



# Ace's Ascension

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**Category:** Erotic, Romance, New Adult, Mc

**Description:** Ace

My life has never been easy. I've endured trauma, heartache and betrayal. Never did I think I'd find my way with the Savage Saints MC. They opened their Clubhouse to me and my brother Seth many years ago. I'm an OG to the club and tracking people down is what I do.

I love to use my fists and demand answers from my enemies. I can never tamp down the darkness lurking deep in my soul, but I managed for a while until I encountered this strong, independent woman stranded on the side of the road. Her darkness calls to mine and together we're a force to be reckoned with. But Liz has secrets of her own.

Liz

Lies, secrets and betrayal sit bitterly in my soul. My family didn't believe me. The ones who were supposed to love and protect me tossed me away like yesterday's garbage. The only one who cared about me died a tragic death, forcing me to leave the bayou of Louisiana and travel two thousand miles away to keep me safe. Meeting Ace has been a Godsend. He is strong and independent and there is a darkness surrounding him that calls to me. I can't stay away from him even if I tried.

Will Ace's darkness save Liz, or will it destroy them both?

**Total Pages (Source):** 44

# Page 1

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## Prologue

Madeline LeRoux

My bones hurt from my old age as I lean over the table, reading the cards and stones scattered in front of me. My heart pounds against my chest as I raise my eyes, “Evil swallows you whole, boy.” I shake a bony finger at Tomas, my grandson. We’re sitting in my living room with my deck of cards and bag of stones. He scoffs at my remark until I snap my fingers in his face and slam a tarot card down onto the table, making the stones jump. “This is serious, Tomas.”

My son, Beau LeRoux, called me when his son, Tomas, showed up on their front door bloody and broken a few nights ago. Things are happening to my grandson that I can’t stop unless he believes in the powers I hold. I move my hand to reveal the death card. My eyes snap up to Tomas’s and watch his reaction. His blue eyes like his sister’s widen in surprise.

“You can take this card,” I slide it toward him slowly, “One way or another. It can mean the death of the trouble you’re heading into or the death of the comfortable life you live. The choice is yours.” I stand from the table, my bones creaking with every move, and leave the room. Tomas’s future is now in his hands.

Elizabeth, my granddaughter, is waiting for me in my room. She rises from the chair, setting the book down on the table. I smile when I see what she’s reading, *Intro to Spiritual Folkways*. Our legacy will continue through Elizabeth when I take my last breath. From the way I’ve been feeling lately, it’s going to be sooner rather than later.

“Memaw,” Elizabeth hurries over to my side and gently grabs my arm, leading me to the edge of my bed. I sit and she follows suit. She’s the light in the darkness that surrounds our family. Without her, our bloodlines die. “How’d it go with Tomas?”

I listen intently to the bayou speaking before answering her. The gators and the insects are singing their songs of death and destruction. Sighing heavily, I pat Elizabeth’s knee. “Soon, Tomas will have to make a choice. I don’t know which direction he will go, but I pray it’s the best for us all.” I lean over Elizabeth and grab the wooden jewelry box on the stand beside my bed. I open it and carefully pull out a gold necklace with a crystal charm. “Here, Bebe. This is to keep you safe. Wear it always and never take it off. I’ve enchanted the crystal so no matter where you are or what you’re doing, this will protect you from evil.”

I set the necklace in Elizabeth’s hand and gently close her palm. I chant quietly to myself before releasing her. “Memaw, I cannot accept this.” She tries to hand it back, but I don’t take it.

“Hush, Bebe. You do your Memaw a favor and take this. I want to know when my time is up that you are safe.” I squeeze her hand with my own until she relents.

I watch the moment Elizabeth’s bright blue eyes waiver and she pushes a tear away. She knows my time is coming soon, just like I do. I just hope when it does come, the evil that takes me to my grave doesn’t push her too far away.

## Chapter One

### Ace

The air is thick with tension as I sit in this metal chair waiting for the knock on my door. Only two brothers at Savage Saints know what I enjoy and how I relieve stress, even though they haven’t seen me fight yet. If they do, they might not understand

how dark it really is. Three if you count my Prez. I don't even need to say anything and he knows what I do and when. Kayne has an uncanny ability to know shit about his members and it's creepy. He's the only one who knows I'm here tonight doing what has to be done for the club.

It all started when I was a teen, waiting for my little brother Spencer to get out of his MMA class. I was sitting there in the dark, minding my business when several men surrounded me. They did things I'd rather not dwell on when I need to have a clear head. Spencer still doesn't know exactly what happened and I'm going to keep it that way for as long as I can. It's been Spencer and me for the last thirteen years until I found Kayne and the Savage Saints MC. Then Spencer moved to Vegas to fulfill his dream as the next up-and-coming MMA fighter and now it's just me, sitting in this cold metal chair with my wrists taped, my body vibrating with adrenaline and my soul growing darker by the minute.

