



AN EVE'S
FURY MC
BOOK 5

Addison

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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ADDISON
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BOOK SIX
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PROLOGUE

5 YEARS AGO

Everything is going to be fine.

I shove my hands further down against the leather seat as the car moves steadily in the direction of my worst nightmare. At least, I think that's where I'm going. The lights bathe my face in a multitude of colors. With every bump, it feels like my heart is going to pop out of my chest.

“Why do you look like you're going to throw up? Come on, don't be like that.”

I swing my eyes in Hollister's direction and fight with all my might to put a smile on my face. He says this is what I have to do to make him happy. He's been so short with me lately, and no matter what I do, it seems like I can't break him out of his bad mood. I wish I knew what started this to begin with.

Still, I can't make Hollister mad. He's all I have.

I know everyone on the outside says he's a bad guy and that I should stay away from him, but he saved me.

After my father went on his last bender, he came home and started to beat on me. I was sure he was going to kill me. It was only because he passed out before he could finish the job that I'm still alive.

I hightailed it out of that house as soon as I could, with nothing but the clothes on my back and a few dollars I'd saved up from past birthdays in my pocket.

I was alone in the world, with no one to watch over me, sleeping on park benches and begging for handouts. That is before I met Hollister. He took one look at me and knew that he needed to take care of me. He treated me like his baby, his little girl. Except when it came to the nights I made him feel good. The nights he touched me like I was a grown woman. He knew I was only sixteen, but he promised that if I didn't say anything, neither would he. I liked how he touched me. He made me feel wanted. The last thing I would do is tell on him. I want to stay with Hollister for as long as possible, and that means I have to do whatever I can to make him happy.

I just didn't think making him happy would be to have fun with one of his friends.

"I'm just a little scared, Daddy," I whisper, using his nickname because I know he likes it. It always puts a smile on his face. At least usually. This time, I only get a small grimace.

"Scared? What is there for you to be scared of? I already told you. Dave is a friend of mine, and he's going through a really tough time right now. He's lonely. It's right for friends to take care of friends, isn't it?" He shoots me another look, and I nod my head.

"Of course." I pull my bottom lip in my mouth and instantly spit it back out once I get a taste of the waxy lipstick painted on them. I don't usually wear makeup, but Hollister wanted me to look my very best tonight. I barely recognized myself when I looked in the mirror.

I looked so much older than my sixteen years. Maybe that's what Hollister wants.

"I just thought... I mean, I don't really want to have fun with anyone but you. I love you." I reach my hand over and place it on his thigh. The muscles there are rock hard like he's tensed up or something.

"I love you too, Babygirl, but if you really loved me, you wouldn't be giving me this much grief about me trying to help out a friend. You know what?" Abruptly, Hollister pulls the car to the curb and keeps his foot on the brake. "If you don't want to do this and you don't love me like you say, then you can

leave. Go back home where you came from. I don't have to be sitting here trying to help you out. I don't have time for your bullshit."

Fear blossomed inside my chest so quickly that it takes me a couple of seconds to get any words out of my mouth. I stutter a few times trying to think of the right thing to say to get him to keep driving. Trying to please this man who took me in off the street. He's never looked at me this way before. Now I'm not only scared of what I'm going to have to do with this Dave person but also that Hollister will leave me on my own again.

I can't go through that. Being alone isn't for me.

When Hollister told me he was going to take me somewhere special tonight this isn't what I thought would happen.

"No, no, please don't make me leave. I don't want to go back. I'll be good. I'll be a good girl, I promise." I squeeze his thigh again, hoping that he can feel how sincere I'm being.

"You going to stop with this 'I'm scared' shit?" He squints his eyes at me, and I quickly nod my head. I breathe a sigh of relief when he puts the blinker on and eases his foot off the brake.

With that, he looks down at his watch and sucks his teeth, "See what you did. All this emotional shit has us running late. I swear, sometimes, Babygirl, I'm not sure why I even put up with the shit you put me through." He sighs as he pulls back into traffic, and I shove my hands back against the leather underneath me and wait for us to get to this Dave's house.

I don't know what Hollister is about to make me do, but I'll do whatever I have to make sure I don't lose him, even if it means having fun with one of his friends.

ONE

PRESENT DAY

“That’s a good boy. Come on, Glenn,” I coo and keep the bright smile on my face. My knees hurt from being in this crouched position too long, but I’ll stay this way as long as I have to, to give my little boy a chance to conquer this milestone.

Glenn wobbles on his little legs and throws his hands out to balance himself, but his little feet don’t take even a single step in my direction.

“Come on, little man, you can do it!” Treble whispers from where he’s sitting in the chair, Riot on his lap.

There’s a thick tension in the air; no one wants to make any big noises and scare Glenn on his big boy journey.

“Come on, come to mamma,” I coo again, and Glenn gives me a big smile. Even with only four little teeth in his mouth, it’s still the best smile I’ve ever seen. His expression makes my heart want to explode. If I wasn’t trying to teach him how to walk, I’d rush right over to him and pick him up into my arms.

I suck in a breath and hold it when he lifts his foot up tentatively and puts it down in front of him.

He moves forward, and I hear everyone else suck in a deep breath as well.

In days past, the rest of the club would be off somewhere, either on a run or having a good time. Tonight, though, everyone is sitting around watching my son take his first steps.

If I didn't know any better, I'd think they were just as invested in my little tyke as I am. Of course, I know it's not true. No one can love this little boy as much as I do.

Glenn takes another step in my direction, and my chest squeezes when he wobbles a little harder. In a split second, I scan the area around him just to make sure that there's nothing in the near vicinity that he can hurt himself on if he were to fall over. I'm sure he'd be okay, but I never want him to hurt. Ever.

Glenn doesn't even recognize my growing anxiety; instead, he just continues smiling at me and takes another step in my direction.

I should be recording this. No, I can't move. Is he too young to be trying to walk?

A million doubts rush through my mind in between my little boy's small steps. I never thought I'd be a parent, and now that I am, I'm never sure if I'm doing the right thing for him. The last thing I want to do is mess him up in some way.

"You got it! You got it!" Bumblebee cheers Glenn on from where she's standing on the opposite side of the room but doesn't move so she doesn't distract Glenn.

The smile on his face falters a little as he stares at my outstretched arms. He's trying so hard to make it to me.

"Come on, baby," I coo again, and it's like that's all the battery he needs to get his legs moving again. Another step, and then another.

Before I realize it, Glenn has taken a full seven steps before he nearly throws himself into my arms.

