

STEEL *Scorpions*
MC



ANGELL

SAVANNAH RYLAN

ANGEL


STEEL SCORPIONS MC #2

SAVANNAH RYLAN

Copyright © 2022 by Savannah Rylan

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

 Created with Vellum

CONTENTS

1. [Nadia](#)
2. [Angel](#)
3. [Nadia](#)
4. [Angel](#)
5. [Nadia](#)
6. [Angel](#)
7. [Nadia](#)
8. [Angel](#)
9. [Nadia](#)
10. [Angel](#)
11. [Nadia](#)
12. [Angel](#)
13. [Nadia](#)
14. [Angel](#)
15. [Nadia](#)
16. [Angel](#)
17. [Nadia](#)
18. [Angel](#)
19. [Nadia](#)
20. [Angel](#)
21. [Nadia](#)
22. [Angel](#)
23. [Nadia](#)
24. [Angel](#)

[Sneak Peak at Goose](#)

[More Books by Savannah Rylan](#)

[About the Author](#)

ONE

NADIA

I picked up the heaviness of my head and leaned it against the wall that supported my back. The rough texture of the cement blocks dug into my skin, pebbles of blood rising to the surface. With my hands bound behind me and my ankles criss-crossed with zip ties, I was helpless.

Hell, I was beyond helpless.

“What should we do with her, Bullet?”

“Should we have some fun?”

“Rough her up a bit?”

“Include her in the auction this month?”

“No,” a deep voice said as fear trembled through my veins. “I have much bigger plans for her.”

My lower lip quivered and I bit my tongue to try to keep myself from crying. I didn't want any of them bothering me. I didn't want anyone else around me. All I wanted was to sit in whatever room they had tossed me into until someone came and found me.

If anyone was looking for me in the first place.

Angel, help me.

I closed my eyes as a silent tear slipped down my cheek. All I'd done was head to my car at the shelter. I'd worked a long-ass day with some of the girls that had escaped the clutches of that disgusting motorcycle crew. I'd gotten them set up with clothes and showers. Food and water. Resources

they needed to either contact family or find jobs so that they could get on their feet. I'd worked around the clock as much as possible, trying to make sure that they were settled.

And the second I stepped out of those doors to head to my car so I could go home, I got jumped.

The men started clapping and cheering about something and it made me jump. I swallowed the knot working its way up my throat, determined to keep my stomach bile at bay. Was it the same day? A different day? How long had I gone without eating? Or water?

I sighed heavily as helplessness overcame me.

I hadn't even been given a chance to put up a fight. All of those self-defense classes after my husband was killed went to waste. I couldn't even protect myself without the help of someone.

Would I survive this?

Fear gripped my stomach and I felt my heart begin to race as my breathing intensified.

Don't start to panic.

When I had come to, I'd woken up to the sounds of someone popping a trunk. They'd shoved me into a trunk, for crying out loud. And the next thing I knew, the sharp pinch of a needle appeared as they injected me with something. My limbs went limp as they tied me up. I'd been tossed over someone's shoulder while I practically drooled down their back. Then, my memory went black before I woke up.

In the dark.

With my wrists and ankles bound.

What are they going to do to me?

It didn't take a genius to know who had taken me. After catching a glimpse of their vests when I'd been practically flopped over someone's shoulder, I knew that Devil's Rage had taken me. Probably as punishment for trying to help the women they tortured on a regular fucking basis. I wanted to slice all of their necks and watch them gurgle on their own

blood. No man deserved to live if they mistreated anyone that way, much less a woman.

And with everything that had already transpired between their crew and Angel's, I knew it was only a matter of time before they connected the dots.

Aria.

For now, I could only assume that they knew me as the woman helping their girls get away. But if they figured out my relation to the gang, then my sister would get roped back into this shit. She'd be thrust into another situation she had no control over, and I knew what Aria's mental health could be like. I knew how bad it could get if she didn't keep herself grounded.

I wondered if Bender knew how to keep her grounded.

"So, what are we gonna do now?" someone asked.

I stuffed down the voices in my head so that I could focus on the conversation happening just outside my door.

That same deep, resounding voice spoke confidently. "Well, we know she's helping those dumbass Steel Scorpions."

Someone giggled. "We also know that her sister is fucking one of those guys. What's his name?"

"Bender."

"Right, right."

"Isn't she fucking someone too, though?"

Fuck had they figured it out already?

"What?"

"I don't think so."

"We don't have any surveillance of her with a dude."

"Are we sure about that? I mean, her sister was quick to fuck someone. Maybe she's just good at it."

"We should have someone test her out." They all exploded in laughter as I fought back the urge to throw up.

“Even if she isn’t fucking one of them, we can still use her as leverage. Her sister will want her back, and by the looks of it, she has Bender pussy whipped enough to get him to save her.”

The sound of their voice faded, and I assumed that they had moved away from where I was being held. While I took solace in the fact that they hadn’t connected me and Angel yet, my sister was still in danger. And if my sister was in danger, then that meant Bender would invoke the whole of the crew to keep her safe.

Which meant that we were about to be plunged into another disgusting altercation with the fucking crew that had abducted me.

“All right,” someone said as they ripped the door open, “time to talk.”

“Ah!”

I yelped as the bright white lights of the hallway—or house, or wherever the hell I was—blinded my eyes. Someone gripped my hair and pulled my head upright, forcing my eyes open when they flicked my closed eyelids with their fingers. The snarling man in front of me had breath that could’ve knocked a damn moose over, and as he shoved my head off to the side, he spit on me.

Directly onto the side of my face.

“Enough,” Mr. Deep Voice said.

I was almost certain that man hovering over me was Bullet, their president. I’d heard about him from the girls at the shelter. He crouched down and gripped my chin, forcing my gaze to his. He tilted his head and studied me with his eyes, allowing them to dance along my face. And as much as I wanted to strike out at him—to spit in his face or to smash my forehead against his nose—I kept my cool.

Because if I wanted to escape, I couldn’t allow them to break me.

“So,” he said as he released my chin, “my guys and I have a little bet going.”

I didn't say anything as he sat back on his haunches.

“My men and I think you're screwing around with someone in the Steel Scorpions. I say you're not as stupid as your sister. My men, however, say otherwise. Care to settle the score?”

I sat there with my crooked body, trying my best to hold myself up. I'd never felt so weak before. So helpless. So afraid. I hated it. I hated every second of it. But I refused to answer the man. I'd rather him kill me than go after Angel, because the last thing I needed was to lose another man I cared for.

I couldn't bury Angel after burying my husband.

Without another word, the man cracked his hand against my cheekbone. My head soared in the other direction, causing my body to fall to the floor. He slammed his steel-toed boot into my ribs and the pain that rushed over my entire being made me sick to my stomach. And as stomach bile crept effortlessly up the back of my throat, it seeped along my tongue and dripped out of my mouth.

While I laid there and took the beating Bullet had for me.

“Maybe that'll loosen your lips,” he murmured.

And after he spat on me as well, he slammed the door closed.

Leaving me alone with my thoughts.

“Patchy,” the man barked, “you're in charge of making sure she doesn't generally shit herself or starve. The only way we get what we want from those fuckers is to make sure stays alive. Go get her some bread and some water, then get that bitch a bucket to use. You'll have to cut her ankles loose, but I don't think she'll be an issue now. Think you can handle that?”

The trembling voice that sounded caught me off-guard. “Y-yes, Boss. I can do that.”

“You sure about that? You don't sound too sure.”

The man cleared his throat. “Yeah, yeah. Of course, I can do it.”

“Good. Now, get it done.”

A bunch of footfalls echoed away from the door before it cracked open. A spindly, young-looking man stood there with disheveled blonde hair and curious eyes. My heart ached for the boy. He couldn't have been more than twenty-one or twenty-two years old.

He silently popped the zip ties from around my ankles before he helped me to my feet.

“Can you stand?” he asked.

I furrowed my brow tightly as I stumbled on my feet. “Yeah, I'm good.”

He nodded. “There's a bucket in the corner. Do you need to use the bathroom?”

I blinked. “Not with you watching me, no.”

He shrugged. “You don't have much choice, unless you wanna piss in the dark.”

“Have to drink water in order to piss.”

He nodded toward the corner. “Bucket's over there. Use your foot to feel for it. I'll be back with some bread and some water for you.”

“Thanks,” I said flatly.

He slipped back out and closed the door, and immediately a plan leapt into my head. It was very clear to me that this Patchy guy didn't like what was going on, and I knew I could use that to my advantage. I had to make friends with him, though. I couldn't convince him to let me go if he still saw me as his enemy.

So, once he came back with the glass of ice water and the cheese sandwich, I stated the other obvious issue.

“You'll have to feed it to me if I don't have use of my hands,” I said.

He nodded before he set the glass of water down. “Here, I'll go slow.”

He held the sandwich up to my mouth and I took a bite.

“So,” I said as I chewed, “how’d you get roped up with these guys?”

He shrugged. “They’re family.”

I nodded. “Where did you meet them? Around here?”

He let me take another bite. “Yeah, around here.”

“I’m a native of Twin Bays as well. I grew up on the east side of town.”

He smiled softly before he reached for the water on the ground. “North side, born and raised.”

“Near the gas station? Or the grocery store?”

His eyes quickly darkened before his boyish charm was sucked up by a darkness that reared its head. “Shut the hell up and fill your stomach before I go tell Bullet that you’re trying to get friendly with me. I might be open with people and enjoy smiling more than most, but don’t mistake that for friendliness.”

I took three long pulls of the ice cold greatness before he yanked the water away. My brain fogged over and I had no idea which way was up. The man interchanged the water with the cheese sandwich, stuffing it into my system as quickly as possible before he drew in a deep breath.

“Like I said, bucket’s in that corner,” Patchy said with a nod of his head.

I scoffed. “How do you expect me to get my damn pants off to go to the bathroom?”

He shrugged. “Sounds like a personal problem. And to answer your question? I grew up between the two.”

Then, he gathered everything up and slammed the door right in my face.

What if Angel doesn’t come for me?

I had no idea if anyone knew. I had no idea if anyone would even recognize the fact that I had been snatched up.

And even then, I couldn't expect some guy I was fucking to come rescue me as if we were together or something. Angel and I, at best, were fuck buddies. Someone that brought about stress relief without having to deal with the complications that came with something serious.

After all, we tried seriously dating back in high school.

And that shit didn't go well at all.

I have to get Patchy on my side. It's my only real chance.

TWO

ANGEL

“We have to do something,” I said the second all of the guys gathered in the living room.

Bender nodded. “And we will. We just need to come up with a game plan first. Does anyone know when she was taken or where?”

Aria bolted into the room. “She was taken from the shelter! Here! Look!”

She held out her phone and we all watched from the point of view of the only camera that hung outside the front door of the women’s shelter. I watched in horror as she stepped out the front door before three massive men came barreling out of the darkness. One of them got behind her and restrained her while another guy gripped her hair, pulling her head back. And when that last man shoved some needle into her skin, she went limp in an instant.

“Goddamn it!” I roared.

I swung my fist around and punched the wall beside me, tearing right through the paint and plaster. I pulled my fist out and went to do it again, only that time, Viper caught my fist. He shook his head as I looked up at him, then he lowered my arm to my side.

“She needs you to be at your best,” Viper said.

“We have to do something, please,” Aria begged with tears in her eyes.

I turned to face the guys. “How do you have that footage?”

Aria sniffled. “I know Nadia’s default password for most things that she uses. She apparently also uses it to log into her account at the shelter, which gives her access to the cameras.”

Bender nodded as he held his woman from behind. “We’re going to find her, you guys. I can promise you that.”

Jesus Christ, what if they sell her off?

While I had never talked with anyone in the club about my past with Nadia, it was pretty clear in the way they spoke—and the way I was reacting—that she and I had some sort of connection brewing between the two of us. That was only a quarter of it, though. I had gone to high school with Nadia and Aria. Nadia and I had dated most of our high school years. However, she kept that a secret from everyone, but most importantly from Aria. Because she knew even then, that I would screw her over.

She had been the pretty little princess who enjoyed makeup and ice cream dates while I had been the horny bad boy stealing my father’s leather jacket to wear to school just to feel cool. I was the third generation of my family to take up the bike life as a Steel Scorpion. It was in my blood.

And when I officially made that decision to join the club, I knew Nadia and I would be shoved into two completely different worlds. Nadia was too good for me. She deserved so much more than I could ever offer her.

Because she was smart. But now look at what she’s in because of me.

“The first thing we need to do,” I said as I found my voice, “is analyze that video. Aria, is there anything after the point where she’s knocked out?”

She shrugged. “Yeah, the camera just keeps taking surveillance. It isn’t like they took them out or anything.”

Reaper yanked her phone out of her hand. “Let me get it digitized and downloaded onto my laptop. I’ll work a bit of magic.”

Fangs nodded, finally speaking for the first time since we had gathered. “Good. Extract any information you can: make

and model of the car, possible license plate—”

Reaper sighed as he sat down onto the couch. “What the guys look like, where the traffic cameras catch their car, yada yada yada. I know how this works.”

“Then do it,” I said curtly.

For the second time in my life, a woman that I cared for had been kidnapped. When I was fifteen, my younger sister had been snatched off the fucking street in the middle of the goddamn day by some local gang-bangers trying to prove themselves. My father had burned their entire damn block down trying to get her back, only for her to struggle with agoraphobia and depression for the rest of her days. I thought back to the times I heard my father crying in the shower in the mornings. The moments where I heard him cursing out his own brothers because he was sick to his stomach with guilt and anguish.

I thought back to how helpless I’d felt, and I hated how that same helplessness crept back into the marrow of my bones.

That incident was the reason I tried my best to push Nadia away. But no matter how hard I tried; I couldn’t keep my hands off of her.

We all stayed silent, listening as Reaper typed away frantically on his keyboard. We all slowly gathered around him, tightening the circle and trying to steal glances at the screen of his computer. Windows popped up before he took screenshots and closed them out, and he did it as such lightning speed that I couldn’t even figure out what the fuck was on those windows in the first place.

“Well?” Fangs asked.

Reaper shook his head. “Got as much as I could off that video, so now I’m trying to get into the traffic cam footage around town. Just give me a bit.”

“Can you hurry up, please? My sister could be dead,” Aria said flatly.

I shot her a look, but I bit my tongue. I wanted to strangle her for that fucking comment. How dare she underestimate the strength of her sister? I knew Nadia could take care of herself. I'd been helping her with her self-defense lessons teaching her how to shoot a gun. I taught her how to get out of most restraints, and when we weren't fucking each other's brains out, we were practicing the things I'd taught her so that she could feel safe in a hometown that felt like it was burning to the ground.

And as Aria's eyes met mine, I drew in a deep breath. "You know your sister better than anyone here. You know how strong she is."

Her gaze softened. "We have to find her. We don't have any other choice."

"And we will," Bender reassured her as he rubbed her back.

Reaper sighed. "Guys, I don't mean to be that person, but this information isn't coming within the next few seconds. I'll have to sit with it for at least an hour, maybe two. So, why don't you guys hit the pavement and see if there was anyone that saw anything that happened at the shelter?"

Fangs clapped his hands. "Good idea. Bender?"

"Yep?" the man asked as he pulled away from Aria.

"You're with me. We're going to the shelter to see if we can find anything. Reaper? Keep chiseling away at what you are. Dig up absolutely anything you can. Goose?"

"Yep?" the man chimed in for the first time as he perched in the darkness of the corner of the room.

Fangs pointed at him. "You and Angel—"

I shook my head. "I'm heading to the hospital."

Everyone looked over at me before Fang spoke. "Why?"

I shook my head as I reached for my leather cut that had been slung over a chair earlier. "I've got someone there that I need to speak with."

“Want to fill us in on who that might be?” Goose asked.

I slid my arms into my jacket. “No. I don’t talk about her unless she specifically says that I can. That’s where I’ll be if you guys need me.”

“Do you want me to come with you at least?” Goose asked.

I snatched my keys up from the table next to me. “Nope. But keep me updated. I won’t be long, and then I’ll hit you up, Goose. Though, it might make sense for someone to stay behind with Reaper in case this place gets ambushed.”

Goose nodded. “I’ll stay here, then.”

Fangs groaned. “Whatever. Bender? You’re with me. Viper?”

The mountain man nodded. “I’ll go on patrol. Put my ear to the ground and see what I can pick up.”

Then, with a clap of Fangs’ hands, church was dismissed. The men scattered, taking on their roles and readying themselves for an evening of pounding the pavement. I walked out to my bike before anyone else could say a word to me, especially Aria. I tossed my leg over, setting my sights on the reception desk at the back of the hospital. That place had two main entrances: one for the E.R. at the front and one for hospital visitors toward the back. I cranked up my engine and peeled out of the clubhouse parking lot, hoping and praying that she was on duty.

I had to talk to my sister. She was the only one that would be able to set my head straight so I could save Nadia.

THREE

NADIA

A fist slammed against the door. “You piss yet?”

Patchy’s voice made me roll my eyes. “Nope.”

“You got a UTI or something?”

I scoffed. “Gotta have more than four ounces of cold water to warrant a piss.”

He yanked the door open. “You trying to get on my bad side? Because this is how you get on my bad side.”

I shrugged. “I’m pretty sure you don’t have a good side, so why bother?”

His eye twitched. “Are you still thirsty?”

“Do you care?”

“I’m asking, so yeah.”

I drew in a deep breath and stilled the anger churning in my gut. “Can I trade the water for a question that you answer?”

He folded his arms over his chest and looked around. “Depends on the question.”

I shrugged. “I just need to know if we’re in a warehouse. I’m allergic to mold, and if I’m in a room with mold then you guys might have a hospital trip on your hands.”

“How the fuck would mold cause you to go to the hospital?”

“I have asthma. It is my reaction to something I am allergic too. And I clearly don’t have my inhaler on me, so when I have this attack, I won’t be able to breathe.”

He tilted his head. “How do I know you’re not lying?”

“My right forearm is itching up a storm. If I’m right, my skin will already be turning red. All you have to do is check it.”

He pulled out his cell phone and turned on the light, so that gave me a bit of information. Wherever we were, we could be traced because that was a very fancy cell phone to have as nothing but a burner. I’d been using my fingernails to scratch at my forearm, making it as red and as irritated as possible. And after he laid eyes on the bright red marks my nails had left behind, he hissed.

“Shit, hold on,” he murmured. “Guys! We got an issue!”

I stifled my grin as the man backtracked out of the room and he didn’t quite close the door. I peeked through the slat and found myself staring at a concrete wall with smoothed concrete floors. Yep. We were in a warehouse somewhere, and judging by the smell, the damned thing had been abandoned for a while.

The guys murmured down the hallway before footfalls came closer.

“Let me see this shit,” Bullet hissed.

He yanked my wrists up and I yelped in pain. My entire body practically dangled as he twisted my joints around, trying to find the red spot I had created. Tears dripped down my face. The room tilted so badly that I almost threw up in the spot where I had been sitting. And after all of the guys got a good look at my forearm, I was dropped back to the ground.

Like a sack of fucking potatoes.

“She’ll be fine,” Bullet said. “But if she gets worse, just toss her into one of the other rooms.”

“Can do,” Patchy murmured.

I whimpered as my cheek pressed into the warm spot where my ass had been sitting. A pair of hands grabbed me and I jerked as they helped me to sit up. My head fell back against the wall again as I caught my breath, trying to quell the nausea fighting against my own stomach.

“Here, drink this,” Patchy said softly.

Another straw danced along my lips and I parted them. Maybe the damned water would have arsenic in it and they’d put me out of my misery. No, no, I couldn’t think like that. I shook the thought from my mind before I took a small pull to see what the liquid was that the man held up for me.

And when the water drifted over my tongue, I started chugging.

“Slow down, slow down,” he said as he sat next to me, “you’re going to choke.”

I took one more long pull before I sighed. “Like you give a shit.”

He snickered. “I probably give a bit more of a shit than those guys out there.”

He’s playing the same game. Be on alert. “I didn’t mean to cause trouble for you. I just wanted to bring your attention to an issue I have that might cause you guys trouble.”

“I know.”

I chewed on the inside of my cheek. “It’s pretty bright in here.”

“In the closet?”

So, I’m in a closet in an abandoned warehouse. “I mean, out there.”

I nodded toward the hallway and Patchy sighed. “Yeah, those damned spotlights are a mess.”

Spotlights. So, probably a generator of some sort, then. Maybe. “I hate those damned things. One time, at the shelter, they were doing work along the road at night and had those things out. One of them was practically shining through the

fucking picture window at the front of the building. It was a mess for weeks.”

“I bet.”

I peeked over at him. “Why are you sitting with me?”

He scoffed. “Gotta make sure you pee. Bullet says if you aren’t peeing, we might have a bigger issue on our hands.”

“Bigger than a UTI?” I asked with a grin.

He rolled his eyes. “You cause a lot of grief, you know that?”

Says the man helping people kidnap women. “I’ve been known to make people’s lives difficult, yes.”

He chuckled. “I like women with a little bit of spunk. Makes things interesting.”

I drew in a deep breath. “I don’t know if I’ve necessarily got spunk, but I can hold my own when necessary. Sort of.”

He nudged me. “Hey, that’s what men are for. Get yourself a good man on your side and he’ll defend you to his last breath.”

My heart broke at his words. “Yeah, I know.”

He paused. “Sounds like you *really* know.”

Maybe if I open up to him, he’ll open up to me. “I was married once, you know.”

“Oh?”

My eyes hooked with the door in front of us. “Yeah. We met about a year after I graduated high school. Got married young. You know how it goes.”

He scooted a bit closer to me. “What happened?”

I swallowed hard as the memories assaulted my conscious mind. “A robbery. Someone just broke into our place in the middle of the night. My husband tried to scare them away. Told me to get into the bathroom with a baseball bat and not to come out until he said the coast was clear. And they just...”

I couldn't bring myself to say it as my eyes dropped to the floor.

"I'm sorry," Patchy offered.

I was honestly shocked at how genuine the words seemed. "Thanks."

He hooked his finger beneath my chin and pulled my gaze to his. "He did it protecting you, though. I hope you know that."

I smiled softly. "Yeah, I know. He was a good man, and I'm not sure I'll ever find another one like him."

"Maybe not," he said as his face came closer. "But sometimes a bad man will burn the world down just to protect what's his."

I yanked away. "What are you doing?"

He slid his hand into my hair and gripped it tightly. "What are *you* doing?"

I tried to scurry away with my feet. "Stop it. Let me go."

He yanked me to the ground. "You can't put signals out like that to a man and not expect him to jump when you offer."

"Stop it! I thought we were just talking. Help! Someone help—mmph!"

He clapped his hand over my mouth and pinned me to the floor. Tears of fear rushed to my eyes as his knee fell between my legs, keeping me from closing them. He pawed at my body, cupping my tits and pulling my shirt down until my bra was exposed. And as I tried wiggling away from him, my legs flailed around.

Until they crashed against something that fell to the floor with a loud clatter.

"What the hell is going on back there!?" Bullet bellowed down the hallway.

"Stupid bitch, shut the hell up," Patchy growled. "Nothing, Boss!"

The second footfalls came in our direction, he shoved me off to the side. He stood to his feet and shoved his hand into his pants and I turned away so that I didn't even have to look at him. I'd been so stupid. What the hell had I been thinking trying to turn one of these disgusting, volatile, insane men to my side?

The door flew open and sobs fell from my lips as I curled my knees to my chest.

“What the fuck is going on?” Bullet hissed.

Patchy sighed. “Just some bullshit. You know how they are.”

“Are you trying to touch the goods?”

“What?”

Bullet's voice mounted with anger. “Are you trying to touch the goddamn goods that aren't yours to touch!?”

Patchy stumbled over his words. “I—it's just—well, she was practically—”

SMACK!

The resounding crack made me yelp as my body flinched, but the world went outside of that. Bullet growled out some sort of command before he dismissed Patchy from the closet and yanked me up off the floor before I knew it.

“Stand,” he commanded.

I did my best to strengthen my legs as they wobbled beneath me. “I'm sorry. He was just—”

He wrapped his hand around my throat. “We have cameras in this place, you know. And whatever it is you think you're trying to pull with our prospect behind our backs isn't going to work. You're useful to me for now, but once I get what I want out of Bender and Fangs? You'll be disposable, just like the rest of them. So, if you want me to sell you off to the only decent man I know that does business with us? You'll keep your mouth shut and eat when we give you shit to eat. Got it?”

I swallowed hard. “Yeah, I got it.”

He brought me closer to his face. “And trust me when I tell you that if you don’t want to cooperate with us? I’ll make sure you rake us in a fuckton of money every week. You’ll be chained to a bedroom so long as you’re alive, acting like nothing but a cum-dumpster for our crew. I’ll break you. Reduce you to nothing. And when your spirit is broken and all hope is lost, maybe then you’ll wish you would’ve listened to me now. Understood?”

My lower lip quivered. “Understood.”

He shoved me to the ground. “Good. Stupid little bitch. Now, shut up and fucking drink that water. The last thing we need is you dying from a gunshot wound to the back of the head because you get dehydrated on us.”

And as he backtracked out of the closet, slamming the door behind him, I didn’t care what I sounded like as I broke down into tears.

Crying next to the empty bucket they expected me to piss in through my goddamn pants.

FOUR

ANGEL

I pulled around to the secondary entrance to the hospital and parked my bike in the nearest parking space. With my helmet tucked beneath my arm, I made my way inside, hoping to see my sister, Claire, sitting at the receptionist's desk.

But when Mikey sat there instead, my gut hit the floor.

"Mikey," I said as I walked up to him.

His head snapped up before he stood. "Hey there, Angel. Everything okay?"

I tilted my head. "Where's my sister? She should be working tonight. Did she call out?"

He furrowed his brow. "Did no one call you?"

"Call me about what?"

The question wasn't even necessary, though. I already knew what he meant. This had already happened before. He shot me a look of pity before he bent forward and started typing some things into the system, then he handed me a visitor's badge that allowed me limited access to the top floor of the hospital.

Which just so happened to house the psych wing.

"What happened this time?" I asked.

Mikey beckoned for me to follow him. "I can't give you that information. You know this."

"I'm already her emergency contact, that you guys apparently didn't fucking call. You can tell me whatever it is I

ask for.”

“Look, Angel, I’m on your side. But I’m just the front-desk receptionist. The nurse manning the psych ward desk can tell you everything you need to know.”

Mikey pressed the button for the private elevator the hospital used that went straight up to the top floor. It didn’t pass “go.” It didn’t collect two hundred dollars. It didn’t even have entrances to any of the other floors of the hospital.

