levi’s answer stunned us both.

“Rage, Devils Damned Disciples, Unwanted Bastards, Fallen Warriors, Satan’s Warriors, Riders of Vengeance, and The Devil’s Scythe MCs are all riding. The Juno Group has their guys on cameras and is flooding the streets with their operatives. Jacob has organised Delta Force, and they are heading here. Hawthornes are on route. Phoe is contacting local PI and merc groups who are previous clients of the Phoenix Trust. James Washington is sending his security team. Willoughby Adams has planes of men coming in. We have two of the best hackers out there searching for any sign of Madisen. There are hundreds of people out looking for her. We will find her,” Levi promised.

“Who the fuck are you people?” I gasped. None of those names were strangers to me.

“An MC with contacts.” Levi shrugged.

“More to Hellfire than meets the eyes,” Derek said. “My probe didn’t turn up half of this.”

I hid a smile because Derek sounded disgruntled.

“There ain’t nowhere in Pennington or Lawrence County they can hide. We’ve done this shit before. Every single highway, airfield, street, and back road will be flooded with people. Someone will find her. Just gotta wait,” Levi stated and ran a hand through his hair.

Yeah, that didn’t sit too well with Levi.

Movement caught my eye, and I looked up and saw Lio striding through

the entrance doors of the hospital.

“We’ve got an APB out on Madisen. Spearfish uniforms are patrolling the city,” Lio announced. “The SFD is also out, and so is search and rescue.”

“Overkill for a single woman,” Derek drawled. There was a question in his tone.

“Think I don’t know Hellfire called for allies? They’ll tear the city apart. And plus, I know who Madisen is. Now my Chief does. And he agrees he does not want war here. Rapid City has been put on alert, and the airfields are being covered by both forces. Suck it up, Chief won’t tell anyone who she is. But we’ve had Hellfire kicking in doors before. We’re trying to head that shit off,” Lio said with a warning glance at Levi.

I was amused. I didn’t believe for one minute Lio was worried about that. The concern on his face was clear as he glanced at Levi. It was obvious they were friends, and Lio just wanted Levi’s woman back safely.

“See,” Levi muttered, “the streets will be flooded.”

I damn well hoped they found Madisen in time. Millar was a loose cannon and not one we planned for. One thing was for sure: Derek was going to kill Millar very, very slowly.

## Madisen

I think a day had passed since Millar had taken me. During that, I’d slept most of it, healing the wounds I’d gained. My body was black and blue where the seat belt had cut into me. It hurt to breathe, and I believed my ribs were bruised. Millar had left me alone and uncuffed, which meant I had been free to explore the room. There wasn’t much there, but even so, it didn’t pay to underestimate a McKenzie. Thinking of myself as such made me feel stronger. The room had two doors; one led to the hallway and one to a tiny closet of a bathroom. It was there I’d seen the old curtain hanging on a wire.

After taking it down, there had been nothing else to strip the covering with, and I had ended up chewing through it. I’d need a dentist after this. Furthermore, only having one hand didn’t help. Between my left hand and teeth, I managed to untwist the wires and break one off. I hung the curtain back up, not wanting Millar to be suspicious should he check on me.

Darkness had fallen ages ago, and I waited until the house fell silent.

Since he’d left me there, nobody had spoken to me except to open the door, check I was there, and then lock it again. I had drunk water from the

small sink, but I was starving. Not eating didn't help my healing, but sleep had.

I sat for another half an hour and then crept to the door. Slowly, I tried to pick the lock, and as minutes ticked past, I wanted to cry.

With my right hand, this would have been so easy. But I'd never practiced with my left, and it was so much harder. The throbbing in my hand, shoulder, head, and ribs did not help either. Millar's men hadn't given me any painkillers. Sadistic bastards.

Finally, there was a click. A sigh of relief escaped me as I twisted the handle, and the door slowly opened. I peered outside into the dark hallway and didn't see anyone. Quietly shutting the door behind me, I crept down the hallway, alert to any sort of movement or noise.

I stepped towards the stairs, and that's when I saw the first man. He was standing at the front door, clearly keeping watch. Shit, to get downstairs, I had to get past him. There was no other escape. The window in my bedroom had been nailed shut, so this was it. I choked on a laugh as the guy pulled out a cigarette and stepped outside. None of my father's men would ever have been so stupid. On tiptoes, I moved rapidly down the steps and hid in the shadows. I could see the red glow of the end of the cigarette. Remaining on my tiptoes, I crept down the hallway, figuring there had to be a back door to this place.

Finding the kitchen next, I swallowed a groan when I saw the guard on the door and then, as I hid, the front door opened and shut.

Footsteps headed towards me, and I looked frantically around in the darkness. My left hand caught on a handle, and I opened the door and darted inside. The smell made me gag instantly, but I closed the door, trapping myself in with it. Nasty smells I could handle; being found, I couldn't.

Two men spoke outside the door, and I froze in place. Dim light shone through a window, and I realised I was in a basement.

## Chapter Twelve.

Levi

It had been thirty-six hours. A day and a half since Madisen had been snatched, and nobody had found a trace of her. Somehow, Millar had avoided cameras and was now hiding somewhere with his woman. Was Madisen suffering? Was she hurt? Levi's mind tortured him over and over with the same questions. He'd barely slept, ready for the call that would say they'd located her. Despite Chance's phone continuously ringing, there'd been nothing.

The one piece of good news was that Riley and Dane had both woken up and were going to be okay. Derek's other three brothers had arrived and joined in the search efforts, and despite several hundred people looking for her, Madisen remained missing.

He sat in Hellfire's church, needing to be alone. If he lost Madisen, he'd lose everything. Levi couldn't bear the thought of not seeing her smile or hearing her laughter ever again.

Someone entered church and grasped his shoulder tightly before sitting down next to him. He looked up into the understanding eyes of Bear.

"When Thalia was taken, I felt sick, unable to concentrate. And we didn't have the people out looking for Thalia like we do Madisen," Bear said.

"Because we thought we knew where Thalia was," Levi replied remotely.

"Yup."

"We have no clue where Millar is. There are no ties to him here. The fucker may even have left the state now."

"Not likely. We got every route covered. Millar's still around here. I had a thought, and we've got Leila tracking any property that has been bought recently that would fit the parameters we're looking at," Bear said.

"Houses sell every day. That is a needle in a haystack, brother. I appreciate

it, but I don't think it will find her," Levi replied.

"Yeah, but Millar's gonna need somewhere isolated, not large, as that could catch attention. And with an easy escape route. Leila's narrowing the list down," Bear said.

Levi sat up. This was the first glimmer of hope he'd had.

"You think she's going to find something?"

"No," Bear stated. Levi deflated. "I know she is."

"If anyone can locate her, it would Leila," Levi acknowledged.

"We are going to get her back," Bear promised.

Levi shied away from the words, but they left his lips anyway.

"Dead or alive?"

"Alive because she is a fighter. And Madisen knows we're coming. Hellfire picks a certain type of lady, one who fights. They all have, and they've all come through, brother. I refuse to believe your woman is any different," Bear stated.

"Why does this shit keep hitting us?" Levi questioned.

"Am fucking sure Rage and Drake asked that, and they have still got single brothers." Bear chuckled.

"Jesus. Be nice to have a few easy ones. Janey, Alice, Sallie-Anne, Artemis, Lindsey. Christ, our men had to earn those women. And the rest. If Madisen doesn't make it—"

"She will, and you just gotta keep believing that," Bear said before falling silent.

Together, they sat there in silence. Both stared at the walls, lost in their thoughts.

Except Levi wasn't alone anymore.

## Chance

Leila hit the jackpot four hours later. She dialled Chance and added Dylan to the call.

"I got three properties; all fit the parameters I was working too. I'm sending you the addresses now. Nigel is hacking satellites, but there is movement at all three. I'll update when I get more. I've sent the addys to your phones," she stated and cut the line.

"Get Levi and get people heading to these addresses," Chance said, throwing his phone to Big Al. He took off at a jog. He had to tell Clio what

was happening.

Ten minutes later, Chance wondered why he had bothered. His wife hadn't even answered him. She'd stared blankly through him and then returned to looking out of the window. Chance sighed. He was losing her. But for now, he had to help Levi, and then with Phoe, he was going to do what was best for his woman. Come hell or high water, he'd get Clio back.

Chance shoved everything aside and stormed into the clubhouse. Brothers were present: Bear, Shotgun, Celt, Diesel, Tiny, Levi, and from Hawthorne's, London, Max and Dylan. Dai and Declan, two of the McKenzies, were also there.

"This is your address. Go," Big Al said, giving him his phone back.

Chance glanced at the address and stormed off. He hoped the fuck Millar was there because his anger needed an outlet. And this dirty bastard would be ideal to unload upon.

Levi

The house looked normal, which meant it was a damn good hideaway. They'd been watching for ten minutes and had noted several black-suited men. In the meantime, Derek, Artemis, Akemi, and Inglorious had arrived. This address was closest to where they had been searching. Once Chance had spotted the suits, Levi knew this was where Madisen was. He could almost feel her waiting for him.

Well, he was coming.