The entire clubhouse explodes in cheers and applause.

"Yeah! Good job, Glenn!" Vexx claps from where she's at. Out of my peripheral vision, I see her smiling wide.

She's happy; they all are sharing in this small moment with me and my son.

"Oh, you're such a big boy. I love you so much. You did so good, Glenn!" I pick him up and cradle him against my chest,

kissing and smoothing the hair back from his face. I'd do anything for this little boy. He's my one reason for living a better life, or trying to, at least.

Slowly, the entire group starts to disperse, and I find myself just holding my son and peering down into his gorgeous gray eyes.

I could find the answers to all my problems in those little eyes if I tried. I do on a regular basis.

"Baby, you know what happens next, right?" I turn my head to see Riot standing at the door. I'm not sure when she came back.

"Huh? What?"

I know it's ridiculous, but for some reason, I'm scared of what's going to come out of her mouth next. What if this was the one thing the club was waiting on to put me out? Once they felt confident that Glenn was progressing, they could make us leave. After all, I'm only a prospect. So far, all they've been doing is providing for us. I've brought nothing to the table worth anything.

"What?" I ask, my words slightly shaky.

"Babyproofing." Riot laughs loud, throwing her head back and letting her bright green boy-cut hair flop from side to side.

My shoulders slump hard, and I instantly feel solace from her kind words. She stops laughing and peers into my face. "Wah gwan?"

"Nothing, that's just not what I thought you were going to say." I smirk at her before my attention goes back down to Glenn, who is practicing his bubbles.

If I saw anyone else doing something like that, I'd be disgusted, but on this little boy, it's adorable.

"What do you mean that's not what you thought I was going to say? Did you think I was going to have bad news or something?" Riot comes to sit next to me and Glenn, immediately taking the little boy out of my arms so she can get some auntie time.

“Not bad... I mean, I don't know. I'm just always waiting for you guys to get enough of me. Waiting for the day to come when you say enough is enough and want to have us out of here.”

If looks could kill, I'd be a dead woman right now. Riot nearly sneers at me.

“Are you kidding right now, Baby? You're our family. We never give up on our family. I'd have thought you'd realize that by now.”

“Family or not, I'm not really bringing much to the table. It seems like I'm more of a burden than anything.”

With a sigh, she places a soft kiss on Glenn's head before giving him back over to me.

“I know this is all leftover trauma from what you went through with that bastard Hollister, so I'm going to let it slide this time. But I never want to hear you talking like this again. Hollister is gone.”

I giggle and squeeze my eyes shut, trying to will my mind not to think back on that time. More specifically, the time Riot pulled Hollister into the backyard and tortured him for his part in destroying her life. Hollister is way gone. We even have his balls in a jar in Vexx's private office as a reminder.

“I know he's gone, but...”

“But nothing, Addison. You belong here with us. We're never going to let anyone hurt you or this baby ever again. You're doing good on your prospect ride. Soon you'll be a full-fledged member of the Eve's Fury MC, and then you can worry about trying to pull your weight. Right now, all you need to worry about is being a good mother to this little boy. Not that you need any tips; you're amazing.”

I let my gaze drop down to Glenn and watch as his eyelids slowly start to fall. After my upbringing, I'd never thought I'd be a good mother, but every day I surprise myself.

“Thank you, Riot, seriously, for everything that you've done for us and for the crap I'm sure you're going to have to deal with in the future.”

“Ah, man, don’t get mushy on me. And there’s no need to thank me. You’re one of us. We all take care of our own. Now get this big boy to bed.” She gently hands Glenn back to me, and I get up feeling lighter for some reason, as if all my problems have magically just floated away.

Something about knowing that my place here is solidified puts me at ease. I have Glenn’s crib in the corner of my room, and as I place him down in the safety of the small bed, I stare down into his face and feel my heart swell yet again.

Nothing and no one is ever going to keep me from loving this kid. It just feels a little better to know I have the club’s support.

As Glenn sleeps, I watch as he pushes his bottom lip out while he dreams. The face makes me laugh. It’s an expression I never do, but he seems to have been born with it.

It’s not lost on me that it takes two to make a child, and in the back of my mind, I wonder if Glenn’s father even knows he’s alive. And if he does, does he think about him?

TWO

THE DULL BLUE LIGHT OF THE COMPUTER SCREEN HURTS MY eyes. My head is throbbing from looking at the report over and over again, but I need to get as much information as possible. Every time I look something up, it seems there are more and more secrets underneath.

Usually, I wouldn't spend so much time in front of the computer, but I need to know more about her. The one mistake I made while working on the force...

Sitting back in my worn leather chair, I press my fingertips to my eyes and press down hard, trying to get some relief. The words are starting to merge together on the screen.

It didn't take me very long to find out about her, even when using facial recognition software. What is taking me so long is trying to find out where she went wrong in her life. After all, if she's the mother of my child, I need to know about all her skeletons in the closet.

Her name is Addison Murphy, but the group she hangs out with calls her Baby. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand how she got that name. She's only twenty-one years old. That means she lied to me about her age. She told me she was twenty-one when I first met her.

The minute I saw her standing on the porch of the Eve's Fury clubhouse, I recognized her. I don't think she saw me, though. If she did, she didn't show it. I'd expect her to pass out or

something like that. It's what I wanted to do, especially when I saw the baby in her hand—a little boy with my hair and eyes. He's just the right age, it looks like, to be mine, but I'm not sure. I have to be sure.

I've been digging into Addison's past for the past few months, trying to find anything that would point to the child not being hers or, even worse, not being mine. So far, I've come up with nothing but the fact that it most likely is. She doesn't have much of an online presence. No Facebook or Instagram. The only up-to-date photos I have of her are the ones that come out when the club does any of their community service work. For a group that is supposed to be full of badass biker women, they all seem to have good hearts.

I'm not really concerned with what she's doing nowadays. I'm more worried about what she was doing in her past.

When I first started on the force, I was paired with Riggs. He was my partner and the man who was supposed to be teaching me everything I wanted and needed to know. I thought everything was on the up and up when he told me that he knew of a place where the off-duty officers let off a bit of steam. I'd been working non-stop for nearly a year straight at that time and wanted to fit in more with the rest of the squad. I'm not really for parties, but I let Riggs talk me into it.

They took me to this upscale house, got me boozed up, and shoved me in a room. I wasn't expecting a woman to be in there with me. Especially not one that looked like my every wet dream come to life. Addison took my breath away that night, and it feels like she's yet to give it back.