And as the metal doors eased open, I slipped inside.

“Thanks, Mikey,” I murmured.

He sighed. “Let Claire know we’re thinking of her, okay?”

I nodded mindlessly. “Will do.”

Then, the doors closed, carrying me all the way up to the ninth floor.

“Ah, Angel. I was wondering when we’d see you,” the woman behind the desk chirped as the doors opened.

I scoffed. “I’d been here sooner if someone had actually called me. How long has she been here?”

The woman shook her head as she typed on her keyboard. “Not long. She came in maybe a couple of hours ago? The E.R. had to stitch up her wrists. She needed some blood as well.”

“Fucking hell,” I murmured.

She took my badge and scanned it before handing it back to me. “All right, that gives you access to those double doors over there for the next two hours. It also unlocks room 904, which is where your sister currently is. You only get two in and outs, though. So, use them wisely, otherwise you have to go all the way back downstairs to get a new badge.”

I sighed as I tucked the badge in my pocket. “You know I already know this.”

“And you know I have to say it anyway.”

“Seventy-two hour hold like usual?”

She nodded. “Yes, sir.”

“Don’t call me ‘sir,’ thanks.”

She giggled softly, probably trying to diffuse the tension. “I’m sure she’s expecting you, so whenever you’re ready...”

I started for the double doors and swiped my badge over the keypad. They opened with a hiss, and as the cream-colored corridor came into view I wanted to vomit on my shoes. She had been doing so fucking well lately. It had been almost two years since she’d had a genuine suicide attempt.

I calmed myself as I strode for her door, buzzing myself in before softly closing it behind me. But nothing could have prepared me for what I saw the second I entered.

“Claire?” I asked softly.

Her skin was so pale that I could see most of her veins. Her hair was a mess and pulled back in a bun. My gaze dropped to her wrists that were wrapped in gauze and the fluid I.V. protruding from the top of her hand was bruised.

They probably had to hold her down.

“Hey there,” I said softly as I went to sit next to her.

Her stare seemed to look through me instead of at me, and even as I stepped out of her line of sight her focus didn’t follow me. She simply kept staring straight ahead, probably doped up on all sorts of medications to keep her calm and collected. Guilt and regret surged through my veins, causing my world to tilt and forcing me to close my eyes.

“I’m right here, CeeCee,” I whispered.

I reached my hand out and settled it on her knee, shocked when she moved her hand to settle on top of mine. She squeezed it softly, almost as if to reassure herself that I was there, and the words poured forth in a flurry of anguish and despair. The thought of Nadia struggling the way my sister was made me sick. The thought that I might not get to her in time at all made me furious. And as I turned my hand, catching my sister’s palm against my own, I curled my fingers against her skin.

Before I drew in a deep breath.

“I came looking for you because I thought you were working. I needed to speak with you so badly, and I didn’t know where else to go,” I said defeatedly. “But now I just want to make sure you are ok.”

She squeezed my hand again, urging me on even though she didn’t speak.

“What happened CeeCee?” I asked. “You seemed to be doing much better lately.” She stayed silent as she stared off into the distance. I debated heading back out to the nurses station to find out exactly what happened, but part of me was scared to know the whole truth.

My eyes glanced over her small frame that looked even tinier in the huge hospital bed with the machines surrounding her. My heart fell to my stomach as I realized that I should have been there to protect her. I failed my sister just like I was failing Nadia.

CeeCee squeezed my hand again and before I could stop myself, I started talking.

“You remember Nadia, right?”

She squeezed my hand again as if to say yes.

“Well, her and I have sort of been...”

I tried to find the right words for what the hell was going on between us, but I came up empty-handed. “Anyway, she’s been... well, some bad guys have... taken her, essentially. They just... jumped her after she was done working. And I’m so scared for her, and we’re doing everything we can to find her. I just...”

I swallowed back the tears I refused to cry because crying admitted defeat. I hated that I was telling this to my sister in the state that she was in. It was selfish of me, but I couldn’t shut my damn mouth.

“I promise to get her back, Claire,” I said as I raised my gaze to look at my sister.

And I found her staring directly into my eyes.

“Claire?” I asked softly.

Her eye twitched. “Bring her back.”

I nodded quickly. “You have my word that I will.”

She tugged me forward so hard that our foreheads almost knocked together. “Bring. Her. Back.”

With a renewed sense of vigor, I pressed my lips to my sister’s forehead. Even her cold and clammy skin told me exactly how bad off she was, which meant that her words had taken more energy than ever. And if she could find enough strength to command me to find Nadia, then goddamn it I’d burn this fucking world to the ground if it meant finding that woman.

“I’ll be back soon, I promise,” I whispered against her skin.

I charged out of that room, ignoring the woman at the front desk who asked me if anything was the matter. I tossed my badge to her before I made my way to the elevator and slammed my hand against the button to summon it. I was on a mission, and failure wasn’t an option. My sister had charged me with something she expected me to do, and damn it I was going to make sure it was seen through.

I sped all the way back to the clubhouse, where I found Aria still in tears while she sat beside Reaper.

“Anything at all?” I asked, slamming the door behind me.

Reaper didn’t even look up from his screen. “I clocked their car for a few stoplights, but then there’s nothing. Fangs and Viper are checking out the vicinity now to see what the hell’s around there.”

“And?” I asked, making my way into the living room.

“And,” Reaper said as he peeked up at me, “that phone call was two minutes ago. So, give them some time.”

Seeing Aria so defeated and deflated killed me inside. If no one else, she was the one that needed to have hope. I held my hand out for her and she took it, helping herself to her feet, and

as I led her into the kitchen, I pulled out a chair for her at the table.

“Sit. You need some food,” I said.

She sniffled and wiped at her eyes. “Shouldn’t you be out there searching with the guys?”

I rummaged around in the fridge. “Once we eat, yes.”

“How can you think about your stomach at a time like this? I’m not even hungry.”

I pulled shit out of the fridge and slapped it onto the kitchen counter. “Can’t save someone on an empty stomach, I always say.”

“Idiot,” she murmured.

I ignored the quip and put sandwiches together. “You know she’s going to be okay, right?”

“I don’t know anything right now,” she said breathlessly.

“Well, she’s going to be. Your sister is strong. She’s always got her wits about her. She’s more capable than a lot of women out there, and the Devil’s Rage aren’t going to know what to do with that.”

“I get what you’re trying to do, and you can stop.”

I slid a plate of food in front of her. “You mean giving you hope so that you don’t drag the rest of us down your rabbit holes?”

“Angel,” Reaper said flatly. “Seriously?”

Aria’s angry gaze snapped up to mine. “You know I barely knew you back in high school. Hell, I barely recognized you when I first stepped into this clubhouse. But I can tell Nadia means something to you. So act the fuck like it.”

I placed a bottle of water in front of her. “You’re right. Nadia does mean something to me. But the best way to help Nadia right now is to stuff down whatever you’re feeling so that you can be productive with us. We need all hands on deck, and that includes yours.”

She slumped into her seat. “It sucks when you guys are right.”

I chuckled as I sat across the table from her. “Now, eat. Get out whatever emotions you need to get out with me. Say whatever it is you need to say. But when we’re done eating? We get to work. Got it?”

“Yeah, yeah,” she said as she reached for her water bottle. “I got it.”

And as we sat there eating in relative silence, I watched as mindless tears dripped down Aria’s cheeks.

“We’re going to find her,” I said.

Her eyes flickered up to mine. “I know we are.”

“We’re going to find her *alive*.”

And when she swallowed hard, I knew I had hit the nail on the head.

“I sure hope you’re right about that, Angel,” she said softly.

I had to be right. Because if anything happened to Nadia, I would kill them all.

FIVE

NADIA

“What the hell was I supposed to do!?”

“Not try to tamper with the goods, that’s what.”

THWACK!

“Come on, Bullet. We’ve all made the mistake at least once.”

CRACK!

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! It won’t happen again!”

A growling voice forced my eyes closed as I tried keeping my tears at bay.

“If I catch you touching that woman again without my permission, I’ll kill you myself.”

Hell. This was what hell had to feel like. I squeezed my legs together, trying not to piss myself. I clenched my jaw and balled my fists up so tightly that my nails created crescent moons against my skin.

And still, I couldn’t distract my mind.

“Come on,” I whispered to myself, “you can do this. You can find something to make you smile.”

The instant I thought about smiling, Angel’s face popped into my head. I relaxed against the wall, conjuring his bright white smile and his raven black hair. I drew in a deep breath, blocking out the voices that barreled down the hallway, mounting in anger and violence.

And as an all-out brawl started, I curled my knees up to my chest as Angel's voice echoed in my head.

Hey there, sweet thing.

It was a nickname he'd given me in the first few days of us secretly dating back in high school. I had been the focal point of some bullying during my sophomore year and Angel was the first to step in. He backed me up and got the guys to back off. And from that point on, I couldn't keep my hands off him.

That was, until he got himself into some bullshit I didn't agree with.

"There," a voice hissed outside my door, "maybe taking a fucking nap will help with his wandering hands."

I stuffed down my fear and rekindled the memories from high school. The first time Angel had ever kissed me had been at the homecoming dance my sophomore year. Aria and I had gone together, and he'd picked us both up. One on each arm, we walked into that dance before Aria made her way into a corner, searching for an art room friend of hers.

And me? Well, it was the first time Angel had ever taken me into his arms and studied me in the limelight with those sparkling brown eyes of his.

You look beautiful tonight, sweet thing.

The memory washed over me, filling me with a warmth that brought tears of happiness to my eyes. Angel was the first boy I had ever loved. The first boy I had ever slept with. He had been my first kiss, my first relationship, and my first date.

He had also been the first boy to ever break my heart.

"Why?" I whispered softly.

I'd never regret marrying Joshua. After Angel deserted me once he graduated, Joshua was the one that picked me up off the floor. He was the one that dried my tears in the middle of the night while holding me, rocking me side to side while I cried about how another man had broken my heart. He was the one that pieced me back together, and the one that showed me what it meant to never abandon those that you loved.

And when he threw himself in front of me to save me from the bullet of that robber's gun, my life changed dramatically.

Hell, *I* changed dramatically.

"Angel, where are you?" I whispered to myself.

It was like someone had heard me because the second the words fell from my lips, the door in front of me burst open. I screamed, jumping and peeing all over myself as someone buried their fingers into my hair. And as the man wrenched me to my feet, he tossed me out into the hallway.

"You're coming with me," the man grunted.

"No, please," I whimpered.

He shoved my back so hard that I tripped and stumbled over myself. I fell to the floor before someone picked me up by my sweater and dragged me down the hallway. I kicked, screamed, and cried out for help, hoping that someone outside might hear me and call the police. But the fact that none of the guys tried to stop my screaming meant that I had found myself in the worst scenario plausible.

They had me holed up somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

"In the chair. Sit," the man growled.

He tossed me like I was nothing but a ragdoll. Obscene names I'd never repeat so long as I lived came from the men jeering and cackling around me. Through my tears, I watched as one of them set up a tripod with a little camera on it. And as one of the guys fisted my hair once more, he pulled my head back until my eyes focused directly onto the lens.

"Play nice, and we might play nice. Got it?" he hissed.

"So," Bullet said as he walked up to me.

I studied the man intently, memorizing every single feature on his face. I never wanted to forget his face. I etched every detail into my memory so I could pick him out of a lineup. Because as God as my witness, I'd never stop until every single one of them was rotting behind bars scattered across the goddamn country.

“What?” I asked flatly.

He bent forward and rested his hands on the arms of the chair I sat in. “You’re going to make a live video for us.”

“And if I don’t?”

It didn’t shock me that he backhanded me across the face. What did shock me, however, was the blood that dripped from my lips and landed in my lap.

My face prickled with pain but I pushed it down not wanting him to see how badly it hurt.

“Ask stupid questions,” the man glowered, “get stupid answers. This video will be sent to your sister as well as those Steel Scorpion assholes. You’re going to beg and plead for your life like the good little girl you are, and in exchange for your life, they’re going to give us what we want. Understood?”

I slowly looked up at him. “I’d rather die.”

Someone behind me brandished a knife and placed it against my throat. I gasped, holding my head high as the sharpness of the blade sliced into the first layer of skin. My blood trickled down the skin of my neck, dripping beneath the hem of my sweater, tainting my breasts as Bullet rose upright.

“We can arrange that if you want,” he said as he looked down his nose at me.

And as he silently backtracked toward the camera that I now realized was attached to a phone, it rang.

Don’t pick up. Don’t pick up. Don’t pick up.

The ringing stopped and Bullet grinned, which meant someone was on the other end of the line. One of the guys got down onto one knee next to the man, and the cue card that he held up had all of the lines on it that they wanted me to speak. I wanted to spit in each and every one of their faces. I wanted to refuse to do anything to help them. But I also knew that the man holding the knife to my throat wouldn’t hesitate to slit it open.

While my sister watched, no less.

“Now,” Bullet commanded.

“Speak,” the heavy voice behind me said.

I cleared my throat. “Aria. Steel Scorpions. I, uh...”

I squinted through my tears so that I could see the card before I spoke.

“I’m okay,” I said as I read the card out loud. “I’m alive. At least, for now. But in order for me to be set free, there are three demands that must be followed.”

The cue card switched and I drew in a deep breath.

“One, the Devil’s Rage are to turn over club Heist back to Bullet with paperwork that is notarized stating that the club is rightfully theirs.”

The cue card switched again as my heart rate finally came down out of the clouds.

“Two, the Steel Scorpions are to return every single piece of proper—”

I couldn’t continue reading with that statement knowing that it meant the woman at the shelter, and the knife against my throat tightened. I refused to let them be a pawn in this.

“Read,” Bullet growled from behind the camera.

And that was when I decided to go off-script. “Guys, don’t do it. Don’t give into their demands. Keep those women safe. Aria, I’m okay. I’m doing just fine. Please, don’t—no!”

“Stupid bitch,” someone hissed.

Bullet knocked the tripod over before someone ripped me out of the chair. I braced myself for whatever beating was coming, or whatever death they had planned for me. I wouldn’t be part of this. I wouldn’t be part of any of it. I wouldn’t bring anymore darkness into my hometown, even if it killed me.

And as Bullet wrapped his hand around my bleeding throat, he tossed me to the ground.

Before stomping his foot against the small of my back.

SIX

ANGEL

“No! Nadia!” Aria shrieked.

Bender wrapped his arms around his woman while she kicked and screamed. The wails that tore from her throat broke my heart, and I had to turn away in order to keep myself contained. The phone call made me sick. Seeing her bleeding like that—seeing the fear in her eyes even as she stayed brave for us—filled me with a fury I’d never experienced in all my life.

I was ready to fill the streets of Twin Bays with the blood of that disgusting crew.

“He’s gonna kill her. We’re never gonna find her. Oh my God,” Aria choked out through her sobs.

“That’s not true,” Fangs said as he patted me on the shoulder. “We’re going to find her and bring her home safely. And after we do, we’re slaughtering every single one of those fuckers.”

“Good,” I growled.

“She was brave, you know,” Viper said as he came to stand beside me.

I simply nodded. “She’s always been brave, even when I couldn’t be.”

No one knew my history with Nadia. No one knew exactly how badly I had broken that woman’s heart when we were younger. I had promised her the world, and in exchange for giving me her soul, I had given her darkness. The second I

graduated from high school, I wanted to join my dad's motorcycle club. The situation with my sister broke him and at first he had refused to let me be a part of it. But I proved myself the night after graduation when I killed CeeCee's attackers. They had been on the run for years, but my dad had been tracking them. I stole his intel and took care of them myself, which made him realize that I was finally ready to take up my legacy. That night I was initiated as a prospect.

Which meant I had to leave Nadia behind.

"What's our next move?" Bender asked as he continued holding Aria in his arms.

I drew in a deep breath before I turned around to face the guys. "We figure out where the fuck those guys are holding her and storm the goddamn place."

If I hadn't already been attracted to Nadia, I would've been at that moment. She had been so strong for all of us. She had put her life on the line to let us know that she was okay. To reassure us that we were doing the right things. She needed us—needed me—now more than ever, and I wouldn't stop until I brought her home.

Alive.

"Fangs?" I asked.

He nodded. "Go talk to Reaper. This will absolutely be his wheelhouse."

"Fair enough," I murmured.

While the guys continued to spitball where the hell we went from there, I slipped out of the living room. I made my way down the hallway, beelining it for the media room where Reaper sat with his headphones on. His fingertips blazed a trail across his keyboard, and for the life of me, I never understood how the fuck he could type so quickly.

"Hey," I barked in order to get his attention.

He looked over at me before picking a headphone up from his ear. "What's up? Got anything for me?"

I walked over and sat down next to him. “I need you to watch this and do whatever it is you can with it.”

The one mistake that Bullet had made was the fact that he had called my fucking phone. On the one hand, that probably meant he understood my relationship with Nadia, as much as we had tried to keep it secretive. At the very least, he understood that we had a history that spanned all the way back to high school, so he was trying to rattle us. However, that live video had the ability to be saved until a certain point in time.

And I sent a copy to every single motherfucker in the clubhouse.

As I played the video for Reaper, his jaw hit the floor. His eyes darted along the screen before he took my phone out of my hand and quickly connected it to his computer. He shook his head while his temple pulsed, and that told me just how angry he was. See, Reaper wasn't like us. We all externalized our anger.

But Reaper?

He held that shit in until his head popped the fuck off.

“He's such a fucking idiot,” Reaper whispered.

I shifted in my chair beside him. “Can you do anything with it?”

He scoffed. “Who the hell do you think I am? Give me a second to figure out what cell towers that shit is bouncing off of. We can calibrate from there.”

I closed my eyes and leaned back, trying my best to settle down. I had to clear my mind if I had any hope of getting Nadia back into my arms in one piece, which meant I had to keep my anger at bay. I could let it fly once we were in the throes of slicing the Devil's Rage's throats wide open for the world to see. But for now, I had to keep a lid on it.

“Shit,” Reaper hissed.

“What is it?” I asked as I opened my eyes.

He shook his head. “So, they're not as idiotic as I figured. They've got some security measures in place, so this signal is

routing itself all around the world.”

I sat upright. “You’re kidding me.”

“I wish I were,” he said as he clicked around. “I’ve got a few other things I can try, but if they’re using those kinds of tactics? I could get us a fifty-mile radius, at best.”

I raked my hand down my face. “Guess that’s better than nothing. Let me know when you have it, all right?”

His fingers flew quicker than ever. “Of course. I’ll come find you.”

Frustration wafted its way through my veins as I exited the media room. The guys were still in the living room battling shit out while trying to figure out our next moves. I paused halfway down the hallway and heard Aria sniffing in the bathroom to my left. I closed my eyes, giving myself a second to assess what I needed in order to stay clear-headed.

Then, I diverted to the back exit before I headed to my bike.

“I gotta get out of here,” I murmured.

Every time I was overwhelmed, my instinct was to run. To get away from that shit as quickly as possible. It was how Nadia had gotten left behind when we were younger. I was selfish and unable to comprehend how much damage running away would actually do. And while I had no plans to run away from this issue until Nadia was safe in my arms once more, I had to go on a bike ride to clear my head.

I had to find a way to clear my conscience.

“I should’ve stayed with her,” I murmured to myself.

Every night, I’d staked out that fucking shelter. Ever since we’d been gunned down at the homeless shelter, I had stuck to the shadows, watching over her and making sure she was all right. Did she know? Not a fucking clue. I didn’t care if she knew or not, either. I knew I was doing what was best for her, but the one night I wasn’t there—the one night I had somewhere else to be—those bastards decided to strike.

The guilt ate me alive as I pulled up to a dive bar I frequented all too much.

Langley's was a disgusting place that somehow had the best chili cheese fries in the Twin Bays area. It also happened to be the one place where one of our more salacious informants hung out. If there was anything going on around town that we needed to know about, Ink always knew about it.

He was a risky choice, though, and I hated being indebted to the man.

"Well, well, well," Ink said the second I walked through the door. "I was wondering when I'd see you back around."

I rolled my eyes and bellied up to the bar. "Wanna get me a beer and some of those fries?"

He slapped a rag over his shoulder. "Depends. You here to catch up? Or have a conversation?"

My face fell flat. "Just do it, yeah?"

Ink was part of a rival crew named the Twisted Skulls MC. They were based out of Oakhaven, which was about twenty minutes south of us toward San Diego. I'd been trying to recruit the man away from that small-time crew so that he could join up with us. His views aligned with ours. He had talents most of us would've sold our souls to Satan to have.

But no matter how hard I worked on him, he couldn't walk away from those guys.

"Here you go," Ink said as he slid a Corona with a lime wedge toward me. "Got those fries in for you, too."

I took a long pull of the beer. "Thanks."

His eyes danced around the parts of me he could see. "So, want me to try and figure it out? Or are you gonna spill the beans?"

I chuckled. "You know I always like to see your party tricks in play."

He cracked his neck and stared a hole into my soul for a couple of minutes before he cleared his throat.

“Your mind is clouded right now because whatever kind of war you’ve kicked up with those Devil’s Rage assholes has come down onto the head of someone you love. Judging by how downtrodden you look, I’d say it was a woman. Probably the same woman you’ve been hooking up with for the past few months now.”

I shook my head in amazement as he dried off some glasses. Ink’s specialty was that he knew everyone’s business. No matter how much of a secret you thought something was, my best was that Ink knew about it.

“She’s been taken, yeah? That seems to be what those assholes do a lot of the time. And you can’t find her, so you’re hoping that your buddy Ink has some information you don’t already have.”

I snickered. “You’re a freak of nature, you know that?”

He shrugged. “I just learned from a very young age how to read people. It’s how I dodged my father’s attacks most of the time.”

I took another long pull of my beer. “I’ve heard through the grapevine that you and your crew have contacts within Devil’s Rage.”

“We might, yes.”

I leaned forward and lowered my voice. “What would it take to figure out where the fuck they’re hiding Nadia?”

His eyes searched mine. “That’s a very loaded question.”

“I’m willing to ante up.”

He leaned closer into me. “Equally?”

I nodded without hesitation. “Yes.”

He drew in a deep breath through his nose. “I have a job that you’d be perfect for.”

“Done.”

“You don’t want to hear the details?”

I polished off my beer. “Keep the fries. Enjoy them. Whatever the job is, I’ll do it. Just get me what I need to know.”

“Can do, my man. I’ll shoot you a text.”

And as I headed toward the door I had just come through, hope percolated through my veins.

For the first time since the news of Nadia’s disappearance, I had hope in my gut that we’d actually find her alive.

SEVEN

NADIA

“Disgusting whore,” Bullet growled.

The second he grabbed the back of my neck, I knew he was about to snap it. His hands were so big that they almost wrapped completely around my neck from behind, and I trembled with fear. I hated showing it. I cursed myself for the tears that wafted down my face. But the second he dragged me down the hallway, he tossed me back into that closet.

Before slamming the door in my face.

“She doesn’t move an inch,” he glowered as shadows gathered in front of the door. “And if any of you touch her, you’re dead as a doornail.”

I knew he was running out of patience. Hell, they all were, including myself. And I knew that if the desperation grew, they’d do something drastic. I scooted on my ass until my back hit the far wall. I curled up in a ball, ignoring the pain, anxiousness, and depression that rushed through my system. I cried into my own bosom. I allowed my tears to fall softly and silently while I stifled my sounds. Because the last thing I needed was someone ripping that door open and the sharp pain of the needle going back into my arm.

And suddenly everything was black.

“Nadia.”

The low, gravelly tones of Angel's voice dawned upon my very ears. I moved slightly and found that my ankles and wrists were no longer bound.

“Open your eyes, Nadia.”

I tried to lift my eyelids but they felt like heavy weights and I ended up just rolling my head to the side.

“Nadia. Nadia, can you hear me. Nadia?”

I let out a low groan, as a splitty headache pierced through my head.

“Nadia, I really need you to open your eyes for me.”

I somehow managed to open my mouth despite it's heaviness. “Angel, please. Where are you?”

Something tapped lightly against my cheek. “I'm right here. I need you to look up at me. I need you to look around.”

I forced my eyes open and found a shadowed figure standing in front of me. I unhinged my jaw to scream, but a palm quickly covered my mouth. I shoved my back further into the wall. I scrambled to get away, to find any sort of leverage I could to get away from my latest attacker.

However, the second his lips fell to the shell of my ear, I stopped.

“Nadia, it's me. Listen to the sound of my voice.”

My eyes fluttered closed and I laid my forehead on his shoulder. It sounded like him, it smelled like him, and as his hand slid along my skin to cup the back of my head it even felt like him.

“Angel,” I whispered.

He sighed, almost with relief, before my body was lifted. “Stay quiet. I'm getting you out of here.”

I closed my eyes and blocked out any and all sounds. His footsteps fell softly. Silently. As if he were a shadow himself creeping through the confines of my prison. I curled deeply into him, as if to remind myself that this wasn't a dream. And

the second the cool wind from outside forces graced my skin, I drew in a shaking breath.

“Can you stand for me?” Angel murmured.

I sniffled before my hoarse voice sounded. “I can try.”

“Good girl. I’m gonna set you down really quickly so I can get you untied. Just stay still for me.”

He leaned me against something hard and cold before I realized we were in the shadows against the side of a building. My eyes darted around, looking for any signs of risk or danger as my bonds fell away from my skin. I rolled my shoulders as I tried to get rid of their ache. I flexed my ankles, trying to rid my feet of the tingling needles that felt as if they were penetrating right to the very bone.

“Can you walk?” Angel asked.

I looked up into his sparkling brown eyes and studied the scar on his face.

“It’s really you,” I whispered.

He cupped my cheeks with both of his hands. “Can you walk?”

I shuffled on both feet before nodding. “Yeah, yeah. I’m good.”

“Can you run?”

I searched his prying stare with my own. “I can try.”

He took my hand. “Good. Follow me.”

The second he took off, I stumbled behind him as I tried to keep my mouth shut. My body hurt and ached in ways I couldn’t explain, but my need to leave with him was greater than my need to indulge the pain. The abandoned parking lot gave way to a tree line as we soared into the forest, leaping over downed tree trunks and skidding our way into ditches. I side-stepped multiple potholes that were coming for my ankles. We gained ground, placing more distance between us and those bobble-headed assholes that had almost killed me.

And as the other side of the tree line came into view, so did the shining outside of his black bike.

“We’re almost there. Just a little bit—Nadia!”

“Shit,” I hissed.

I had become so focused on our end goal that I had stopped watching the ground beneath my feet. I stepped onto a rock that had much too smooth of a surface, and all of a sudden, a resounding pop rushed throughout my body. My eyes welled with tears. My mouth unhinged as an unearthly groan of pain bubbled up the back of my throat. And as a searing, white hot electric pain shot throughout my entire system, my body plummeted toward the ground.