Chance gave the order, and they began making their way to the house. Moments later, a firefright broke out from the back, and shots were exchanged. Chance cursed, but keeping low, everyone kept moving forward. Levi ducked behind the black SUV as he caught sight of movement in the doorway. Biding his time, he waited until Shotgun popped his head up, and the figure moved to take the shot. Levi's bullet took him straight in the middle of his forehead, and he leapt to his feet and rushed the door.

Shotgun was seconds behind him as they burst through, and Shotgun's shot took a second suit down.

Behind them came Dylan and Inglorious. They started to clear the ground floor as boots stampeded upstairs. Several more shots were fired, and then Bear yelled an all-clear, and Dylan called the same.

"Where the fuck is she?" Dai demanded.

“She has to be here. Why have those suits present if she wasn’t?” Chance asked, coming down the stairs.

“Spread out, search the grounds, look for sheds or shit,” Dylan said, and half their group left.

Levi leaned against a wall as worry swamped him and was stabbed in the back.

“What the fuck?” he mumbled and turned.

“Got a hidden door,” Levi called softly, and those remaining faced him. The handle blended in so well that it was no wonder they’d missed it on their first sweep.

Levi twisted it, and the door silently opened. They all jumped at the stench that came from down below.

“Fuck me,” Declan muttered.

As quietly as they could in their shitkickers, they walked down the stairs and looked around. Chance pointed to the two doors and then pointed at Bear, Declan, and Dylan to take the one on the left. Levi headed for the door on the right, with Inglorious and Chance behind him.

Chance held up his hand and counted down three fingers, and on the count of three, they opened the doors.

Levi’s ears were immediately assaulted by Madisen’s scream. His gun rose and fired before he realised what he was doing.

His eyes took in the nightmare in front of him.

Madisen was strapped to a table, unable to move and naked. Beside her, wearing white overalls, had been Millar. All Levi could see was Madisen’s body awash with blood. Levi moved forward as Madisen continued to scream. He grabbed her head and forced her to meet his eyes.

Her screams cut off midway, and a loud sob sounded through them.

“You found me!” she cried.

Chance worked on cutting her loose as Inglorious rounded the table. He was going after Millar. Levi paid him no attention. Declan and Dai rushed into the room and skidded to a stop at what met them. Declan shrugged off his suit jacket as Chance cut the bonds, holding Madisen’s arms by her side. Chance grabbed it and covered Madisen with it, trapping her arms inside as he buttoned it to protect her dignity.

Levi held her as she sobbed into his shoulder. He didn’t know where he could touch her because there was so much blood. But his heartbeat steadied as he hugged her. She was alive, and that was all that mattered. Madisen’s

sobs tore at his heart, and she clung to him with all the strength she had left in her body.

As soon as Chance cut her ankles free, Levi scooped her up and carried her out. The stench from the other room was overpowering, and Levi gagged.

“Don’t go in there. The cops are gonna need to see this place,” Bear stated.

“Need to burn it down. All those dead bodies,” Declan said calmly, but his eyes were focused on Madisen.

“No, let the police worry about who did this. None of the guns we used today are registered. Wipe them clean and drop them here. I’ll get a crew here to destroy our DNA, but those women need justice,” Chance ordered, his face pale.

Levi knew Chance had done what he’d done. Levi had peered into the room and just managed to control his stomach.

He didn’t bother with the argument as he carried Madisen up the stairs. Madisen had buried her head in his throat, and he could feel her tears wetting it. Clutching her close, he took her outside and straight to Dylan’s SUV.

“Let the cops handle it. You disappear,” Chance was saying to Declan and Dai. They were still arguing when Dylan climbed in and started the engine. Without a word, Dylan sped off, aiming for the hospital.



“So none will scar her?” Levi asked Doc Paul, who’d arrived the day before. Hellfire had called him yesterday, as they only trusted certain doctors to look after their women. And not doubting they’d find Madisen, they wanted to be prepared.

“Not quite. The bastard cut her good and a lot, but none were deep. Most of them are shallow wounds, but there are two deep ones on her shoulders. Plastic surgery can remove them. It seems he was more about inflicting pain with small cuts and then rubbing vinegar or salt in them. But she’ll heal, Levi. She’s strong,” Doc Paul replied. He clasped forearms with Levi and then went to write up the report.

Levi opened the door to Madisen’s private room and entered.

Derek was sitting by her bed, soothing her hair away from her face and touching her uninjured hand. Madisen’s eyes flicked to him, and a beatific smile shone.

“I knew you’d come. Both of you,” she whispered. Her voice was husky,

probably from screaming.

“Told ya, you’re mine. I ain’t letting you go, lady,” Levi said, taking a seat and holding a leg. His gaze landed on her broken right hand. “That was brave of you.”

“If my hand was broken, I couldn’t sign the marriage certificate—or the forged will.”

“Quick thinking. It bought us time. If you hadn’t, I’ve got money; he had a priest waiting,” Derek mumbled.

“Don’t like you being hurt,” Levi stated, and Madisen managed a smile.

“Pain relief is pretty damn good in this place,” she replied. Her smile wobbled and fell. “Did you get him?”

Derek and Levi swapped glances.

“He’s currently a guest of the McKenzies,” Derek murmured.

“Make him scream,” Madisen hissed.

“Jesus, you and your cousins are bloodthirsty bitches,” Derek muttered, and Levi released a genuine laugh.

“Something I better keep in mind,” Levi said dryly, and Madisen’s fingers twitched.

“I have a plane to catch, Madisen. Taking Daithi with me, but Declan, Dai and Davin are sticking around for you and Dane,” Derek announced, looking rueful.

“I am glad Dane and Riley are gonna be okay,” Madisen replied.

“I’m happy all three of you are going to be fine. Nothing means more to a McKenzie than family, Madisen; remember that,” Derek stated softly as he rose to his feet and dropped a kiss on her forehead. He nodded to Levi and left.

“Should I be worried?” Madisen asked Levi.

He frowned.

“My brothers,” Madisen explained, and Levi grinned.

“I believe Davin... he’s the second eldest?” At Madisen’s nod, Levi continued, “He discovered Brandy can’t be pushed around. There were guns involved, and Davin ended up in a headlock with Brandy choking him out.”

Madisen’s laugh echoed through the room before she winced and clutched her ribs. Levi reached over and hit the button that released pain relief.

“Levi!” Madisen scolded, and Levi revelled in her tone.

“Ain’t having my lady love in pain,” Levi said. His hand stroked her thigh.

“I’m fine,” Madisen argued.

“Yeah, you will be when the meds kick in,” Levi replied smugly. He loved the way she sent him a sideways look through her eyelashes. His woman had spirit, even after being kidnapped and tortured.

There was a knock at the door, and Lio entered. He looked relieved upon seeing Madisen.

“Thought you’d be here sooner,” Madisen chirped.

Lio raised an eyebrow and gazed at Levi.

“Strong pain relief, I think it is hitting her,” Levi explained.

“Ah, right. Well, I can’t take your statement now, but based on what we’ve found, it’s probably a moot point. Even so, I want to cross my Ts and dot my Is.”

“What do you mean?” Madisen demanded.

“It looks like Millar was the one who kidnapped you. It seems his men turned on each other, and there was a shootout. Millar clearly fled when he heard what was happening, leaving you behind. It was lucky Hellfire found you because who knows how long you’d have been there,” Lio said.

Levi held back a laugh. That was the story the cops were going with. Lio had a twinkle in his eye, which faded.

“Lio?” Levi asked.

“Sadly, in the basement next to you, which Hellfire called in, was another room.”

Madisen paled so quickly Levi shot up.

“I’m okay. I found it too,” Madisen whispered.

Levi closed his eyes. That was what he hadn’t wanted to happen. Those images would give him nightmares, let alone someone like Madisen.

“Who are they?” Madisen asked.

“From the evidence we’ve gathered so far, it appears they were homeless or prostitutes,” Lio said, and Levi could tell there was something he didn’t want to tell Madisen. Madisen wasn’t prepared to let him skate.

“Say it,” she insisted.

“Madisen, some of the women were missing body parts which we believe were sent to you. It appears Millar was kidnapping women from the streets, raping and torturing them. His main home is being raided right now in Florida, and teams are on the way to his other homes. The FBI has also been contacted. Everyone is moving fast on this as Millar is in the wind,” Lio explained.

“Were they alive when he cut them up?” Madisen asked quietly.

Levi shook his head, and Lio followed suit.

“We won’t know until the coroner does the full autopsy,” Lio demurred.

Madisen’s eyes narrowed, but she dropped her line of questioning. Levi knew she was remembering that room because he was. Madisen might have ended up there if Bear hadn’t had his brilliant idea.

Nausea rose, and Levi swallowed hard. He mentally shook the images of Madisen being cut up from his mind. It was something that would haunt him until the end of time. Madisen’s eyes closed, and her breathing evened out, and Levi guessed she’d fallen to sleep.

Nodding towards the door, Levi followed Lio out.

“No sign of Millar?” Levi asked.

Lio held his gaze and allowed Levi to see the knowledge in his eyes.

“Chief thinks he’s running. There’s a statewide APB out for him, which is why the feds have been contacted. They can take it across stateliness. Chief has approached Willow,” Lio said.

Levi nodded. That made sense. Willow Ware, Axel’s daughter from Rage MC, was a well-respected fed around their area. She worked hand in hand with the police and was dedicated to bringing crime down and criminals to their knees. Levi also knew that Willow would guess Millar would not be found alive. So she wouldn’t extend too much energy into the search. Willow would wait for his body to be discovered.