I've always had a bit of a pillow princess kink. I want to be the leader in the bedroom, want to command my partner what to do and how to do it, want to be the teacher, but I never had the chance to act out any of my fantasies. I'd let that secret slip one night while Riggs and I were in the middle of a stakeout. Compared to his fantasies, wanting to play Daddy seemed a little bit tame.

I figured it'd be a fantasy I'd take to my grave until Addison opened her mouth, and she was everything I'd wished for.

I asked her if she was a working girl, asked her if she really truly wanted to be there. Even in my inebriated state, I did everything I could to make sure that she was a willing participant, but she played her role so well. She made all of my dreams come true until I found out the next day that it was really a nightmare.

Turns out she was a working girl, and Riggs had gotten me to break the law by soliciting a prostitute. It made me sick to my stomach, but for Riggs, it was the one piece of leverage he needed to keep me in my place. After that night, things began to change. I saw him for what he really was.

Nothing but a scumbag with a badge pinned on his shirt.

Scrubbing my hand down my face, I shake off the fatigue and lean forward once again to go through the same page of information I've been looking at. Her father was Adam Murphy; based on the file, he was in and out of the holding tanks for public intoxication. There are a few assault charges in his jacket, but nothing big time. I also found a few CPS cases about his daughter, Addison. Apparently, she'd gone to school a few times with fresh bruises, but he'd always manage to explain them away. Nothing more was ever done for her.

She must have run away; something more must have happened to get her on the streets working. My brain is on overdrive as I try to put the pieces of the puzzle together; the only problem is I don't have them all.

"Hardy!"

I jerk in my seat and my head pops up just in time to see a well-crafted paper ball come hurling in my direction. I bat it away before it makes contact. My eyes settle on Riggs, who is sitting across the space next to his new partner, both of them laughing at me.

"What the hell are you focusing on so hard? We're detectives now; we don't need to work so hard," Riggs jokes, and I scoff at his indifference. That's his life; he coasts by here, and for some reason, no one ever calls him out on his bullshit. I wouldn't be surprised if he had shit on everyone that works here just to make sure he never got in trouble himself.

“Don’t worry about what I’m doing. Focus on yourself. Don’t you have a case or something you need to be working?” I ask, dragging my gaze back down to the computer screen. I can hear him getting out of his seat and quickly close out of the documents I have open on my screen. Unfortunately, federal funds don’t cover much in terms of new electronic equipment. There’s still one photo of Addison open when Riggs makes his way to my desk.

“Ah, back on this girl again? I’m sure we can get her charged on something so you can spend some extra time with her,” Riggs jokes and slaps my back. He likes to think we’re still friends, but my skin sizzles just from that one touch. I don’t want anything to do with the man, but I have no choice with who works in the same building as me.

“Don’t fuck with her.” My eyes dart up to him. A threat if I ever issued one. His eyes go wide, and he puts his hands up in a mock surrender. “Easy, big boy. I’m not going to mess with your little pet. I just know you’ve been stuck on this girl for a while. All I wanted is to help you out a bit. Grease the wheels if you may.”

Finally, the window closes out and locks down my computer before I get out of my seat, standing nearly toe-to-toe with Riggs. “I don’t need the fucking wheels greased. You leave that girl alone. She hasn’t done anything.” I snarl at the man, but the grin doesn’t leave his face. He and I have gotten into it in the past, but he knows he’s got me over a barrel. I’m not going to do anything that would make him blow the whistle on my past transgressions.

“Just leave me the hell alone, Riggs.” I mutter before I step by him and toward the exit.

“I don’t know what your obsession with that girl is, Hardy. She’s not that hot if you ask me.”

I let the words roll off my back. It’s a lie. Addison is beautiful. But I’m grateful he doesn’t find her attractive. I’d rather keep her as far off his radar as possible for as long as I can.

I push the door open, but the tension in my chest doesn’t dissipate. I need to cool out, need to let go of some of this

anger floating around inside of me, and there's only one thing that seems to do that nowadays.

I have to see Addison.

THREE

FINDING ADDISON IS EASY; STAYING OUT OF SIGHT IS MUCH harder. On several occasions, I've come up to the Eve's Fury Clubhouse just to sit around and scope the place out. Every time I've tried to do that, I've almost been caught by either Mojag or someone named Press. It's like, between the two of them, they know every branch of this forest area.

The last thing I want is for any of them to start asking questions, especially when I'm not sure how I'd answer them yet.

Yeah, I'm a police officer. No, I'm not on duty. Oh, and by the way, I think Addison's son is my kid. Sure that'll go over well.

I groan and park my motorcycle as far away from the property as possible. I'll have to walk the rest of the way from here. There's one spot with good tree coverage that I've noticed neither Press nor Mojag come around very often. I'm sure it's because there's a wasp's nest nearby. I'm not afraid to be stung once or twice if it means I can get a look at Addison.

Most nights, she and the child are out on the porch just playing around. Other nights, she's there by herself. I can't tell if she's happy or sad, but it looks like she's safe.

Of course, I'm only looking in from the outside; she could be holed up in there against her will for all I know. A surge of anger bubbles up inside of me, but I push it down. I don't

know her situation, at least not yet. It's why I need to do more research.

I'm here a little earlier than usual; the sun has barely set by the time I make it to my spot. I hear laughter and people talking inside before the sound of loud music comes blaring out of the open window. God, I hope she's okay in there. I've never really been a big fan of motorcycle clubs, but they're good for certain things.

A breeze floats right under my nose, and I catch the very subtle scent of brown sugar and chocolate.

Someone must be baking.

I wonder if it's Addison. She seems like the type that would make a batch of cookies just for the hell of it. Someone who belongs in a home with someone taking care of her. Someone who needs to be guided and spoiled. I could do all those things for her and more.

I groan again, but this time follow it up with the hard thud of my head against the closest tree. "You'll have to get off your ass and go talk to her first," I mutter to myself. Rubbing at the throb on my forehead, I close my eyes for a second, only to pop them back open again when I hear the front door to the house open.

My breath catches when I see Addison walking out with the little boy cocked on her hip. She's not dressed to stay home either. It looks like she's going out.

Instantly, I perk up at the opportunity. So far, she spends most of her days and nights at the clubhouse. I've never had a chance to see her out in the open, with nothing blocking me. I could follow her. I could be close to her.