Before Angel caught me in his arms.

“There we are. I gotcha. Just hold on.”

I whimpered. “My ankle. I think I—I think—”

“It’s okay. Just hang on. Once we’re safe, Goose will take a look at it.”

I clung to him as he sprinted us toward his bike. Even with how heavy I knew I was, he carried me as if I were nothing but a down comforter slung over his shoulder. He settled me onto the back of his bike and shoved a helmet down onto my head. He kept looking around, his eyes wide with prowling fury before he got my legs settled on either side of his bike.

Then, he flung his leg over, placed his own helmet over his head, and soared off into the distance.

“Where are you taking me?” I asked as I quickly slipped my arms around him.

He chuckled as he stepped on the gas. “My apartment. The clubhouse isn’t safe right now.”

I leaned my helmeted head against his back. “Will Goose be there?”

“I’m having him meet us there, yes.”

“Does that mean the crew knows—”

“No,” he said quickly.

I nodded softly. “So, I take it that we shouldn’t tell them right now?”

“Nor Aria. We can’t risk you being placed in any more danger because of what we’re doing. Now, let me concentrate. We can talk once we’re back at my place.”

I sighed. “Aria isn’t stupid. She probably already knows.”

“Honestly? I think the crew suspects. But there’s no point in breathing any life into it right now.”

His admission hurt, but I wasn’t sure why. We had been hooking up for the better part of a year in the shadows as a way to get out of our heads and out of our worlds. He was a decompression tactic for me after particularly long days at the women’s shelter and other things I did for a living. And I was the same to him, as far as I knew. However, the idea of boldly lying to people I’d come face to face with was a completely different story. And I didn’t like it.

But that also didn’t stop him from being right.

“We don’t know who we can trust right now anyway,” I said softly.

“Exactly,” he murmured as he took a sharp left turn. “And until we know what the hell is going on and exactly why these assholes thought they could take you, it’s best that we don’t add anymore fuel to the fire.”

“Fair enough.”

The rest of the bike ride was silent, and I clung to him as tightly as possible. My ankle felt as if someone had set it on fire, and I refused to look down at it. I didn’t want to see the damage. I didn’t want to see what the hell had happened. If it was broken, it would have to be set. If it was dislocated, it would still have to be set. Which meant that I wasn’t out of the woods with this fucking pain.

I decided to focus on how to deal with that instead of how to deal with my emotions.

“All right,” Angel said as we pulled up to his apartment building. “I’m on the third floor. Think you can walk?”

I shook my head. “My ankle’s still burning. It’s not good.”

He put his kickstand down. “Then, I’ll carry you. I don’t see Goose’s bike, but he should be here any second.”

I pulled my helmet off my head. “Sounds like a plan to me.”

And as he pulled off his helmet, shaking out his disheveled raven black hair, I couldn’t help but be entranced by his beauty. By his chiseled jawline. By the way his broad shoulders tapered into a slim waist. Angel was still one of the most beautiful men I had ever laid eyes on, and watching him grin at me in that leather jacket brought back so many breathtaking memories from our time together in high school.

But the moment was ruined when another bike engine revved nearby.

And as quickly as Angel had found me, he scooped me into his arms and started for his apartment stairs.

EIGHT

ANGEL

I took the stairs two-by-two while Goose parked his bike. I'd sworn the man to secrecy, hoping and praying that Fangs wouldn't insist that she be kept close. I saw what happened to Aria when there was an insistence that she be kept close. I didn't want the same thing happening to the only woman I had ever loved.

The only woman that had ever been worth the angry, nervous energy I felt.

I stormed through my front door and got her over to the couch. I settled her down as a pair of bootsteps followed quickly behind me. Goose led with his aftershave, a combination of something sweet and woody. And as I wrinkled my nose to try and tolerate the strong smell, Nadia's eyes darted over my shoulder.

"Hey there," she said softly.

"Close the door and lock it," I said flatly.

Goose did as I asked before he came over. "You wanna talk about why she's not at the clubhouse?"

I shook my head. "Nope."

He crouched next to me. "Hey, Nadia."

She snickered. "Hey there, Goose."

He looked down at her ankle. "How ya doin'?"

"Ah, you know. Been better, I guess."

He chuckled as he picked up her ankle gingerly. “I know that’s right. Angel?”

“Yep?”

He pointed. “Go get my bag. I set it down by the door.”

I stood to my feet. “On it.”

With Nadia in the light completely and me hovering over her, I caught an eyeful of what those bastards had done to her. She had swelling around her left eye and a deep, discolored bruise that trickled all the way down to her cheekbone. There were ligature marks around her neck that deepened by the second, and it took all I had not to get back on my bike and go unload every weapon magazine I had into those asshole’s fucking guts. I ground my teeth together and drew in deep breaths through my nose, trying to keep my cool as I dropped Goose’s bag next to him.

And as he sat on the floor, cross-legged, he placed Nadia’s ankle in his lap.

“All right, I won’t lie to you, this is gonna hurt. But the good thing is that it’s only dislocated, not broken. I’ll pop it back in, put a brace around your ankle, and then you should be good to go with painkillers. All right?”

Nadia swallowed hard. “Angel?”

I nodded. “Look at me. Focus on the fact that you’re here right now.”

She forced herself to look up at me. “Hi.”

I grinned. “You remember the first time we ever met?”

A soft smile arrested her features. “I do, yes.”

I dipped down and perched beside her. “You were in this white t-shirt and some bell-bottom jeans. You had this terrible backpack with one shoulder strap that had been broken—”

She giggled. “You know why I kept that backpack for so long?”

I peeked over at her. “Why’s that?”

Her gaze met mine. “Those damn shoulder pads were always so comfortable. Every other backpack I had used those terrible polyester pads that rubbed blisters on my shoulders. But that backpack? That thing was—AAAAAHHHH!”

“Got it,” Goose murmured.

I took Nadia’s hand and let her squeeze as hard as she could, and I had to admit that it hurt. She had a fucking grip on her, and I swallowed back my grunts while Goose got her ankle in a brace. Her tears broke my heart. She leaned her head back against the couch cushions and allowed the tears to flow down her face. Her entire body shook from the pain she was in, and it took every ounce of energy inside of me to stay by her side instead of stalking out every motherfucker on the planet that was associated with Devil’s Rage.

“There we go,” Goose said before he stood to his feet. “Now, for the pain.”

Nadia’s voice trembled as she talked. “Better be something strong.”

Goose chuckled as he pulled a small bottle out of his bag. “Trust me, it’s the good stuff. One weeks’ worth of hydrocodone. That’s all you get. Two pills a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. And once you run out of those, this bottle here has prescription-grade Tylenol in it. Same thing with this: two pills a day, one in the morning and evening for a week as well. And after a couple of weeks, you should be out of the woods with the pain.”

I took the bottles from him. “Thank you.”

He nodded. “You’re welcome.”

“Could—could I have something now?” Nadia asked.

I popped the hydrocodone open and stood to my feet. “Let me get you something to drink.”

Goose followed me into the kitchen and kept his voice low. “Fangs won’t like that you’re hiding this from him. You know he’s gonna find out eventually.”

I shrugged as I pulled a bottle of water out of my fridge. “I know he will find out. But I have to figure out what I owe first for getting Nadia out of there.”

“What did you do Angel?”

“It’s my problem to worry about, not yours.”

“Well, you brought me into this problem by calling me here,” Goose ground out.

“I’ll keep you out of it. I just needed to save her.”

Goose was probably the only guy in the club that really knew what was going on with my sister. And the only reason of that was because I had called him last time when we had to rush her to the hospital. Goose let out a sigh of understanding.

“But you really should think about telling someone, even if it isn’t Fangs.”

I peeked over at him. “Why do you think I asked you to come here?”

He patted my shoulder. “I got your back all the way, you know that. So long as you understand that the hell that’ll come down on your head for hiding her here is vast.”

“I know. I’m not stupid.”

The truth of the matter was that there was a reason why I kept Ink around. Most the guys in the club, especially Fangs didn’t trust him farther than they could throw him. However I understood his usefulness, even if he was a bit shady. It hadn’t taken him much time at all to track down where the fuck those dogs had been keeping Nadia; then it was simply a matter of getting in and out unnoticed.

Which happened to be my specialty.

However, I had bigger issues than Fangs finding out that Nadia was at my place. Eventually, Bullet would figure out that it was Ink that leaked the location to me. And that meant Ink was in trouble until further notice as well. I didn’t want to get him into trouble, nor did I want to complicate things with Devil’s Rage with one of their own tattling on them for funsies.

I had to buy myself some time, and I needed as much of it as possible.

“Thanks again, Goose,” Nadia croaked from the couch.

He waved at her softly. “Seriously, call me if those meds don’t help with the pain or if anything worsens.”

I sat back down next to her and handed her the pill as well as the water. “I will, I promise.”

Goose nodded. “See you when I see you, then.”

Nadia sighed as she took everything from me. “Thank fuck. Maybe now I’ll actually get some sleep.”

She popped the pill and chugged the water until it was gone and the bottle itself crackled inward. I smirked as she finally came up for air, heaving so hard that her bosom caught my stare. My eyes dropped to her prominent chest. A chest I had buried my face into countless times during our throes of passion when no one else was looking.

I wanted nothing more than to bury myself between her legs and help her forget about this awful encounter.

But I knew her well enough to know that sex was the last thing from her mind.

“Is Aria okay?” she asked once she caught her breath.

I nodded. “She’s doing well. Bender’s got her back, too, so there’s that.”

She looked over at me. “Are they together? Be honest.”

I snickered. “If you have to ask the question, you already know the answer.”

She groaned. “Guess her and I are a lot alike.”

“I don’t know whether to be offended or complimented.”

She paused. “A bit of both, I guess?”

I chuckled. “I suppose I deserve that, yes.”

She leaned her head back again and sighed. “They stuffed me into a damn trunk, Angel.”

I crept my hand over her knee. “I know. We saw the security camera footage.”

She peeked an eye open. “Did Aria see it?”

“See it? She was the one who helped us track it down.”

She groaned. “Great.”

I squeezed her knee softly. “She helped us a great deal in finding you. I just put the final pieces together before I came to get you.”

“Any reason why the entire cavalry didn’t show up for me?”

I shrugged. “I figured you didn’t want anyone knowing about us.”

And when she didn’t answer, I knew I had guessed right.

“It isn’t that I don’t want anyone knowing about us, you know,” she said softly.

I removed my hand and cocked my body to face her. “You don’t owe me an explanation. I’m just glad you’re alive.”

She lobbed her head in my direction, the painkillers taking hold. “I just don’t know if you’re going to break my heart again. So, I’m trying to stay safe and cautious.”

I took her hand in mine. “Like I said, you owe me nothing.”

“I owe you my life right now. Those men would’ve killed me otherwise. I know they would have.”

I leaned in a bit closer to her. “You and your sister are pieces of work, you know that?”

She giggled like a little schoolgirl. “That’s what happens when you’re raised the way we were raised.”

I laid my head back against the same couch cushion her head had picked. “I’m really glad you’re still alive, Nadia.”

Her stare dropped to my lips. “May I kiss you?”

I shook my head. “Not while you’re medicated. You’re not in the right frame of mind to be making sound decisions.”

“It hasn’t kicked in yet. I’m relaxed, sure. But I still know what I’m doing.”

“But you know it won’t stay that way. Not with something as strong as hydrocodone.”

She leaned in a bit closer. So close, in fact, that her warm breath pulsed against my lips. “Which is why I’m asking now before I become a bumbling mess. Please, just let me kiss you.”

My nose nuzzled softly against hers. “Be my guest, then.”

She captured my lips with her own and I had to work to still the beast rattling around in its cage in the pit of my soul. I cupped her cheek, allowing my fingers to thread their way through her tangled hair before I gripped hold. She slid effortlessly onto my lap, a position she had taken up many times before over the past year or so. And as her arms draped around my neck, our tongues danced a tango they had long since memorized.

Before her hips started grinding her pussy’s warmth into my rising cock.

NINE

NADIA

My need for him was greater than my need for rest. The entire time I'd been held captive, all I thought about was him coming for me. All I thought about was him rescuing me. Just scooping me into his arms and rushing me out of there the way he had. I wanted to thank him. I wanted to feel him. I didn't want the last touch of my day to be one of fear, hesitation, or even anguish.

And as I straddled his lap, his cock rose to the occasion.

"Nadia," Angel grunted.

I peppered kisses along his jawline. "Please, just let me have you."

"Nadia," he said a bit stronger.

I raised my head and gazed into his eyes. "I'll beg you if I have to."

He grinned. "I might enjoy the sound of that. Why don't you give it your best shot?"

I leaned my forehead against his before I kissed the tip of his nose. And as my nickname for him fell from my lips, his dick pulsed between my thighs.

"Please, Daddy. Let me feel good against you."

He growled. "Goddamn it, sweet girl."

He crashed his lips to mine before my sweater was ripped over my head. With his arms reaching around my body, one snap of his fingers unhooked my bra before it slid down my

arms. His hands searched beneath my skirt, pushing my panties off to the side as my lips slid down the bulging vein in his neck.

“Jesus,” he grunted, “so good for me.”

I nibbled along his neck, nipping and sucking my mark into his skin. “Let me feel you, Daddy.”

He pulled his dick out from beyond his pants without another word spoken. I raised my hips just enough for his tip to catch against my entrance, then I sank down onto his girth. Every time he spread me, it felt like the first time. Every time he stuffed me full, it felt like he had grown overnight. My head fell back as moans parted my lips. His hands dug into the small of my back, holding my hips to his as I shivered with ecstasy. Electricity blinded me. Passion stifled my voice. And after bringing me back to his chest, the pad of his thumb slid between my pussy lips.

Before he swirled it softly around my swollen nub.

“Oh, shit,” I whispered.

“That’s it,” he murmured as he thrust his hips up into my own, “relax against Daddy. Let him take care of you.”

I whimpered. “Oh, fuck. That’s it.”

“Mmmm, my soft and beautiful sweet girl. So good for me. So strong.”

I rocked back and forth, needing more friction than he gave. “Faster. Please.”

“Mmmm,” he hummed before he nipped at my earlobe. “I love it when you beg for me, little one.”

I buried my face into the crook of his neck and hung out for dear life. The painkiller had muted the searing pains shooting up the back of my calf. I rocked against him, feeling his cock growing as his thumb pressed into my clit. My entire body shivered as it broke out in goosebumps, and that tight coil in the pit of my gut started to wind up.

I rocked and bucked. Whimpered and moaned. His arm wrapped around the dip in my back, holding me steady while

his fingers worked their magic. My walls collapsed around him as my jaw unhinged in silent pleasure. Stars burst behind my eyelids the second my eyes rolled into the back of my head.

And as my head fell back, I cried out his name for the world to hear.

“Daddy! Oh, fuck! Yes, oh holy shit, yes, yes, yes!”

He chuckled before animalistic growls dripped from his lips. “Squeeze that dick. There’s a good girl. So amazing for me. Take it all. Take it like the little slut you are.”

“Oh, yes,” I squeaked out.

I collapsed against him, panting for air as he placed a kiss against my throbbing temple. His cock released inside of me, painting my walls with his mark like he had done so many other times before. My cheek rested against his shoulder. His body cradled my own as he wrapped his hands around me. And as we sat there on the couch with his dick still sheathed within my warmth, I allowed the tears to flow.

Tears of happiness and sorrow. Fear and elation. Hopefulness and hopelessness.

While Angel stroked his fingers through my still-knotted hair.

“There’s a good girl,” he whispered.

I swallowed hard. “Do you think Bender and Aria will work out?”

He paused. “We can have that conversation another time.”

The painkillers took hold of me and my words slurred. “Just answer the question.”

He sighed. “No, I don’t think it’ll last. Aria used to be a reporter, and even though she seems nice and Bender likes having her around, she’ll wise up like the rest of them and leave. Probably with a story she’ll want to run that he won’t approve of.”

I shook my head lazily. “Aria’s better’n that.”

“No woman is better than that. Eventually, women we love leave. That’s how it works.”

TEN

ANGEL

She picked her head up. “I didn’t leave you. You’lef’me.”

I gazed into her tired eyes. “Let’s do this another time.”

She slid off my body, leaving her juices behind on my lap as she fell to the couch. “Oh, no, no, no. You always do that. Always on your watch. Always on your time. Well, it’s my’ime.”

I stood to my feet. “Right.”

“My sister isn’t stupid like that. She won’t leave him. He’ll hafta leave her, like you’eft me.”

I shook my head. “You need to get some rest.”

Her eyes closed, but her mouth continued to run. “Why did you leave me?”

I plucked a blanket off my recliner in the corner and spread it over her body. “Because I was stupid, Nadia.”

She nodded. “Uh-huh. And Aria isn’t stupid. And if Bender isn’tupid, he’ll stay.”

I shook my head. “Right.”

She pulled the blanket up to her chin. “Glad we’re’n agreemen’.”

And as I stood there, hovering over her with my shadow while she slipped off into a drug-induced slumber, I allowed her words to hang heavily in my head. Before I scooped her up, took her into my bedroom, and tucked her in properly.

Because she sure as hell wasn't going to recuperate well sleeping on a goddamn couch.

I tossed and turned all night on that bullshit couch before the sun pulled me up from the cushions. I stretched my arms over my head, cracking my back into place, then I set about setting things out for Nadia. I scribbled a note for her that I left on the kitchen counter beside her medication, reminding her to take a pill before going back to bed.

Then, I pulled a Red Bull from my fridge and chugged it.

"There we go," I said breathlessly. "Good as new."

The hardest part of my day would be the act I'd have to put on in front of the guys. As far as Fangs knew, Nadia still had to be rescued, which meant I'd have to participate in a fruitless effort. That would prove difficult since Goose was already in the loop with things, but until I could prove without a shadow of a doubt that Nadia was safe, I didn't want anyone else involved in me trying to hide her until further notice.

However, Fangs was the least of my worries the second I walked through that door.

"Angel!" Aria exclaimed.

She barreled up to me and I girded my loins. "What's up?"

She came to a screeching halt in front of me. "Fangs thinks he has something. Didn't you get the text about church?"

I furrowed my brow. "No."

And that was when Bender appeared down the hallway behind her. "Come on, my man. We've narrowed our search radius."

With Aria's prying and worried eyes gazing up at me, I had to brace myself for the fight coming. My mouth wanted to open up and tell her that her sister was safe at my place, but I didn't want the secret to get out. Not just yet. I had no idea how deeply we were in it with Devil's Rage right now, and the last thing I wanted was to get my informant into trouble.

Because I still had high hopes for that fucker.

“Come on,” Aria groaned as she took my hand, “you gotta put the pedal to the metal.”

I pulled my hand out of hers. “I got it. You go mellow yourself out a bit.”

She scoffed. “Whatever. Just come on, please? We’re all tired of waiting for you.”

Bender chuckled as I passed him. “Glad you showed up.”

I tossed him a look. “Keep your woman on a leash. She’s a bit tightly wound.”

“Hey!” Aria exclaimed.

Bender shrugged. “Can you blame her? Her sister’s missing, for crying out loud. She could be dead for all we know.”

I grabbed his leather cut and pulled him close. “She’s stronger than that, and you know it.”

Aria slipped between us. “Yes, she is, which is why you need to keep your eyes on your phone. Every second we waste not looking for her is another second that she runs out of time. And if she dies? I’m blaming every single one of you for it.”

“Well, there’s the story, I guess,” I murmured.

“What was that?” Aria asked.

I turned away from them and faced the rest of the guys. “Nothing. What’s up? Whatcha got?”

Fangs studied me for a few beats of silence before he cleared his throat. “We don’t have any reliable leads yet, but Reaper was able to track down some of their phone numbers. Reaper?”

Our computer geek stepped to the forefront of the conversation. “Without going into the mumbo-jumbo, I’ve pinged all of their cell phones off towers and then triangulated things.”

I blinked. “That’s not mumbo-jumbo.”

Reaper chuckled. “Not my fault you’re an idiot.”

I grinned. “Keep going.”

“It’s easier to show you than tell you. Here.”

He handed me his phone and I stared at a map of Twin Bays that had five different green circles on it. “The hell am I looking at?”

He pointed to the part in the middle where all five of the circles converged. “When I pinged the thirteen numbers that I tracked down, they pinged from all of these cell towers. And this place where they all converge?”

I narrowed my eyes. “Possible stomping grounds, maybe?”

Reaper shook his head. “More than that. I think somewhere in that area they’re holding Nadia.”

I wanted to tell him that he was incorrect, but I couldn’t. “Then, we should get a search party out there. Start combing the area.”

Fangs nodded. “That’s what I was thinking. I figured you’d want to be part of that party. You seem... invested in what’s happening.”

I shrugged as I handed Reaper his phone back. “I’m just as invested as you guys are. Her sister is part of our family, at least for now.”

“Hey,” Bender barked.

I rolled my eyes. “And family helps family.”

Fangs raked his stare down my body. “Uh huh.”

I knew he didn’t believe me. Fangs had always been a great reader of people’s body language, and I knew I’d be fucked sooner rather than later. But I had to stall as long as possible. I had to put this shit off as long as possible until I could fulfill my end of the bargain with Ink.

Because I wasn’t sure if that would kick more shit up with Devil’s Rage or not.

“Well,” Fangs said as he drew in a deep breath, “you can be part of the first scout party. You, Reaper, and Viper will go on the first prowl. The rest of us will go tonight.”

My cell phone vibrated in my pocket. “Sounds like a plan to me.”

Fangs nodded. “Gear up. You guys leave in fifteen.”

The second he clapped his hands, I ripped my phone out of my pocket. Ink’s name was displayed on the screen, so I eased my way down the hallway and slipped into the bathroom. I made my way into the shower and pulled the curtain, just in case someone stood outside attempting to eavesdrop.

And the second I picked up the phone call, he immediately spoke. “You still have a job to do for me.”

I nodded. “I’m aware. I take it that’s why you’re calling?”

“Yes.”

“Well, hit me with it. What’s up?”

His voice lowered, and that didn’t bode well for what he was about to tell me. “There’s a shipment of weapons arriving for you guys in the next couple of days.”

Weapons? I thought we had gotten out of the weapons business. What the hell did Fangs do? More importantly though I wanted to know how the fuck Ink knew about it when the rest of the club didn’t. “And?”

“And I want you to derail it. I want you to divert it in my crew’s direction.”

I blinked. “You can’t be serious. My club will kill me if I did this.”

“A favor for a favor, that was our deal.”

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Is there something else? Literally anything else? Because Fangs will kill me himself if he figures out—”

“Then, don’t let him figure it out. But this is the price for having Nadia back safely. Is she not worth two million in weapons to you?”

I growled. “She’s worth the world to me.”

“Then, prove it. Divert the shipment in our direction and your debt will be paid.”

A knock came at the door. “You takin’ a shit in there or something?”

I rolled my eyes at Viper’s voice. “Yeah, I’ll be out in a second. Let a man shit in peace.”

“Whatever,” Viper murmured as he moved away from the door.

Then, I drew in a deep breath. “Consider it done.”

“Good,” Ink said. “Call me when it’s happened. And don’t try to dip out on me. It won’t end well for you if you do.”

“When the hell have I ever reneged on a favor?”

“I don’t know, but there’s a first time for everything. Make sure this isn’t it.”

He hung up the phone just as someone pounded on the fucking bathroom door and I damn near exploded. I slapped the shower curtain off to the side and stepped out, ready to strangle whoever the fuck it was on the other side of that door. I flushed the toilet just to be safe and turned on the water so it sounded like I was washing my hands.

And after I swung the door open, I was met with the eyes of my president.

“Doesn’t smell like shit in here,” he said as he peered over my shoulder.

I shrugged. “I don’t chug protein shakes like Viper does.”

He eyed me carefully. “Your patrol’s about to leave without you.”

I drew in a deep breath. “Actually, I’ve had an outside emergency come up.”

He tilted his head. “I’m sure.”

I rolled my eyes. “Fangs, it’s a shitstorm any way you slice it. We’ve got women being attacked that aren’t even the slightest bit associated with us. We’ve got shelters being

gunned down. We've got women being held captive in our own fucking city limits. We're at war with another crew. I get it. Shit's tough right now. But I've had other things swirling in the background for a while now, and I can't drop those obligations."

He stared me down for so long that I thought he had seen right through my lying. But instead, he drew in a deep breath.

"I'll take your place on the patrol this time around. Wrap up whatever it is you need to, but once you step back through those doors? We either have your full attention or we have your leather cut in our hands while you're walking back out that door. Understood?"

I shoved myself past him. "Yep. Got it."

I didn't stop for anyone who called out for me. I didn't pass go. I didn't collect money. I didn't do shit. All I did was march right back out to my bike, slam my helmet over my head, and rev my engine before I took off into the distance. I kept an eye on my rearview mirror, making sure Fangs didn't have me followed by anyone. And when I was sure that I had gotten away from the crew, I doubled back and headed for the apartment.

Where I found Nadia still sleeping soundly in my bed.

"Nadia," I said softly.

I perched on the edge of the bed and rubbed her back.

"Nadia, you gotta wake up."

She groaned. "Five more minutes."

I chuckled. "You need to eat and get some energy back into your system."

She sighed as she pulled the covers over her head. "Already did. Took my meds. Had an apple. Now, it's sleepy time."

I grinned. "Will you let me make you some toast at least?"

She peeked one eye out from beneath my comforter. "I'm not hungry."

“Are you sure an apple is enough to keep those meds from making you nauseous?”

“I think I know my body well enough, Angel, yeah.”

I nodded slowly. “Can I get you anything, then?”

She turned over onto her side, facing away from me. “Nothing that you’ll give me willingly, I’m sure.”

“Try me.”

She sighed heavily. “Will you get into bed and just hold me for a little while?”

I kicked my boots off before shedding my coat. “I’d love to.”

After pulling my shirt over my head and wiggling out of my jeans, I slid behind her in bed. She wiggled that luxurious ass of hers back against my cock, and with nothing but her skirt and my boxers separating us, it grew hard not to just slide into her from behind. I kissed her bare shoulder as I slipped my arm around her waist. I pulled her close, feeling her warmth flush against my body as her leg slipped between my own. My face nestled into her hair. I drew in her natural scent, relishing the sweet taste her musk left on the tip of my tongue.

And as she reached her hand back, threading her fingers through my hair, she tilted her head back.

Before drawing my lips to hers in a soft, sensual kiss.