Millar was currently winging his way back to the McKenzie stronghold with Derek. All tucked up safe and sound in a packing crate. He’d been sedated and trussed and gagged. Millar had no escape.

Lio’s eyes told Levi he didn’t expect Millar to turn up alive, and he was okay with that. Cop or not, Lio held strong with the Hawthorne code. You didn’t hurt innocent women and children.

“Keep Chance updated?” Levi asked.

“Of course,” Lio said, clasped Levi’s forearm, and left.

“Madisen asleep?” Davin questioned, approaching. He carried a tray of coffees and several food bags.

“She’s just gone off,” Levi replied.

“Good. Now you can tell me why you think you’re enough to date my sister. And then we’ll discuss your intentions for her,” Davin said, smiling wickedly.

Levi rolled his eyes and snatched a coffee from Davin. Madisen having brothers was becoming a problem!

## Phoenix

I stared at Clio, saddened and grieved by her retreat inside herself. Things had been bad, even though Chance hid it. But with him busy, I'd been watching Clio for two hours now. She hadn't moved once. Not when Dax had cried or Louisa Mae called her name. And it was starting to piss me off.

Of course, I understood her grief, and my heart broke for her. I could be a bitch, but I wasn't a callous one. Clio was stressing Hellfire out, and Chance was hiding stuff and becoming short-tempered. I knew shit was bad with a capital B when Thalia asked me to watch Clio for two hours.

"See what's happening?" Thalia asked, approaching me quietly. "All day long, she is like this. Chance bathes and dresses her, and then she sits there completely zoned out. She's my sister, and I don't know how to help her. I've shouted, screamed, begged and cried, but Clio stares through me."

"I knew she was depressed, but she seemed to be coping. This shit with Madisen set her off, right?"

"Yeah, Phoe. And Chance, when he thinks nobody is looking, he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. He knows he is losing her, and nothing he's tried has worked. Heck, even Grandmother had a talk, but Clio again ignored her."

"Then it's time to get nasty," I said.

Thalia sent me a worried look.

"This isn't going to be something I enjoy, Thalia, but to keep my family healthy and together, Clio needs a short, sharp shock." I turned to hold Thalia's gaze. "You may want to leave for this, and if you don't... forgive me for what you are about to see."

Thalia nodded, and I turned away and strode over to Clio. The madam didn't even acknowledge my presence.

"This stops now. I am done with catering to your shit," I snapped loudly. Clio's shoulders jumped a little, and I knew I had her attention. "You're acting like you are the only one who's suffering, and I'm done with your selfish bullshit. Your stupid actions are hurting Chance, Hellfire, and your sisters. I am giving you a week to pull yourself out of this slump, or God help me, I'm having you locked up and treated. You want to act like a zombie? I'll fucking make you one."

My tone was cruel and sharp and meant to shock, and by the horror in Clio's eyes as she gazed at me, it had achieved something. Now, if she'd only

listen to my words and pull herself out of this slump. Can't honestly say I understood this behaviour. I had been through as much as Clio and never fallen so far into depression. I had the feeling that something was eating at her, but I'd no idea what it was.

But how I handled things and how Clio did were different, and that was fine. I couldn't judge Clio until I walked in her shoes, even though I felt she was overreacting. But I'd been created in fire, Clio hadn't. Judging her on how she reacted to trauma was unfair because everyone reacted a different way, and there was no right or wrong reaction.

As frustrated as I might be, it did not give me an excuse to lash out at her. I had picked my words on purpose, with the aim of shocking her out of her slump. Not to hurt and make her feel worse, but to give Clio the short, sharp shock I hoped would work. Because come hell or high water, if Clio didn't improve soon, I would drag her kicking and screaming to a psych ward and leave her sorry ass there. Chance deserved better, and being his sister, I'd make sure he got it.

I left their house with a sinking feeling. I didn't think my words would make Clio improve. But I could hope.

## Chapter Thirteen.

Madisen

“Derek’s returning tomorrow,” I announced to Levi three weeks later.

Levi nodded quietly as he stroked my hair fanned out on his chest. My hand in its cast rested upon Levi. The rest of my bruises and cuts had already healed.

“Any reason why?” he asked.

“Not that he’s said.”

“Just get rid of your brothers and one comes wandering back.” Levi sighed.

I couldn’t disagree. My older siblings had proven to be a pain in the ass. Literally. Every chance Levi and I tried to get some alone time, one of them disturbed us. Hell, I had even spotted them stalking us on dates. At first, I’d not been amused, annoyed at their invasion of my privacy, and Levi told me it was quite funny. If they wanted to waste their time spying on our picnics and late-night walks, let them.

Tonight was our first night of freedom, and we were enjoying being alone. We were in Levi’s house, which had been built on the Hellfire Compound land and on his bedroom decking. We’d still not slept together, but we had fooled around more and more. All that was left was the actual deed, and I wondered if Levi was going to torture me forever.

Even now, lying curled into his side, my head on his chest, his hand stroking my hair and making lazy circles on my back, I wanted him badly. But Levi was content to watch the stars and hold me. Which made no sense. His cock hardened whenever I was in his arms, so why not make a move?

“Because I need you to understand I respect you,” Levi murmured, and I stilled. Oh no, had I really said those words out loud? “Yes, you did,” Levi confirmed, and I buried my head.

“How embarrassing,” I muttered.

“Nope. I’ve been going mad waiting for a sign you were ready to take this to the next level,” Levi replied, hauling me over his body. His hands wrapped in my hair as he dragged me down for a kiss.

His lips met mine with familiar heat, and I lost myself in him. Levi always tasted of mint and coffee, which had become my favourite flavours.

Levi’s fingers tangled with my hair as he lifted us up, and his hard body covered me as he flipped me onto my back. His mouth never left as the heat ramped up between us. My good hand moved to the bottom of his tee, and I slipped up it, feeling warm, smooth skin. Slowly, I traced the outline of Levi’s muscles, loving the feel of his skin.

I started tugging at his top, wanting to taste him. Levi helped and tore his tee over his head, leaving his chest free. My mouth watered at the delicious landscape before me. With Levi resting on his haunches, I surged upwards and began exploring every inch of his chest, throat, and mouth with my lips and tongue.

Levi’s cock strained his jeans, and I wondered if he was hard enough to break through them. As I continued to feast on him, Levi pulled my own tee off and undid my bra. His hands cupped my heavy breasts as I moaned against him, and he squeezed them with just the right amount of pressure. A pinch of pain made me gasp and lose focus for a few seconds. Levi’s palms were rough, but his movements were firm—gentle. He knew how to arouse and ensured he exerted every skill he had in turning me into a panting mess.

His fingers exploded, trailing featherlight touches over my sensitive spots, making me shiver and raising goosebumps as my body responded. Levi was a master of desire, a God of passion, and I wanted nothing more than to worship at his feet.

When his mouth claimed a nipple, my spine arched as a moan of desire escaped my lips. Sucking it deep and adding pressure made me squirm. His teeth nipped me, causing me to cry out.

Levi lavished attention on it before releasing my swollen breast and capturing the other. He held my squirming body still as he provoked me until I rubbed against the friction my jeans caused.

“Let’s do something about that,” Levi murmured, letting my boob go with a pop. He laid me down gently and slid down my body. His hands were at my waistband, and then my trousers and panties were gone, and Levi was staring at my bare pussy.

“Christ, you shaved,” Levi muttered roughly and spread my legs. I was a little embarrassed at how wet I was, but Levi seemed mesmerised. He slid a hand between my glistening folds and used his fingers to open me up wide. Bared to him, I could only squirm as cold air hit my heat. Levi made a guttural noise, and his head dropped between my thighs.

In one smooth move, he latched onto my clit, finding the nub and sucking the sensitive spot. A cry left my mouth as my back arched; I lifted myself to offer him everything.

Levi’s fingers gripped my ass as he licked and sucked, driving me wild. The bastard seemed to realise when I was building to a crescendo and would get me to fever pitch and deny me release.

I grabbed his hair, and Levi muttered something before flipping me over onto my knees.

“Is that comfortable?” he asked as I moved my hand until I lay on an elbow instead of my cast.

“Will you just fuck me?” I demanded.

Levi chuckled, and a hard slap made me jump. Levi’s palm covered the sting and rubbed before another slap landed on my other cheek. Repeating his actions twice more until I was squirming, Levi nudged his cock between my folds, hitting the nub each time.

I pushed back, needing to come, and finally, Levi grasped my hips and drove deep inside me.

A scream of relief left my lips as he began to pound away at me. I was held imprisoned in his hands; he clutched my love handles hard and thrust into me repeatedly.

“You’ll come when I say,” Levi grunted, and I nodded. The ability to form words was lost in my pants and cries. Just when I thought I couldn’t take anymore, Levi paused and shoved my shoulders down so my cheek rested on the bed, and he hiked my hips higher.

“Come!” he ordered as he drove even deeper into me at this angle.

I felt his cock and screamed as he hit the spot, and I orgasmed.

Levi kept pumping; even though I was squirming because I was sensitive after coming, he kept going.

“Mine, Madisen, you’re fuckin’ mine until we die,” Levi cried, slapping my ass and, with one deep thrust, came inside me.