The excitement is almost too much to bear. I watch from my hiding spot, nerves and anticipation racing through me, as I watch her get the boy over to a small sedan and strap him into a car seat before she gets herself over to the front driver's door. She's going alone. It's perfect.

I'm moving too fast. I turn in place, trying to find the best way out of the small area without causing too much noise, but the

ground is muddy. Instead of taking a step forward, I slip and land directly in the mess below me. “Shit!” Without even checking to see if I’m injured, I get back on my feet and run as fast as I can toward my motorcycle. There’s only one way for her to go, and if I want to get there without her seeing me, I have to be at my bike before she drives down the hill.

It’s been a long time since I’ve had to move this fast. I used to be a beat cop, but now that I’m behind a desk, most of my police work happens behind a computer screen. Sweat pours down the side of my face, and my side has a stitch in it; I’m so out of breath. Thankfully, I make it to my bike before she gets down the hill. The bike rumbles to life, and I peel out of my hiding spot only to find another one further down the road where Addison might not notice me if I pull out behind her.

Every muscle in my body is coiled tight and ready as I wait for her to come. Doubts start to swirl in my mind, and a hint of shame as I realize I’m more or less stalking this woman. For all I know, she might not want anything to do with me. If she has my son, that’s not something I’m comfortable giving her a choice about.

Finally, after what feels like forever, I see her car pull out of the only road that leads up to the clubhouse and onto the main street where I’m hiding out. The clubhouse is deep in the back country, so there’s not a lot of traffic. I force myself to wait twenty seconds before I pull out and follow behind her. The drive is slow and leisurely. I don’t have to wonder where she’s off to for too long because she turns into a small strip mall and circles the parking lot to look for a spot.

I park my bike in the far corner where I can keep my eyes on her but not get too close. My eyes are glued to her as she finds a spot and gets out of her car to get the child and her belongings. I feel like I’m in a movie or something. She seems to be moving in slow motion, and the wind is tussling her dark hair perfectly. God, she’s gorgeous.

A few people walk by in front of me, their attention locked on me, and I have to look away from Addison before they get the wrong idea. I’m not a predator, even though right now I’ve got quite a few predator qualities. Once again, forcing myself to

stay back, I watch as she walks into a clothing store. When I know she's not expecting anyone behind her, I follow her inside.

We could've been in a lingerie store for all the attention I was paying at that moment. All of my focus is on her. She browses the clothes on the shelves without a care in the world. The boy is safe in the seat of the shopping carriage, and I forget myself for a moment. I want to get closer. Staying maybe ten feet away from her, I follow her from aisle to aisle, only falling out of my daydream when I watch her pick up baby shoes.

She must be here shopping for the little boy. Does he need things? I should be the one taking care of this. It's my job. Another wave of guilt washes over me, and I grunt softly, trying to force the emotion back down.

The sound must have traveled because Addison's head pops up, and just as she's about to turn and look right at me, I turn my back to her so she can't see my face. For all she knows, I'm shopping for my own little boy. I need to give it some space. If I don't, she's going to think I'm being a creep. I am.

When I turn back in her direction, I see nothing but the baby shoe display and some tussled clothing on the shelf. She's gone. "What the fuck," I grumble and look up and down the aisles, trying to find her. I don't. "No, no, no!" I whisper-shout and desperately start moving up and down the store looking for her.

At the last second, I watch her walking out of the store, pushing the shopping cart to the parking lot. I don't care who I have to push through right now; I need to get to her.

The automatic door moves too slow for me. I bang my shoulder against the glass as I rush outside.

Her car is still in the parking lot but I don't see her walking toward it.

"Where did she-"

Before I can get the rest of the thought out of my mouth, something small and hard hits my side, grabs my arm and

before I know what's going on I'm flipping over someone and onto my back.

All my air explodes out of my lungs, and I'm stuck for a second looking up from the ground as the object of my obsession steps over me.

"You've got three seconds to tell me why you're following me."

FOUR

THE BLOOD IS PUMPING SO FAST IN MY VEINS IT SOUNDS LIKE A drum in my ears. I knew I shouldn't have gone to the store tonight, but I was so excited about Glenn learning how to walk that I just needed to get him some new shoes so he'd be more comfortable. It's my fault because I didn't wait for someone to come with me.

No, this isn't my fault. It's the creep who's following me's fault.

"Talk!" I yell down at the man who is still staring up at me in complete shock.

"I wasn't..." He starts, and I pick my booted foot up, ready to bring it down on his face. I watched him follow me through the store, and when he couldn't find me, I hid behind one of the displays and watched him panic. He's definitely following me.

I may not be part of the Eve's Fury MC officially yet, but I know about all the trouble they've been getting in recently, mostly because they're allied with the Wings of Diablo. There's a group called the Faceless that were trying to take them all out. Lucky for us, the good guys won. The Wings of Diablo, Purged, and the boys of Djinn clubs were able to bring down the Faceless, at least as many of them as they could. There are still quite a few out there roaming around. Maybe this asshole is one of them.

I dart my eyes to the side of the store where I pushed Glenn just in case things got dangerous. He's still sitting there,

happily chewing on his fingers, unaware of what his mother has just done.

“Wait, wait! Okay, I was following you, but I wasn’t going to do anything. I didn’t mean to scare you.” The man puts his hands up while he’s still on the floor, and I back up from him. I’m not going to wait for him to reach for a weapon, but right now, it looks like I’m more of a threat than he is.

“Get the hell up and get away from me,” I snap, backpedaling in the direction of Glenn. I want to get out of here as fast as possible.

“Wait, don’t run off. I just want to talk to you.”

The man gets up but doesn’t make any quick movements in my direction. I appreciate that. He’s a big man. Tall and built, but not so much I’d think he lives in the gym. Just enough so I know he does something physical for a living. My eyes scan his body from his feet up to his face before I look away.

“I don’t have anything to say to you. You could’ve asked me to talk while we were in the store. Right now, all I want-” My thoughts come to a screeching halt as I look back at the man and take in the expression on his face. One I see nearly every day when Glenn doesn’t get something he wants.

My feet move toward the man on their own. It feels like something is pulling me closer to the one threat in the area when all my instincts are screaming that I should run away. He focuses his gaze on mine, and I stare deep into his gray eyes.

Glenn’s eyes.

“Oh God... no, oh God no!” I croak before I slap my hand over my mouth and begin to back away again. This time with no more fight. This can’t be happening. I’d never thought I’d see him again, but I’d bet everything I have that the man in front of me is Glenn’s father.