A knock on my door signals it's time. The knob turns and the door bangs against the wall when Seth, who is the emcee for the fights, opens it.

"It's do or die," Seth's voice is low with tension. I get what he means. It really is do or die. Either I kick this motherfucker's ass or I die trying. I rise from my chair, tapping into the rage building deep inside of me. My mind is focused on what's waiting for me on the other side of the door.

Tonight's fight is one of my hardest fights yet. But the harder they are, the more I crave. Only one of us will walk away tonight. If and when I win, I'll get the answers I need. Answers my club needs.

Stepping into the cage, the crowd's chants assault my ears. They know it's going to be a blood bath, the scent of death and destruction thick in the air. I know it'll be a battle they haven't seen before. Looking around the crowd, three men capture my attention. They're trying to stay low-key, but I've seen them lurking around a few

times. One has long, dark hair pulled back and twisted at the nape of his neck. His face is covered with the beginning of a goatee. The other man with him has a reaper tattoo on his arm. They're sitting front and center tonight, not hiding the fact that they're here. They're both wearing Krymson Destroyers cuts.

Krymson Destroyers has been trying to get a sit down with Kayne for a few weeks now. They're an up-and-coming MC out of Pennsylvania. Not sure what it is they want or need and I really don't give a fuck.

I turn my attention back to the ring and study my opponent. His dark hair is cut close to his head in a high and tight. He's all brawn, no brains when it comes to a match like this. If I beathim, then Kick, Blayde's father has agreed to a sit down with Kayne. Kick might be our main chapter president, but after all the information we've found that the old president, Steam, was doing we started separating from his chapter. We want nothing to do with the human trafficking Steam was in deep with. If anything, we're on opposite ends of the spectrum with it. Steam bought and sold women through the Black Market Railroad and we are hired to take them out. We already took out Steam a while ago, along with Kingston and a Russian asshole. They had no idea that the funds from their operation were being diverted into our accounts. We're close to finishing this, but I need to win tonight to seal the deal. And the deal was only one person would walk away.

The bell dings and we both advance to the middle of the ring. This fucker thinks he has an advantage over me and takes a powerful swing at my head but misses. I push him back, staying on the balls of my feet. He charges again and tries to body slam me, but I step at the last second and his meaty fist catches the corner of my ribs. I'm playing with my prey, making him tire out before I deliver a deadly blow. He catches me off guard and nails me in the ribs again.

We go at it blow for blow. Both of us are bleeding from the harsh blows we're taking from each other. There is no stopping in this fight. It doesn't end until one of us stops

breathing. Done with fucking around, I go on the attack and land a deadly strike to his throat, cutting off his air supply and crushing his windpipe. My adrenaline spikes with every jab and I have tunnel vision. This guy is all I see and hear. No crowd, no chants, no cheers. He grabs his throat gasping for air when I hit him again in the stomach. He goes down to his knees still clutching his throat, blood dripping down his face. I step up behind him to finish him off. With my adrenaline running at an all-time high, I grab his head and twist, snapping his neck and ending his life. I'll deal with the aftermath later. Shoving the now dead fighter away from me, I rise to my full height, and the bell dings.

The crowd is a frenzy of activity. Cheers, chants, hoots, and hollers echo through the arena as the cage doors open and I'm quickly ushered out and back to my small changing room. I open the door and step inside. The three men from Krymson Destroyers are waiting for me, making the room smaller and my adrenaline spikes looking for a threat.

"What the fuck do you want?" I growl. I'm in no mood for petty little shit. I just killed a man and need to decompress. These three in here are stopping me from doing it.

"My Prez wants a sit down with yours and we're here to make it happen." The dark-haired man says. There's a look of appraisal in his eyes like he knows what I do. It's a bond formed from one killer to another which allows me to let my guard down just a little. His cut reads Cobra and he's an Enforcer for the club. The second one reads Reaper and the third is Tank.

I size them all up deciding if it's worth taking three more lives tonight or not. "Why should we do what you're asking? What's in it for us?" I sit down in the metal chair, my adrenaline is starting to run low.

"Rumor has it, you want out from under Steam. We can make that happen but to do

it, we need your help.” Tank responds. It’s hard to get a read on him, but by his tense body language, there’s more at stake here than he’s letting on. Not my fucking problem. Tank leans against the door, crossing his arms over his chest. “And if fifty G’s will help persuade you, I can have it sent to your account with one phone call.”