“Feel me, baby, deep in you. That’s my seed claiming you, and it means we’re gonna be together forever,” Levi muttered as he dragged my head up to

talk softly in my ear.

Right about now, that sounded pretty damn good!



A smile lingered on my face as I made breakfast for Levi and me. Levi had woken me up three more times in the night to make love to me. And in a sweet move, he took off a heavy silver ring. One he said meant everything to him. He'd undone my usual necklace and threaded it through. His ring nestled between my breasts now, a reminder of how serious Levi was about me.

Derek knocked and entered before I could call out. He took one look at my face and groaned.

"I do not need to see that first thing in the morning," he complained as he headed for the coffee machine.

"Then don't arrive so damn early," I retorted.

"At least his performance made you smile," Derek grumbled.

Levi chuckled as he entered the kitchen.

"Didn't realise you were so concerned about my," Levi said, coughing deliberately and making Derek scowl, "performance."

"Shut the fuck up," Derek growled, sipping a cup of coffee.

While I was delighted to see Levi not backing down from my brother, I realised this wasn't a casual visit by Derek.

"Millar was found by the police last night; seems the man had upset someone very powerful and was beaten and sliced. It is confirmed that there were more victims in his other houses. The feds are investigating, but who or what killed him is unknown, and the feds have made it very clear they are not prioritising his death. They're more focused on identifying his victims," Derek said.

"Such a shame," I bit out.

"Nobody's grieving for him or even planning to attend his funeral from what we've heard. The McKenzies have let it be known his actions were not condoned. It has been widely announced the Roderick women are now formally under McKenzie protection. That Oscar, before his death, drafted a letter asking me to watch over his girls. My brothers and I have made it very clear that we would not only respect Oscar's wishes but also protect you all.

Hopefully, any other asshole who might develop ideas will think twice.” Derek offered a smile of reassurance, but I saw something behind his eyes.

“You’re hiding something,” I accused.

“Jeremy was hurt in prison and was being transported to the hospital. There was a suspicious accident, and he escaped. Two paramedics are dead. We think he’s coming here for you,” Derek replied.

“Jerre probably is. He’ll want revenge, not just on me,” I replied slowly.

“Can you tell me who is in his crosswires?” Derek asked.

I sat down heavily and gazed at Levi and then Derek.

“You want me to tell you what I did, don’t you?” I muttered.

They both nodded.

I took a deep sigh, prepared to unleash my inner secrets.

“Oscar was vile.” I started glancing at Derek. He nodded. “Oscar did not care how dirty a crime was. If it was profitable, he had his nasty, greedy fingers in it. Drugs, gun running, meth production, prostitution, and worse, human trafficking. I discovered this a year before his death. Of course, I noticed he was illegal with his underground casinos and loan sharks, but I didn’t realise it went to the depravity of human trafficking. And Oscar didn’t care who—men, women, and children.

“He had even begun organ harvesting. Some of his clients like rough play and would often leave their victims for dead. Oscar would swoop in and offer a clean-up and whisk the barely breathing bodies away. He’d then harvest them in an illegal operating theatre he owned somewhere. When I discovered what he was doing, I was appalled.

“Working with Riley, I would sneak into Oscar’s office and access his safe. He thought I was too dumb to know the combination. The joke was on him. I had known it for ages and had been compiling evidence against him. Not weak shit, but the hard-core stuff that would take him down. Riley would take the info I’d got and contact someone he trusted in the FBI.

Then Oscar’s next delivery of whatever it contained would be intercepted. We saved a few people, but I know for every truckload saved, three more got through.

“So Riley and I began making plans to have his criminal empire smashed to pieces. Of course, Oscar and Jere realised someone was leaking info, but they couldn’t discover who. Stupidly, they trusted me to set extra cameras up with the security firm they’d hired. I had access codes and everything and was able to create loops, so it looked like nobody was breaking into his

personal study.

“Then Oscar had a dinner party, a rather large one, and announced husbands for my cousins and myself. None of us had any idea it was coming, so to say we were stunned is an understatement. Even worse, he knew Brandy and Cami were in a relationship, and if they fucked a man, it would be rape because neither of them like men. Oscar gloated, his fat face all smug. We were horrified and started making plans.”

“Carry on,” Derek encouraged.

“Brandy was damn good at forging his signature. So we had her go over it again and again until it was flawless. Tami had read a book about how we could trigger a heart attack with certain flowers, so we began cultivating them in Oscar’s greenhouse. Meanwhile, I worked to find a lawyer who was basically honest, and I had him rewrite Oscar’s will.”

“Madisen, that lawyer isn’t exactly legit,” Levi interrupted.

“Yeah, he is. His sister was one of the women we saved. He owed me big time,” I replied, and Derek nodded.

“That makes sense.”

“The lawyer forged the will, and I slipped the signature page into some documents Oscar was signing. The idiot signed it, the lawyer got the witnesses, and it was a done deal. It was left undated until we were sure of when we were making a move. Brandy then forged the letters, and he sent them to a contact; the lawyer had to see if they could be determined forgeries. The guy claimed they were Oscar’s writing, so it was a go. I gave Oscar the lethal dose and waited until he was paralysed, and then I told him everything we’d done. That Riley and all of us had worked against him.

“Oscar was furious. I sat there watching drool run down his chin and him helpless to wipe it away. There was great joy in telling him how we planned to destroy his bastard son, his legacy, his empire, and what we wanted to spend the money on. I ensured that if Oscar hadn’t hated me when I made my move, he did then. I showed him the new will, the letters, everything. How Jere was going to be cut from the entire estate? Of course, back then, I didn’t know I wasn’t his daughter.

“And then I sat there as he died, telling him my plans for Jere. How I knew he’d blow, and the police would be called. And how Riley would place enough coke in his car to ensure Jere did a lifetime inside. We escaped and set up the charity that helps people out. And then we contacted a group of mercs. Gave them all the info on the buyers of the men, women, and children

who had been sold. See, Oscar was such a fucker. We knew who'd bought who.

"The mercs work for us and us alone and rescue those who were sold into slavery. Then, once rescued, they get a cash sum to set them up for life. I'm not stupid enough to know they're not damaged, but taking away a lot of the everyday stresses allows them to heal and regain control. So far, since Oscar's death, we've recovered thirty men and women. And ten children. Their 'owners' have suffered cruel deaths or been exposed and prosecuted.

"Day by day, the girls and I tear down Oscar's vile legacy, and we'll save who's left. It is not enough and never will be. But it's what we can do, and I resigned myself to that a long time ago."

I crossed my arms and gazed at the two men in front of me. If they wanted to condemn me now, then so be it. I wasn't innocent, I'd known what Oscar was doing, and although I had done my best, innocents had still died.

"You're fucking amazing," Derek stated with a gentle smile.

My eyebrows shot up into my hairline.

"You could have taken that money and walked away. You didn't. Shit baby, I'm so fuckin' proud of you and your cousins," Levi said, pulling me up into his arms. He nuzzled my neck, and Derek made a gagging noise and then growled as Levi kissed me.

"Get used to it," Levi taunted, and I sighed as Derek sent him a murderous glance. Levi, however, seemed to have a death wish and grinned. "Bonding with the in-laws, how refreshing."

"Let's focus on the issue at hand," Derek snarled.

My lips pursed, and a shiver ran down my spine. There was no doubt Jere was coming for me. My freaking nutjob brother hated me with a passion and would most definitely come for revenge. Shit. My eyes met Derek's, and I saw the acknowledgement in them.

"You're not going to lock me down, are you?" I asked, resigned to a fight.

"No. Jere is far too dangerous. His fractured state of mind means he can't be predicted. I also believe he knows where some of your father's secret weapon stashes are. Jere, using a missile to blow up Hellfire or whatever house you are in is not beyond the realms of fantasy. The little asshole is capable of such acts. We need to hide you and the girls," Derek stated.

"Do you have any safe homes?" Levi asked.

"Several."

"Take Cami, Brandy, and Tami to them. I can hide Madisen. There's

somewhere I go that's only known to me. Madisen will be perfectly safe there. I have a secure connection there and could give you the number to dial in daily," Levi replied.

"Sounds like a good idea to me," Derek said slowly, looking between Levi and me.

"Is this place secure and defensible?" I asked. I wasn't about to put either of us in danger, but some time alone with Levi wouldn't go amiss.

"Very defensible and very secure. It's where I go when I... need a break," Levi responded. I had the feeling he'd been about to say something else, but I didn't push it.

"Take Madisen. We will lay down false leads. Dane and Declan will bring the girls somewhere safe. For now, we'll split Tami from them. The harder it is to find you, the better," Derek stated.

I wasn't going to disagree. He was right.



Two hours later, I was packed and in a vehicle. Derek was gone and not happy Levi wouldn't tell him where we were heading. Instead, Levi had called Chance and asked for a prospect to drop a car off. Levi couldn't be sure if my car was tagged or not and didn't want to waste time checking it over. He gave me directions and told me to leave my phone behind. Again, it could be tracked. Worried in case someone from The Midnight Hour needed me, Levi assured me that Maylene Dixon, Clio's gran, was looking after it.

Of course, I knew Maylene was as rich as Croesus; Levi had said so. So my little business would be great in her gentle hands. I followed Levi, not losing sight of him once. Mainly, that was because Levi dropped back and rode in front or behind me, depending on his mood. Soon enough, we were out of Spearfish and heading along the I14a, which for Jere, sucked, as his guys were driving into Spearfish as we left.