“Please don’t cry. I’m not going to hurt you.” The man moves forward, and I feel the tears sprouting from my eyes coming faster.

“Bullshit! Stay away from me,” I yell.

“Addison, I’m not going to hurt you. I just want to talk,” he tries again, moving forward.

My back hits the shopping cart, jostling Glenn, which causes him to let out a short screech and reach up for my hair. He pulls hard, babbling something that I can’t pay attention to right now.

“Addison, please,” the man in front of me says. He’s closer than he was a moment ago, but his voice feels like it’s far away. The world tilts from side to side, and I blink furiously a few times, trying to right my equilibrium.

“Hey! Hold on.” The man in front of me dashes even closer, and just as I’m about to fall, he catches me in his arms.

I want to push away. Move out of this mess that I’ve found myself in, but for the life of me, I can’t muster up the strength. I was sure when Hollister was killed that I’d never have to think about that life again, only to have it come screaming back into my life when I least expected it.

“Please, just let me go. I just want to go.”

“Listen to me, Addison, I’m not going to force you to stay here. I just want to talk to you for a second, and then you can be on your way. I’m not going to hurt you.”

He could be lying, I’m sure he is, but the sincerity in his eyes helps me drop the anxiety building inside of me.

“Come on, let’s sit down before you fall over.”

I nod shakily before I reach behind me and grab Glenn out of the shopping cart. The minute my arms are around him, he starts to wail. He must feel my energy. Mojag and Catori are big on the energies we put out being felt by the people around us. That must be what’s going on with Glenn now. He knows I’m scared, and so is he.

I take a few breaths to calm myself down before I walk over to the bench and sit down.

“What do you want from me? I’m not working anymore.” I let the words come out of my mouth before the man even has a

chance to say anything. If he thinks he's going to get another roll in the hay with me, he's out of his mind.

"What? Is that what you think I want from you?" He groans and drags his hands through his hair before he looks up at the sky, praying maybe. "I'm not here for sex, Addison." He turns in my direction, and my skin crawls when the very edge of his knee touches mine. The last time he touched me, he got me pregnant. I like to think I've grown from the person I was at that time, but the trauma I feel is real.

"What do you want then?" I ask, lifting my chin, trying to get my emotions under control.

"Can we start with the little stuff first? Do you remember me?"

"Obviously," I answer deadpan. Why would I have such a guttural reaction to someone I don't remember?

"Do you remember my name?"

"I only know you as Daddy. That is what you like to be called, isn't it?" The words slide out of my mouth laced with venom. I remember my night with him clearly. Aside from the fact that Hollister had taken me to the big house where he only entertained his best clients, it was the first time any of the Johns ever worked hard enough to get me off. As sad as it is, this man is the only other person aside from myself to get me to orgasm. Yeah, the sex was good, but I'd rather go through life having bad sex than be forced to sleep with someone for money again.

He cringes at the sound of me calling him Daddy, but he doesn't deny it. "My name is Hardy," he corrects me.

"Okay, Hardy, now what do you want?" I spit out again.

"I want to know..." His voice cracks as his eyes leave mine and settle on Glenn. He clears his throat before he continues, "I want to know if that child is mine."

"No," I answer too quickly. "He's mine. I don't know who the father is. I was a prostitute after all, or don't you remember?" Hoping that is enough to get him to back down, I get up from the seat and start walking toward the car.

“Bullshit.” Hardy leaps up from the seat and steps right in front of me, stopping me from getting any further away.

He grabs hold of my arm, and it’s only the fact that I have Glenn in my arms that I don’t turn around and punch him in the face. I’m not going to risk my child’s safety.

“I know you, Addison. I know what that bastard Hollister put you through. I know the type of people he would’ve put you with. Tell me the truth, is that my kid or not?” Hardy snaps in my face, and my anger at the situation and at him pushes to the forefront.

“What the hell difference does it make? I don’t need you or anyone else trying to come into my life and tell me what to do with my son. I’ve been doing just fine on my own raising him. Whoever his father is, he can stay away.”

Please let that be enough. Please let this man just drop this.

When Hardy crosses his arms over his chest and widens his stance, I know that I’m not going to get what I wish for.

“That’s not your decision to make.”

“So what? You saying that you want to take this to court or something? You want to get the authorities involved? Because I will fight you tooth and nail. I’m a damn good mother.”

Fear blossoms on Hardy’s face. I’ve hit a nerve.

“Oh yeah, that’s right. I don’t need to go far to get the authorities. I’m sure there’s someone at your job that handles things like this. Isn’t that right, officer?”

Besides him, the officers were the worst of my johns, mostly because they knew I couldn’t go to anyone if they tried to do wrong by me. I mean, who was I going to tell, another one of their police buddies?

“Addison, I’m not trying to take him away from you. Hell, I’m not even trying to tell anyone anything you don’t want them to know. Right now, all I want is to know if he’s my child, and if so, what I can do to help. It’s my screw-up. I should be doing what I can to make it right in whatever way I can.”

Screw-up? My heart sinks, and I hold Glenn tighter to my chest. “This baby isn’t anyone’s screw-up. He’s the best thing that ever happened to me. The mere fact that you’d put him in that category lets me know all I need.” I sidestep the man and try to walk away, but I see him getting ready to cut me off again.

“If you stop me from going to my car, I swear on my life I’ll scream bloody murder. I’ll make up such a wild story they’ll have no choice but to take you in. Even if they manage to clear you of everything, I’ll be long gone before you ever get a chance to see me or this little boy again.” I keep my gaze locked on him and watch as defeat washes over his features. Getting the cops involved is really the only card I can play. I really hope I’m not going to have to follow through on it.

After all, what cop is really going to believe an ex-prostitute over a fellow cop?

Quickly and without looking back, I make my way to my car and strap Glenn in. My hands are shaking so hard I can barely turn the key to start the car.

Pulling out of the parking lot, I take one final glance in the rearview mirror to see Hardy standing there watching me.

This wasn’t supposed to happen.

But now that it has, I don’t know who I can turn to for help.

I could bring it up to the club, but that means they’d possibly have to go against the entire police force. I can’t bring that kind of trouble down on them.

No, I’m going to have to handle this on my own.

FIVE

IF ADDISON THINKS I'M GOING TO GIVE UP JUST LIKE THAT, she's got another thing coming.

I let her drive out of the parking lot last night, but never once did I believe it was the last time that I'd see her again, especially now after seeing her reaction to me and after seeing the child up close.

That's my son; I've got no doubt about it.