I weigh my options. These guys know more than they’re letting on. Do I want to bring them back with me or tell them to fuck off? They don’t know we already eliminated Steam, but we do need more information about the Russians coming after us since we killed one of the Kozlov brothers.

Weird things around our legal businesses have happened, but no one can explain it. Many appointments at our auto shop were canceled, and deliveries to the bar have been diverted—weird shit with no explanations. Rooster and Tatt have been working overtime trying to get to the bottom of it with no luck. If this helps us, I need to do what I can.

## Page 2

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“Step out and let me make a call.” I make up my mind to see what Kayne wants to do, but these three don’t need to hear my conversation with him.

“You won’t regret it and tell Kayne he won’t either,” Cobra says over his shoulder as they leave the room, closing the door behind them.

I pull out my phone and dial Kayne’s number. “Ace, you almost finished? Is it done?” He asks before the first ring completes.

“It’s done. We should have the info soon. But I ran into a snag. I have a few guests here wanting a sit down between you and their Prez.” I lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees, still holding my phone. My energy is zapping quickly and I need to get back to the clubhouse before it completely drains and I can’t function. This only happens once in a while, but when the crash comes it comes hard.

“Ace, I can hear it in your voice. You’re hitting the low of the high. Get back here, bring them with you and I’ll take it from there. Do you need me to send the van?” The concern in Kayne’s voice is coming through loud and clear.

“No, Prez. I can get back. I’ll bring them with me. Their names are Tank, Cobra, and Reaper from the Krymson Destroyers, Pennsylvania Chapter. I’ll see you soon.” I hang up the phone and rise from my chair. My legs are wobbling a little but I push it aside and stroll to the door. I open it and spot Tank, Cobra, and Reaper waiting for me. “Follow me and try to keep up.”

I climb the stairs taking them two at a time. Shouldering the door open, the nighttime fresh air assaults my nose and gives me an extra boost of energy to make it back to



the Clubhouse. Feeling good, I walk to my bike parked next to the warehouse and straddle it. Strapping on my brain bucket, I fire her up. The deep rumble centers my mind and I take off with the three men from Krymson Destroyers following close behind me. I know my body's limit and it's almost past that time. I need to get back to the Clubhouse quickly before I crash and burn. I throttle the gas, taking off at a breakneck speed, weaving in and out of traffic. Time to see how much experience these three have on their bikes. If they can keep up, then they'll get their meeting.

## Chapter Two

### Ace

We make it back to the Clubhouse in record time. Tank, Cobra, and Reaper managed to keep up with me and we rolled up the driveway. Everyone's bikes are here and I pull into my spot and turn off the engine. Kayne, Blayde, Stryker, and Rooster are waiting on the porch, watching the three men behind me with caution. My energy is almost depleted and I need to get to my room as soon as possible before I crash right here in the driveway.

I hoist my tired body off my bike, remove my helmet, and drag my feet up the porch steps, passing my brothers along the way. Stryker slaps my shoulder giving me a nod when I pass by. Holly is waiting on the other side of the door when I open it. She immediately helps me up the stairs to my room. I can't think straight let alone put two words together to tell her thank you. Holly has helped me many times in the past and I don't know what the club would do without her sweet soul. She and Stryker finally let their guards down with each other and I haven't seen her so happy since she's been here.

"You know the drill, Ace. Strip when I leave. I left you a bottle of water on the stand and a bottle of aspirin. I'll have food ready for you when you come back to the real world." Holly leaves my room closing the door behind her.

I strip down to my boxers, take the aspirin and drink the bottle of water before stumbling into the bathroom to piss. I need a shower to wash all this blood off me, but I don't have the energy to make it that far. Holly left me a towel and washcloth next to the sink. Always taking care of us, even when we don't deserve it. I hope someday I can find a girl like Holly and she will accept me for who I am and what I do. No bitch has ever stayed around long enough for me to even try. They've been a warm hole for me to fill with no emotions attached, but that's not me. That's not who I really am and I haven't found the one woman who will fill that void.

I stumble back into my room and flop face-first onto the bed. My body is sighing in relief, I can finally close my eyes. There's no moving once my head hits the pillow and I succumb to a deep sleep. I hope the dreams that haunt me daily don't come back because I don't have the energy to wake up.

Several hours later there's a bang on my door. It's not a normal knock. It never is when it's time for me to come back to the real world. It's hard, unforgiving, and relentless until I answer. They'll keep pounding on my door until I respond. I drag my body into a sitting position and swing my legs over the side of the bed. My voice is groggy with sleep so I don't bother to answer yet. I take a drink of the water sitting on the nightstand next to my bed and shake my head to clear it.

Bang, bang, Bang.