We drove for several hours, backtracking and then making U-turns until I felt Levi was lost, but he pulled into a clearing and pressed a button. To my surprise, what I thought was a wall of ivy and rocks lifted, and I saw a small garage. Levi pointed to it, and we drove up and parked inside. I climbed out of the car and helped Levi gather bags and then exited. Levi pushed a button, and the walls slid back into place.

"Now that is cool. A hidden garage," I admitted.

Levi nodded, but he seemed to be nervous.

“Where are we?” I asked, and Levi took as much luggage from me as possible and then began walking.

“I own a cabin nearby. But I designed and had the car port built to my specifications. I don’t like people knowing where I am or if I am here. This is my private spot,” Levi said as he weaved through the trees.

Finally, we hit a small clearing, and I gaped at a cute but rustic log cabin. It was postcard-pretty and adorable. It was two levels, and I knew that I could live there forever.

“Why do you have this, and why does nobody know?” I asked as I followed Levi into the cabin. Oh, the cabin was Calamity Jane pretty. “Wow.” I took in the wide-open area, with a kitchen to one side and settees at the other end.

“I come here, Madisen, because I have a monster inside me. Coming here alone allows me to control him,” Levi replied.

“Okay, is that freaky talk for something?” I demanded.

“Sit down,” Levi nodded to the sofa as he opened the fridge and pulled two beers out. He handed me one and sat down.

“My parents weren’t the best of people. Self-centred and selfish, the world revolved around them. They were professional dancers, so it was a miracle I ended up being born. My mother was back at work four weeks later, barely having a baby pouch. From the moment I could stand, I was taught to dance. I wanted to pick my own path, even from an early age. But my parents began teaching me. They never brought home a gold medal; yet they were very talented. They realised I could bring that medal home, and therefore, my entire life was about dancing.

“I grew to hate it. It was something I loathed and despised, but my partner was a sweet girl through and through. Una was being pushed into shit as much as I was, so we rebelled. Then at 16, Una came to me; she was pregnant, our parents would flip the fuck out. We had a massive competition coming up, and we were nearly guaranteed the gold. Not only that, but my parents could also sue for breach of contract.

“In the end, we agreed to do the competition and then run away together. The winnings were a 50K jackpot. I figured it would be enough to live on for a while. The night of the event went well. We won as intended and received our cheque. Both sets of parents were over the moon until the next morning. I got up early to collect Una, and I saw her father dragging her out behind the

cabins we were staying in. Una was crying and holding her stomach, and I had a bad feeling about it.

“Following them, I overheard her father cursing her, and it came out he was the kid's dad. He'd been raping Una and threatening her to keep silent. I was a strong kid and barely managed to control my anger. He was shaking Una and telling her she was going to name me as the father. He then began kicking and beating her, and I charged forward. In my pure temper, I beat him to the ground, and it took four men to pull me off him. I had released a monster that had been in my belly for months.

“The beast had grown stronger with each slight or insult my parents dished out. Each time, Una and I were forced to practise for hours until our feet bled, it grew. Una's dad unleashed it. I was incoherent when pulled off him, but Una spilled everything. The cops dragged the piece of shit away, and her mother played innocent. But I knew something was still wrong. How could the mother not know that her husband had been raping his own daughter?

“Sadly, I never got the chance to ask. Una argued with her mother that night, and her mother blew Una's brains out for spilling the beans. She then turned it on herself. Seemed appearances meant more than her own daughter's life. After that, my monster raged, and it took everything I had to rein him in. If I let my control lapse, I'd let a serial killer loose. Because I know what that part of me is, it would revel in blood and pounding things, shapeless and breaking bones.

“I come here when I feel control slipping. Here, I paint myself into a stupor or dance until I fall. It tires the monster out, and I gain full control again. It's hard to explain, but here I can unleash the energy until I have control.” Levi fell quiet and gazed out at the trees.

What he had told me was huge, yet I wasn't frightened of him. I knew he wouldn't hurt me.

“We all got monsters we battle; some of us are not even aware of them,” I said, taking his hands.

Levi looked into my eyes. “Can you live with that?”

“I'm still here, aren't I?” I replied.

“Yeah, you are,” Levi replied with a smile.

## Chapter Fourteen.

Madisen

I was sitting on a porch swing, rocking back and forth. Levi had gone into town to fetch supplies and told me to stay put. Obviously, I can't be seen. He said he'd call Chance while there and check on my cousins and how they were doing.

So I sat here, taking in the beauty of the morning and fully relaxed. Of course, Levi had given me the goodies several times in the night, which helped my happy mood.

I heard bike pipes approaching and looked up with a welcoming smile. To my horror, the two riders who approached were not Hellfire. Their cuts proclaimed them to be Venomous Fangs. I leapt to my feet and headed straight for the cabin. Shit, I couldn't call for help. But there were shotguns inside. I was running for them when a weight took me to the ground.

I hit the floor hard and had the wind knocked out of me. Dazed, I lay there, wondering what the hell had hit me. That was when I felt hands on me.

With a scream, I started to fight, and something hit the back of my head with a loud crack, and it was lights out.

Levi

Madisen wasn't on the porch when Levi returned in the car. He imagined she was inside, naked and ready for him, and a smile crossed his mouth. Levi entered and stopped dead at the mess he saw.

"Madisen!" Her name left his lips in a scream. He raced to the upper level, and, on not finding her there, tore the cabin apart. He stopped at the small pool of blood on the floor. On autopilot, he dialled Chance.

"She's gone," he exclaimed as soon as Chance picked up.

"What do you mean?"

“There’s blood, and she’s not here,” Levi said, walking to the door. He saw tyre tracks in the dirt outside. He’d missed them when he came home. “Two sets of bike tracks. If they ain’t allies, then who’s are they?”

“Fangs.”

“Yeah. Fuckin’ watching our backs for her brother and Fangs snuck past us,” Levi replied bitterly.

“Get ready to ride. Derek put a tracker on her. He gave me the code, although I didn’t expect to use it anytime,” Chance said. Hope flared within Levi.

“Derek did?”

“Yes, in the necklace he bought her before he left. Don’t think she knew either. Sunny is tracking it right now,” Chance answered.

“I got her. Hang on,” Sunny called over the line.

Levi paced back and forth. His hand palmed his neck.

“She’s here,” Sunny said, spitting out an address. Levi was on his bike before Sunny uttered the last word.

Madisen

Damn, my head hurt. Whichever prick had hit me had hit me hard. My lids blinked, and I squinted into a dim room. I was handcuffed to a rusty bed; even my cast was cuffed, and my ankles were tied. I began yanking at the cuffs, hoping the frame was loose, but despite the poor condition, the bars held firm.

The door opened, and a scruffy-looking biker entered. He gazed at me coldly.

“Don’t see why Clamp lost his marbles over you. You aren’t exactly special,” he said.

“So let me go.”

“Not fuckin’ likely. Bein’ paid a lot to hold you, bitch. In fact, our guest is due any minute now.”

“I’ll pay double,” I said desperately.

“Nah, Fangs do not break words. But once he’s done with you, I’m taking what I want, even though you ain’t what I usually do. Bit too old for my tastes.”

I felt sick as two little kids ran by. They could only have been two or three, and I looked at him, horrified. The sick fuck winked, and I couldn’t help it.

Bile rose, and I leaned to one side and threw up. The biker laughed and slammed the door.

The next time it opened, I stared into the furious eyes of Jeremy.

Aw shit.

“Well, sister dear, what a predicament you are in,” Jeremy sneered.

“Did you tell assholes one and two out there you got no money?” I demanded.

“That isn’t a problem. Not when you’re dead and everything comes to me,” Jeremy said. “A quick trip to a pretty island with no extradition, and all the pennies will be mine.”

“Except I made a will,” I retorted.

“Easy to get one forged, right Madisen? After all, that’s what you did,” Jeremy snarled, and I saw the wild light in his eyes.

“I’m not sure what you mean. Father clearly realised he had treated me wrong and tried to make up for it.”

“Now, Madisen, there’s no way he’d have done that,” Jeremy sneered.

“And why’s that?” I demanded.

“Because you were not his. Think he didn’t realise mother fucked somebody else? You weren’t his, so he’d never have left you everything,” Jeremy replied.

Oscar had known? And Jeremy? Yet they’d never said anything.

“Oh yeah. You really didn’t matter. Father knew he could use you to foist on some unsuspecting soul and use you to tie someone to him. He thought the McKenzies were interested at first, but Derek never made a move.”

“Nope, and I bet you’d love to learn why,” I taunted.

Jeremy’s gaze narrowed, and I could see he wanted to ask.

I grinned at him, and, like a flash, his fist shot out and connected with my cheek. I continued to smirk as I saw rage infest Jeremy’s eyes.

“Yeah, Oscar wasn’t my father. I know who my family is though. And they’re someone you don’t want to mess with.”

“You know shit, Madisen,” Jere spat.

“I got Oscar to leave me everything. And to write those letters and to disown you. I also managed to dismantle his vile criminal empire. You underestimated me. I even got you sent to prison,” I gloated.

Jere’s fist shot out and hit me in the same spot. I couldn’t stop the cry of pain leaving my lips, but I gazed at him in disgust.