ELEVEN

NADIA

The heat of his lips magnetized my body to his. I rocked back against him as his tongue slid along the roof of my mouth, teasing me and tickling parts of me that had long since laid dormant. His hand cupped my stomach, massaging it and pushing goosebumps all across my body.

And as his cock grew against the swell of my ass, I yearned for more of him.

“We can’t,” he murmured down the back of my throat.

I sucked on his lower lip, causing him to growl. “Just be gentle. Can you do that?”

He chuckled. “No.”

I snickered as a smile crossed my face. “Then, make sure your pleasure overrides my pain.”

He rolled me onto my back and slithered across my body like a scorpion. His eyes held mine, pinning me to the bed even before he lifted my wrists above my scalp. He pinned them down with his massive, callused hand, opening my body and exposing it to the air conditioning as it kicked on.

Then, he lowered himself on top of me and perched on his knees between my legs.

“Are you sure?” Angel asked.

My eyes searched his. “I’ve never been more sure of anything in my entire life.”

In one fell swoop, he thrust forward, sinking his hardened girth into my wetness. I gasped for air as my eyes rolled back and every single part of me locked up. Pain rushed through my veins, pulling groans from the back of my throat before his lips connected with mine. And as he pumped his hips, his heated electric shock sizzled throughout my body.

Burning the pain down to nothing but ash.

“Oh, Angel,” I said breathlessly.

He nibbled on the crook of my neck. “Goddamn it, you feel so fucking good.”

I arched deeper into him. “Angel, please. Don’t stop.”

He snapped his hips against my own. “Trust me, I don’t think I could even if I wanted to.”

I dug my heels into the mattress and raised my body to his. I met him as best as I could, thrust for thrust, while I breathed the air he afforded me. I peppered his face with kisses. I swallowed his groans of ecstasy every time our lips connected. And as my pussy clamped around his cock, my nipples puckered so tightly that they ached.

“Goddamn it,” I groaned.

Angel swiveled his hips, raking his coarse hair against my swollen clit. “Come for me.”

“So close,” I squeaked out.

His lips fell to the shell of my ear. “Come for me, little one. Say the name only you can say.”

“Daddy,” I whispered.

“Again.”

“Daddy, please.”

He pressed an open-mouthed kiss against my ear as his hips pumped harder. “Cry it out. Let the whole world hear you, little one.”

And finally, that coil in my gut popped. “Daddy, yes!”

His furious pace shot me into the clouds as my eyes fluttered closed. My muscles quivered for him while my pussy collapsed around him, milking him for all he had. His cock spread me, stretching me to new and glorious girths as his hips stuttered.

And the second his body stilled against my own, thread after thread of heated arousal poured into my body.

“Oh, Daddy,” I said breathlessly as my body collapsed against the bed.

Angel released my wrists and hovered over me, refusing to fall. “Jesus fucking Christ, Nadia.”

He fell off to the side and pulled me into him as our juices dripped from between my thighs. I nestled into him, trying to tuck myself away from the pain that popped back up just as the electric pleasure he had afforded me faded away. I swallowed hard. I tried to keep my tears at bay as I drew in deep, broken breaths.

While Angel slid his calloused fingers through my hair.

“It’s okay,” he whispered. “I gotcha, sweet girl.”

I sniffled. “When can I speak to Aria?”

He shook his head softly. “Not for a while, until we can get things sorted out.”

I peeked up at him. “I have to talk to her. She has to know that I’m okay.”

His eyes studied my own. “If it were possible, I would’ve already handed you my phone. But we can’t do that right now.”

“But Angel—”

“No buts,” he said curtly.

“She’s probably going through hell. I can’t do that to her.”

He gripped my chin and forced me to focus. “I didn’t get your location from the crew, Nadia.”

“I have no idea what that means.”

He slid his thumb along my skin. “There’s an informant I keep close to my side. He’s the one who dug around and gave me your location. The crew didn’t come after you, Nadia. I did. Just me.”

I blinked as the gravity of that blanketed me. “Just you?”

He stared deeply into my eyes. “If I knew it would benefit you guys in any way, I would’ve already told you to call her. But right now, I have a favor I need to do in order to repay my informant, and I’m still not sure how to go about it lightly. Either way I split it, someone gets fucked, and I’m trying to make sure it’s not you, me, or my guys.”

“Or my sister.”

He nodded. “Right. So, for right now? She’s just going to have to keep believing with the crew that you’re still missing.”

I had no idea what the hell to unpack from that sentiment. However, the only thing my mouth latched onto long enough to spit out was...

“You compromised yourself for me?” I asked softly.

He chuckled as his hand moved to cup my cheek. “Always and forever, just like I told you.”

“That was years ago, Angel. So many things have happened since then. So much has changed.”

He shrugged. “Not everything changes.”

I reached out and cupped the back of his head. “I wish I could help you shoulder the weight of this secret. I can’t imagine what it’s doing to you.”

“I’m stronger than I look.”

“Well, you look pretty strong. Especially if you can hoof me around like I don’t weigh shit.”

His stare grew stern. “You know how I feel when you talk about yourself like that. I won’t have you shit-talking Nadia.”

I rolled my eyes as I flopped onto my back. “Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

He sighed as he linked his fingers with my own. “You still want to see Aria, don’t you?”

I nodded. “Yep.”

“You’re still going to try and find a way to see her, aren’t you?”

“Yep.”

“And there’s nothing I can do to stop you, is there?”

I grinned. “Like you said, not everything changes.”

He chuckled as he nestled next to me. “Then, I suppose the same is true with you.”

I pulled the sheet over us. “What’s true with me?”

He kissed my bare shoulder. “That you’re stronger than you look.”

“You’re damn right I am.”

And as exhaustion finally took hold of my body, I allowed myself to slip into a peaceful, unwavering slumber.

Because I’d need the energy to keep fighting to see my sister if I had to get through Angel in order to do it.

TWELVE

ANGEL

As I watched Nadia sleep soundly against me, her words echoed around in my head. So many things had been shared between us, and she was right. So much had happened and changed since our time together in high school. I had fucked her over once. I had been a boy instead of the man I had grown into. And the longer I laid there thinking about the predicament she had found herself in because of me, I knew what I had to do.

At the very least, I had to tell Aria she was alive and well.

Slowly, I slipped away while Nadia's soft snores filled my bedroom. I scooped my clothes off the floor and pulled them over my bare skin, relishing the smell of our sins as it hung heavily in the air. The rise and fall of her curves while she snored away called to me. My cock pulsed with life, threatening to steal my state of mind if I didn't get out of my bedroom quickly enough.

"I'll be back soon," I whispered.

Then, I eased out of the bedroom and closed the door behind me.

I walked around, pulling all of the curtains over the windows so that if she got up, no one would be able to clock her walking around in my place. There was still a viable threat looming in the distance, and with every second we spared, the villains of our story grew closer to taking us down. I wouldn't allow that to happen, but in order for me to focus I had to make sure Nadia didn't do something stupid as fuck.

Like leaving my apartment without protection just to go tell her sister she was still breathing.

My head stayed on a swivel as I journeyed toward Bender's place. The last thing I wanted to do was step foot back into that clubhouse until I had things resolved on my end with Ink. I was torn between two families. Torn between the men that saved my life and the woman that saved my soul. And as I pulled up to Bender's place, relief cascaded through me when I saw his bike parked out front.

"Thank fuck he's home," I murmured to myself.

"Angel? What's wrong?"

Bender's voice hit my ears the second I swung my leg off my bike. Aria appeared behind him, clad in nothing but one of his shirts with her hair a disheveled mess. I grinned to myself as I walked up the steps to his front door. I tried to ignore the worried look in his eyes.

But when Aria spoke, I couldn't deny the truth from her a second longer.

"It's Nadia, isn't it?" she asked.

I nodded toward the inside of his place. "Let's go sit and talk."

Aria's eyes watered with tears. "No."

I shook my head. "You're right. Whatever you're thinking, it isn't it."

She swallowed hard. "So, my sister's still alive?"

My gaze gravitated to Bender. "Let me in. We need to talk."

Silence filled the spaces between us as he stepped off to the side. Aria wiped at her tears, trying to keep them at bay as I rushed toward their open windows. Bender had always been a fucking risk-taker, but I didn't realize he was just plain stupid.

I slid all of his curtains over his bright-ass windows before I turned to face them.

“If something had happened, I would’ve gotten a text from Fangs,” he said.

Aria glared at me. “Spit it out, Angel. Where the hell is my sister?”

I drew in a deep breath. “She’s at my place.”

“She’s what!?” they exclaimed in unison.

“You found her?”

“Where was she?”

“I have to see her. Bender, get dressed.”

“No,” I said firmly.

Aria paused. “No... what?”

“Really,” I said as I eased into a chair, “you two need to sit.”

Aria looked up at her man before he nodded his head, and with a huff she plopped down onto the couch in front of me. Bender sat beside her like the good man he had always been, his arm draped around her in comfort. I tried to figure out where the hell to start. I knew I couldn’t trust them just yet with the shit swirling with Ink.

And when I finally landed on how to spit it out, I leaned forward. “Nadia is just fine. She’s a bit beat up, but she’s at my place. Goose patched her up.”

“So, Goose knows she’s okay, but not Fangs.”

Aria furrowed her brow. “I want to see her.”

I shook my head. “You can’t. It’s too dangerous right now.”

She leapt to her feet. “I don’t give a shit what you say, she’s my sister.”

I stood with her. “And I don’t care how much you fight me, her protection lies squarely in my lap right now and I won’t put her at risk until I know it’s absolutely safe.”

Aria scoffed. “Risk? I’m not a risk to my own fucking sister. Tell him, Bender.”

The man eyed me carefully. “How did you find her?”

I chanced a look in his direction. “An informant.”

He lifted his head toward the ceiling a bit, gazing down his nose at me. “Fangs doesn’t know, does he?”

I shook my head. “Not right now, he doesn’t.”

Aria took a step toward me. “I want to see my sister and I want to see her now. So, you can either take me to her or I’ll take it to Fangs and—”

“No, you won’t,” Bender commanded.

He turned to face his woman and placed his hands on her shoulders.

“I’m sure I can convince Angel to let you see her at his place since he’s apparently got something in the works he hasn’t filled everyone in on yet.”

He shot me a look before he focused back on Aria.

“But you will not tell a soul. Not until I figure out what the hell is going on, got it?”

Aria sighed. “Yeah, yeah. I hear you.”

“Got it?” he asked as he turned to face me.

I clicked my tongue. “Keep my secret and I’ll take the fall for all of it.”

Bender nodded. “Done. Aria, go get dressed. We’re going to see your sister.”

I still didn’t agree with taking her to my place. But the questioning glances Bender gave me meant we had to have a deeper conversation between the two of us. And the only way to do that while slipping away from the women was to put them in a room together so they could have their joyous moment.

“All right,” Aria said as she rushed back into the living room. “Ready when you guys are.”

Bender cleared his throat. “Let’s go.”

We took the long way back to my place, combing through backroads in order to make sure that we hadn't been followed. Paranoia crept through my veins, and the second I pulled up to the front of my apartment building I couldn't get up the stairs quickly enough. I charged through the front door, damn near breaking the key off in the lock just to get the fucking thing open a little quicker. And when I saw Nadia standing upright in the kitchen pouring orange juice into a mug, I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Nadia!" Aria exclaimed.

Nadia's head whipped toward us. "Aria? Oh my God, Aria!"

I was shoved out of the way in favor of their reunion and caught myself against the wall. They wrapped their arms around one another and held each other tightly, crying and talking all at once. I slithered into the corner, watching their heartfelt reunion as Bender closed—and locked—my front door.

Then, he came to stand beside me as the girls made their way down the hallway into the bedroom.

"So," Bender said, "care to fill a brother in on what the fuck you've just done?"

I shook my head softly. "You're not gonna like me once I do."

"Was there any other way to save Nadia?"

I looked over at him. "What?"

He turned to face me. "Whatever you did, was there any other way? Any quicker way that you could have done things?"

I shook my head. "No."

He placed his hand on my shoulder. "Then, as far as I'm concerned, I've got your back."

"Until you figure out what I have to do in order to repay the favor my informant just did me."

He shrugged. “Difficult times call for difficult measures. As long as there was no other way, I’m good. I trust you.”

With the girls chittering and cackling in the bedroom, I nodded toward the living room. Bender followed me over to the couch where we eased ourselves down. I reached for the remote control and turned on the television, providing some background noise just in case one of those girls had some serious hearing capabilities.

Then, I cleared my throat. “Ink.”

Bender blinked. “That the name of your informant?”

I nodded. “I’ve been working on trying to get him to ditch his pathetic MC and come hang with us. He’s fantastic. Got this knack for reading people that’s out of this fucking world. And because of that he knows everything that is going on. And I mean everything.”

“Sounds like we could use a guy like him.”

“I know we can. But that’s beside the point. Him and his crew have a direct line to Devil’s Rage. Their crews are... pals, for lack of a better word.”

He crooked his eyebrow. “Oh, boy.”

I snickered. “In exchange for the exact location of where they had been keeping Nadia, I had to agree to divert one of our gun shipments in their direction.”

His eyes grew wide. “Not the one coming in a few days, I hope.”

“So you knew about the shipment?” I asked.

Bender let out a sigh. “Of course, I knew about it. Fangs and I were going to tell you guys once things died down a bit.”

“What to tell me why the fuck we are back in the gun business?” I said angrily.

“With the shit going on with the Devil’s Rage the club needed the extra cash. This deal happened quickly that we didn’t have time to set it to a club vote.”

“You know that will piss the rest of the guys off, don’t you?”

“Yeah, I know. But we were hoping that the money coming from it would lessen the blow. And besides, this was just a single deal. It wasn’t like we were planning to get back in it full time.”

“Well it looks like the club won’t be getting that cash now.”

He leaned close and lowered his voice. “That’s millions of dollars’ worth of munitions. Are you insane?”

“I know, I know. I didn’t know that’s what was happening up front. He just said I’d have to do him a favor.”

Bender groaned. “Goddamn it, you fucking idiot. You didn’t even get the terms up front?”

“If it had been Aria and someone knew exactly where she was, what would you have done?”

His face fell into a stern, growling stare. “I would’ve sold my soul if it meant finding her.”

“Exactly.”

His gaze raked down my body. “You really care about this woman, don’t you?”

I chuckled. “Is it that obvious?”

A smirk glided across his face. “And there was no other way?”

I shook my head. “Absolutely no other way.”

He placed his hands on his knees and stood. “Then, there’s nothing else to be done. I’ll deal with Fangs and make him understand.”

I stood with him. “You know those bastards will come after Nadia again if I don’t do this.”

“Hell, Angel, even if you do end up doing it, there are still people that will come after her so long as those Devil Fuckers are still tearing up our turf.”

“Yeah.”

He sighed heavily. “Yeah.”

My phone vibrated against my thigh and I ripped it out. Goose’s name was displayed on the screen and I turned the phone to face Bender before he nodded his head. I picked up the call and placed it on speakerphone while the two of us huddled close to one another. And as I turned down the volume, hoping the television would cover up the sounds so that the girls didn’t hear us, I picked up the phone call.

Before putting it on speakerphone.

“What is it, Viper?” I asked.

“You got Bender, too,” he said.

“Wonderful. Two birds. All right, Fangs just got a call from Bullet himself.”

I blinked. “What?”

Bender shot me a look. “What did the man have to say for himself?”

Viper scoffed. “You’re never gonna fucking believe it, but that woman of yours? Nadia? She managed to escape.”

I paused. “She what?”

“Gotta do better than that,” Bender whispered.

“She *what!*?” I tried again.

He patted my back. “Better.”

Viper snickered. “Yeah. Hell of a woman to pull something like that off, I’m sure. Anyway, we’re trying to figure out where the hell she could be since she’s obviously on the run. Fangs is demanding all hands on deck, especially since that we apparently got a gun shipment coming in tonight.”

I froze. When did Fangs tell the rest of the club? Bender shoved me slightly so I would speak again.

“Wait, *tonight* tonight?”

“Uh, yeah? What other definition of ‘tonight’ is there?”

Bender stared down the profile of my face. “I thought it was coming in a couple of days?” he asked.

“I guess it came in earlier than we thought,” Viper said.

“We’ll be there soon,” Bender replied.

I jumped the gun a bit. “I can help oversee that shipment if Fangs needs any help with it.”

“Actually, he’s tasked me with overseeing it. And yeah, I could use some serious help.”

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Viper, we’re really gonna need your talents and command of the road to figure out what in the fuck has happened with Nadia. And I’m pretty much compromised until further notice. So, why don’t I just oversee the shipment tonight and you help out with the search?”

“Compromised? Why?”

Bender chuckled. “You really can’t read between the lines, can you, my man?”

Viper paused before it clicked. “Oh, shit! That’s the girl you’ve been fucking around with!”

I swallowed a growl bubbling up the back of my throat. “Just switch with me. It’ll be easier on all of us and Fangs could use as many clear heads as possible while she gets tracked down.”

“Yep, yep. Okay, I’ll let him know we’re switching off. And to be honest? I didn’t wanna fuck around with that shipment anyway. Too much heat on it with how big it is. I fucking hate restocks.”

I sighed. “Well, just this once, I’ll take it off your shoulders.”

“Thanks, man. We’ll see you guys soon.”

“Yep, see you soon,” I said.

“Here, here,” Bender said.

However, I should've known that those girls wouldn't have given us our privacy. Because the second I hung up the phone, Nadia hobbled from around the corner.

"Please, don't betray your crew for my sake," she said.

I looked over at Bender and he nodded. "Aria?"

She sighed as she walked out behind her sister. "I know, I know. We have to go."

I nodded. "See you at the clubhouse."

Bender shook his head. "You fucking better see me there."

I watched as the two of them left my apartment as Nadia limped toward me. She placed her hands on my chest, rubbing softly against my heart like she used to always do back in high school. I closed my eyes. I reveled in the heated touch of her palms. But when she stood on her tiptoes to kiss me, I backed away.

"We really shouldn't," I said.

She paused. "What?"

I clicked my tongue. "I gotta go. The guys are expecting me."

She stepped in front of me. "Not until you tell me what just happened. Why did you lean away from my kiss?"

I gazed into her eyes, regretting every word I was about to utter. But I had to put some distance between us in order to keep her safe. "Because there is nothing happening between us. You are just a woman I used to fuck. Nothing more."

She scoffed. "So, this past year meant nothing to you."

I nodded. "No."

She took a step away from me as pain wafted over her features. "Fuck you, Angel."

"You already have sweetheart."

I could feel the anger pouring off of her as I made my way to the front door of my apartment. I paused and turned back towards her.

“You can stay here as long as you’d like, but just know that if you go somewhere else by yourself, you risk being captured again. The crew thinks you’ve escaped, so if you give me some time, your life will be back to its old self in no time.”

“So... what do you expect me to do?” she asked. “I’m just supposed to stay in this cramped apartment with some man that doesn’t give a shit about me?”

I’ve always loved you, Nadia. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“Seriously, Angel. Fuck you,” she said as she flopped down onto the couch.

Which caused me to rip the front door open. “Keep the curtains pulled and the front door locked. I’ll be back tonight.”

Then, I stormed through the threshold before I closed the door behind me.

Before turning my sights toward cleaning up the mess I had created in order to save the woman I had just pissed the hell off.

THIRTEEN

NADIA

The slamming of the door made me jump, but it was the way he stomped down the stairs that pissed me off. I shot up from the couch and rushed toward the door, ripping it open before I bellowed my voice out toward him.

“You don’t get to be upset with me, asshole!” I roared.

Then, I slammed the door just as loudly as he did.

Pettiness raced through my veins as I booked it for the balcony. I opened the door and ignored his warnings as I watched him stride toward his bike. He looked up at me before he waved his hand in the air, as if to shoo me back into his place like some petulant child.

Then, he tossed his leg over his bike and rode off into the great, big world that I apparently wasn’t allowed to be part of.

“Stupid motherfucker,” I grumbled.

I waited until he was off in the distance just to spite him, and then I made my way back inside. I slammed that door behind me as well, unsure of what to do with all of the anger coursing its way through my system. That man had no right. He had no right to manipulate me with our past just to get in between my legs before tossing me into the wind. What was I, some kind of fucktoy for him? He came to rescue me just so he could get his goddamn dick wet?

He doesn’t get to play hero while breaking my fucking heart.

“Not on my watch,” I hissed.

I'd overheard enough of his conversation with Bender to know what the hell he had just done. He was about to make a stupid, bold-faced decision on my part, and I wasn't going to shoulder that guilt for the rest of his life. He didn't get to use me as some sort of scapegoat while he threw himself onto the fiery pile for my sake.

I was fine.

I had been saved.

And now, this bullshit ended.

I raced into the bedroom and made sure I looked presentable. I tossed my hair up into a messy bun before splashing some water in my face, then I snatched up my cell phone. I hailed an Uber since I didn't have my car anywhere near my vicinity, and the second I saw it pull up, I raced down the stairs.

And as I buckled my seatbelt, I double-checked to make sure I had plugged in the correct destination address.

Open Arms, here I come.

Despite the fact that Angel treated me like an idiot, I wasn't. He could think I was dumb all he wanted, but I knew what he had gotten into for the majority of his life. I knew all about the crew he had joined. Which meant I knew which bar they spent most of their time at. It was the only bar they owned that wasn't always open to the public. Despite how well their clubs did around town, everyone knew that Open Arms was the bar they used to clean their money. It was simply that no one could catch them in the act of doing exactly that.

And as my Uber pulled into the parking lot, I left the driver a tip on the app.

Before I started for the front doors.

"I heard this bar is a safe haven for most!" I exclaimed as I barged through.

The first voice I heard was my sister's before she slammed into my body. "Nadia! What are you doing here!? Oh, my

God. You guys! It's my sister!"

I wrapped my arms around her. "I need to talk to whoever's in charge. Is Angel here?"

She shook her head as her man approached us, lowering his voice. "You shouldn't be out and about. It's not safe."

I glared up at him. "I can do as I please, whether it's safe or not. Are you the one in charge here?"

"Why do you ask?"

Aria released me and linked her arm with mine. "Come on. Reaper makes the best margaritas."

Bender's eyes were on me as we approached the bar, but I didn't care. I had to stop Angel from doing something I knew he'd regret. Because if he really expected me to carry the guilt and the consequences for what he was about to do on my back? He had another fucking thing coming.

"You look good for a woman on the run," the tall man behind the bar said.

Aria slung her arm around my neck. "Reaper, this is my sister, Nadia. Nadia, this is Reaper. He's the crew's techie guru, and he makes the best mango margarita."

I nodded. "Nice to meet you."

Reaper looked me up and down. "Two mango margaritas?"

Aria nodded. "And keep them coming."

I sat on the stool and turned to face my sister. "Angel really isn't here?"

She looked around before she shot me a look. "No, he's not. And you know why."

"Does anyone know where he is?"

"Two mango margaritas," Reaper said as he popped up from beneath the bar. "You hungry, Nadia? I'm sure your legs have to be tired from all of the running you've been doing lately. It's on the house. What would you like?"

"Actually, I was hoping to talk to someone about—"

Aria grabbed my knee and squeezed so hard that I had to breathe in deeply. “An order of boneless buffalo wings and some of those double-fried fries of yours.”

Reaper knocked his knuckles against the bar. “Coming right up. Hey! Fangs! You got an order!”

My eyebrows rose. “Fangs. I think that’s who I need to talk to.”

Aria spoke at me through gritted teeth. “No, you really don’t. Right now, you need to eat and drink with me and keep your mouth shut.”

I leaned into her ear. “You won’t stonewall me on this. Angel can’t do this.”

She hissed in my ear. “He’s roped Bender into this and I won’t let you get him in trouble. Shut up and eat. Got it?”

I pulled away and glared at her, and the anger that flooded her face flushed her cheeks. I sipped my drink silently, waiting for the moment that I could pull away from her grip on my knee. I hated this. I hated all of it. I knew how Angel operated, and once he tanked his relationship and his status with these men, he’d look to me to fall back on. Like I was supposed to pick up the pieces of his fucking actions.

He had always been that way, ever since he was a teenager.

And I wasn’t about to lease my life out because of something I didn’t ask for.

“Here’s your food,” another tall man said as he dropped two baskets in front of us.

“Are you Fangs?” I asked.

He studied me closely. “Good to see you’re alive. We’ve been searching for you.”

“Actually, I really need to talk with you about what happened. You see, there was—”

Aria removed her hand and slapped my back so hard that I almost choked on my own tongue. “My sister here is very

eager to make these men pay for what they did. Aren't you, Nadia?"

I shot her a look as I drew in a deep breath. "Yes, among other things."

Fangs nodded as he checked a message that was displayed on his phone. "Well, it'll have to wait. Guys!"

My eyebrows rose. "Wait, wait, wait. We really need to talk. There's something—"

Fangs whistled between his teeth and the bar fell silent. "Guys!"

Aria leaned into my ear. "Shut up or I'll make you shut up. Got it?"

My eyes grew wide. "Who the hell are you right now?"

Fangs held up his hand to garner everyone's attention. "We need to head toward the dock for package pickup. I've just got word that Devil's Rage are in the vicinity. It's not looking good for our delivery."

Angel.

"Seriously," I said as I slipped off the stool, "we've gotta talk."

Fangs peeked down at me as the guys filtered toward the front door. "We'll talk afterwards. Right now, we've got business to attend to."

"Wait! Will someone just listen to me!?"

Aria kicked her leg out so hard that she slammed me in my gut, causing me to gasp for air. I doubled over as she slid from her stool and wrapped her arms around me, holding me as if she fucking cared.

"Jesus, Nadia. I'm so sorry. Here, just breathe. I didn't know you were standing so close to me!"

"You got this?" Bender asked as he came up to my side

"Yeah, yeah. I got her. Just go before something happens," Aria said quickly.

I reached out for my sister and wrapped my hand up into her hair. I pulled her head off to the side, getting her off me as I gasped for air. I stumbled back into the stool behind me and tried to stand upright. I had to talk to someone. I had to get word to Angel.

I had to tell him that he was in danger.

“No, stop,” I choked out.

“Stay safe, guys!” Aria sing-songed.

And as the last of the guys filtered through the front door of the bar, I finally caught my breath.

“You stupid bitch,” I glowered.

Aria pinned me with a look. “You have absolutely no idea what you’re about to do.”

“I’m trying to save Angel from making a mistake, what the fuck does it look like I’m doing!?”

“From where I’m standing? It looks like you’re trying to save your own ass instead of considering everything he’s done to save yours.”

I thrust my hand out toward the front door. “I’m not gonna let him ruin his life because of a decision *he* made!”