I check in at work and let them know that I'll be working from the field today. It's not uncommon for some detectives not to step foot into the station. The privilege is supposed to be used when working on a case, but I know there are some other officers like Riggs and his crew that abuse it.

I'm not usually one of those people, but making sure I keep tabs on Addison is enough of a reason for me to risk it.

I sit at the very entrance of the small road that leads away from the clubhouse, just waiting for her to drive by. I've seen two other women leave out and one man I'm not familiar with. I'm going to have to get more information about the people who live in that house. It seems like the clubhouse is the home base for a lot of people. I'm not sure it's something I'm going to want my son around.

I push out a sharp breath before refocusing my thoughts. Right now, I have no say in what goes on with my child, especially

since I can't even get his mother to admit that he's mine in the first place.

Last night was sleepless. I kept going over the short conversation Addison and I had in my head. I said a lot of the wrong things.

I always thought if I did ever get a chance to speak to her in real life that things would go smoother than that. I don't want to be a threat or put any undue stress on her or the baby. That's not what I'm here for. I just want to make sure the both of them are okay.

Now that she's seen me and has labeled me the enemy, I'm going to have to do a lot more kissing up in order to prove to her that I'm safe.

If it's possible at all.

The roar of a motorcycle snaps me out of my daydream, and I look out the side view mirror to see if I can identify who is coming out.

"What the hell is this?"

I'm surprised when I don't see one of the other members of the club but Addison herself coming down the road on a motorcycle. I don't know when she started riding, but from her form and the tentative way she moves, I can tell that it's not that long ago.

She has a helmet on and a leather jacket but no other protective gear. It pisses me off that she'd put herself at risk like that.

Riding motorcycles is dangerous. Everyone knows this. I don't understand how she could be so reckless, especially when right now she's the sole provider to her son.

I hunker down further in my seat as she breezes by me. She doesn't bother to look in my direction, which is exactly what I wanted. I need to get her away from the clubhouse before things turn bad and I have the entire club on my ass.

I know if I keep down this road, I'm going to have to deal with them eventually, but right now I just want to get things back

on solid ground with Addison. Everything else can come later.
Good or bad.

I follow behind her, keeping more than three car lengths between us. I don't want to spook her. Thankfully, she's so focused on the road and keeping her bike upright that she's not really paying attention to what's behind her.

My foot jerks on the gas pedal a few times as we're driving through when I see her make some rookie mistakes that can easily cause her to wipe out or, worse, crash into someone else. She doesn't check her blind side well enough, for one. She nearly merged into oncoming traffic at one point. If the other driver didn't lay on the horn, I'd be peeling her off the street.

The strip mall that we went to yesterday flies by, and we head deeper into the city where there are more people and busier streets. I have to get closer to her if I don't want to lose sight. My hands hurt when she finally pulls off to park her bike; I was gripping the steering wheel so tight.

I've learned my lesson from last time. I'm not going to try and sneak up on her again. My back still hurts from that hip throw she pulled on me.

Quickly finding a place to park, I hop out of my car and jog across the street just as Addison is about to walk into a bookstore.

I make it right behind her just as she's opening the door. "Addison, hold up." I tap her once on the shoulder and take two steps back. The last thing I want is for her to get scared.

She turns with a soft smile on her face until she sees who's calling her name. Quickly, that smile turns into a nasty grimace. "What the hell, man. I told you everything I was going to tell you yesterday. Get a clue." She steps away from the door to let another couple walk in.

"Easy, just relax—"

"Don't tell me to relax. I'm as relaxed as I'm going to be with having some man stalk me all around town. I don't know what you want from me." Her voice is raised, and I see a few people

turn their heads, ready to either intervene or simply watch the drama that's about to unfold.

In this day and age where everything winds up on social media, I know I need to keep a cool head and calm her down without becoming Instagram-worthy.

"I didn't mean relax. I just meant you don't need to be scared or nervous around me. You're right; I am stalking you all over the place, but that's only because I need some answers. Answers only you will know. Just give me a few moments of your time, see for yourself that I'm not trying to run any game or anything on you. Just talk to me." I take a half-step closer to her, getting close without invading her personal space. She doesn't answer right away, but I'm not going to take no for an answer. "Come on, what's a little conversation going to hurt?"

"Fine, talk." She crosses her arms over her chest and glares at me. She really means to have this conversation in the middle of the sidewalk where everyone can hear us.

I'm not famous or anything like that, but I'd rather not be on the street where one of the passing patrol officers can see me.

"How about we go in the coffee shop right here? It's public, neutral?" I point to a small bakery across the street. It's not exactly what I'd call bustling with people, but there are a few customers walking in and out. Slow enough to be personal, but busy enough she won't have to feel uneasy.

"Fine, but you're going to have to make this quick. I've got things to do." She walks ahead of me, barely paying attention to the cars coming in our direction.

I grab hold of her arm and yank her back when a small coupe comes barreling up the road. She rips her arm away from me the second she can.

"You know I'm old enough to cross the street on my own, right?"

I could bite back, tell her that if she were capable of crossing the street, she should know to look both ways, but I doubt that will get me any brownie points with her.

I nod once and gesture with my hand that she should continue walking. I follow closely behind her, doing what I can to keep her safe from this distance.

We get into the coffee shop, and she beelines straight for a table right in front of the large floor-to-ceiling windows. She's not trying to give me even the least bit of privacy.

It's not ideal, but I'll deal with it.

"Are you hungry?" I ask.

"What? What does my appetite have to do with you taking your five minutes?" She squints her eyes at me and once again leaves a very large opportunity for me to fight back. I've got a whole war ahead of me; I'm not going to waste my time with these little battles.

"Give me a second, please. If we don't buy anything, we can't sit in here." It's a plausible excuse, but in reality, I'm walking away from her because I need to get my thoughts under control.

I need to figure out exactly what I'm going to say to her, what questions I'm going to ask. When I came up with this plan this morning to strong-arm her into talking to me, I didn't plan out the actual talk.

On top of that, I need to rein in my attraction to her as well.

Every time she challenges me or questions me, it feels like she's throwing another log on an already roaring inferno. She's exactly the kind of woman I want. I already know she can be submissive. When I had her, she was coy and soft. She follows instructions in the bedroom, and when she comes, it's glorious. The fact that she also has this disobedient wild side only makes me want her that much more.

Shoving my hands in my pockets, I lean forward slightly, trying to decide between what kind of pastries and other baked goods I should get. I by no means think of this as a date or anything like that, but if she's sitting with me, I can at least make sure she has something to eat.