“The young girls you raped. Wonder what your cell mates will say to that

titbit when you're returned. Even jailbirds hate paedophiles. They'll make your life a living hell."

"Ain't going back, Madisen," Jere promised.

"No, because my brothers will put you in the ground, just like Millar," I stated, and Jere froze.

His little brain was going nine to the dozen, and I saw enlightenment dawn.

"You're the reason the McKenzies took out Millar," Jere drawled slowly as his brain made the connections.

"And you know how McKenzies feel about family."

"They'll soon forget you," Jere said, but I could hear the hesitation in his voice.

"Not a chance in hell. Remember, Derek killed his own father to protect his brothers. What do you think he'll do to you, who has no blood tie to him?"

"Don't matter. Because by the time they find you, the Fangs will have used, broken, and left you for dead."

"Derek knows Jere. He knows you're free and hunting me. Derek will tear you to pieces one slice at a time."

"Do you really think the McKenzies will go to war over you? Someone they barely know," Jere demanded.

My smug silence was all the answer Jere needed.

"Don't matter, I'll be long gone by then. Derek can do what he wants when he finds your body with the Fangs. He will be so incensed that he'll attack them. He won't even look for me," Jere said.

I shook my head and dug my nails into my skin. Slowly and trying not to wince, I indented Jere's initials into my arm.

"Derek will find me and your mark."

Jeremy cursed as he saw what I was doing, and he leapt at me. Too late. J R was there. Before the Fangs got a chance to use and abuse me, I'd be dead, and my body would have these marks. Derek would hunt Jere until the end.

"Let me go, and I'll make sure Derek doesn't kill you," I offered.

"No. You stole from me; you're going to pay," Jere growled out.

"Then I better confess everything," I said blithely, attempting to buy time.

Slowly, I began telling Jere exactly how I'd betrayed Oscar and the plans I had put in place. Of course, I didn't mention Riley or my cousins but instead made it seem the mastermind had been all me.

Levi

Levi approached the third house in what was a road in the middle of nowhere. Someone had planned years ago to build an estate, and bankruptcy hit him, and then the buildings did not sell. So this, in the middle of nowhere, an abandoned street, had ten derelict houses. Levi's mind flashed to a business opportunity, but then his focus hit the third house. In there was Madisen.

Derek was already there, and Chance and his men were on their way.

Derek was pacing back and forth on a call to another of his brothers. He kept sending Levi a shitty look, which Levi had to admit was justified. He promised Derek nobody knew his secret place, and less than twenty-four hours later, Madisen had been snatched.

"Seems Jeremy learned of the Fangs. They're from Florida, and he made contact with them. They identified Madisen, and Jeremy arranged for the snatch and grab. He's in there with her," Derek growled.

"My brothers will be here shortly," Levi said.

"And my sister may be dead by then. There are three of them and two of us. I'm going in," Derek challenged.

"We don't know there's only three," Levi argued.

"Then watch yourself."

In his immaculate suit, Derek moved forward, his head on a swivel, looking for any sight of an enemy. He motioned silently for Levi to go to the back. Levi nodded and drew his weapon. McKenzie was crazy, but so was Levi. It was a requirement of being Hellfire. Derek held up three fingers and made a zero, and Levi began counting. He hit the back door with five seconds left and, on zero, kicked the door in.

He entered with his gun out and heard footsteps heading towards him in a hurry. A bullet zoomed past him, and Levi took cover. The Fang kept firing, and Levi counted shots. Jesus, this guy was a damn idiot. As soon as the bullets stopped, Levi stepped out and fired once. The Fang went down with a bullet between his eyes.

A similar shot echoed from deeper within the house, and Levi quietly made his way forward.

Derek met him with a nod and tilted his head to say 'upstairs'. They made their way up and listened for any noise.

"He's armed," Madisen's voice rang out, and there was the sound of flesh

hitting skin.

“I’ll kill that fucker,” Derek mumbled and kicked the door in.

A bullet hit the frame.

“You’ll regret missing Jeremy,” Derek promised as Levi eased into the room behind him.

Madisen stood in front of Jeremy, a gun held to her head.

“She’ll die before me,” Jeremy stated.

“Doubt it. Because I want you alive,” Derek growled out.

“Let her go,” Levi ordered.

“Not a fucking chance. This bitch is my ticket out of here, and she owes me,” Jeremy yelled.

“Not happening,” Madisen sang out. Levi winced at the marks on her face. Jesus, she’d just healed from the last lot, and now she was bruised again.

“Who wants to take bets?” Jeremy sneered.

Levi didn’t like the look in his eyes. It was wild and crazy.

“Me. Because she is claimed by Hellfire, which means she’s going nowhere,” Levi said.

Jeremy began edging to one side.

Madisen sighed.

Before Levi or Derek could say anything, Madisen collapsed to the floor. Jeremy fired into a wall, and Derek’s bullet took him in the shoulder, Levi’s took the other.

Jeremy screamed as he dropped.

“Take her and go. My brothers will be coming with transport,” Derek ordered. “And it’s time Jeremy got reacquainted with McKenzie law and retribution.”

Levi nodded and swept Madisen up before carrying her downstairs.

“Wait, there are two kids here somewhere,” Madisen stated.

Levi paused and looked around. Derek would have cleared the ground floor. He wouldn’t have left two kids behind.

“Hold this, use it if you have to,” Levi ordered, passing her his gun. Levi walked back upstairs and kicked open the remaining doors. In a tiny box room stinking of piss and shit, Levi found two babies.

“Fuck,” he muttered. “Hey, I’m not here to harm you.”

“Dada?” the eldest asked, looking terrified.

“Your dad wear something like this?” Levi questioned, showing his cut.

The little boy stared and nodded.

“He got black hair?” Levi quizzed.

The boy frowned. Okay, he didn’t know black hair.

“BooBoo,” the little boy said and pointed to his cheek.

Levi guessed that meant that the father had a scar. He scooped the kids up, babbling nonsense, and rushed to Madisen.

“They say their father is one of the Fangs. That he has a cut on his cheek. Can you wait with them while I check?” Levi asked.

“Hello!” Madisen said in a happy tone as she nodded.

Levi moved back to the man he shot and didn’t find a cut. On the guy Derek had taken out, Levi discovered he had a scar running down his face. That was the father. His name had been Poppet. For fuckin’ real? Levi choked back a laugh and walked to Madisen.

“Let’s go,” he said, hearing a car and bikes arrive. He checked before opening the door that it was Hellfire and was met with Chance.

“You didn’t wait.”

“Derek went in. Couldn’t leave the hot-headed asshole without backup,” Levi explained.

“Who the fuck are they?” Chance demanded, nodding to the kids.

“They belonged to a biker named Poppet.”

“One of the Fangs was called Poppet?” Bear asked incredulously.

“Seems fuckin’ so. Can’t leave them here. I don’t think the eldest is three,” Levi said.

“Put them in the car with Madisen. I’ll take them home and clean them up before deciding what to do,” Chance muttered.

Levi nodded. All he wanted to do was get Madisen home to Hellfire and make sure she was physically okay.

Chance

He stormed into his house carrying the two children. As of yet, neither of them had said a word. And his wife was lurking somewhere around there. But Chance couldn’t consider Clio right now. He had to check these kids over, get them fuckin’ bathed because they stank, and get some food into them. The way their bellies were sunken in, Chance did not think they had eaten for a while. He’d already called Phoe, and she was on her way from RC.

Carrying them, he didn’t see Clio turn her head in shock. Chance carried them to the main bathroom and then striped them as he ran the water.

Both kids stared fascinated at the bath, and Chance wondered if they'd ever had a wash.

"You brought me babies?" Clio asked in a soft, shocked voice.

Chance stiffened.

"Rescued them from their asshole of a Fang father," Chance answered.

"And you brought them home to me," Clio replied, moving forward. A hand ran over the littlest one's head.

"No, woman. The state you're in, I wouldn't bring you kids," Chance said cruelly. He didn't need to be dealing with her shit now.

"Liar. You read my mind. I should have trusted you to make everything right," Clio said, dropping to her knees and helping unclothe the little one. She lifted her and placed her in the bath.

Chance was shocked to see the one he was carrying was also a girl. Poppet had shaved their heads like boys.

"Clio, honestly, I ain't got time for whatever bullshit you're about to spew," Chance stated as he began gently bathing the kids.

"I've been sick. I need help," Clio admitted.

"Fuckin' odd to me that you ignore the gifts God gave you, Louisa and Dax, but wake up for these two," Chance spat, hurt in his voice.

"I was lost in guilt, Chance. I couldn't give you the big family you wanted," Clio answered.

"Not me that wanted that. I've only ever needed you, but you gave me Louisa and Dax. They're bonuses, but even if you hadn't, you were my everything. And you shut me out, turned away from me. And now there's two more kids. Everything is hunky, dory? Not fuckin' likely," Chance hissed. He grinned at the kids and splashed bubbles at them so as not to scare them.

This was bullshit. Clio had come back to life because she thought he'd brought her more youngsters. What was wrong with their own?

"I wanted you to have a large family, and the hysterectomy stopped that," Clio admitted as she washed the little one.

"That's what you wanted. Not me," Chance shot back.

"I know. But I couldn't climb out of the guilt. And then this shit with Madisen. I thought I'd lose you, too."