“And what I’m hearing is that you don’t want to deal with the guilt that comes with fucking a man you never stopped loving.”

I closed the distance between us. “You take that back right now.”

She shook her head. “I won’t. I knew back in high school that you loved someone. That you loved that person, even when you married Joshua. You can’t deal with the fact that Joshua was your fallback plan, especially after he threw himself in front of that bullet.”

I shot my hand out and wrapped it around her fucking throat. “Say that again and see what happens.”

But all she did was settle her hand against my forearm. “If you tell them what’s happening, Angel’s done for in this crew.

And Bender, too because he is in on Angel's plan. And I won't let you take Bender down just because you don't know how to process your own guilt. Angel made his decision. He doesn't blame you for what's happened. If anything, he blames himself. He knows he put you in harm's way, and he'll carry that for the rest of his life. For once, this isn't about you. Just deal with it, okay?"

My eyes danced between hers. "I just don't get why he would go to all this trouble when he doesn't give a shit about me."

My grip loosened and she backed away from my touch. "He wouldn't have risked his standing with his crew, if he didn't care about you. So, whatever it is you think you're doing? Just stop. You aren't in control, and you need to get used to that. Let him do what he has to do to make things right, then move on however you see fit. But so long as your actions hurt Bender? I will never allow you to execute them."

I furrowed my brow. "You love him, don't you?"

"More than my own life."

"More than your own sister?"

She nodded. "Right now, yes. I love you, Nadia. You're my rock. You're my only shred of blood family left. But right now? You're doing this for selfish reasons. You're not doing this for Angel; you're doing this so you aren't saddled with even more guilt that you don't know how to get rid of. And until that changes, I won't let you take another step forward."

I slumped against the stool behind me. "What will Fangs do once he figures things out?"

Aria shrugged. "I don't know, honestly. But right now? Angel has made his decision. He knows the risks. He knows exactly what he's gotten himself into. He isn't a little boy anymore that you have to protect. He's a grown man making grown man decisions. So, right now? All you need to do is hope for the best."

And as much as I hated to admit it to myself, I knew she was fucking right.

“I’m gonna need another margarita,” I said breathlessly as I climbed back onto my stool.

My sister giggled as she got back onto hers as well. “Let’s focus on these first, then I’ll get behind there and see what I can whip up.”

FOURTEEN

ANGEL

“Hey, guys,” I said as I approached the dock hands that we paid off every month to keep their god damn mouths shut.

“Angel.”

“Hey, man. Where’s everyone else?” a tall man asked as he looked behind me. “Everything all right?”

I waved my hand in the air to bat their questions away. “We’ve got a patrol going on, so I’m the point man for this delivery tonight.”

The lead dock hand stepped in front of his men. “We were expecting Viper.”

I pinned him with a look. “And Viper is needed elsewhere. He should’ve informed you of the change. Have you checked your phone lately?”

The man eyed me carefully before he dug around for his cell phone. He pulled it out and scrolled through things before his features settled back into place. And as he dropped his phone back into his pocket, his walls tumbled down.

“That’s my bad. Whatcha need?” he asked.

I nodded. “Scatter until the ship docks, like always. I’ll deal with the paperwork just in case.”

The dock hand crooked an eyebrow. “There something going on that we should know about? Viper usually just watches while we work.”

“I’m sure you’ve heard about the shit going on with that other crew. We’re just wanting to make sure we’re in the line of fire in case shit pops off. That’s all.”

His stare raked down my body. “Fine by me. Anything else?”

I shook my head as my plan unfolded in my mind. So long as I had those documents in front of me with no one hovering over my shoulder, I’d be able to sign those crates off in Ink’s name instead of Fangs’.

You don’t have to do this.

“Just handle the crates,” I said as I brushed past him. “I’ll deal with the paperwork and keep an eye out on things.”

Just tell Fangs what happened. He’ll understand.

I stuffed the little voice in my gut down as far as I could, trying to drown it in my own stomach bile. The guys behind me scattered as I walked out toward the dock, gazing off into the distance. The lights of the cargo ship crested the horizon and my heart leapt into my throat.

I was about to betray everyone I had ever come to love for a woman who couldn’t fucking listen.

This better be worth it.

With each inch closer that the ship came, I drew in deeper breaths. I kept my eyes and ears peeled for any sign of Devil’s Rage as the darkened outline of the ship came into view. I peered over my shoulder, watching as the deck hands eyed me before nodding their heads.

And just as the cargo ship approached the dock, the familiar cantering of bootfalls approached me from behind.

“Fangs?” I asked as I turned around.

He walked up to me with a determined look on his face. “Nadia showed up at the bar.”

My eyes widened. “Wait, you actually saw her?”

He nodded as he stood in front of me. “She’s pretty banged up, but she was upright. Her and Aria are eating and drinking.

We figured she'd need the fuel after running for so long."

I searched his eyes. "But she looked okay? She wasn't rattled or anything?"

He shrugged. "No more rattled than I expected her to be. She was looking for you, though."

I turned back toward the ship as it started the docking process. "Is anyone with her? I mean, other than Aria?"

He stood next to me with his hands slid into the pockets of his leather jacket. "They're fine at Open Arms. You know how locked down that place gets when I lock things up."

"So, no patrol tonight, then."

"Actually," he said as he cleared his throat, "we got word that Devil's Rage were in the area. I've got the guys staking things out and patrolling right now."

Come clean. Tell him what's about to happen.

"Well," I said with a sigh, "if it makes you feel any better, I haven't seen anything as of yet."

"You know, I'm curious. What made you want to be here instead of out there looking for Nadia?"

I shrugged. "Can't concentrate."

"If you can't concentrate, why would I want you handling one of our largest shipments in the past three years?"

I rolled my eyes. "If you want me to leave, just say it. Otherwise, let me deal with this paperwork."

He patted my back. "You sure you got this?"

I scoffed. "You know that I know my limits. It's why I pulled myself from the patrol."

"I know. I know."

He already knows. Just fucking tell him.

"Well," Fangs said as his hand slid away from my back, "I'll go join the patrol if you've got things covered here."

I watched the captain of the ship hop onto the deck. “Yep. I got it.”

“And Angel?”

I peered over my shoulder. “What?”

He stared me down. “She’s okay. All right?”

I sighed. “Yeah, I know.”

He allowed his eyes to drop down my body one last time before he walked away. The captain came up and tapped me on the shoulder, and as I looked down at the paperwork I was faced with a choice. Point the shipment in Fangs’ direction or Ink’s. Which to do, though?

I peered over my shoulder one last time, watching as Fangs disappeared into the darkness.

Then, I took the paperwork from him and did what I had to do.

“There,” I said. “Now, get to unloading.”

My knees wobbled as I turned around. I nodded my head and it caused the deck hands to come running before they unloaded things from the ship itself. Nausea gripped my gut. My head pounded with anger and sorrow. I had just committed the ultimate sin. Something I’d never be able to come back from.

And if they ever found out, I was a dead man.

“Got it taken care of?” Fangs asked as I marched toward the gate.

I nodded. “Yep. They’re loading it up as we speak.”

“Great. Then, we’ll all head back to the clubhouse. There’s been no sign of Devil’s Rage, so it was probably just a jumpy deckhand seeing things in the darkness.”

I snickered. “They do that a lot, don’t they?”

He chuckled. “The new guys do, at least. But they’ll get used to it once we grease their palms a bit. You coming back to the clubhouse?”

I shook my head. “Actually, I’m gonna go run by Open Arms and see if Nadia’s there. I need to speak with her.”

He grinned. “I’m sure you do?”

I shot him a look. “Not like that.”

He held up his hands in mock surrender. “Whatever, whatever. None of my business anyway. Keep your phone close.”

“Always.”

I had to get out of there. I had to speed away as quickly as possible before I caved and told Fangs everything. So, I tossed my leg over my bike and made a quick stop by Open Arms just so the cameras could clock me. I poked my head in and found the bar completely abandoned, which didn’t fucking shock me one bit. Nadia had always been stubborn to a fault. Hell, she could probably talk the grim reaper down from taking her own fucking soul if given enough time. So, I headed to the only other place I knew she’d be.

Because while she was stubborn, she certainly wasn’t stupid.

“Nadia,” I said as I marched through my front door.

She shot up from the couch. “Angel, you’re back. I was wondering—”

I held up my hand. “I’m not in the mood to fight with you, so you’re going to listen while I speak. Got it?”

“Look, I just—”

I growled at her. “Right?”

Her back straightened. “Yeah, sure.”

I lowered my hand and drew in a sobering breath. “It’s not your job to protect me. I protect myself just fine.”

“I could argue the same thing.”

I stormed toward her and wrapped my hand around her neck, pinning her to the wall. “Listen or take your chances out there. Got it?”

Her eyes darted between my own. “What in the world has happened to you?”

I smoothed my thumb along her pulsing carotid. “It is not your job to protect me, and even if it were, you don’t have the capability to do it. Not with the life I’ve chosen. When you went to that bar?”

“How did you know that—”

I pressed my leg between her thighs. “Shut up.”

She rolled her lips over her teeth and I released her neck.

“I know why you went to that bar. I know what you were thinking. You haven’t changed one damn bit, thinking you have to save me. Thinking you have to repay me for something. So, listen up, because I’m only going to say this once before I toss your ass out into the world for you to take your chances with the open air: stop it. Listen to what I’m telling you or get yourself killed. Those are your choices. You put everything on the line walking into that bar. Revealing yourself like that. You put Bender on the line. Me. Hell, even your sister. But you didn’t think about that. You never do. It’s always about you, what you can handle, and what your conscience needs. Never about anyone else.”

Her eyes sparkled with fury. “That’s not even remotely fair. I—”

“Shut up!” I roared.

She gasped before she recoiled, and I felt like shit. But it didn’t stop me from saying what I needed to say.

“You’ve put me in a position where I now have to come clean to my brothers. Instead of executing this in a way that saved everyone, you’ve forced me to make a decision. And I don’t take kindly to that.”

Her eyes watered over. “I’m sorry.”

I took a step away from her. “Sorry doesn’t cut it. Not this time.”

“Angel, please. Just listen to me. All I wanted was to—”

“It doesn’t matter what you want. We’re just fuck buddies, remember? Just screwing around in the shadows, right?”

A tear dripped down her cheek. “I—I just—”

I shook my head. “You fucked with my life, Nadia. I put you at risk by associating myself with you, and then you decided that it gave you the right to fuck with my life instead of listening to what I told you I needed. You’ve always done that. You’ve always tossed out what other people tell you because you think you know better. And the truth is? You don’t. Outside of that women’s shelter, you don’t know shit. I told you exactly what I needed from you, and you shat on it like it meant nothing. Like I meant nothing.”

“You mean *everything*,” she said.

She said it with such conviction that I almost believed her. “Then, fucking act like it.”

And as I backed away from her tears and heaving sobs, I stormed into my bedroom and slammed the door.

Before I ripped my cell phone out of my pocket.

“Is it done?” Ink asked as he picked up the phone.

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Ink, you have to understand—”

His growl cut me off. “Oh, you son of a bitch. You’re going to pay for this. You know that, right?”

“Ink, just listen to me. The crew showed up. It wouldn’t have gone well—”

“I don’t give a shit if God Himself showed the fuck up! We had a deal!”

I closed my eyes. “If you’ll just listen to me for a fucking second, I—”

“Oh, no. I’m done listening to you, you stupid, pathetic little fuck. You went back on your word. My club *never* goes back on their words. So, listen to me very, very carefully: you’ll pay for this. You’ll pay for this betrayal. You have a

debt to settle, and after I out you and Nadia for the idiotic couple you've become, you're both going to pay."

I snarled at him. "You stay away from her. I'll slit your throat myself if—"

"Better keep one eye over your shoulder," he taunted, "because we're coming for you. All of us. And you won't be able to stop it."

Then, he hung up the phone.

Leaving me reeling in place before I cocked my leg into the air, leaned back, and launched my phone against the wall.

"God-fucking-damn it!" I bellowed.

As my phone smashed against the wall into teeny, tiny little pieces.

FIFTEEN

NADIA

“God-fucking-damn it!”

I flinched at the sound of his voice, but the resounding crack that followed made me gasp. I took off down the hallway, lunging as far as I could before I slammed the door open. The doorknob sank its way into the wall. The plaster spurted everywhere in a small plumb that coated my right arm. And as Angel whipped his torrentially angry gaze in my direction, I froze.

Because I'd never seen that look in his eyes before.

“Angel...?” I asked tentatively. “Everything okay in here?”

His jaw clenched. “Get out.”

I watched his body vibrate with fury as he clenched his fists so tightly at his side that his knuckles turned white. My heart stilled in my chest. My knees grew weak, as if the bones from my body had completely evaporated. My throat closed up as my palms began sweating. Every inch of my body stood on high alert as he raked his widened gaze down my crooked form.

But I refused to waver for his sake. “Angel.”

He turned away from me. “Get out.”

I took the smallest of steps toward him. “Angel, please.”

“Cut it out,” he growled.

I shook my head softly. “No, I won’t. You need someone right now.”

He peered over his shoulder. “Yes, I do. But what I don’t need is the person who’s gotten me into this mess trying to be the person to get me out of it.”

His words sliced through my heart like a jagged dagger. “Sorry.”

He whipped around and charged past me. “I gotta get out of here.”

I moved with him, following quickly on his heels. “Just talk to me. That’s all I’m asking. You obviously need t—”

He spun around, and the furiousness coursing behind his eyes robbed me of my breath.

“What I *need*, Nadia, is for you to not get yourself killed. Got it?”

“Where are you going?”

He made his way for the door. “Anywhere but here.”

I tried my best to find any excuse to talk him into staying. “If you need me alive, wouldn’t it be best if I had some sort of protection here?”

He yanked the front door open. “Never stopped you from fucking up before. Why should it now?”

“Hey!”

He froze. “You know what, Nadia? Have it your way. You want your way so badly? You want to step to the beat of your own drum? Fine. Stay here or don’t stay here. Do whatever you wanna do. I don’t give a shit anymore.”

And with that statement lingering between us, he stepped out the front door.

Before slamming it behind him.

“Shut the hell up!”

The muffled voice that came from next door was accompanied by a series of fist-poundings against the kitchen

wall. I sank to my knees as tears brewed behind my eyes, but I no longer had the strength to fight them. With neighbors pounding on walls and knocking on their ceiling—which just so happened to be the living hallway floor beneath me—I dipped my head to my hands.

Before my palms caught my silent tears.

All I want is to talk.

Angel had always been this way. He had always been the one to act first and think later. To say things first, then think about their consequences later. Even now, as an adult, his words and his actions got him into trouble. All I wanted was for him to talk to me. To unload and get it out so that he didn't coop all of that bullshit up in his system.

Yet still, after all these years, he couldn't talk to me about anything.

“Why is this happening?” I choked out through my sobs.

I leaned forward and pressed my head into the carpeted flooring. My shoulders quaked with my violent sobs as snot slid down my lips. Everything felt helpless. Everything felt hopeless. And it seemed like every time I tried to make things better, I only seemed to make them worse.

Just let him take care of you. That's all he's asking.

I hiccupped with my sobs as I pulled myself off the floor. I stumbled down the hallway, making my way back into the bedroom as the voice in my head chanted that one specific phrase over and over again. I didn't want to blindly listen. I didn't want to be some kept woman that sat back and just did whatever someone told me to do. I had a job. I had women at the shelter that needed me. I had lunches and dinners to coordinate at the homeless shelter. I had a life outside of this apartment—outside of Angel—and I couldn't go out there and live it.

It pissed me off to no end.

But more than that, it made me worried for whatever my future might become.

“I’m so sorry,” I said breathlessly as I crawled into bed.

I wasn’t sure how long I laid there crying, but the next thing I knew the front door opened. I curled my knees up to my chest and squeezed my eyes shut, preparing myself for whatever anger was to follow. Maybe it wasn’t Angel at all, though. Maybe it was those asshats who had taken me before. Maybe they had found me because I was a fucking idiot.

I’d honestly let them take me if it got me away from the hellhole my life had become.

“Nadia?” Angel asked.

His voice sounded more settled, but the cutting edge of his tongue was still there.

“Nadia? Are you here?”

The smell of burgers and fries wafted beneath my nostrils and I sniffled. I wiped at the tears that had long since dried upon my cheeks. The crust around my nose made me grimace, and as I tossed the comforter off my head my body felt heavier than lead.

As if someone had pumped the marrow of my bones full of cement.

“Nadia?” Angel asked.

Worry mounted in his voice, so I poked my lips out from beneath the comforter. “In here.”

His heavy footfalls strode into the room before he turned on the light. “Nadia, was that you?”

I wiggled my fingers from beneath the covers. “Yep. It’s me.”

He sighed. “Honestly? I’m shocked you’re still here.”

I rolled my eyes. “Not sure where else I can go right now.”

The bed shifted before his body heat reached out for me through the comforter. “I brought food.”

“I can smell it.”

“Are you hungry?”

“No.”

A beat of silence passed between us. “I’m sorry.”

I scoffed. “Wow, that’s a first.”

“I’m serious, Nadia. I never should’ve spoken to you the way I did before I left here. I never should’ve raised my voice.”

I tossed the comforter off my head. “All I wanted was to talk with you.”

“I know.”

“All I wanted was to make sure you were all right.”

“I know.”

I sighed as I gazed up at the ceiling. “But all you do is push me away all of the fucking time, and then you wonder why I don’t listen to you? How in the world am I supposed to listen to someone who won’t let me in? Who wants me to do nothing else except blindly follow his words all of the time? What kind of woman do you think I am?”

The sigh he let out was much heavier than mine, and it gave away his state of mind. “You’re a much stronger woman than I give you credit for.”

I pushed myself upright and leaned against his headboard. “But at any rate, I wanted to speak with you before I *do* head out.”

His gaze snapped toward me. “What?”

“I didn’t want to leave things like that between us before I left.”

He turned his entire body to face me. “You can’t go anywhere right now. It’s just not safe. Not for anyone.”

“I’m a big girl. I can handle my own.”

“Until you get snatched up again. And I’m telling you, Nadia, if they catch you again? They won’t hold you hostage. They’ll kill you or worse.”

I crooked an eyebrow. “There’s something worse than death?”

“Did you forget about the women that came to your shelter only days ago?”

He had a point. “I can’t live like this with you.”

“And I’d never be able to live with myself if something happened to you.”

I blinked. “Didn’t you just accuse me of being selfish? I figured you’d be thrilled to have me gone.”

He didn’t hesitate. “At least my decisions don’t have overarching consequences for everyone involved. Right now, yours do.”

“Says the man who just betrayed his crew over some damn weapons.”

And that was when he shook his head. “Actually, I didn’t.”

It took me a second to process his words. “You didn’t what?”

He scooted a bit closer to me, settling his hand on my knee. “I didn’t sign the weapons over to my informant. I sent them with Fangs and the guys.”

Relief flooded my body. “You didn’t do it.”

“I didn’t do it, Nadia.”

My brain finally kicked itself into gear again. “But—but your informant? Didn’t you say—”

“You leave him to me. But that’s why it’s not safe right now. Not only do we have Devil’s Rage breathing down our necks now, but my informant has threatened not just my life, but yours.”

I raked my hands down my face. “Fucking hell.”

He squeezed my knee. “I know you’re going to feel trapped and it’s going to make you want to run more, but I’m telling you that you can’t. Not because I want to control you, but because I don’t want to bury you.”

I dug the heels of my hands into my eyes. “Why didn’t I just fucking listen?”

He chuckled softly. “At least the lesson is sinking in. It’s a tick better from your high school days.”

My hands dropped into my lap and my face went blank. “We were all assholes in high school, don’t even play.”

His grin fell slowly from his face. “I know.”

I leaned my head back against the headboard and closed my eyes. “I’m so sorry.”

He climbed into bed with me. “I know you are.”

Tears streak my face again. “I should’ve just listened. I’m so sorry.”

He wrapped his arms around me, pulling me close. “I know you are, it’s okay. Come here.”

“I shouldn’t have stayed so late at the shelter. I should’ve been carrying my pepper spray. I’m so fucking sorry, Angel.”

He kissed the top of my head. “And I’m sorry, too. I guess I still don’t open up easily.”

I buried my face into the crook of his neck as the tears unleashed themselves once more. My entire body trembled, threatening to rattle my bones to pieces as he pulled me into his lap. I straddled his pelvis. He ran his hands up and down my back as my tears soaked his t-shirt. And as the heat of his breath pulsed along the shell of my ear, I melded with his body.

Becoming one with his strength as my own personal store of it dried up.

SIXTEEN

ANGEL

The more she quivered, the tighter I held her. Hearing her cry so hard that she struggled to catch her breath broke something inside of me that I simply couldn't tolerate. It hurt. It physically hurt to hear her struggling through her snotty nose and her clouded eyes. So, I did the only thing I knew to do. The only thing that I knew would stop them in their tracks.

I gripped her hair, pulled her head upright, and planted my lips against hers.

"It's okay," I murmured down the back of her throat, "I'm right here, Nadia."

The whimper of hers that I swallowed spurred me on as her arms draped around my neck. I allowed my hands to splay against her lower back, pulling her closer while my cock lurched to life. It pressed against the zipper of my jeans, begging to be set free, and as the tips of my fingers graced the bare skin of her love handles, she rolled her hips into mine.

Before groaning those immortal words down the back of my throat.

"Make me forget."

With a growl, I lunged forward, taking her with me as I kept her body attached to mine with one arm. I placed her onto her back, gazing into her red, puffy eyes. She didn't deserve this. She didn't deserve any of it. She had always been so full of life; a light within the darkness of my soul. Her legs clung to me, locking against my back as her hands gripped my leather jacket, peeling it off me in one fell swoop. I wanted to

feel her skin against my own. I wanted to drench her body in sweat while she cried out my name to the heavens.

I wanted our neighbors to never forget my name.

“Mine,” I growled.

“Jesus fuck,” she gasped.

Piece by piece our clothes were shed until nothing but our bare skin clad our bodies. The peaks and valleys of her curves called to the tip of my tongue, and I dipped down to capture her pert, puckered peaks. The moans that fell from her lips stiffened my already hardened cock. The heat from her pussy wrapped around my waist, holding me hostage as she allowed my tongue to travel along her body.

Down her stomach.

Around the dip in her waist.

Between her legs.

Until I tossed her luscious thighs over my shoulders and dove between a pair of lips I longed to taste forever.

“Oh, my God, it’s been so long,” she gasped.

I grinned. “It’s been two weeks.”

Her hands found their way into my hair. “Like I said, much, much too long.”

I chuckled before my tongue parted her folds and her womanly scent arrested me. It held me there as my mouth explored her pussy, drinking down every last droplet as I lapped from slit to clit. She jumped beautifully for me, jiggling those mountainous tits for my viewing pleasure. And the harder her hands tightened in my hair, the more she raked her lovely nails across my scalp.

Spurring me on as my tongue flattened against her swollen mound.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck! Angel! Please!”

I growled into her body. “Come for me. Show Daddy what you can do.”

She gasped for air. “Fucking hell, Daddy. That’s it. Oh. Oh. So close. Right there. Right there. Don’t—don’t mo—AH!”

She erupted, drenching my face in her juices as her entire body locked out. Her thighs clamped down around my cheeks, holding me between her legs as I peeked my nose up to breathe. I watched her skin flush red from head to toe. Her hands fell away from my hair, traveling up her body as she tweaked her nipples. I longed for more. I needed more of her as I ground my aching dick into the soft sheets of my bed. I rutted like a wild animal, helpless to stop as I watched her excess ebb and flow like the beautiful waves of the ocean.

And as she collapsed against the bed, I listened while she gasped for air.

“Oh, Daddy,” she whispered.

I kissed up her body, leaving wet marks in my wake. “My sweet girl.”

She whimpered. “I’ve missed that nickname so much.”

I hovered over her with my swollen dick pointed right between her legs. “I’ve missed *you*, sweet girl.”

Her tired gaze searched my own. “Angel?”

“Yeah?”

“I—”

Her throat jumped as she caught herself, but I knew what she had been about to say. The voice in my head begged her to say it. It cried out for mercy as I studied her gaze. All she had to do was say it. All she had to do was utter the words I had felt for so many years and she’d be mine. She’d never be alone again. She’d never be without protection so long as I was alive.

But instead, she swallowed hard and grinned. “Your turn, handsome.”

I slipped off to the side and shook my head. “No.”

She furrowed her brow. “No?”

I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her against me. “Not tonight. Tonight was for you.”

Her asscheeks wrapped around my hardened member. “Are you sure? I really don’t mind.”

I kissed her bare shoulder. “Maybe in the morning. But right now? You need rest.”

She yawned. “You always had a knack for wearing me out.”

I smirked. “Guess I still got it.”

She snuggled even closer to me. “The morning, then. I promise.”

I nestled my face into her hair. “You owe me nothing. Now, get some sleep.”

And as I held her there in my arms, relishing the scent of her pussy still just beneath my nose, her soft snores quickly filled the expanse of my room.

Before I slipped beneath the tidal waves of darkness alongside her.

The first rays of the morning sun shone through the curtains of my bedroom, pulling me from my effortless slumber. I groaned as I rolled over, and just like she always used to do, Nadia moved with me. She slung her arm over my waist. Her leg tucked itself between my own. And even though I wanted to roll her over and slide my morning wood right into that juicy pussy of hers, I had something else more pressing to do.

I had to go see my sister.

Because if Ink was threatening Nadia, it wouldn’t be long until he threatened CeeCee as well.

It took me almost half an hour to slide out of bed without waking Nadia, but once I accomplished the impossible, I scooped my clothes up from the floor. I dressed myself as

quietly as possible before slipping into the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth. Then, after a quick glance in Nadia's direction, I closed the bedroom door behind me.

Before scribbling a note for her that I left on the kitchen counter.

Nadia,

I know it's tempting, but don't go anywhere. I'll be back with food.

- **Angel.**

My brain felt like a jumped mush of bullshit. I needed some clarity, and I needed my sister in order to get that. I hadn't gotten word from the hospital that she had made it back home. But then again, they probably wouldn't have known that. I buzzed by her place on my bike to give myself some time in the wind.

And when I saw her car parked in front of her townhouse, hope filled my chest.

"Claire?" I asked as I knocked on the door.

I listened for any sort of sound inside her home. Footsteps or someone calling out and telling me to hold on a second. I gazed through the frosted windows on either side of the door, trying to figure out if there was even a fucking light on in the damn place.

But the sound of the lock flipping on the other side pulled my attention back in front.