"Ace let's go. We've been waiting for you to grace us with your presence before we held Church." Stryker's deep rumble echoes through the door.

I groan, lifting my tired body off the bed, and stumble to the door. I swing it open and walk back without a word to Stryker. Music is pumping from the speaker downstairs, vibrating through the hallway. He follows me in and shuts the door behind him blocking out the bass of the music. I pop more aspirin from the bottle Holly left and down the rest of my water. Stryker leans against the wall with his arms crossed over

his chest. He's the Enforcer of the club and a man I want to have my back. When Holly learned about who she was, and Stryker had issues with his father, who happens to be one of the deadliest nomads from here to Mexico, he unleashed a darkness inside of him and he's more in control of himself, and the rage brewing below the surface than what he used to. I don't know how many times I've had to use my skills on Stryker just to bring him back to the real world.

"Those dicks still here?" I grunt. I must have slept really hard because my voice is still raspy.

"Yeah, Kayne wanted to wait until you were awake before meeting with them. They're currently balls deep in some patch bunnies right now and content until you get your shit together. This one must have been pretty brutal. Your face looks like shit."

"Fuck off, asshole," I smirk. Fuck, it does hurt. "I don't know, haven't assessed the damages yet. Motherfucker hit pretty hard, but not hard enough."

"Doesn't matter how hard he hits when it comes to you though. You hit like a bitch and still manage to snap necks." Stryker laughs teasing me. If he wasn't my brother in all aspects besides blood, I would show him again how hard I can hit.

"Do you need a refresher?" I pick on him back, cocking my eyebrow. "I'll show you bitch again if you want."

Stryker rubs his jaw where I've had to hit him before when he lost his fucking mind and shakes his head. "Nah, I'm good." We both laugh.

"Tell Kayne I'm alive, taking a shower, and will be down in twenty."

"You got it, bro." Stryker kicks off the wall and opens the door. "For what it's worth,

Ace, know when you're ready to let it go we'll be here to help." He exits my room and shuts the door behind him before I can respond.

Am I ready to let the past go? Can I let it go? It's what fuels the darkness lurking inside of me. If I lose sight of that, will I still be me? I've been this way for thirteen years. I don't know how to be or do anything else besides a fighter and a killer.

I make my way into the bathroom with my head so fucked up now, I don't know what to do. Starting the shower, I let it steam up and assess the damage done to my body. There's a purple bruise forming on my ribs where the fucker got a lucky shot at me. They're sore but thankfully not broken or cracked. My face has a few bruises and the cut on my eyebrow has stopped bleeding but now needs to be cleaned up. My knuckles are red and raw. I dab at the cut with some antiseptic then get into the shower, letting the hot water beat down onto my sore muscles. Once the water grows cooler, I quickly wash my body and hair then step out. Drying off, I walk into my room and get dressed.

Throwing on a clean pair of jeans, a black t-shirt, socks, and my riding boots, I'm ready to get this shit show of a meeting over quickly. I throw my cut on, grab my wallet tuck it into my back pocket, and put my .45 Smith and Wesson on the holster clipped to my belt. Michigan is an open carry state, so I don't need to conceal carry but sometimes jobs call for it, which is why each of us has our CCW.

I open my bedroom door and the base of the music thumps in my ears. Coffee. I need coffee before I go to Church. I pass Rooster's door and a loud moan cuts through the music. Lucky fucker. I pound on his door to let him know I'm alive and heading down. I'm at the bottom of the stairs and heading for the kitchen when a set of nails wrap around my left arm halting my steps. I don't like to be touched and I especially don't like to be touched unaware. I grab the wrist on my arm and tighten my grip to the point it should be painful.

## Page 3

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“Keep your fucking hands off me,” I growl. I turn and see that Amber, the latest patch bunny to enter our club, is the owner of the intruding fingers. “This’ll be your only warning. No one touches me unless I allow it. Are we clear?”

Amber nods her head, her long brown hair falling over her chest. Her big brown eyes are filled with fear. Good, she needs to understand you don’t fuck with me. “Sorry, Ace. I thought...”

“That’s the problem, Amber. You thought.” I cut her off. “You’re not here to think. You’re here to please the men in our Club who want your attention. That’s what you signed up for when you stepped through those doors. I know the rules were explained to you. You don’t like it, get the fuck out.” I release her wrist and she takes a much needed step back. “Unless I tell you to touch me, keep your claws to yourself. No one touches me.”

I know I’m being a dickhead but after the conversation with Stryker, I’m in a pissy mood. She caught me by surprise and I fucking hate surprises. Nothing good ever comes from them. “I’m sorry.” Amber mumbles. “I’ll remember next time.”