Ordering two large blueberry muffins, a tea, coffee, and a soda, I walk back over to the table with a tray full of food.

I sit in the chair opposite her and push the tray of food to the side. “Take whatever you want.” I motion with my head, but she doesn’t even glance at the food I’m offering her.

“What I want is to be able to get out of this coffee shop in the next three minutes. You should try to make that happen.”

Her attitude is fierce. I have to bite the inside of my cheek to keep from smiling. I’m always up for a good challenge.

“I’ll do my best. So, do you want to start, or do you want me to just jump in?”

“You’re the one who is following me around. You obviously have something you want to say to me.” She shrugs her shoulders and leans back in her chair with her hands folded in her lap.

“I do... I have so many things I want to say to you. Just be honest with me, okay?” Of course, the first thing on my mind is finding out if the little boy is mine, but I don’t want to scare her off by making her think this is some kind of attack or something. “Are you okay?”

It’s a genuine question, but the way her face drops, I can tell she’s not expecting it.

“Am I okay? Why do you care?”

“I do. I know we met under some really messed up circumstances—”

“You paid to sleep with me,” she blurts out just loud enough that if anyone were walking by, they’d hear. I do a quick scan of the room and breathe a sigh of relief when I don’t notice anyone looking in our direction.

“First, I didn’t pay. My partner did. Second, I asked if you were a working girl and you told me no.” I make sure to keep my tone low, hoping that she will follow suit.

She stares at me, but the anger is quickly draining from her eyes. “Hollister... He made me tell you no. It’s supposed to be part of the girlfriend package. I was just supposed to be some girl who thought you were attractive. Someone who couldn’t

keep her hands off you. You know, the way two people would meet out in the real world.”

“The real world?” I scoff and shake my head. “I’ve never had a woman meet me like that. Not even close.” I fold my hands on the table and lean back in towards her. “Seriously Addison, I didn’t know at the time. It was only after, when my shitty partner began holding it over my head, that I found out what you were doing. I’d have never forced myself on you. Never. It’s not my way.” I do my best to keep her gaze, but she’s finding it hard to look me in the eyes for more than a few microseconds at a time.

“You didn’t force yourself on me. I mean, after it was all said and done, I had a good time.”

Internally, I beat a hand against my chest. I was right; she did have fun with me. I always thought there was a connection between her and me, but when Riggs told me she was a paid professional, I thought it could have been all part of the game.

“Now that we’ve got that out of the way, when did you get away?”

“Get away?” Her head pops up, and she stares at me with those expressive dark eyes. If I tried really hard, I’m sure I could read her like a book.

“Yeah, from Hollister? When did you get out of the life?”

“Oh, almost three years now.”

“And that’s when you signed up with the Eve’s Fury Club?” Too soon. I shouldn’t have let her know I know about her MC so soon.

“No, I didn’t sign up with them. They rescued me. One of the members used to be a working girl for Hollister back in the day. He kidnapped her and tried to get her back in the game as well. She got me out of there. I’ve been with them ever since.”

Shock is the smallest emotion I feel right now. I knew the girls in that club were all for community service, but I’d never think they were so intent on helping out the community that they’d take in a virtual stranger. It’s exceptional. Not only am I feeling a little uneasy about my perception of the club, but I’m

also feeling incredibly grateful. Who knows where Addison and the baby would be right now if she'd had to find her way on her own after all that.

Moving right along just so she doesn't know she's affected me, I ask, "What about Hollister? Has he given you any grief?"

That gets a small chuckle out of Addison, though I'm not sure why. "No. Let's just say Eve's Fury MC has him by the balls."

I didn't like the sound of that, but if she was telling me that she didn't have to worry about Hollister anymore, I was going to accept it.

"Did you know I was a cop when I saw you that first time?"

"Of course I did. It's one of the reasons Hollister made sure to tell me not to screw it up. I had to please you no matter what you wanted."

"Did you think of trying to get some help? Maybe telling me so I could get you out of there?"

"Look, I know you mean well, but it really wasn't that simple. There were a few men I met in my time who seemed like nice people. Stand-up guys in their normal lives. But there's no telling what would've happened to me or them if I had decided to ask any of them for help. I've seen what Hollister would do to girls who started trouble. I didn't want to chance it."

It bothers me that she had to go through all this mess on her own. More so, it bothers me that she didn't trust me to help her. I understand why though. She'd only just met me that day, and I was a job to her.

"Are you only staying with the MC because you think they are the only people who can keep you safe? That's not true. I can keep you safe too. I can-" She gives me a half-smile and I clamp my mouth shut. Talk about coming on strong. "Not me, I can set you up somewhere safe. I have connections all over the place."

"I'm sure you do, Hardy, but I'm not only with the club because they can keep me safe. I'm with them because I'm

learning how to keep myself safe as well. They're my family, and we all look after each other."

I nod my head and lean back in my seat. I've already asked all the outside questions I can. Now I need to get to the real matter at hand.

"I know you don't want to talk about it, and I hate to press, but I have to. It's eating at my very soul not knowing for sure." I peer up into her eyes, taking a breath and praying that she doesn't get offended again and try to leave. "Is your son mine?"

I watch her jaw flex and her hands ball up into tiny fists on the table. She's upset and probably a bit scared. Quickly, I add on to my question, hoping to ease some of her worries. "I'm not asking you because I think you're a bad mom or that I want to take him away or anything like that. You're doing a great job raising him from what I can see. I just want to know if he's mine."

"And what if I don't want you in his life?"

"Why would you not? It's not like I'd try to turn him against you or anything like that. The courts don't have to get involved. I would be just an added support here when and for what you need."

The silence slices through the air, scratching against my skin with every second that ticks by that she doesn't answer.

"Well, is he?"

Addison closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and whispers something so softly I can barely hear the words.

"Addison?"

"I said yes. Yes, Hardy, he's yours. After our time together, Harrington only let me out for one other person, and he used me for something different. I wasn't as marketable as I once was because I had gotten fat. I didn't even know I was pregnant until I gave birth to Glenn."

"Glenn? That's his name?" I say more to myself than to her.

I heard the atrocities that she went through, and I'm sorry for them, but I'm also relieved to finally have an answer. By some form of magic, it feels like my heart triples in size. The few images I have in my memory of the small baby replay on a loop in my mind's eye.

"Glenn seemed like a fitting name." She replies, pulling me out of my daydream.