"Hey there," my sister said softly as she opened the door.

All of the lights in her place were off and she looked like a fucking wreck. Her disheveled hair was knotted on top of her head and the bags beneath her eyes weighed so heavily on her face that her eyes seemed wider than normal. My gaze cascaded down her presence, taking stock of the raggedy robe she wore that she refused to get rid of. The stubble on her legs told me a stark story, and as my gaze traveled back up to hers I drew in a deep breath.

“When did you get home?” I asked.

She shrugged. “Couple days ago.”

I slid my hands into the pocket of my jeans. “I’m sorry I didn’t stop by to check on you. May I come in?”

She stepped off to the side. “Sure.”

I made my way into her place before she closed the door behind me. “How are you doing?” I asked as I made my way inside.

“I’ve clearly been better,” she said with a laugh as she locked the front door and turned to face me.

“Yeah,” I laughed. “You have.”

“You want to talk about it?” I asked tentatively.

“Not yet,” she shook her head. “Eventually yes though.”

“That’s fine with me,” I said. Silence permeated between us we walked into her living room and sat down together on her couch.

“I’m going to a therapist,” she blurted, breaking the silence.

“That’s great,” I said truthfully. “I’m glad that you are seeking some help.”

“Yeah I’m going to take a leave of absence from work for awhile, to work on myself.”

Hope soared through my chest. Claire had been struggling on her own for so long. She had refused to go to therapy or get any kind of help over the years and bottled everything up inside. I prayed that she finally was making a turn for the better.

I reached out and pulled her close to me in a hug. “You know, if you ever need me, I am just a phone call away.”

“I know you are,” she said as she stifled a snob. I knew how prideful my sister was and that I knew she wouldn’t want to break down in front of me in tears. So I quickly changed the subject.

“I found her.”

She pushed out of my embrace turning to face me. “Nadia?”

I nodded. “I found her, just like I promised.”

“I didn’t think you wouldn’t. You’ve always been attached to that girl.”

I snickered. “She’s about as much of a girl as you are.”

A shadow of a grin ticked her cheeks. “Come. I made coffee,” she said as she got up off the couch.

I followed her into the kitchen where she ushered for me to sit at her little breakfast nook. I watched her closely as she poured two mugs of coffee, then gathered some cream and sugar for the table. She seemed strong enough despite how exhausted she looked. But then again, she’d just spent almost an entire week in the psych wing of the place where she worked.

“So,” Claire said as she placed the tray in the middle of the table, “do you want to start with how you saved her? Or the fact that you still love her?”

I snickered. “I see my sister is back to her old self.”

She eased herself into the chair in front of me with a groan. “Ah, I try my best.”

“You do more than your best. You go above and beyond.”

She fixed her coffee with enough cream and sugar to fuel a small village. “You pick where we start.”

I reached for my black coffee. “I had to bribe an informant in order to get Nadia’s location.”

She nodded as she sipped her drink. “Where did you find her?”

“Some fucking abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of town.”

“What did you use to bribe your informant?”

I chuckled. “Can’t tell you that.”

“Ah. Club business. Got it.”

I searched her face. “It’s the only time I’ve ever gone behind the club’s back to do something.”

Her gaze whipped up to mine. “The guys didn’t help you?”

I shook my head slowly. “I didn’t let them in on what was happening. I was so focused on saving that I was willing to do anything to find her. And besides, Nadia and I were so adamant about keeping what we’ve been doing on the downlow, that I knew if they realized how much I was willing to do whatever it took to get her back, they would figure it out.”

“Is it really that big of an issue if your club figures out you two are fucking?”

“You know as well as I do that we’re doing more than just that.”

She tilted her head. “Does she love you the way you love her?”

I thought on her question for a while before I responded. “I’m honestly not sure. I’d like to think so, but I don’t know.”

Then, the Claire I knew and loved finally shone through. “Quit being an idiot, Angel.”

I chuckled. “I never thought I’d be so relieved to be called an idiot.”

“I’m serious. Don’t be stupid this time around. You’ve already broken her heart one time with your ‘I gotta keep shit to myself’ nonsense you always pull. You think it’s yourself against the world and that anyone you let in is going to die or something. Cut it out. She’s stronger than that. She always has been.”

“Except that’s exactly why she got taken, Claire. She got taken because someone figured out we were fucking around.”

“And you went and got her. What’s the issue?”

I set my coffee down. “The issue is that it shouldn’t have ever happened in the first place. Do you even know what

happened to her husband?”

She nodded. “He died taking a bullet for her. This entire town knows what Joshua did. It was in the newspapers for days.”

“So, you get why I feel the way I do, but you still don’t agree?”

And that was when she leveled me with her stare. “You’ve never once talked to me about any other woman other than Nadia. You’ve never brought anyone to meet me. You’ve never talked about loving anyone else. Hell, I’ve never even heard you mention dating of any sort. When you talk about women? Nadia is the only one you talk about. So, yeah, I get why you feel the way you do. But I’ll never agree to my brother denying himself something he very obviously longs for just because he feels he’s toxic. Because what you feel isn’t always what’s factually right.”

I smiled. “Good to have you back, Claire.”

She nodded. “Good to be back.”

“Before I forget, I wanted to let you know that I am going to have the prospects start patrolling your house. If you ever feel unsafe, you call me alright?”

“Am I in some kind of danger?” she asked and I hated the fear I saw that moved across her eyes.

“I don’t think so, but I just want to be prepared incase anything boils over.”

She nodded. “I won’t be going anywhere for the next couple of weeks,” she said.

We finished our coffee in silence before I stood and wrapped her up in one of the biggest hugs I’d ever given her. My sister had always battled with depression and anxiety. For as long as I could remember, she had always been hardwired that way. But despite that, she was one of the strongest people I knew.

“I’m happy you’re still here,” I murmured.

She squeezed me before letting me go. “Me, too. Now, get out of here. Go tell that woman how you feel, for fuck’s sake.”

I left my sister’s place feeling more confident in my actions, but there was still the bigger task at hand: I had to fill the club in on exactly what had happened. If they continued their patrols and continued searching for answers, they’d eventually find them. And I knew that if the truth came from me, I might be able to side-step having to turn in my leather cut. So, I mounted my bike, drew in a deep breath, and made my way for the clubhouse.

Only to be met with multiple sets of prying eyes the second I walked through the door.

“Uh oh,” I said as I peeled my helmet off my head. “Did I miss a church meeting?”

Fangs shook his head. “No.”

I stared at the guys before I cleared my throat. “Everything all right?”

“Let’s talk in my office. Come on.”

Blood drained all the way to my feet, making them almost impossible to move. Never once had I ever feared for my station in my club, but in that moment I wondered if Fangs had already found shit out. I tucked my helmet beneath my arm and fell in step behind him, trying to ignore the heat beating against my back as everyone looked after me. I followed Fangs into his clubhouse office before he tossed the door closed, and when he locked that shit, I knew I was in for it.

“Look, I can explain,” I said as I turned around.

Fangs scoffed. “You better fucking be able to. You wanna know how I woke up this morning?”

“I take it you’re going to tell me anyway?”

He shot daggers from his eyes at me. “Don’t you get coy with me. I’m still debating on whether or not to strip you of your cut and kick your ass to the curb.”

I resisted the urge to quip back at him as he folded his arms over his chest.

“I woke up to a fun little anonymous tip. Some mangled voice on the other end of the line telling me that someone was apparently at the docks waiting to intercept our shipment.”

I nodded. “That doesn’t shock me.”

“That same voice proceeded to tell me that I needed to look within my club for the culprit instead of outside. That I had a rat in my ranks. That mutiny is going on.”

I snickered. “It’s not a mutiny, Fangs. Ain’t’ no shit like that going on in this club.”

“So, you’re not involved in this in any way.”

“I didn’t say that.”

His eye twitched. “So, you are involved in this.”

Guess it’s now or never. “I’m the one that found Nadia.”

He paused. “What?”

I set my helmet down onto his desk and perched on the edge of it. “Nadia and I are... we... well, we have a past. A high school past and a recent past.”

He groaned. “For fuck’s sake, are you two shacking up?”

“It’s a bit more than that, but yes.”

Fangs pinched the bridge of his nose. “What did you do? Start from the beginning and tell me everything.”

I shrugged. “There’s not much to tell. I’ve been working on a guy by the name of Ink. He bartends in the area and runs with another club. He’s got this uncanny ability to read people up and down without ever knowing them, because of that he knows everything going on in this town. I’ve been trying to sway him away from his club and onto our side for around a year now.”

“And what the fuck does he have to do with any of this?”

“His club taps into Devil’s Rage from time to time. Their presidents are buddy-buddy or whatever. I told him that if he could give me the exact location of where they were holding

Nadia, I'd owe him one. And at the time, I didn't know what that favor was."

"Until you had already gone and gotten Nadia."

I nodded. "Right. I get a phone call from him saying that he wanted me to divert our latest shipment of weapons over to his club instead of taking it for ourselves."

"That's why you wanted to switch with Viper and be there that night."

"But I didn't do it. At the end of the night, I couldn't divert those guns. Nadia would've been pissed as hell, not to mention I would've lost part of my family."

"You considered it, though."

I closed my eyes. "Yes, I considered it."

"And you didn't think to loop any one of us in until now?"

"I know, I know," I murmured as my eyes slowly opened. "It's not my finest hour."

"You fucking think!?"

He whipped his fist around and slammed it into the wall, punching a hole directly down to the bones of the clubhouse. He ripped his knuckles out and shook his hand, splattering a small amount of blood along the wall. I watched as his entire face flushed beet red with fury. He had every right to be angry with me, but I'd never regret what I had done.

"We never would've found her in time. They would've sold her off to the highest bidder, and you know it," I said.

He turned around and pointed at me. "You had no right to even consider selling out your club like that. Selling out your brothers!"

"I didn't know what the favor was going t—"

"You were tapping into someone else from another club! You didn't think they'd try to screw you over in the process? Are you fucking thick-headed or some shit!?"

“I know you’re upset, but I also know that you understand.”

“You’re goddamn right I understand!” he bellowed. “But that doesn’t excuse what you almost did!”

I nodded. “I agree.”

He drew in a deep, shaking breath before he lowered the tone of his voice. “There will still be consequences. I can’t let this slide.”

“I know. I fully expect them.”

“And I’m still not so sure that you’re fit to run with this club right now. Not if your judgment is that skewed by some pussy.”

“I understand that as well. But don’t forget the shit Bender put us through with Aria. If we can tolerate that—”

He pointed in my face. “He didn’t decide to almost sell out the fucking club, Angel. That’s the fucking difference.”

I couldn’t argue with him on that, so I stayed silent.

“Just—stay in here. Give me some time to think and fill the guys in on what the fuck’s happened. I’ll be back in a bit.”

And as he stormed out of his office, he kicked the door closed.

Before his high-pitched whistle sent a signal to the rest of the guys to gather for a meeting.

SEVENTEEN

NADIA

I woke up to an empty bed and tried not to let it get to me. After all, Angel was out there saving the world one shithead at a time, and I needed to try my best to stay out of it until he got back.

But as I pulled myself out of bed, I started worrying about work.

I had so much that I had already fallen behind on. There were women that needed me. Women that had come to rely on me, and I didn't want them to feel abandoned. I had an entire homeless network that searched for my face every day during lunch and dinner. They sought out my comfort and my smile in order to help them feel safe.

Who was out there saving them?

Who was out there taking care of them?

I pulled my naked ass out of bed and shuffled into the kitchen. The piece of paper sitting on the edge of the kitchen counter caught my eye and I read the note with only one of my eyes open. The damned lights were on everywhere, and one by one I walked around to shut them off. And after I returned back to the note, I scoffed to myself.

“Great. Just grand,” I murmured.

I peeked over my shoulder at the front door. I mean, if I hailed an Uber or something, who the hell would know? There was no telling when Angel would be back or even if he'd agree to accompanying me to work just so I could catch up on things. It would be so easy just to slip out for a couple of

hours, hit up the shelters, and get files to bring back here so that I could at least work while he was gone.

However, our conversation from last night filtered through my mind.

Just let him protect you. That's all he wants.

I ground my teeth together as I made my way back into the bedroom. I needed a hot shower. I needed to wash away the sorrow and the sadness and the fear. I turned the water on as hot as I could stand before stepping into the stream, and the smell of Angel wrapped around my entire being. I used his bodywash and shampoo so that I'd smell like him all day. Maybe if I smelled him, I wouldn't miss him nearly as much as I did standing in that shower alone with my body aching with reminders of the ecstasy he had graced me with last night.

But it wasn't as if I had any choice in that matter.

It wasn't like I had any of my shit with me, either way.

After washing myself down, I cleaned myself up. I brushed my teeth and scrunched my hair before wrapping the oversized towel around my body. Finally, a piece of microfiber that covered the whole of me. I smiled at myself as I tucked the corner in between my cleavage. My hair dripped down my back before the streaks of water found their death against the microfiber that sat tightly against my back. And for the first time since I had been taken, I felt strong.

I felt things slowly easing themselves back into some semblance of normalcy.

That was, until I stepped out of the bedroom.

"Well, well, well," Bullet said as he sat there, perched on the edge of the bed. "I thought you'd never get out."

Without thinking, I darted toward the bedroom door, but I was met with the chest of a massive man standing in front of it. I squealed, stumbling backward before something tight locked around the back of my neck. I tried to get away, but something swooped my feet out from beneath me. My cheek connected with the rough carpeting of Angel's bedroom, and I did the only thing I knew to do.

I screamed for help.

“Somebody help me! Someone, please! AAAAHHHH!”

“Mute her,” Bullet growled.

I had no idea how many men there were. I had no idea who the fuck had their hands on me. But when someone yanked me up by my wet hair and clapped their callused hand against my mouth, I found myself staring into the eyes of my captor.

The eyes of the man that wanted to kill me.

“You made a big mistake in escaping,” he said as he unsheathed a knife.

My eyes widened as I watched him bring it up to my face. It glistened in the sunlight before he slid it against my cheek, taunting me with how sharp it felt. I forced my knees to stay strong, lest I slip and slice my fucking face open. Tears of anger and anguish filled my eyes, threatening to spill forth as Bullet’s wild eyes danced down my toweled body.

Then, he tsked with his tongue. “Seems to me like the Dunne sisters just can’t keep themselves out of trouble.”

I practically growled at him. “You leave my sister’s name out of your fucking mouth.”

“Now,” Bullet commanded.

In one fell swoop, someone tossed me over their shoulder. I kicked my legs and flailed as hard as I could, not caring if my towel came off me. A gag made its way around my head, muting my sounds as someone slapped my ass. And as those men hauled me out of Angel’s apartment, I found myself back in the trunk of that fucking car once again. Rolling about with every pothole and sliding to either side with every sharp turn they took.

Before they tossed me down a flight of stairs and into a stale, muddy puddle.

“Maybe some time in the basement will help you rethink things,” Bullet said.

“He’s going to kill you, you know!” I called out at him.

He chuckled. "I'd love to see him try. I have very special plans for Angel, you know. I've never sold a man into the sex trade before, but I think he'd like to see you auctioned off before I put him up on that stage as well."

"You son of a bitch!" I shrieked.

"Lock the door tight."

"No!" I roared.

I barreled up the stairs before the door was slammed in my face. I reached for the doorknob and did my best to shove the door open, but the locks that got flipped into place held it tightly in its spot. I shoved my shoulder into it. It rattled and rumbled, but damn it, the fucking thing wouldn't open.

And as I sank to the top of the step with nothing but that blasted towel covering me, I let the tears fall.

Because I knew Angel wouldn't come for me this time.

Not with everything I had put him through. Not with the shit I had caused him. He'd leave me to rot, and he had every right to do just that. I pulled my knees against my chest and cried into them. I'd never cried this much in my life except for when I lost Joshua. My chest heaved and my entire body shook. My heart rate skyrocketed as snot coated the towel beneath my face. My throat grew hoarse, robbing me of my voice as I rocked side to side on that top stair.

Until a voice squeaked out from the darkness.

"It's no use. They don't care."

I paused at the sound of the female voice. "Who's there? Who are you?"

Footsteps came closer, settling softly against the stairs before a pair of eyes came into view. "Come. There's a bed we can share downstairs."

I leaned away from her. "Who are you? What do you want?"

She came a bit closer and I noticed the black eye she donned. "The name's Harley. What's yours?"

I swallowed hard. “Nadia.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Nadia. Come on. There’s a bed down here that we can share. It sounds like you need sleep.”

I furrowed my brow. “Why are you here? What’s happening?”

She snickered. “Isn’t it obvious? All of their girls escaped, so they need more girls.”

I thought back to the women at the shelter that had been rescued. “Oh, my God.”

“Seriously, you’re going to need your sleep. They don’t feed us much if we give them trouble, so the best thing you can do to pass the time is nap. There’s some clothes for you too.”

I inched myself down onto another step. “Sure. I’ll be down in a second.”

“Take your time. It took me almost an entire day to feel comfortable enough moving away from the sliver of light beneath that door. But don’t worry. Your eyes adjust eventually.”

And as I listened to rusty springs creak and groan off in the distance, a feeling I absolutely hated washed its way through my veins.

Hopelessness held me hostage as I sat between the door and the darkness.

EIGHTEEN

ANGEL

Watching the minutes tick by on the clock I faced killed me. Curses and murmurs sounded down the hallway, and I knew that didn't signal anything good. I paced Fangs' office, waiting for my fate.

And when his steps finally came down the hallway, I braced myself for whatever punishment the group saw fit.

Fangs opened the door. "Hey."

I whipped around and faced him. "So, what did they say?"

The look in his eye wasn't good as he closed the door. "We need to talk."

With those words, everything came to a grinding halt. I watched Fang's lips move, but I barely heard his voice. My stomach lurched into my throat. My feet started sweating. And when my ears finally decided to kick into gear, I heard the only words that meant anything as he held out his hand.

"Whenever you're ready, I need your cut."

I looked down at his hand in disbelief. Holy fuck, they were actually kicking me out.

"Did everyone vote for this?" I asked flatly.

Fangs shook his head. "You know I can't tell you that."

My gaze slowly slid up to his. "Now?"

He nodded. "When you're ready, yeah."

My heart shattered. Time itself meant nothing any longer as I slid my leather cut off my shoulders. I yanked my arms out of it and slapped it into his palm, unsure of what my next move needed to be. So many things rushed through my mind, like the fact that Ink was still out there. He was still watching. Still waiting. Still concocting a plan to strike. The club needed all the help they could get, and yet they were letting me go.

Over something I ended up not doing in the first fucking place.

“Angel, it isn’t personal,” Fangs said.

I slipped past him. “Feels fucking personal to me.”

“If you need anything—”

I scoffed as I ripped the office door open. “If I need anything, I’ll give it to myself.”

I didn’t bother looking at any of the guys as I picked up my helmet and eased down the hallway. I didn’t cause a scene and curse them out like I wanted to as I strode for the front door. But Bender’s voice stopped me in my tracks.

“Angel.”

I paused. “Yep?”

“Can you at least look at us?”

I snickered. “You lost the right to ask when you demanded my cut.”

“You know that isn’t how this works,” Reaper said.

“You should’ve come to us,” Viper said.

I shook my head in disbelief. “Good luck, guys.”

Protests mounted behind me as I slipped through the door. I closed it behind me with a soft thud, refusing to let my anger get the better of me. Even with the consequences, I would’ve done it all over again. Anything for Nadia’s safety.

Anything to have her in my arms again.

“Guess I’ll have more time to protect her, then,” I murmured to myself.

Even though I wanted to take the long way home, I fought against the feeling. I needed to get back to my place as quickly as possible so that Nadia knew I hadn't abandoned her. Without responsibilities lingering over me with the club, I had more time to devote to us. Which was probably a blessing in disguise, despite how much it hurt to not have my leather cut over my shoulders while the harsh, salted wind whipped around my body. But as I walked up the stairs toward my apartment, the idea of scooping the woman I loved into my arms invaded my mind. Which tugged a smile across my face.

"Nadia? I'm home," I said as I stuck my key into the lock.

The lock seemed pretty loose, though. "What the—"

I pulled my key out and opened my front door without having to flip the lock. The hairs on the nape of my neck stood on end as I peered into my apartment. The door eased itself open slowly, pausing just as the hallway was revealed to me.

"Nadia?" I asked as I stood there.

But no sound echoed back to receive my greeting.

"Nadia!" I exclaimed as I strode into my place.

I threw open every door and checked every corner of my fucking apartment. I stormed out onto the balcony, hoping and praying that she was playing some sort of twisted prank on me. Fear raced through my muscles. I tripped over myself getting to the bedroom. And as I charged through my bedroom door, I saw her clothes still on the floor.

"Nadia! Come out right now!" I bellowed.

Someone banged on the wall, yelling at me to shut up, and I had to resist the urge to walk next door and punch their goddamn lights out. The smell of her lingered, yet she was nowhere to be found.

Maybe she just didn't listen and left.

But why would she have left without her clothes? She didn't have another set of clothes at my place. I yanked open my drawers, trying to figure out which set of my clothing she had taken. However, all of my things were accounted for.

Every single pair of sweatpants. Every hoodie. Every t-shirt and every set of boxers.

My mind raced with so many terrible things as I snatched my cell phone up from the bedside table.

“Come on,” I growled.

I dialed Nadia’s number only to watch her phone light up on the other bedside table. I growled beneath my breath and hung up the phone before I dialed the only other number I knew to call. Bender’s face popped up as I placed him on speakerphone, and the damn thing didn’t even ring once before he picked up.

“Hey, I’m glad you called,” he said as he picked up the phone. “I was hoping we could—”

“Are you near Aria at all?” I asked.

He paused. “What?”

“Aria. Your girlfriend? Are you near her at all?”

“What is it?” she asked in the background.

“Put her on,” I said.

Bender’s voice grew hardened. “What is it? What’s wrong?”

I scoffed. “You lost the right to that information when you kicked me out of the club.”

“I didn’t vote for shit, Angel. It was—”

“Hey!” Fangs barked.

I shook my head. “I swear to fuck on high if you don’t put Aria on the phone right the fuck now I’m gonna storm back down there and—”

Wrestling sounded on the other end of the line before her voice appeared. “What is it? What do you need?”

“Have you talked to Nadia at all today?”

“No, why?”

“She’s not with you?”

“Angel, you’re freaking me out. What’s going on?”

“Just answer my goddamn question!”

She shrieked at me. “I haven’t seen my sister or heard from her all day! Now answer mine, you twatwaffle!”

Bullet. “I’m coming back to the clubhouse. I need to talk with you and Bender. No one else.”

Aria’s voice sounded broken when she spoke. “She’s gone again, isn’t she?”

“What? Give me that,” Bender hissed before his voice sounded. “Who’s gone? Where’s Nadia?”

“What’s happening?” Fangs asked in the background.

“Bender, I’m coming back to the clubhouse. You, me, and Aria need to talk. You’re the only three I trust right now.”

“Are you fucking kidding me with this shit?” Fangs asked.

Bender sighed. “You know we’re always here to he—”

I stormed back toward my front door. “You. Me. Aria. No one else. Got it?”

He sighed. “Yeah, yeah. I got it.”

“See you soon.”

I hung up the phone and blazed a trail all the way back down to my bike. I didn’t give a shit about locking the door. Hell, I wasn’t sure if I had even closed it. The only precious thing in that apartment had been taken, again, and I knew *Bullet* had something to do with it.

I knew they had finally found her.

I sped through yellow lights and raced down back alleys just to get around four-way stop signs. I skidded to a stop in the parking lot of the clubhouse only to find Bender and Aria waiting for me. Along with Fangs, of course. I hated the fact that he was there. I wanted nothing to do with his bullshit one damn bit.

But if he was willing to help...

“Talk, and quickly,” Fangs said.

I turned to Bender and decided to speak with him instead. “Nadia isn’t at the apartment. My door was unlocked when I got there. The window to my bedroom was open, too.”

“Oh, no,” Aria said with tears in her eyes. “I knew it. I knew they’d find her. Bender, we have to do something.”

I stared my friend down. “I’m with her. We have to go find her. We have to figure out what the hell happened.”

Bender shook his head. “If this really is Bullet and not some shit your informant is pulling? He won’t let her off easy.”

Fangs stepped up to the plate even though I hadn’t even looked at him. “Which is why it’s even more important to find her sooner rather than later. Is there anything else you know, Angel?”

I peeked over at him. “You’re really going to do this? You’re really going to help?”

He nodded. “Despite what’s happened, you’ll always be my brother. Where do we step next?”

I drew in a deep breath and nodded. “The only location I have is the one I originally went to in order to find her, and I honestly think those assholes are stupid enough to take her back there.”

Bender pivoted on his heels. “Then, let’s load down and head out.”

Aria turned to look up at Fang. “You think any of the other guys will help? You know, since it’s my sister?”

He studied me with a quizzical look. “If Angel wants to accept their help, I think they would.”

I scoffed. “You let me use some of your weapons one last time and I don’t give a shit who comes to help. All I care about is getting the woman I love back.”

Aria gasped. “You love Nadia?”

I chuckled. “Is that not obvious at this point?”

Fangs slapped my back. “Why the fuck didn’t you just say something? Come on, we have a rescue to prepare for.”

And as he ushered me back into the clubhouse, all eyes were on me as Bender held up his hand.

“We have a situation that requires the entire club’s participation. Failure to give it your all will result in the same vote we just bestowed upon this man. Any questions?”

Viper raised his hand. “Something wrong with Nadia?”

I nodded. “She’s been taken again. They broke into my apartment.”

Reaper didn’t hesitate. “I’ll nab security footage from the complex.”

Goose charged down the hallway. “I got the key to the cabinet. Everyone, come suit up.”

I sighed heavily. “I’m gonna miss you guys.”

And the look Bender gave me broke my god damn heart.

“Come on, one last ride for all of us. Let’s go get your girl, Angel.”

NINETEEN

NADIA

I laid there on the damp, musty bed beside the faceless woman with the glowing green eyes. I shifted around, trying to find a spot that wasn't wet. Trying to find a spot that helped diminish the anxiety shivering my body.

Or maybe that was simply the cold.

"It won't work," Harley said.

I closed my eyes and drew in a deep breath. "Is there a leaky pipe down here or something?"

She snickered. "It's probably not waterproof. Basements get musty and damp like this whenever they aren't waterproofed."

"Interesting that you know that."

She shrugged. "I work in my father's contracting company. We do everything from landscaping to remodeling."

"Sounds like backbreaking work."

She shifted before I felt her warmth against my side. "Sorry, my toes are going numb."

I rolled toward her and captured her feet between my calves. "There. Maybe that'll help."