“Good. Now go and entertain someone who wants attention. I’m sure one of the three new guys would love your skill set.” Duke picked her up at a strip joint in the city and she was more than willing to come here. The things she can do with her body, bending it in angles unheard of, she’s a rare woman in the mix of all the bunnies here. I smile to soften the harshness of the way I treated her. See, I’m not a total dick. Amber walks in the direction of the living room swaying her hips and grabbing the attention of the one named Tank. I watch as he grins at Amber while she dances in front of him.

I finally make it into the kitchen. Kayne and Poison are sitting at the table nestled in the corner having a private conversation. I'm surprised they're not tearing each other's clothes off. It wouldn't be the first time I've walked in on them in a compromising position. Since Rooster's little girl Elsa came into the Clubhouse, there haven't been a lot of compromised situations in the open. Kayne and Poison stop talking and look in my direction while I make myself a cup of coffee.

Once I have the steaming cup of life in my hands and take a sip, letting the hot liquid coat my throat and stomach, I acknowledge them. "Prez, what's the word?"

"Things are moving according to plan. We should have information on the Kozlov brothers by the end of the week. Thanks to you and your skills."

"That's what I wanted to hear." I lean against the counter taking another sip of my coffee letting it flow into my bloodstream, the caffeine awakening my body. "What about our visitors?"

"They have more info about Steam and we have info into their issues too." Kayne's being cryptic and we must have more ears than the three of us. I keep my mouth shut and nod my head.

"Ready for Church when you are."

"Let me round up the brothers. I'll meet you in there." Kayne gives Poison a quick kiss and rises from the table. He walks out of the kitchen leaving just the two of us here.

"Ace," Poison starts and I hold up my hands to stop her pity.

"I'm good Poison, I promise."

“I’m worried about you.”

“Don’t be, Poison. I’ve got it all under control. I’ve been doing this for years and know how to decompress when needed.”

“Well, that's not what I’m worried about.” She wraps her hands around the mug sitting on the table.

“You’ve lost me. I’m not sure what you’re worried about then.” I’m confused as fuck at what she’s talking about.

“I’m worried that no one here has your attention, Ace. There are so many attractive women here and you don’t bat an eye at them.”

Oh, that’s what she’s getting at. Motherfucker. “Well, Poison, no one here does it for me. I don’t know what you want me to do. I’m true to myself and the moment the right one does catch my eye, you’ll be the first to know.”

“You promise? I don’t want you to always be alone.”

“I promise. You have bigger things to worry about than my love life.”

Poison smirks, “Yeah I do. But you’re family so that worry extends to you.”

“I appreciate it. But don’t get your panties in a bunch, mama. I’ll be fine.” I head toward the Chapel. “You coming?” Poison took a hiatus from Club issues while she was pregnant with her and Kayne’s little Savage. Now that Emine or Emi is born, Poison has been slowly getting back into the swing of things.

“Yup.” Poison stands up from the table and joins me walking to Church. We put our phones in a box before entering and take our respective seats at the table. Being the

first one in here puts me on edge but also lets me be able to watch who enters, when they enter and make sure no one touches me, even if by accident.

Everyone enters including our three guests and the one named Tank cocks an eyebrow at Poison being in here. My teeth are on edge the way he's questioning our Club. I clench my raw fists on the table, ready to punch this cocksucker in the mouth if he says anything about it. My eyes don't leave him and I'm daring him silently to say a word, any word and I'll be up and out of this chair in a flash with his life in my hands. Kayne slams his gavel on the table, silencing the room and calming my inner monster from unleashing holy hell, but only by a fraction. I'm on edge again and I don't like it.

Kayne turns his attention to Tank, Cobra and Reaper who are sitting at the end of the table near Duke and Poison. "What do you have for us?"

Tank leans forward, steepling his hands together in front of him. "My Prez, Chainz, found out some info that pertains to your Club getting out from underneath Steam's hold. He'd like to have a sit down with you and discuss details moving forward."

"What kind of info?" Kayne clenches his jaw tight. If anyone wants this more, it's Kayne. "We've got that part handled. I don't see what your Prez has that will help us."

"Black Market Railroad." Three little words from Tank send our whole Club into a frenzy. Shouts, grumbles and fists slamming on the table fill the room. Tempers flare and the stress level here just shot up about fifty notches.



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### Chapter Three

Ace

Kayne slams his gavel on the table silencing the whole room. “Speak before I send Ace and Stryker down there after you.” I’m on my feet ready to pounce.

Tank raises his hands and shakes his head. “There’ll be no need for that. If you can dig up some information on a guy we’re looking for and help us eliminate him, Chainz has agreed to help you with Steam.”