"It's perfect. Great choice," I say a little too happily. There's nothing special about the name itself. I have no attachment to the name one way or another, but the moment I attach it to that sweet boy's face, it is the most perfect name in all existence.

"Can I... Do you have any pictures?" I ask, and she actually chuckles at that.

"Have you met any mother who doesn't have pictures of their child? Here, look..." She pulls out her phone and quickly gets to the camera roll. She pulls up the latest one. Glenn has a face full of what looks like cheese sauce from mac and cheese. He's smiling wide and reaching for the camera. She flicks through picture after picture, and suddenly along with my happiness comes a fresh wave of guilt. I've missed so much of his life already.

"Addison, I know you don't know me, but I swear you can trust me. I'm not going to hurt you or Glenn." My tone is serious, and I grab hold of her hand. The first real contact I've had with her since I met her the second time. "Please don't cut me out of his life. I just want to know my son."

"I hear you Hardy and despite the way you approached me I want to believe you're just trying to do the right thing. The problem is I've been wrong about people before. Until I can trust you, which I may never, I don't feel comfortable with you around my son." She shrugs and my heart drops just a bit.

It's not the answer I want but I'll accept it for now. It's a problem but there's also a solution. "Then get to know me. Let me prove to you that you don't have to keep your guard up around me."

“How do you suggest we do that?” Addison asks, hitching an eyebrow.

“Let’s start by getting to know each other a little better...” before I can finish my sentence I hear her stomach growling from across the table.

“Oops, sorry.” She giggles and presses a hand against her midsection. Her cheeks flush red and she looks away.

“Have you eaten today?” She’s laughing but I’m dead serious.

“I was going to get something to eat when I got back home. I wasn’t very hungry earlier.”

A deep growl rumbles in my chest and I have to swallow to keep it down. She’s not taking care of herself. She’s doing a great job with Glenn but it ends there it seems. Almost aggressively, I grab the muffin from the tray and put it down in front of her. “Eat.”

“I already said I’d get some food when I got home. It’s not that big a deal.”

“Addison, don’t make me tell you again. I’m not going to let you sit across from me and starve. Eat. The. Muffin.” I’m not doing a very good job keeping the anger out of my voice.

She blinks at me a few times before she squints and tilts her head to the side, “What are you going to do if I don’t? Punish me?”

My cock surges to life the instant those words pass her lips. I have to remind myself that we’re a long ways off from jumping in the bed together. I have to do things slow if I want to get in good with her and Glenn. I can’t fuck this up.

“Am I going to have to hand feed you?” I question disregarding her last statement.

She rolls her eyes and chuckles before plucking up one of the muffins from the tray and picking at it. “Simmer down, Daddy, I’m eating.”

I lean back in my chair and watch her eat. Yeah, I’m going to have to take care of her and I’m going to enjoy every second of it.

SIX

“BEE! CAN I COME IN?” I BURST INTO BUMBLEBEE’S ROOM without even bothering to wait for a reply. She sits up on her bed, a cloud of weed smoke surrounding her.

“Baby? Shit, what’s wrong? Glenn okay?” She tries to get out of bed, but she’s wobbly. Apparently, whatever she’s smoking has already taken hold of her.

“No, I’m sorry. Everything’s fine. I just wanted to know if I could borrow a shirt from you?” I give a soft smile and shift from foot to foot, waiting for her to say yes so I could rush into her closet.

I don’t know how this happened. One minute I was showing Hardy pictures of Glenn, and we were laughing about him learning to walk, and the next thing I knew, he was asking me to come out with him so we could continue getting to know each other better. He never said the word “date,” but now that I’ve gone through every suitable thing in my closet and come up short, it’s really starting to feel like a date.

“You want to borrow my clothes? Are you sure? You know I’m so much older than you.” She chuckles sarcastically. Bee is in her late twenties, but she’s the closest to my age in the whole club.

“Don’t be like that. You know I love how all of y’all dress.” I give a little pout, and she takes pity on me. She waves a hand

toward her closet, and I take off like I'm searching for a grand prize in her well-worn clothing.

The closets in the clubhouse aren't very big, so she doesn't have much stuff, but she does have a few low-cut tops that I think would impress Hardy.

I groan and squeeze the garment in my hands. When did this become about me trying to impress Hardy? I shouldn't have to impress him. Nothing is going to happen between us.

"Everything okay over there? Did you find something?" Bee gets up from her bed and comes over to me.

"Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I don't even know what I'm looking for," I admit, feeling a bit defeated.

She squeezes my arm in a show of support before grabbing the shirt I have in my hand and tugging it away. "No, not that one. It's my favorite." Of course, she'd have a favorite low-cut top. Bumblebee is a wild child. She's so much like her sister Free it's crazy.

"First, why don't you tell me where you're going, and I can help you pick out something that will work."

I hesitate for a second. It's not that I think they'd mind me going out, but I know how most of them feel about law enforcement. Either they've had a bad experience or they've seen all the people in the Faceless society who are supposed to be police come out as dirty as Louisiana mud. "I'm going to have dinner with someone."

"Oh, so a date?"

"No!" I answer quickly, catching her off guard. "No, we didn't call it a date."

"So, are you discussing a business deal? Is he a pastor? Maybe someone from the old folks' home you want to take out for something good to eat?"

I know she's joking, but I can't laugh. I'm too tense about what's about to happen. "No, he's middle-aged."

"Then it's a date, girl. That means we dress you like one." Bee claps her hands and begins pulling things out of the closet

while I close my eyes and let her play Barbie dress-up with me.

“Hey, I didn’t see you drive up.” Hardy walks slowly in my direction.

“I didn’t drive; I took a cab.” I offer up. I didn’t want to take my motorcycle and risk getting dirty, and Duchess and Press had the only available car for the night. It was either hop in a cab or miss the chance to have dinner with Hardy altogether.

“A cab? I would’ve picked you up.”

“No, that’s okay. It was fine.” I wave my hand in the air, trying to dismiss it.

The girls at the clubhouse call me Baby, mostly because I’m the youngest out of all of them but also because I tend to have things done for me.

Spider in the room, one of the men comes and kills it. I’m thirsty, one of the other girls brings me a drink. They baby me, but I’m trying hard to ditch the moniker. I need to learn how to do for myself. Tonight it started with the cab. I even brought a few extra dollars to pay for my portion of the meal when the time comes. I’m ready to be independent one step at a time.

“Okay, well, there’s a nice place right here. We don’t need a reservation, but they serve really good food.” He points to a small Italian restaurant behind him.