"But you didn't. And you didn't try Clio. You gave up on me, Hellfire, Louisa and Dax. Retreated so deep none of us could reach you. Yet two kids who've nothing to do with you bring you out of your funk. What does that say to us?"

“That you realised I needed more children to love?” Clio asked.

Chance snorted.

“That’s bull. I brought them here because I had shit to bathe them in and spare clothes. Had nothing to do with you,” Chance growled out.

“But they could be ours?” Clio questioned with an almost begging tone.

Did he trust Clio with them? She’d already rejected her own flesh and blood. He wished he knew what the fuck was going on in her mind.

“I’ll get therapy, and maybe Phoe’s right. I do need some time in an institution to talk this shit through. All I could do was wallow in my guilt, which makes no sense because I’ve nothing to feel guilty about. It was my dreams that were smashed, not yours, but I was caught in a whirlpool that just kept getting deeper and deeper.”

“You have probably got a lot of trauma over Dax’s birth,” Chance admitted.

“You’ve no idea,” Clio agreed.

“Get help. I’ll stand with you because you’re my world. But ever pull this shit again, and I will put the kids first. I have to,” Chance stated.

“I’ll do whatever it takes to get better and be worthy of you,” Clio said quickly.

“You’ve never not been worthy of me, babe; let’s get these babies washed and fed. And then see if they have names we like.”

Chance busied himself even though his mind was full of doubts. But Clio was responding, and for now, his heart was eased.

# Epilogue.

Levi

Levi looked out at the quiet woods that surrounded his cabin. They'd discovered a tracker on his bike, which had since been destroyed. He wasn't prepared to give up his home, so instead hired the Fallen Warriors to come and make it secure. Levi now owned state-of-the-art equipment that would alert him to any approach to his home.

The monster was asleep. No, that was the wrong word. The monster had been tamed. Around Madisen, those feelings he'd fought just faded away. The anger over how he and Una had been treated wasn't there.

Madisen had gone after his parents and completely ruined them. Four weeks ticked by quickly after Jere kidnapped Madisen.

At first, he thought the beast he controlled would break free, but instead, being around her calmed it into nothing. Of course, should anything threaten her again, it would rise, but for now, the beast lay dormant.

Clio was recovering, having done a three-week stint in a place Chey and Phoe discovered for her. She had three weeks remaining but came home at weekends, and everyone could see the difference. Clio was heading back to her strong, happy former self. Diesel hadn't been able to look her in the eyes, knowing what his decision had wrought. But this weekend, Clio had gently boxed him into a room and had it out with him. They'd all witnessed Clio and Diesel clinging to each other and visibly healing.

Life was good—apart from the threat of the Fangs. But with their allies, and those increased daily, the McKenzies were now on board.

Levi was hopeful.

Beauty and happiness surrounded him.

Right now, Madisen lay sprawled in their bed, naked and exhausted from the lovemaking. He may not have been looking for her, but Levi had found his soul mate and had no intentions of letting her go. As much as he claimed

her, she'd claimed him. And Levi was quite happy to belong to someone. Finally.

# Characters.

## **Hellfire MC.**

**Chance Michaelson.** DOB 1973. Chance is the Hellfire President. His father started Hellfire. Chance looks like Tim McGraw with long hair. He is Drake's older cousin. They were brought up together and are as close as brothers. They both fought to get their clubs clean from the filth that infected them.

Chance is six foot four and projects a deceptive leanness. In fact, he has a broad chest and shoulders that are muscled, not heavy like a wrestler, but with a clear muscle definition. He's lean-hipped and long-legged. Chance's hair is shaved at the sides, and he's left the top long and tied back in a ponytail. He has sharp, bright green eyes with laughter lines. Chance has a neat goatee the same colour as his hair, a dark brown that sometimes looks black. He has a pin-up girl on his right arm. He's married to Clio and is the father to Louisa Mae.

**Bear.** Bear is the Hellfire VP. Chance lets it slip to Drake that Bear has a dead sister. Phoenix calls him Bearbear. Bear loves his food and drink and doesn't care who knows it. His real name is Sky Blue. Bear can be hotheaded and hot-tempered, but he's loyal and caring. Bear's hair is light brown, cut short at the sides and long on top. He has a floppy lock that keeps falling over his eyes.

His eyes are light hazel, which look amber when the light catches him just right. Bear has a strong face, not classically handsome but eye-catching and attractive. His jaw is square, and a goatee hides firm but plump lips. Bear is six foot seven with shoulders as wide as a wrestler and his chest just as broad. He has long legs and thick muscles. He's married to Thalia.

**Sunny.** Sunny is Hellfire's Lieutenant. He is a legacy like Chance. His father was also a founder. Zeus put four bullets in Sunny and then tried to kill him in the hospital. Doc Gibbons forged a death certificate, and Sunny joined the army. Sunny's Mom and daughter Olivia moved to Florida for their safety. He's now left the military and could have demanded VP back but settled for

Lieutenant. Sunny thinks there is still dirt left in Hellfire and is there to clean it up.

**Diesel.** Diesel is Hellfire's Sergeant at Arms. He buys and flips houses, putting half the profit into the Hellfire coffers. Diesel is a quiet man who speaks when he has something to say. He'd once had an old lady who'd split from him during the fight to get the club clean. Diesel is Pyro's close friend. Pyro beat him badly when Pyro learned his father had been arrested. He is attracted to Alice, who works at Magic's bar. Diesel's old lady is Alice.

**Big Al.** Al is Hellfire's Chaplin. He has an old lady called Tatianna and owns a pawnbroker. Al is the only First Gen left and is over twenty years older than Tati. He and Tati want to adopt three children whose mother murdered their seven-year-old sibling, and Tati gave birth to twin boys.

**Rooster.** Rooster is Hellfire's Secretary and handles their money. He has three kids, all boys but isn't with their mother, and he has custody of them. Rooster loses his left leg below the knee in an explosion on Hellfire.

**Tiny.** Tiny is an enforcer for Hellfire. Tiny is sullen and quiet, but with reason, his mother was murdered by his father, and he hates women being abused. He owns a gym. Tiny likes a specific top-shelf whiskey that Bunny threatens to ban him from at the bar.

**Banshee.** Shee is an enforcer for Hellfire. Shee buys houses and rents them out; he also loves shopping for women. He had a woman who's done a bunk with his kid, and they'd never found them. Shee had been searching for four years. His son is called Troy, and his ex is called Tracey. Shee's one of those who can keep Louisa Mae happy.

**Chatter.** Chatter had witnessed his girl gunned down in front of him when Hellfire took their club back from the evil men who'd infested it. He works on car designs.

**Pyro.** Pyro is the clown, but he hides a secret pain; his brother and sister got into drugs and died. Pyro works on car designs. He's wrecked his bike three times. Pyro has dirty blond hair hanging around his face and keen blue eyes. He is lean and finely muscled and works out at a gym. Pyro has a rich baritone voice. Pyro's name is Dakota Johnson. He grew up in an abusive household, and his father beat him and his mother.

Pyro was almost murdered by his father, who tried to burn him alive. He was nearly adopted by the Revers. He has a persona called Justice, who burns criminals after he gets their confessions. Justice operates separately from Pyro. Pyro saved Logan Carter in a wildfire. His woman is Janey Revers. His

scars were tattooed over by Levi.

**Levi.** He likes to paint pictures of landscapes. He has darkness in his past and sometimes disappears for a few weeks. No one knows what he does during that time. Levi also does tattoos. He is one of the few who can keep Louisa Mae happy. Levi goes walkabout during Justice of Hell. He has a goatee. As a child Levi trained as a professional dancer and at sixteen he lost his partner and close friend when her mother killed her. It unleashed a monster inside of him which is why he heads to his cabin for peace when he feels it rising.

**Shotgun.** He makes leatherware items as a hobby. Shotgun came from 'the wrong side of the tracks' and looked after his grandmother, who most of the club were fond of. He learned leatherware from his grandfather.

**Celt.** Grew up glass-blowing. Celt had been betrayed not once but twice by a woman and saw women as a release and nothing else. The only women Celt treats with respect and decency are Phoe and Tati. He'd been brought up by an uncle who taught Celt glass blowing and turned his back on him. Celt has blue eyes. Celt hit Chey when they were younger while high on drugs and booze. He had no memory of this. Celt is devastated when he discovers what he did. Celt thought Chey had chosen fame and fortune over him. His arms are burned when he pulls Chey from a burning car.

**Phoenix.** DOB 1979. Drake's old lady. She is English and left England to escape an abusive relationship. Phoe has five children she gave birth to and adopted eleven. She is exceedingly well off and runs three National Charities. The Phoenix Trust, the Rebirth Trust and the Eternal Trust. She has been married twice, her first husband died, and her second was a bigamist. Phoe has long, blond hair, is green-eyed and is five feet tall. She met Hellfire MC first and is loyal to them.

## **Prospects**

**Smokey.** Smokey has just become a prospect. He's called Smokey because he was always on the grill smoking ribs. He also does tattoos.

**Bone.** He's called Bone because he is like a dog with a bone when he's got a project in his head for a design; he's just become a prospect.