"So, what do you do? I mean, other than getting yourself captured."

I giggled bitterly. "Well, I, uh... I work at the homeless shelter and the women's shelter in town."

“Wow. Big heart. I don’t know how you do it. I can’t allow myself to care that much.”

“It’s emotionally draining, I’ll give you that. But I’d rather do what I’m doing than swing a sledgehammer around and break my back.”

She giggled. “Then, you keep to your job and I’ll keep to mine.”

I smiled as a thought crossed my mind. “Are you associated with an motorcycle club, by any chance?”

She paused for a while before she spoke. “I am. Or at least I was. Some asshole named Bullet plucked me right off a fucking job site I was on a few nights back and I’ve been down here ever since.”

I wanted to ask her what crew she was part of, but I honestly didn’t care. I was simply thankful to not be alone in my circumstance.

“Do you think we’ll ever get out of here?” I asked softly.

Harley leaned in so close that her bright green eyes started glowing in the dark again. “Can I trust you?”

I scoffed. “I should be asking you that question. For all I know, you’re part of a club that wants to kill my club.”

“Bah,” she said as she leaned away, bringing back the darkness I wanted to chase away from existence, “I don’t subscribe to that bullshit. People hate people just because they’re told to hate people. I give people a chance to prove themselves to me first.”

“Well, what do I need to do to prove that you can trust me?”

She wiggled her ice-cold toes. “Tell me the biggest secret about your life that you wish you could tell people, but simply can’t.”

I didn’t even hesitate. “I’m in love with the boy that broke my heart back in high school, and yet I’ve shat on him so much this past week that I’m not sure he’ll even care that I’m missing.”

She whistled softly. “Damn, that’s a shit situation.”

“Your turn.”

She rolled away from me as the bed shifted with her weight. “I don’t regret killing my stepfather, even though I know I should.”

My eyebrows rose. “Was he an asshole?”

She snickered. “The biggest.”

“Then, good riddance, for all I care. I’m over men and their angsty bullshit.”

She clicked her tongue. “I like you. I think I can trust you.”

“So, what does that trust get me? Does it get me out of here?”

She rolled back toward me and stuck her face in mine. “I think I know a way out of this fucking place.”

My eyes widened. “You’re fucking kidding. How? Where? Why haven’t you used it yet?”

“It’s a plan that requires the effort of two people and I’ve been alone in this basement for at least a week, judging by the meals they give me in the mornings and again in the evenings.”

Hope filled my chest. “Whatever I need to do, I’ll do it.”

She lowered her voice to a whisper. “There’s a window that’s rusted shut in the far corner of the basement. I’ve moved some shelving in front of it little by little over the past few days to try and get up there, but someone still has to hold it steady. And even then, it’s gonna take some torque to pry that damned thing open. But if I’ve spotted the dimensions right, once we get it open I can physically pull the glass away from the crumbling cement blocks that surround it and we can slip through.”

I paused. “I’m pretty thick around the bodily area. You sure I’ll fit through there?”

She scoffed. “My hips are as wide as God’s fucking mouth. We’ll be just fine. It’s just a matter of doing all of this

shit while not being heard. That's the big thing."

"Do we have any sort of light to help us out with that?"

"That's the kicker," she murmured. "We'll have to use the fading sunlight or even the moonlight to help us out."

I groaned. "I've never wanted to know the moon's cycle in all my life up until this moment."

The bed shifted wildly as Harley rolled away from me. "Well, I guess it's good that ya girl knows all that shit. Come on. There's supposed to be a half-moon tonight, so there should be plenty of light to help us out."

I couldn't see her in the darkness of the basement, but the second she took my hand, she wrenched me out of bed. I stumbled behind her, trying not to make too much noise or trip myself up as we moved around in the endless darkness. At first, I thought she was kidding. I thought it might have been a trap set for me just to see if I'd try and get away again.

But once the glowing blue outline of the rusted window came into view, my heart slammed against my chest in glee.

"Holy shit," I whispered.

"Here, put your foot on this bottom shelf and hold it down for me," Harley said as she pointed.

I gripped the metal shelving and placed my right foot on that bottom shelf, just like she asked. I watched her climb it, her eyes searching around for something. I had no idea what in the hell she was looking for, but I kept my head on a swivel while my ears listened out for any sound we didn't want to hear.

"Bingo," Harley murmured.

"What?" I whispered. "What is it?"

She held up a mangled wrench in the glow of the moonlight that streamed through the window. "Torque. Now, keep an ear out. They should be delivering dinner any minute now, so we don't want to leave until after they've done that."

I nodded. "I've got that, you just work on that window."

“And hold me steady. We can’t have this metal scraping against the concrete floor. Too much noise.”

“Just go already. Come on.”

Harley began working, but I had no idea what in the hell she was doing. I had no proficiency in tools whatsoever, so I busied myself with listening out. Every time the window creaked or groaned, I winced. The sound seemed to echo all throughout the basement and I knew it was only a matter of time before we were caught.

“Harley,” I whispered harshly.

“Almost got it,” she grunted.

And that was when I heard it.

“Dinner time!” one of the guys called out.

Harley leapt down from the shelving and grabbed my hand. We raced back to the bed, tripping and stumbling over ourselves just as the door at the top of the steps opened up. Footfalls slammed into the wooden steps just as we slithered silently back onto the bed, and the soft thud of something at the foot of the bed caught my attention.

Before the smell of stale bread wafted beneath my nostrils.

“Don’t eat too much. Might make ya sick,” the man said through his chuckling.

Harley drew in a curt breath, but I reached over and grabbed her hand. The last thing we needed to do was piss these guys off. I squeezed her as tightly as I could and it shut her up, but the second the man retreated and closed the door behind him, we were right back out of the bed.

“Just a little more,” Harley grumbled.

The footsteps above my head didn’t do much to settle my roiling gut. However, the second I heard the window pop open, my eyes widened. Harley started fumbling around with something on the shelving, raking things across the rusted metal and clanking around.

“Could you be any louder? Seriously?” I hissed.

“Just trying to find... there! A crowbar. That’ll pry this fucking window from the cement blocks.”

It took almost nothing to rip the flimsy window away from the cement blocks, and the feeling of fresh air as the wind kicked up outside brought tears to my eyes. Harley climbed back down, dropping to her feet as she splashed herself into a puddle. Some of the muddy water brushed up against the back of my leg and I grimaced, but I didn’t have time to contemplate how dirty I felt.

“All right, you first,” Harley said breathlessly.

I quirked an eyebrow. “You don’t want to get out first?”

She giggled. “No offense, but I can pull myself up and through that opening. I’m not sure you can.”

I stepped onto the first level of the shelving unit. “You’re probably right on that.”

Her hands pressed into my ass cheeks as she heaved me toward the window. I stuck my head through and looked around, and when I knew the coast was clear I shimmied through the opening. At first, I didn’t think I’d get my shoulders through. Then, my hips got stuck trying to wiggle my fat ass through the god damn thing.

However, with Harley pushing behind me and me clawing my hands into the dirt, I finally popped out the other end.

“Holy shit, I did it,” I whispered.

“Now, my turn. Let me hold your hands. You can pull me through from there,” Harley said softly.

After grasping her hands and pulling her through the opening, she whimpered as her torso came through. The sound of tearing fabric wrapped around my head, but it was the way she growled that caused me to pause.

“You okay?” I asked.

“Fucking hell,” Harley spat, “I’m bleeding. I think I caught my lower back on something.”

“Is it bad? Do we need to stop?”

She scoffed. “Stop? Just pull me through. We need to get the fuck out of here.”

Against my better judgment, I pulled her the rest of the way through. However, the continuous tearing of fabric and her muted whimpers didn’t settle my mind much. I tugged her until the window finally gave way and she laid there on the ground, breathing heavily and blinking her eyes as quickly as possible.

“Can ya help a girl up?” Harley asked breathlessly.

I slid my arms beneath hers and helped her to her feet. “Can you walk?”

She leaned heavily against me, tossing her arm around my shoulders. “I need a bit of help, but I’m good.”

“Are you sure we don’t need—”

“Just go. We can get me to a doctor after we’re away from this awful place.”

With the wind howling through the trees, it silenced our sounds as we booked it for the woods. I had no idea where in the fuck we were, but any direction was better than where we had been. Harley stumbled beside me, grunting in pain as tears rushed down her cheeks. I knew she wasn’t okay. I knew that whatever had happened, it was bad.

And I prayed to any God listening that we were headed to town.

“What’s that noise?” Harley asked.

I paused briefly to catch my breath, but all I heard was the sound of the wind. “Those are just the trees.”

She shook her head. “No, no, no. Listen for a second.”

I didn’t want to stop moving, but I did. I rested her against a tree while she caught her breath and I strained my ears to try and pick up whatever the hell it was that she had heard. Was there an animal out there somewhere? Waiting to strike at the opportune moment? I wasn’t sure what to think. Panic gripped my heart as my breathing grew shallow.

“Harley, I don’t think there’s any—”

The second I heard the dull roar of those motorcycles off in the distance, I lunged toward her. I ripped her away from the tree and she cried out in my ear. I wrapped her arm around my shoulders and took off, crunching dead leaves beneath my feet and tugging both of us toward the sound.

“You think it’s my club?” she asked as she started coughing. “Or—or yours?”

“Guess we’re about to find out,” I said breathlessly.

I headed toward the sound, but almost immediately the sound pivoted. It had been in front of me, and then all of a sudden it was behind me. I whipped around, trying to figure out which direction to run in. And as Harley leaned herself heavily against my body, I listened as the sound faded away.

“They’re heading for where we were. Someone’s found us,” I said.

“We have to keep going,” Harley grunted.

I started in the direction of the bikes. “We have to find people who will help us. Come on.”

“That’s the direction of the warehouse.”

“Just trust me, okay? Trust me like I trusted you.”

With sweat dripping down my back and something warm seeping into my side, I booked it back in the direction we had just been running away from. The motorcycle engines grew louder, and louder, until the sound rumbled my gut and blocked out the screaming wind. Leaves whipped around us in small tornadoes. Lightning flickered across the sky. And just as I dragged us back toward the treeline we had escaped toward, a nefarious sound that signaled trouble filled the air.

The resounding pop of bullets leaving the barrels of guns.

“Get down!” Harley exclaimed.

I dove us behind a tree and leaned her against it. I squinted my eyes as bullets slammed against the metal outside of the warehouse we had been trapped in. It took my eyes a second to

adjust. Too many seconds, if I'm being honest. However, once they focused, they fell onto the one person I wanted more than anything in the world.

“Angel,” I whispered.

Harley sputtered as she coughed. “What?”

I grabbed her and held her to my side. “It’s my club. Come on. You need help. Guys!”

I hobbled us toward the motorcycles as Harley’s feet dragged.

“Guys! Angel! Look this way!”

The first person to pivot their head was Bender, and his eyes widened. I watched his lips move, but I had no idea what the hell he had said. Exhaustion flooded my bones. Harley collapsed completely against me. It took us both to the ground as Angel finally turned his head, and as his fist raised itself into the air the gunfire ceased.

Before he sprinted in our direction.

“Nadia!” he exclaimed.

Bender took Harley from me and I stood back to my feet. “Angel.”

“Nadia,” he growled as he scooped me into his arms. “Dear fucking God, you’re alive.”

I clung to him with all my might as Bender scooped Harley into his arms. “She needs help.”

He released me and looked at his arm. “You’re bleeding.”

I looked down at my side. “No, I’m not. Harley’s bleeding. She needs medical attention immediately.”

He furrowed his brow. “Who’s Harley? How the hell did you get out?”

“We gotta go, guys!” Fangs exclaimed.

Lights flipped on inside the warehouse and Angel grabbed my hand. He tugged me toward his bike before he practically tossed me on and whipped his leg over it. The front door of the

warehouse burst open before men yelled and cursed at the top of their lungs. And as a few of the guys in the club took aim, I watched the Devil's Rage's bodies drop right where they stood.

Before all of us sped off back into the dazzling moonlight.

TWENTY

ANGEL

“Goose! We need help!” I bellowed.

All of us charged through the front door of the clubhouse while Fangs ripped out his cell phone. Everything was absolute chaos. Bender heaved the pale woman onto the kitchen table—stomach down—as her blood dripped everywhere we went. And as Goose approached her, he shook his head.

“She’s lost a lot of blood. She’ll need a transfusion,” he said.

My beautiful Nadia leapt to the front of the conversation. “Do what you can. We have to get the bleeding to stop.”

“Uuuuugh,” Harley groaned.

Goose pulled up a chair at the top of her head and straightened her neck. “Keep your eyes on the floor and take in deep breaths for me.”

“Goose!” Fangs exclaimed.

Our president charged from the darkened hallway he had disappeared down before he held out the phone to him.

“Doctor Borden is on the line. He needs to know everything we need.”

Goose took the phone from him. “Doc? We’re gonna need blood. She’s lost a lot of blood, and she’ll need some serious stitching done. She’s got a gash from the small of her back all the way down her left asscheek to her leg. No, no, I don’t see any bone. Harley?”

The woman groaned. “What?”

“Can you wiggle your toes for me?”

Reaper got up. “Let me get her shoes off. Hold on.”

The man slid her tennis shoes off and she wiggled her toes for us. We all sighed collectively with relief as Goose informed the doctor on what we’d need and what had to be done. Then, he tossed the phone back to Fangs and our president disappeared once more.

“Fuuuuck,” Harley said breathlessly.

I dipped down beneath the table so I could look into her eyes. “Keep breathing. Keep hanging on for us. We’ve got a doctor en route, okay?”

She nodded slowly. “I’ll... do my... my best.”

“Goose,” I said.

He looked over at me. “What?”

“Keep an eye on her. I’m sure Fangs will task you with watching her anyway.”

He scoffed. “If he wants that, I’ll wait until he tells me.”

“Hey!” Nadia barked.

Goose whipped his eyes up to hers. “What?”

And when she pointed directly into his face, I knew I’d never be able to love another woman the way I loved her. “Just because you want to be shitty during a situation you know nothing about doesn’t give you the right to talk to someone that way. So, buck it up, suck it up, and focus on the issue at hand. Fight when it’s over, but not right now. You hear me?”

“She’s right,” Fangs said as he came back into the kitchen, “on all counts. Goose, I want you to keep a close eye on her. The doctor’s two minutes out.”

Goose nodded curtly. “Got it.”

The guys closed rank around the girl, icing Nadia and myself out. I hated it for her. I hated the way her shoulders slumped as she turned to face me. But despite the fact that I no

longer had my brothers' support, that didn't stop the need for a conversation between the two of us.

So, once the doctor charged through the front door, we slipped out onto the porch.

"You think she's gonna be okay?" Nadia asked as she peered through the window.

I gripped her shoulders and turned her to face me. "She's in capable hands. Dr. Borden is more than qualified to handle this issue."

She looked up at me with worried eyes. "They kicked you out of the club, didn't they?"

I slid my hands up to cup her cheeks. "You've always been perceptive."

She sighed. "How could they do that, though? You were just trying to help me."

"At the expense of what was best for a club I had pledged myself to. They had no other choice."

"Angel, that isn't fair. Family is family, and if you're family—"

I smoothed my thumbs over her rosy red cheeks. "What I did was stupid. I did it for a good reason, but I almost went through with selling out my fucking club. That has to be punished. I don't disagree with their decision, and neither should you."

"Nadia!?"

She turned away from me at the sound of Aria's voice. "Aria!"

"Nadia! You're alive!"

"Aria!" she shrieked.

The love of my life leapt off the porch and directly into her sister's arms. It warmed my heart to watch them jump with joy as they spun around in a circle, crying and laughing at the same time. I crossed my arms over my chest. I gazed upon the focal point of my life and knew that there was no going back.

Because so long as Nadia wanted me around, I'd dedicate my life to making sure she always smiled.

"Okay, I'm not taking no for an answer on this," Aria said as I stepped off the porch, "but you're coming to stay with me. You'll be safe there, especially since Bender's over just about every night, and that way I can keep an eye on you."

"Sounds like a good plan for now," I said as I approached Nadia from behind.

Nadia simply shook her head, though. "I have somewhere else to go where I'll be safe, but thank you."

Aria furrowed her brow. "Where the hell are you gonna go? You can't go back to your place."

I nodded. "She's right. Your place is no longer safe. You might as well give the damn thing up."

She turned to face me. "I'm headed back to your place, of course."

Aria paused. "Uh, no. That's where you were just taken from."

My eyebrows rose. "I'm with your sister on this one. My place isn't safe, either. Not for you, at least."

Nadia shrugged. "Tough tits. I want to be where you are, and that's the last I'm saying about it. I don't care where we end up, but you're going to be with me. And the four of us can't cram into Aria's little studio apartment."

"Hey," Aria said as she pouted, "my place isn't that tiny."

Nadia turned to face her sister and wrapped her arms tightly around her neck. "I promise I'll be safe with Angel, but I'm going with him. Okay?"

Aria held her close, rocking her side to side. "Tell me where you are the second you get there, otherwise I'm coming to hunt you down myself."

And when Nadia released her sister, she took a step backwards and ended up at my side. "I promise, I will."

Then, she slid her hand into mine and linked our fingers together.

“Ready to get out of here, handsome?”

I gazed down at her as Aria’s jaw dropped open. “Ready when you are, beautiful.”

“How long have you guys been together?” Aria exclaimed.

Nadia giggled. “I’ve been hiding it for the past year or so.”

Aria’s eyes widened. “A fucking year!? You’ve been screwing my sister for a year?”

I pulled Nadia close. “I’ve been loving your sister for a year, if that’s what you mean.”

Nadia whipped her gaze up to me. “You... you love me?”

I didn’t hesitate. “I’ve always loved you, Nadia. That never stopped.”

“Aria!” Bender exclaimed behind me. “In here!”

She pointed at my face. “Protect her with your life.”

I nodded. “Always.”

Then, after Aria kissed her sister on the cheek, she headed inside the clubhouse.

While Nadia and myself headed toward my bike.

TWENTY-ONE

NADIA

“Come here, gorgeous,” Angel growled.

We hardly got into his place before he whipped me around. The entire bike ride back had been silent, with my hands beneath his shirt fondling the lines of his chiseled abs. I couldn't keep myself off him. I couldn't keep myself away from him. And as he pinned me to the door, closing it with my back, he raised my hands above my head.

Before sliding his knee between my thighs.

“I love you, Nadia.”

My eyes danced between his as my heart soared with glee. “I love you too, Angel.”

The growl that accompanied his kiss stole my breath away. He flipped the lock before he picked me up into his arms and carried me down the hallway. Before I knew it, he had tossed me onto his bed, watching my body bounce for his viewing pleasure. He stripped himself of his clothes, his dick leaking from its tip as it created a mess on his carpeted flooring.

And as he eyed me down, I wanted nothing more than to be naked against him.

“Take me, and never let me go,” I whispered.

He pounced, jumping onto the bed and crashing his mouth against my own. He pawed at my towel, ripping it directly from my body in a fit of furiously-popping stitches and torn fabric. The animal had been released. The beast had come alive.

And he was mine to enjoy for the rest of my days.

“Goddamn it, you’re perfect,” he grunted.

He wasted no time sinking himself between my legs. His cock filled me to the brim, stroking my wet walls and caressing every sweet, sensual part of me at once. He stood at the edge of the bed and pulled me close. He tossed my legs over his shoulders. His hands gripped my hips so tightly that I swore to the heavens that his fingerprints would be there in the morning.

And as our gazes connected, he smirked.

“Hang on, sweet girl. It’s gonna be a wild ride.”

He pulled back and slammed into me and my back arched. I clawed at the sheets, allowing the electricity he afforded me to sizzle throughout my entire being. I shivered with need. I felt helpless against his assault and I wanted to be nowhere else. His cock filled me to the brim. He spread me in ways no man ever had, over and over again, and I simply couldn’t get enough.

“I love you, Daddy,” I whimpered. “Please, don’t ever leave me.”

And that was when he dropped down, folding me in half just so he could stare into my eyes.

“I’m never leaving you, sweet girl. You’re stuck.”

Our bodies melded together in a symphony of love and lust. My juices dripped down his shaft, coating his balls as they slapped against my ass cheeks. I breathed the air he afforded me. He swiveled his hips as his girth grew thicker against my walls. He stroked my swollen mound with his tightly-wound curls, causing my legs to tremble and my toes to curl.

“So close. So close, Daddy, please,” I said breathlessly.

And as his hips stuttered against my body, he sucked my lower lip between his teeth.

“Come for me, beautiful,” he growled.

“Daddy, yes!” I cried out.

My body locked out and my muscles contracted. Every single part of me shivered with tremors as the electricity rushing through my body blinded me. I struggled to catch my breath. His face fell between my tits, nuzzling and kissing and sucking his mark into my skin. Something wet sprayed from between my legs, causing my vision to dim as I collapsed heavily into the mattress.

And as I laid there, feeling him empty himself into my body, everything was finally right with the world.

“Jesus Christ,” I whispered.

Angel fell on top of me, blanketing me away from the rest of the world with his muscles. “Shit, Nadia. Good God.”

I closed my eyes and allowed myself a few moments to revel in the perfect bliss we had carved out for ourselves. With his cock still sheathed within my warmth, we worked our way up the bed until we were nestled against the pillows. As his dick dwindled, effortlessly slipping from between my thighs, the evidence of our love gushed toward the sheets.

But it didn’t stop my lips from murmuring the one question we didn’t have an answer to yet.

“Angel?”

“Hmm?”

I turned to face him, propping my head up with my hand. “How in the hell are we gonna make this work without so much risk hanging over our heads?”

He scoffed. “Well, I don’t roll with the club anymore, so that should fix things.”

His response had been almost automatic, and even though he wasn’t looking at me I saw the hurt roll over his features. His nose wrinkled and his eyes blinked a bit more than usual, and as I nestled into his side, he heaved the heaviest sigh I’d ever heard in my life. We both fell silent at his words. As his fingers mindlessly stroked through my hair, I thought about everything that had changed. I thought about my late

husband's death, and how he had given himself so that I could still live my life. I thought about how happy he'd be for me that I was no longer allowing my past to hold me hostage.

And I couldn't allow the man I loved to be held hostage as well.

I have to repay him for all he's done for me.

Silence continued bubbling around us until we slipped off into an effortless sort of slumber. Every time Angel moved, I moved with him, our legs intertwined and our fingers laced together. Waking up next to him was one of the most amazing things I could have ever done with my life, and I'd be able to do it over and over again until he no longer wanted me around.

But as I watched the rays of sun flood his face, I noticed something.

The sadness was even prevalent in his features as he slept.

"I'll make this right, I promise," I whispered.

Then, I kissed his cheek and slipped out of bed.

I have a president I need to talk to.

TWENTY-TWO

ANGEL

My body ached and my head spun as I rolled over in bed. I reached my arm out, eager for my sweet girl's luscious body to blanket its fall. The skin of my arm graced the bed and I peeked an eye open, wondering why on God's great green creation her fucking side of the bed was cold.

And as my one eye wandered around, I found myself alone in my bedroom.

"Nadia?" I asked.

I shot up like a bat out of hell and threw the covers off my bed. I sniffed the air, still smelling the erotic scent of our debauchery as it hung heavily in the air. All right, so she had been here. I hadn't dreamt that shit or anything. But where the hell was she?

"Nadia!" I exclaimed.

I slipped out of bed and strode through the apartment. I poked my head into every door and checked every corner, trying to track that woman down. I fidgeted with the windows and studied the lock on the front door, trying to figure out if someone had come for her yet again in the middle of the night.

But I knew that wasn't possible.

Had something like that happened, I would have been wide awake in a fucking instant.

"Where the fuck is she?" I grumbled.

Worry and anger mounted in my system. I swear to fuck on high, if Bullet had tried a third time to take Nadia from my

grasp, I'd roll right up to their god damn compound and pop his head off with my own two fucking hands. I stormed back into my bedroom and yanked my drawers open. I quickly clothed myself and pulled my father's old leather jacket that I still had off the hanger. I swung it over my shoulders as I headed for the front door with the need for blood rising up within my system.

And as I ripped the front door open, a swinging piece of paper caught my eye.

“What the—”

I snatched it off the front of the door, almost tearing the damned thing in half. But right there, in her terrible handwriting, was a note from Nadia. Relief flooded my veins as I read over the words, but even though I knew she was all right, it still didn't stop me from being confused as well.

“What the fuck?” I murmured.

Daddy,

I love you. I have always loved you, and I always will love you. But if you're going to get your life back, I can't be in it. Until I can find a way to get you back with your brothers, I can't be part of it. You'll be miserable, and eventually you'll grow to resent me for coming in between you and them, and I'll never be able to live through it.

I've damaged your life, and I miss my own. You need your brothers, and I have women at the shelter that need me. I have the homeless that need me. So, know that I love you, and the only reason why I could even stomach something like this is because I love you so fucking much.

Please, don't come after me.

- **Your Sweet Girl**

I read the note over and over, trying to make sense of it. Trying to decipher some hidden meaning between the painful words that bounced off the corners of my mind. The letter didn't sound desperate. It didn't sound hasty or slapped

together. It sounded like she had put a lot of thought into it, and I hated that I couldn't disagree with her.

That didn't stop me from loving her, though.

That didn't stop her from being the love of my life.

"Fuck," I grumbled.

As my rage died down and my heart rate climbed out of the clouds, I closed the door behind me. I stuffed the letter into the pocket of my leather jacket and headed toward the only place I knew I could find some sort of solace. I rode through the morning light, enjoying the cool breeze as it wrapped easily around my body.

And when I parked in front of my sister's townhouse, I saw her out on her covered porch sipping coffee.

"Morning," she said as I turned off the engine of my bike.

I pulled my helmet off my head. "You got a second?"

She nodded to the chair beside her. "Always got a second for you. Coffee's inside if you need some."

I walked onto the porch and sat beside her. "How's your morning been?"

Claire shrugged. "Eh. Alright. I officially took a medical leave at work."

"That's good. I'm glad you're doing something for yourself finally."

"I promised my therapist this time around that I would."

I nodded slowly, leaning back into the chair. "I'm glad you're finally taking their advice."

She crossed her leg lazily over her knee. "So, how are things with Nadia now that you've found her?"

I scoffed. "Ah, we've sort of parted ways."

She quirked an eyebrow. "And you allowed that?"

"Can't really control her and what she wants."

"Since when did that ever stop you?"

I grinned. “Nice to see the sass is back.”

She cocked her body to face me completely. “I’m serious, Angel. Since when the hell did that ever stop you with anything?”