“What’s the motherfucker’s name?” Kayne’s jaw is ticking with agitation.

“Ben Cross. He’s the CEO of Cross Shipping and we think he’s involved with Steam.” Tank puts a piece of paper on the table and shoves it toward Kayne. Rooster picks it up and with a nod from Kayne, leaves the room.

I’m still agitated and ready to pulverize someone. The stress is getting to me and I need a release. I need, no, I crave another fight. “Ace, sit. We’re good here.” Kayne orders.

I take a seat, not happy about this. Not fucking happy at all. I cross my arms over my chest, ready to attack if need be.

“We’ll get the info you need.” Kayne acknowledges Tank. “Are you sticking around until we do or leaving?”

“We’re leaving as soon as this meeting’s over with.” Tank responds.

“Got it.” Kanye nods his head. “Now, we have other business to discuss.” Kanye dismisses our three guests with a nod. He waits until they leave the room to continue Club business. “Senator Graham and his son will be done for by the end of the week. Ace, you, Duke and Rooster are set up to meet with some buyers tomorrow night to finalize the deal we’ve been working on. Take a kilo of Coke with you and some of our finer guns from Cal’s storage. The buyer’s name is Thad and will be expecting you. If anything, and I mean anything seems off, get the fuck out. I don’t know or trust him yet.”

I nod my head, “Aye, Prez.”

“We have another rebuild coming in today, so I’ll need Ace, Tex and Butch to handle this one. Also, it’s pick-up day. Stryker, Blayze and Duke that’s on you three. You know what to do. Poison and I will be heading to the bar with Alyssa to make sure our shipments come in with no problem. Siren and Holly will be at the dance studio with Talon and two prospects watching them until you get done, Blayze. Afterward, you can relieve a prospect and send him to the bar. No one is to travel alone until the threat from the Senator is over with.” Kanye slams the gavel on the table dismissing us.

I rise to my feet, ready to get this show on the road when Butch stands next to me. We walk together out of Church and both grab our phones.

“How are you feeling?” Butch asks, pocketing his phone.

“I’m fine. Why do I look like shit or something?”

“You always look like shit, bro.” Butch smirks, which is a rare oddity. The motherfucker doesn’t have a single care in his fucking body besides the Club and

now the girls.

“What’s the fucking point then, Butch? My nerves are already on edge, the last thing I need is your cryptic ass fueling the fire.” I glare at him thinking about the conversation with Poison.

“Bitch, I’m a medical Doc in case you forgot. It’s in my nature to make sure my brothers are at one hundred percent.”

I relax a little and blow out a breath, “Yeah I’m good. The ribs are sore but not broken. The bruising will fade in a week. Thanks for looking out for me.” I slap Butch on the back.

“Good to hear. You still slap like a girl.” Butch smirks and I look behind him.

Poison is standing behind him with a smirk and I raise my eyebrow. She slaps him in the back of the head making Butch grunt. “How’s that for slapping like a girl?”

“Fucker, you could’ve warned me.” Butch rubs the back of his head and turns to Poison. “You know I don’t think of you as a girl.” She cocks her hip to the side. “I mean. Fuck me, why does this always happen to me.” Butch takes off like his ass is on fire. Poison and I laugh.

“Shit, that was funny.” I needed that little reprieve.

“It’s fun fucking with Butch. I should go and tell him I’m not mad.”

“He knows. Besides, make him squirm some today. He deserves it.”

“True. After that stunt, I might make it my mission to smack his head every time I see him.” There’s an evil glint in Poison’s eyes that scares even me. “I might have the

girls go along with it too.” Poison drums her fingers on her lips thinking. Fuck, Butch is screwed. When Poison has her mind set on fucking with someone, it’s dangerous for everyone.

“I gotta go. Be nice, Poison.”

“I’m always nice.” She pouts. I cock an eyebrow at her. “Well, most of the time. Go fuck off, Ace.”

I laugh as I make my way to the living room, getting ready to leave. The three guys from Krymson Destroyers are waiting. Tank is on the phone, agitation written all over his face. I can’t hear what he’s saying but it isn’t good. He shoves his phone into the pocket inside his cut and turns to the other two. I’m lurking closer, being a nosy asshole.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

Rooster comes out of his Communications room and heads straight for Kayne who's sitting on the couch with Poison. Kayne stands and they exchange heated words. Rooster nods his head and hands Kayne a piece of paper. Kayne reads it and the color drains from his face. His cold blue eyes snap toward Tank, Cobra, and Reaper. So much shit is happening right now and I'm at a loss at what's going on. I'm sticking around to find out though.