**Fanatic.** He's a prospect and called Fanatic because he's like Bone. He is apparently the worst out of the lot for picking on the finest detail in a design and making it perfect. Fanatic is Micah, Phoe and Drake's son, and he joined Hellfire because he thought he wouldn't get fair treatment from Rage. Micah

believed Rage would try to protect him too much. He is shot in his shoulder when trying to save Janey from Tanner. His best friend is Calamity. Fanatic is also a Star Wars fan.

**Slaughter.** Has just become a prospect and is called Slaughter because he once worked as a butcher.

**Wraith.** He's called Wraith because as big as he was, the man moved like a ghost and has become a prospect. He does tattoos. Wraith was involved in the car chase to save Janey and didn't give up until he had her safe.

## **Hellfire Old Ladies**

**Tati.** Tati is roughly five foot eight, with a vast Dolly Parton bust, a tiny waist, and flaring hips. She has blond hair that's teased out around her face; she has kind, steady clear blue eyes. There were a few lines around them and a smattering of freckles on her nose. Tatianna is aged mid to late thirties. She has a generous mouth and is attractive. Tati is friendly and excitable, and over the moon, the old ladies are growing. She loves shopping and spending money. She has two twin boys and a son she adopted, and two adopted daughters.

**Clio.** She has long, silky brown hair hanging to her waist in a straight sheet and a flawless peach and cream complexion. She has a rosebud mouth and large, wide, grey eyes framed with long lashes. Clio has a slender frame but a rounded ass and a bust that promises a handful. Clio had no one in the world and was an orphan. She's kind and generous and is five foot three inches tall. She spent her life in foster homes, and from seven to thirteen, Staffey raised her. Clio calls Staffey her father. Clio discovers she is the second of the quintuplets and Thalia's identical twin.

**Thalia Winchester.** Her birth parents kept Thalia, who left her with her maternal grandparents. She was unaware of other siblings and was horrified when she discovered there were. She is the eldest of all the siblings, and she and Clio are identical twins. She suffers from idiopathic gastroparesis, which was found when she collapsed at seventeen in school.

Thalia discovered she had siblings by accident and was hurt her grandmother hadn't told her. Thalia was tortured and nearly killed, she lost her right hand's little finger, and her nipple was burned off. She is stabbed and sliced many times and has to have surgery.

**Cheyenne Markham.** Cheyenne was eighteen when she was with Celt. She

was pregnant by him, and he hit her to cause her to miscarry. Chey was carrying twins and lost one baby. Chey is a famous singer in a group called The Wild Wind and had two crazy stalkers.

She was paralysed in a car accident and can take a few steps after a year of therapy. Chey is very close to her son, Jesse. She hadn't been back in Spearfish for fifteen years, frightened of Zeus's threat and worried about danger to herself and Jesse. Chey is now walking again after therapy.

**Janet Revers, aka Bunny Jones.** Janey witnessed a murder which she informed the police about and was accused of wasting police time. Then she was stalked by the murderer and so disappeared. Before she did, Janey rediscovered Pyro, who'd been her best friend when they were children. Pyro didn't recognise her, and Janey fled but was shot on Hellfire. She recovered and disappeared before finding work at Magic's bar. There she is found by Pyro, who swears to protect her. Janey was a librarian but changed her appearance dramatically because of hiding her identity. Janey also plays softball and has played since she was three.

**Alice Rain.** Her real name is Alexis Adams. Alice is a barmaid at Magic's and has been for seven years. She escaped from a cult at seventeen, and Magic found her. He hid her while she gained an online education for four years and then let her work at the bar. She edits and copywrites books for a side job. Alice has no idea about her true family and is distraught when she finds out.

**Sallie-Anne Forrester.** Sallie is a teacher who escaped from the same cult Alice did. She was married to Second at the age of twelve, and her real father was Alice's uncle. Which made Sallie Willoughby's granddaughter too. She saves two children from a burning building and then disappears. She falls in love with Shee after forgiving him for ruining her life.

**Madisen Roderick.** Madisen was brought up by Oscar Roderick who was a Mafia boss. She has three cousins who live with her. One from her mother's side and two from her fathers. She arranges for Oscar's death as she's sick of his evil and she shuts his entire empire down while arranging for her sadistic brother to go down for drug running. She opens The Midnight Hour, which is split into different levels. She dresses in 1920s clothes and doesn't care who judges her. She is brave and spirited and not frightened of holding her own.

**Hellfire children.**

**Jesse Markham.** (Celt and Chey.) Jesse was born in 2004. He had a twin who was lost due to a miscarriage. He knows how Celt treated his mother and is very protective of her. Jesse is suspicious of Celt and hates him at first. He comes around when Celt rescues Chey.

**Louisa Mae Michaelson.** (Chance and Clio.) Born on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Louisa appears to have a mind of her own and runs everyone ragged.

**Dax Aston Drake Michaelson.** He was ten weeks premature and weighed three pounds and eight ounces at birth.

**Kit.** Rooster's eldest son. He was born in April 2011.

**Finn.** Rooster's middle son. He was born in June 2012.

**Brax.** Rooster's youngest son. He was born in November 2013.

**Ajax.** (Tati and Big Al) Born 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**Brock.** (Tati and Big Al) Born 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**Tinsley.** (Tati and Big Al) Born 2016. She was adopted in 2020.

**Kersey.** (Tati and Big Al) Born 2017. She was adopted in 2020.

**Campbell.** (Tati and Big Al) Born 2018. He was adopted in 2020.

## **SPD**

**Emilio Hawthorne.** Lio is Dylan Hawthorne's cousin and is a detective in Spearfish PD. He hates women and children being abused and doesn't worry about calling on his cousin if he needs help. Emilio likes to be called Lio. His partner is Phil Gold.

**Phil Gold.** He isn't as fiery as Lio but still has a strong sense of wrong and right. He's a detective in SPD.

**Jaggers.** Uniformed police officer. One of the good guys.

**McNamara.** Uniformed police officer. One of the good guys.

## **Other Characters.**

**Maylene Dixon.** Maylene is the quintuplets maternal Grandmother. She was devastated when her daughter gave up four of the quintuplets. Her husband died three years ago; she has blond hair and grey eyes with a trim figure. She is Clio's grandmother.

**Jere Roderick.** He is Madisen's sadistic older brother who treats her and her cousins like dirt. He is arrested for drug smuggling and running and escapes

prison. He kidnaps Madisen intending her to give him back his inheritance but ends up at the mercy of the McKenzies.

**Brandy Carter.** Brandy is Madisen's cousin from her mother's side. She is in a relationship with Cami. Brandy is bold and brash and brave, she doesn't hesitate to defend her family.

**Camillie Roderick.** Cami is the oldest of two sisters and Madisen's cousin from Oscar's side, she's in a strong relationship with Brandy. Like Madisen Cami loves the 1920s and opens a dance studio in The Midnight hour.

**Tamsin Roderick.** She is the youngest sister and Madisen's cousin through Oscar. She's as tough as her sisters and cousins and opens a clothes shop for the 1920s in The Midnight Hour.

**Mr Applegate.** He is a lawyer that helped Madisen gain her father's fortune. His family member was hurt by Oscar, so he took great pleasure in screwing Jeremy out of everything.

**Brooker.** Madisen dated him once and he didn't like her rejection and turns into a stalker. The police arrest him.

**Branson.** He's the manager of the gallery which sells Levi's paintings.

**Bambi.** She was a woman who got a date with Levi, and spoke about herself all night. Levi got shot of her.

**Millar Levvit.** He is a minor crime lord who is moving up the ranks. He was promised Cami by Oscar to marry, not caring she was a lesbian. He swaps his attention to Madisen when she stands up to him and he wants to break her. It is Millar who was sending the body parts to Madisen. He'd killed numerous women for no reason. The McKenzies take care of him.

**Riccardo Conti.** Madisen had been slated to marry him. He's in love with his sisters best friend.

**Oscar Roderick.** Madisen's alleged dad. She killed him for his cruelty and greed and power plays.

**Kylian and Callahan.** Cousins who are Darren's bodyguards. They're aware of who Madisen is.

**Derek McKenzie.** His real name is Diarmuid but he goes by Derek. He is head of the Irish Mafia and the biggest crime family in Florida. Derek confronts Madisen and explains he is her brother and places all the girls under his protection. He was the eldest of six brothers, no older than thirty-five. His reputation was ruthless and makes the devil cringe in fear. Derek was rumoured to have killed his father at eighteen, in reality he was fifteen.

**Davin McKenzie.** He is the second eldest and known as the enforcer.

**Declan McKenzie.**

**Dane McKenzie.**

**Daithi McKenzie.** He is the second youngest and a hot head.

**Dai McKenzie.** Dai is the youngest but is known to be ice cold.

**Eimear McKenzie.** She is the only girl the McKenzies had until they claimed Madisen. She is their little cousin.

Thank you for reading Hell's Vengeance. For more from the Rage/Hellfire World, check out Rage MC, book one [The Rage of the Phoenix](#) is the beginning of the Rage MC world. Or take a peek at Washingtons, starting with [James](#). The Prospects series is also out now, the first book [Calamity](#) is available now!

Also, take a gander at the Love Beyond Death series, book one of which, [Oakwood Manor](#), is out now. And the new series of Love Beyond Death-The Inns begins with [The Jekyll and Hyde](#). If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review at,

[Goodreads](#) and [Amazon](#)

Please remember your reviews are so important to me!

Thank you!

**Elizabeth.**