I shrugged. “Even if I wanted something different, it’s too dangerous. I’m a target, and she’d always be at risk.”

“So, you choose to be hollow and empty for the rest of your life?”

“It won’t be that bad.”

“Are you sure about that? Because I’ve known you my entire life, and when you’re without Nadia? You’re a miserable son of a bitch.”

“Hey.”

“What!? It’s the truth, and you know it.”

I closed my eyes and leaned my head back. She was right. Fucking hell, they were all right. If Nadia stayed with me, she’d always have a target on her back. But if I didn’t have her in my life, I’d be nothing but a shell. A dead carcass of what once was.

“Fuck you for saying that shit,” I murmured.

Claire reached out and took my hand. “You know I’m right.”

I turned my hand up to grasp hers. “I know. I know you are. It’s nice to hear you getting better, though. I’m glad I came over.”

She squeezed my hand. “You’re always welcome, even on my bad days.”

I peeked an eye open and looked over at her. “Especially on your bad days, which I hope you’ll tell me about when you have them from now on so I can be here for you like I want to be.”

She nodded as she released my hand. “I’ll do my best. But only if you promise me something.”

“Name it.”

And as her gaze held my own, I knew what she was about to say before she even spat it out.

“Go get her, dumbass.”

I chuckled as I stood from my chair. I held my hand out and she took it, then I pulled her up to her feet as well. Her body creaked and groaned as if she were fucking seventy years old, and as I wrapped her up in a massive hug, she sighed into my chest.

“Just go get her, okay?” Claire asked softly.

I kissed the top of my sister’s head. “All right. I promise that I’ll do my best.”

“Good.”

Until I can find a way to get you back with your brothers...

“What?” Claire asked as she backed away from me.

I furrowed my brow. “I think I know where to find her.”

She smiled brightly. “Then, don’t waste anymore time. Just promise me you’ll bring her for dinner soon.”

I quickly stepped off her porch. “I will. Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

I strode for my bike and tossed my leg over. I pushed my helmet onto my head and struck up my engine before I blazed a trail toward Open Arms. I barely got my bike parked before I hopped off and slipped through the front door. I didn’t want to cause a scene, I simply wanted to track Nadia down.

However, the second I pulled my helmet off my head, I was met with the prying gaze of my former president.

“Angel,” he said as he walked up to me, “glad you’re here. Come to my office.”

I paused. “I’m just looking for Nadia. Did she come by here at—”

He glared at me. “Office. Now.”

Great. What the fuck did I do now?

Eyes penetrated my body as I walked behind Fangs. We maneuvered around the bar and slipped into the back room before he closed the door behind him. Open Arms didn't have any formal office spaces. We had one computer room where Reaper spent most of his time, but other than that we usually just locked ourselves in the back room if we needed to talk alone.

And after he flipped the lock, he spoke a set of words that took me a second to process.

“So, Nadia came by this morning and made a pretty compelling case as to why we shouldn't kick you out.”

I fell silent for a few seconds before I spoke. “She was here?”

Fangs nodded. “For about an hour. Her and I went back and forth for a while as she outlined all of the reasons why none of this shit was your fault.”

I shook my head. “That isn't true. All that happened was ___”

He held up his hand. “I'm not finished.”

I bit down onto my tongue as he raked his stare down my body.

“I get why you like her now,” he said as his gaze came back to mine.

“I love her, actually,” I said.

He grinned. “I get why that is, too. She's stubborn, hot-headed, and she's a hell of an arguer.”

I chuckled. “I don't win shit with her.”

“Well, you can add me to that list, because after she explained everything to me from front to back, I now understand why you did what you did. Why didn't you just tell me about your history in the first place? Why didn't you just come clean about the fact that she's practically your family at this point?”

I blinked. “Because she wasn’t at the time. We were just hooking up.”

“You know that bullshit isn’t true. You know that as well as I do.”

“Fangs, what are you saying right now?”

He took a step toward me. “I’m saying that I filled the club in on everything she told me and we took a vote. And it came out unanimous.”

The hairs on the nape of my neck stood on end. “Unanimous... for what?”

He smiled. “Unanimous to keep you in the club. You’re on probation for a while, but we aren’t kicking you out.”

I wanted to hug the fucking man. I wanted to pick him up and swing him around like some ragdoll in a fucking rom-com movie. A smile crawled across my face as light beamed from my soul. It ignited every part of my body that had died the second he had taken my leather cut from me, and as he strode past me I couldn’t help but whip around.

Before he plucked my leather cut off the back wall of the dingy storage room.

“Here,” Fangs said as he tossed it to me, “you’ve earned that after doing what you had to do for family.”

I looked down at my leather cut. “I swear to fuck on high, you won’t regret this.”

“Just make me a promise, Angel.”

I slid out of my leather jacket and put my cut back on. “Anything.”

“If you ever find yourself in a shit situation like that where family has been compromised? Just fucking come to us. Let us fucking help. It’s what we’re here for.”

And as I slid my hands into the pockets of my leather cut, I nodded.

“You have my word that I will.”

TWENTY-THREE

NADIA

“Nadia!”

“Miss Nadia, welcome back.”

“Hey there! Long time, no see.”

“Miss Nadia, is it possible to talk?”

“Nadia, guess what? I got a job! I actually got a job!”

The second I walked into the women’s shelter to try and catch up on work, I was bombarded with the smiling faces of those that had missed me. Some of the women had news to rejoice over, such as jobs and approved apartment applications and new haircuts. I rejoiced with them, hugging them and jumping up and down before booking out my entire day to help those that had waited so patiently for me to come back to work.

But as I stood in my office waiting for my first meeting of the day, my shoulders felt... heavy.

“I’m sorry, Angel,” I whispered.

“Whatcha sorry for, beautiful?”

His voice piped up behind me and I whipped around. My eyes widened as he stood there, leaning against the doorway of my office with his arms folded over his chest. The grin on his face stopped my heart in my chest. The easy look of his etched body puckered my tits in my bra.

Then, I noticed his jacket and smiled. “I see my conversation with Fangs worked.”

He pushed off the doorframe and stepped into my office. “Not sure what you said to him, but I figured the least I could do is thank you.”

I took a step back. “A letter would’ve been just fine.”

He closed my office door behind him. “You know I have shit handwriting.”

“Angel, I’m not sure if you should—”

He took another step toward me. “You do good work here, you know that, right?”

I backed up until my ass fell against the edge of my desk. “I know.”

But he kept coming closer. “And you know that I know that everyone here needs you, right?”

I swallowed hard. “That’s close enough, Angel.”

However, he didn’t stop gravitating toward me. “And you know that I love you with every fiber of my fucking being, right?”

My eyes watered over. “Please don’t make this any harder than it already is.”

He stood in front of me, his shadow cloaking me away from the world. “Claire wants me to bring you for dinner one of these days.”

“Let me know the night and I’ll block it off.”

“She’s doing better. A lot better since her last trip to the psych ward at the hospital.”

I smiled softly. “Good. That’s good. I’m glad she’s doing well.”

And as he raised his hand to my cheek, he cupped it so softly and so tenderly that my heart physically shook in my chest.

“Daddy,” I whispered.

He smoothed his thumb along my skin. “I refuse to live without you.”

I searched his eyes. “It isn’t going to work. It’s too much risk for both of us, you know that.”

“I refuse to accept that, sweet girl. Our lives have always been risky. You deal with women here who are targets because of their abusive marriages, or who they’re running away from, or the secrets they have to keep. It isn’t like your job is necessarily safe.”

I closed my eyes. “Don’t make this any harder than it already is. I can’t do the pain any longer.”

And as he slid his body between my thighs, my eyes opened as his hand cupped the back of my head.

“Then, don’t. Be with me, Nadia. Because I can’t live without you. I’ve never been able to. You’re the first thing on my mind when I wake up every morning and the last thing on it before I go to bed. Not only do you make my heart sing, but you make my life worth living. I’m nothing without you. Without your peace, and your presence, and your beauty. And whatever it takes to make this work—whatever it takes to convince you that I’m right—I’ll do it, no questions asked.”

I couldn’t help the words that poured forth. “I love you beyond a shadow of a doubt, Angel. There isn’t a moment that goes by that I don’t worry about you and what you’re getting into. I don’t want to live a life without you, but I don’t know how else to protect you from the chaos of my own life.”

He chuckled as he kissed my forehead. “You let me protect myself. I’ve got that locked down pretty tightly.”

“I’m so sorry. For everything,” I whispered.

He gripped my hair and pulled my gaze up to his. “I want to be in your life forever. I want to be your man, forever. Until the day we both die. Until the day that death separates us, and beyond. That’s what I’m offering: a lifetime of companionship, safety, love, dedication, trust, and great fucking sex.”

I giggled. “I mean, I don’t know if it’s *great* sex, but...”

He growled as he whipped me around, bending me over my desk. “Come here, sweet girl. Give me that ass and let me

show you what great sex really is.”

My tits planted heavily into my desk as he flipped up my skirt. His hand gripped my panties and ripped them from my body with a pop and a sting against my skin. His hand reached around my face before his grip landed securely along my mouth. And as my muffled sounds filled his palm, his thickened dick slid into my body.

Leaving me breathless as his hips snapped into my own.

TWENTY-FOUR

ANGEL

“Goddamn it,” I grunted.

Even with people walking around outside, I slammed into her over and over again. The sounds of skin slapping against skin filled me with joy as her pussy tightened around my girth. Her excess gave way beneath my fingertips. Her muffled groans and salacious moans pounded the skin of my palm. And as her juices leaked down my aching ballsack, a knock came at the door.

“Nadia?”

I leaned my lips down to her ear as I removed my palm. “Better make it quick.”

She drew in a quick breath to respond as I swiveled my hips. “Yes, Mark?”

“Can you open the door? We need to talk about your upcoming schedule.”

I eased my dick in and out of her body. “Better turn him away, sweet girl.”

She shivered and swallowed hard. “G-give me ten minutes, Mark.”

“Twenty,” I growled.

“Twenty!” Nadia called out. “I-I’m on the ph-phone.”

The man at the door paused. “You okay in there?”

I slid my dick all the way out and charged it back into her body. “Tell him you’re fine.”

She whimpered softly. "I'm good! Just catching up on paperwork. Twenty minutes, I swear. Okay? Good talk!"

I clapped my hand back around her mouth the instant those man's footsteps fell away from us. I pounded into her, relishing her muffled sounds as her body shook uncontrollably. Her pussy clamped down onto me, milking me for all I had as she released around my girth. And as her body collapsed into her desk, my balls pulled up.

Before I shot load after hot load into her perfect existence.

"That's the stuff," I growled.

She squeaked as she rested against her desk. "Oh, yes. Fill me up, Daddy."

I gripped her hips and rutted into her beautiful pussy. "Better not be too loud. Mark might hear you."

I pumped myself into her body until every last droplet I had to offer her was tucked between her legs. I pulled away, stumbling into the seat in front of her desk while my cock bounced around with her shimmering juices tainting me. She sank to her knees, resting her cheek against the side of her desk as her thighs glistened with our intermingled mark.

And as she tossed me the laziest smile I'd ever seen, I saw my future unfold before me.

"I love you, Nadia."

She crawled to me and placed her cheek against my thigh. "I love you too, Angel."

With my legs spread and my cock hanging low between them, I stroked my fingers through her knotted hair. She planted soft, open-mouthed kisses along my exposed thigh, gripping my heart even tighter than it had already been gripped. If there was a word stronger than "love," I felt it for her. If there was a timeframe longer than "forever," I wanted it with her. From the moment I had laid eyes on her in high school, I knew she was going to be mine forever. Even though we went our separate ways for a few years. Even though she married, loved, and lost another man. Even as I lived in hell, I knew her and I would always end up together.

And with my sister finally on a road to recovery—with my brothers still at my side after everything that had transpired—my life felt complete.

“Man, now I wanna nap,” Nadia said.

I chuckled. “We can nap all you want once you get home from work.”

She peeked up at me. “And where’s home, exactly?”

I gazed down into her twinkling eyes. “Wherever you are is where I’m going to be, so wherever we are *together*? That’s home.”

She pulled herself up from the floor. “Well, if you don’t mind, then, we should stay at my place tonight. I need my own shower and my own bed, because no offense but your bed is rock fucking solid.”

I grinned. “Just like me, sweet girl.”

She rolled her eyes. “Ha. Ha. Ha. But I’m serious. I’ll be off work around six, then we can pick up some dinner and head back to my place.”

I stood to my feet and tucked my dick back into my pants. “Sounds like a plan. I’ll meet you outside at six and we can figure out what we wanna do from there.”

She resituated her clothes on her body. “What are your plans for the day? Gonna go roll with the guys or whatever?”

I chuckled. “Well, Devil’s Rage are still out there, and as long as they’re out there then we have—hold on.”

My phone rang in my back pocket and I pulled it out. I saw Goose’s name appear on the screen, so I held up my finger to Nadia and turned my back. She giggled behind me before the creaking of a cheap chair sounded, and I made a mental note to get her a better fucking office chair if she was going to sit in it for most of her days.

“Hey, Goose. What’s up?” I asked.

He cleared his throat. “So, uh, I kind of owe you an apology.”

I shook my head. “You don’t owe me shit. It’s group business, and that’s just how it goes sometimes. It’s in the past.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear it, because I gotta chew your ear off about some shit.”

I peered over my shoulder. “Love you. See you in a few hours.”

Nadia blew me a kiss. “Love you, too. See you at six.”

“Awwww,” Goose said. “I love you too, man.”

I barked with laughter as I slipped out of Nadia’s office. “All right, what’s going on?”

“Uh, excuse me? Who are you?”

I turned around at the sound of the familiar male voice that had almost interrupted my love-making. “Ah, Mark.”

Goose paused. “What?”

“Hold on a second,” I murmured.

“Do I... know you?” Mark asked.

I nodded my head toward Nadia’s office. “She’s ready for you now. She just... needed a bit of a massage before she got to work. Women. You know how it goes.”

Mark eyed me carefully. “You’ve been in there this whole time?”

I winked at him before I headed for the front door. “Have a good meeting, Mark! And don’t give my girl any more guff than you should.”

Goose barked with laughter. “Do I even wanna know?”

I eased out the front door of the shelter and headed for my bike. “We’ll gossip over beers later. Right now, I need to know why the hell you’re keeping your voice lowered.”

He sighed. “So, you know how I was tasked with watching over Harley while she recuperates?”

I swung my leg over my bike. “Is something the matter? She injured again?”

“No, no. It’s not that. She’s healing just fine.”

“Then, what is it?”

And when he sighed, I knew I wasn’t good.

“You know how I have these hunches with people, right?”

I nodded. “You mean, when you read things about people they don’t want you knowing, yet?”

“Yeah, that.”

“Yeah, I know. I swear, if Ink hadn’t been such a fucking shithead, the two of you would have gotten along great. He’s got that same talent you have.”

He chuckled. “Well, my senses tingle every time I’m with Harley. I don’t know what it means yet and I sure as hell don’t have proof, but something’s not right.”

I furrowed my brow. “You got any direction to go in as to why something isn’t right?”

And when he uttered his next set of words, I set my sights for Open Arms.

“I think she rolls with another club, Angel, and I’m not convinced that her injury isn’t a set-up.”

SNEAK PEAK AT GOOSE

I'm not the kind of person to make a habit out of stalking someone. In fact, I couldn't care less about most people's movements. That wasn't my job, so I didn't make it a point to try and log every action of every person I came into contact with.

However, as I stood outside of Harley's bedroom door, I couldn't stop listening to her whistle.

Why the hell was someone whistling in her kind of position?

"Goose!"

I lifted my head and watched as Fangs jogged toward me.

"Goose, there you are," he said as he stopped in front of me, "you got a second?"

I tilted my head. "What's up?"

He held the clubhouse phone out for me. "It's Angel. He says he's been trying to call you for the past hour and you haven't picked up."

I jammed my hand into my pocket and pulled out my cell phone. My silenced fucking cell phone. I groaned at the eleven missed calls I had from the man and immediately snatched the phone out of Fangs' hand. How the hell had my phone been silenced? I have never once silenced the damn thing.

So, while I fiddled with turning up my phone's ringer volume, I propped the phone against my shoulder.

“This is Goose,” I said.

“Danger zoooooone!” Angel wailed.

My eye twitched. “Really? You’ve called me eleven times just to do that in my ear?”

I heard Nadia cackling in the background as Angel cleared his throat. “Just had to make the girl laugh. You know how it goes.”

I jammed my cell phone back into my pocket. “No, I don’t.”

“Well, anyway,” Angel said as his chuckling fell to the wayside, “Nadia wanted me to call you and see how Harley’s feeling. Any update on her condition?”

The woman’s whistling kept taunting me as Fangs jogged back down the hallway.

“She’s... in shockingly high spirits.”

Angel snickered. “I can only imagine. I’m sure she’s happy to be away from those Storm Reaper assholes. Especially with that basement. Nadia’s been telling me about it a bit, and it sounds like a—.”

“Hey,” I said as a thought occurred to me, “Nadia’s with you, right?”

He paused. “Uh, yeah?”

“Great. Hand her the phone.”

“What?”

“Angel, give Nadia the phone. I’d like to ask her some questions about her first impressions regarding Harley.”

He snickered. “Can’t figure the girl out?”

Not quite. “Would you just do it?”

“Fine, fine. Hold on.”

And after the phone shuffled around for a few seconds.

“Hey there,” Nadia chirped. “Everything okay? How’s my captivity buddy?”

I ignored her question. “When you first met Harley, did she seem scared at all?”

“What?”

“Harley, in the basement. Where you guys first met. Did she seem scared? Or worried? Or frightened in any way?”

“Uuuuuuuuh...”

I rolled my eyes. I hated nonsensical words and sounds like that. She droned on in my ear and I held back a growl while she racked her brain for an answer to my, apparently, very hard question.

“You know what?” Nadia asked. “Now that you mention it, she didn’t really seem too scared. If anything, she was determined as hell to get out of there.”

My brow furrowed tightly as my gut started churning. “What do you mean, determined?”

“I don’t know. She just seemed... like she had been waiting for someone else. The plan she had for escape required two people, and it was almost like throwing me down there had been her saving grace. If that makes any sense.”

“So, she already had the plan ready to go. Right?”

“Yep! She had already scouted things out. She just needed a second pair of hands to help with things. Honestly? It struck me like she had been down there a while.”

I lowered my voice as I moved away from Harley’s door. “How did the guys act around her? Did you see her interact with them at all?”

“Uh-uh,” she said as a heavy sigh left her lips, “the only other time we interacted with the guys before we busted out of there was when they came to give us food. We had to rush back to the mattress on the floor and pretend like we were just hanging out.”

I chewed on the inside of my cheek as I closed my eyes. “And her injury. How did it happen? Did you see it happen?”

“Oh, yeah. It was pretty rough. It happened while Harley was pulling me through the small window we crawled through. The broken glass sort of slashed us a bit.”

So, it shouldn't be getting worse. “I have one last question. Are you up for it?”

Nadia sniffled. “Uh, sure. Yeah, yeah.”

But, it was then that Angel wrangled the phone away from her. “Sorry, she’s done for a while. She’s getting worked up again.”

“I just have one more ques—.”

“No.”

I clenched my jaw. “Yeah, yeah. All right. She needs her rest anyway.”

“Yes, she does.”

I licked my lips. “Can you do me a favor?”

He chuckled. “Don’t mention any of this to Fangs?”

I raked my free hand through my hair. “I don’t have any proof of the feeling I’ve got in my gut, and I don’t want to clue him in until I can prove to him what’s happening.”

“And just so we’re in agreement, we think Harley’s been sent to spy on us, right?”

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “When Nadia settles down, can you ask her something for me?”

“It might take a day or two, but sure. What is it?”

“Can you ask her how dirty Harley looked?”

He paused. “How dirty she was?”

I nodded. “Yes. Just ask Nadia if she seemed dirty. Dusty. Covered in mud, or anything like that.”

“Are we looking for a specific answer to that question?”

“Mmmm, yes and no. Just ask her and let me know what she says, okay?”

“Can do, Goose.”

“Oh, and Angel?”

“Uh huh?”

I snickered as I cracked my neck. “Let that poor woman rest, okay?”

He barked with laughter. “Trust me, I’m doing my best.”

“Good. We’ll talk soon.”

“Talk soon, brother.”

As I hung up the phone, I couldn’t stop thinking about Harley’s wound. Every time I checked in on her—every time Nadia looked her over—her wound seemed to get worse. Bigger. More swollen and more irritated. It didn’t make any sense, either. A slash wound from glass didn’t take long to start healing from the bottom up. And yet, with Harley’s wound, the damn thing almost seemed to be getting deeper despite the rest she was getting.

Unless she’s not resting at all.

“How was the phone call?” Fangs asked.

I almost came out of my fucking skin as I forced myself to put on a nonchalant face. “Can you believe that asshole was pestering me just to sing ‘Danger Zone’ in my ear?”

Fangs cackled as he took the clubhouse phone from me. “Sounds like Angel. I knew he was all for being cooped up with Nadia, but she might be driving him nuts.”

I grinned. “Either that, or he won’t let her rest.”

Fangs tossed the phone in the air before catching it in his hand. “Well, you keep a lookout on Harley. Nadia says that her wound isn’t healing like he figured it would, so we need to make absolutely certain that she’s resting the way she needs to be.”

“I’ll make sure of it.”

He patted my shoulder. “Good man. I’ll come find you for a report before dinner tonight.”

Fantastic. “I’ll be here.”

As Fangs disappeared around the corner once more, I turned my attention back to Harley's closed bedroom door. I no longer heard the shower running nor did I hear her whistling, but the light still shined through the slit between the bottom of her door and the floor. I closed my eyes and focused. I tried to take in whatever soft sounds might've been happening behind the door. However, there was nothing. There wasn't even snoring to indicate that she was sleeping.

And good God, could that woman saw some Z's.

Check-in time. "Harley?"

I knocked on the door before I opened it.

"Harley? You okay in—?"

I watched her quickly drop her phone into her lap. "The hell are you doing?"

My gaze fell to where her phone was before dragging up to her eyes. "Checking in on you. Like I always do."

Her face softened a tad. "I'm okay. Just drip-drying from my shower."

"And yet, you have your clothes on."

She blinked. "Did you think I was going to drip-dry naked when I know a man is liable to bust in on me at any second?"

I studied her intently as she sat there, cross-legged. I had no idea how the fuck that position didn't hurt her injury, and it only poured fuel on the fire burning through my system. Her hair was damp, but it wasn't as if it was soaked, and I knew I hadn't been on the phone with Angel for that long. Her clothes were also completely dry. Shouldn't they have been clinging to her body? With wet spots or some shit?

"Goose?" Harley asked.

Her voice pulled me from my trance. "You hungry?"

She furrowed her brow deeply. "Everything okay?"

I nodded. "Are you hungry?"

She shrugged. "I could eat some soup, maybe."

I started closing her bedroom door. “I’ll bring you some along with some hot tea. I think that’ll help—.”

“Goose, wait.”

I paused and gazed over my shoulder at her. “Yeah?”

Her eyes danced between my own. “Would you... maybe like to have dinner with me?”

“No,” I said plainly, “I’ll be back soon with your dinner.”

Then, I closed the door and let out the breath I had been holding.

Before I started toward the kitchen to put dinner together for the woman that I knew was spying on us.

[Want more of Goose? Get him here!](#)

MORE BOOKS BY SAVANNAH RYLAN

Box Sets

[The Bad Disciples MC Box Set](#)

[The Road Rebels MC Box Set](#)

[Marked Skulls MC Box Set](#)

[Dead Souls MC Complete Collection](#)

[Black Hornets MC Box Set](#)

[The Lost Boys MC Box Set](#)

[The Callaghan Mafia Box Set](#)

[The Black Cobras MC](#)

[Dragon Riders MC](#)

Series

[Brooks \(Dirty Misfits MC #1\)](#)

[Porter \(Dirty Misfits MC #2\)](#)

[Archer \(Dirty Misfits MC #3\)](#)

[Cole \(Dirty Misfits MC #4\)](#)

[Tanner \(Dirty Misfits MC #5\)](#)

[Finn \(Dirty Misfits MC #6\)](#)

[Link \(Dragon Riders MC #1\)](#)

[Bowser \(Dragon Riders MC #2\)](#)

[Ash \(Dragon Riders MC #3\)](#)

Knuckles (Dragon Riders MC #4)
Sly (Dragon Riders MC #5)
Declan (The Callaghan Mafia #1)
Brody (The Callaghan Mafia #2)
Gael (The Callaghan Mafia #3)
Flynn (The Callaghan Mafia #4)
Cage (Dead Souls MC: Prospects #1)
Bear (Dead Souls MC: Prospects #2)
Saint (Dead Souls MC: Prospects #3)
Ryker (Dead Souls MC: Prospects #4)
Toxin (Dead Souls MC: Prospects #5)
Texas (The Lost Boys MC #1)
Stone (The Lost Boys MC #2)
Bronx (The Lost Boys MC #3)
Notch (The Lost Boys MC #4)
Diego (The Lost Boys MC #5)
Puck (The Lost Boys MC #6)
Frost (The Lost Boys MC #7)
West (The Lost Boys MC #8)
Jace (The Black Hornets MC #1)
Maverick (The Black Hornets MC #2)
Duke (The Black Hornets MC #3)
Colt (The Black Hornets MC #4)
Thor (The Black Hornets MC #5)
Jagger (The Black Hornets MC #6)
Knox (Dead Souls MC #1)
Grave (Dead Souls MC #2)
Brewer (Dead Souls MC #3)

Rock (Dead Souls MC #4),
Diesel (Deal Souls MC #5),
Girth (Marked Skulls MC #1),
Rodeo (Marked Skulls MC #2),
Abe (Marked Skulls MC #3),
Oz (Marked Skulls MC #4),
Dash (Marked Skulls MC #5),
Hawk (The Road Rebels MC #1),
Talon (The Road Rebels MC #2),
Snake (The Road Rebels MC #3),
Fox (The Road Rebels MC #4),
Gunner (The Bad Disciples MC #1),
Hunter (The Bad Disciples MC #2),
Tank (The Bad Disciples MC #3),
Glock (The Bad Disciples MC #4),
Marco (The Bad Disciples MC #5),

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Savannah Rylan is a romance writer that spends most of her time writing and reading with her cat, Gris. When not penning the next great American novel, (HA), you can find her on the beach with a drink in her hand or at the gym testing out some strange new position. Yoga, obviously. She lives in Southern California with her husband and Gris, the true love of her life.

[You can join her mailing list here!](#)

[Check out her website!](#)