Kayne marches over to Tank and shoves the paper in his face. "Are you playing some kind of sick fucking joke?" His jaw is ticking and his eyes are betraying his emotions. Usually, Kayne can keep it together better than this. Whatever it is, Kayne is ready to kill someone.

"No joke, brother. This is what I needed." Tank's jaw is set tight. His fingers curl around the paper, squeezing it. "This proves Ben Cross is in deep with Steam and the Russian assholes Kozlov brothers." He turns to Cobra and Reaper. "We need to get Dia out of there." Panic is clear in his voice.

"Chainz is working on it, brother. We need to get back now." Reaper keeps Tank calm, but not by much.

"Thank you, Kayne. You didn't need to do this but we're grateful you did. Chainz wants us to extend an invite for your Club to come to Pennsylvania and help us take Ben Cross out." Tank holds out his hand and Kayne shakes it.

"Give me a few days to get things in order and we'll be down," Kayne responds. "Drive safe brothers. Keep the tires on the ground and the wind in your face."

Tank, Reaper, and Cobra leave our Clubhouse with the devil on their heels. Something big is going down in Pennsylvania and by the sound of it, we'll be there to bring him to his knees. No one and I mean no one, fucks with allies of ours and gets away with it.

## Chapter Four

Liz

No. No. No. No. No.

This cannot be happening to me today! Why is bad luck following me everywhere I go? Is it a curse from the Tarot reader the other day or something else altogether? It's not supposed to be like this. Moving here and going to college was supposed to be a change for the better, not the worse. I miss my hometown in Louisiana, but things got too tough when my Memaw passed away and a change was what I needed. She was the glue that held our family together and taught me everything I knew about Voodoo and witchcraft. She's the reason I decided to go to college and pursue my degree in spiritual folkways and liturgical languages, so I had a better understanding of our heritage. The best school I found was over a thousand miles away. Away from the dangers. Away from the heartache. Away from everything associated with my family.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

My check engine light on my little piece of shit car keeps dinging at me and I'm lost in the middle of nowhere.

I had a dream last night that called me to do something new today. So, I decided when I woke up that I was going to venture out and see more of the countryside instead of the city I've been living in for six months. The sun was out beaming brightly on my face this morning, which I believe is a sign from my Memaw, telling

me to go on an adventure. I grabbed my keys, wallet and cell phone, left my apartment and started driving on these backroads. I heard all roads eventually lead into each other so with no destination in mind, I started driving. With the radio up and the windows down I began my adventure.

Now, I'm totally screwed. My car stalled on the side of the road. No one knows where I am. I don't even know where I am and the positive energy surrounding me this morning is quickly fading and leaving dread in my heart.

"Memaw, if you're listening, what do I do now?" I bang my head on the steering wheel and the horn beeps, scaring the living daylight out of me. Rays of sunshine beam down on my face warming my red hair.

"Is this a sign from the Tarot reader the other day?" I wait for an answer but of course, one doesn't come.

I went to a Tarot reader a few days ago to see what she had to say. Of course, curiosity kills the cat but with all the bad luck I've been experiencing, I wanted to know if it was going to end or keep going. Apparently, I pissed the Voodoo gods off or something because bad luck is still following me. I'm on the verge of losing my apartment, something about the owner having sold the building. My professors are hard asses, and now I'm failing and the job at the nightclub is one of the worst bartending jobs I've had in forever. The manager is a sleazy asshole who likes to manhandle the female staff. He tried to cop a feel while I had my hands full in the backroom the other night and I ended up slamming him into the wall. I'll be surprised if I still have a job tonight.

The faint rumble of motorcycles grows louder. They're getting closer to me. Shit. I don't know if I can handle another dreadful thing happening to me today without a mental breakdown, so scooching as far down in my seat as I can, I rub the crystal charm around my neck, praying they can't see me. The rumble gets closer, vibrating

my entire car and my eyeballs.

Once they pass, I sit up a little in my seat and watch where they go. There are three of them with leather vests on and I watch as they slow down to make a left-hand turn out of my sight. It's so quiet again, I can hear the birds chirping.

"C'mon girl, you can do it." I talk to my car and twist the key, praying it'll turn over. The motor whines and stutters before coming alive. "Hallelujah! Thank fuck!" I put the car in drive and take off from where I stalled. Making a wide U-turn, I head back towards the city. That's enough of an adventure today. The dreadful ding for the check engine light comes on again and I groan.

"Oh no, not again." My car sputters and stalls before dying in the middle of the road. "Fuck!" I punch the steering wheel and the horn doesn't even beep, but pain shoots through my knuckles. "Good one, Liz. Way to use your brain." I roll my eyes and put my car in neutral. I need to get it to the side of the road before some unsuspecting driver hits it. I open my door, step between the door frame and the driver's side and try pushing it. The heat from the day is scorching my pale skin and sweat is breaking out all over my body. At this rate, I'll sweat all the extra pounds I gained going to college. When someone says freshman fifteen, you better believe it. Only, I'm not a teenager like the rest of the college students. I'm pushing twenty-three, not nineteen. I get my piece of shit rocking back and forth and the rumble of a single bike pierces the quietness surrounding me. Birds take flight above me in a hurry and panic sets in my chest.

Shit, if they see me, they'll stop and the last thing I want is trouble. Why do I keep getting into these predicaments? Why can't anything go right for me? The distinct rumble grows louder until it gets quiet and the only thing I can hear is my heart thumping against my chest and my breath coming out in pants. I don't dare turn around, afraid of what or who is coming up behind me. I keep pushing my car until it finally moves. I jump in the driver's seat and steer it to the side of the road. Well, that



was easy enough. Fear and panic must give me super strength.

I look in the rearview mirror and see a man in a black leather vest. I can't see anything but his body in the mirror. It dawns on me that it wasn't me who moved my car but this huge man and he's coming up to my door. I slam it shut and push the button to lock my door. My heart beating hard in my throat, I watch his long powerful legs eat up the ground in my side mirror. Those powerful legs have my mouth watering. No, Liz. This isn't the time to get all hot and bothered. You're lost in the middle of nowhere with no help. If he wants to kidnap you, no one will ever know or care.

"Need help?" The deep sexy voice of the biker makes my skin break out in goosebumps. He leans in my window, his strong forearms covered with sleeves of different skull tattoos, resting against the hot metal. Shit, I forgot my windows were down. I facepalm and gather my wits.

"No. I'm good. The cops are on their way." I tighten my grip on the steering wheel, grounding myself not to touch his inked-up arms.

"Oh really?" He cocks an eyebrow. Shit. He knows I'm lying. I'm a terrible liar and never could get away with it.

"Yeah really. I just called them and they're sending someone out here. Should be here any moment." I shrug my shoulders like it's no big deal that this sexy-as-sin man is pretty much insidemy car. The scent of leather and motor oil fills my senses making my heart beat erratically.

"Hmm." He mumbles before pushing off the side of my car and taking a step back. His hands are still on the door frame leaning toward me, his knuckles are red and raw, possibly from a fight.

“What?” I whisper. Afraid if I talk any louder, more of these burly men will appear and I’ll really be in trouble.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

“Just trying to figure out how you have cell service is all. This area is known for dropping signals.” Well, fuck me sideways. He called me out.

“I, uh, have Wi-Fi?” I stutter out.

“If you say so.” He shrugs his shoulders but doesn’t move from my door and I dare to cast my eyes in his direction.

He’s tall. Like really fucking tall and I have to crane my neck back to take all of him in. His leather vest fits snugly against his hard body. His arms are covered in intricate tattoos leading all the way up underneath the tight black t-shirt hugging his muscles. My eyes travel up from his lean chest covered in leather, to his face. He has a slightly dark stubble forming around his strong jaw and full lips that I want to run my tongue across. His nose is slightly crooked, probably from fighting. My brother has the same slight crook from when his mouth ran away with his brain and a thug knocked his ass out after breaking his nose. It was never the same again.

This man’s eyes. Holy shit, talk about setting panties on fire. His eyes are a light whiskey color and I cannot draw my own eyes away from them. My Memaw always said the soul of a man isn’t through his dick or his mind but through his eyes. They’ll tell you what you need to know before his mouth will. And these beautiful whiskey-colored eyes staring back at me are revealing shock and lust before he schools his features. His long lashes, which any girl would be jealous of and pay top dollar to have, flutter those transparent irises closed long enough to sever our connection. When his lashes flutter across his high cheekbones again and he opens them, there is no lust or shock. It’s confusion first replaced by anger radiating from their depths.

What the hell? I've never and I mean never, had this type of inner monologue before. I facepalm again and a grunt escapes this man's sinful lips. I pull my hand away from my face and turn to look at him again. I can't help it. Something is pulling me toward him and it scares the living shit out of me. The thing is, he shifted so the only thing I see is a bulge against the zipper of his black jeans. This bulge will make any woman whimper. Which I think I do but I bite my lip to keep the groan from escaping my throat.

"Well, when you're done ogling me, I'll be happy to introduce myself and see if I can fix your car for you, Sweet Cheeks." He winks.

My face is on fire, embarrassed at being caught staring at this sex on a stick. But what does he expect? He can't just walk up to some stranger's car and not expect them to act like a lust struck idiot. "Uh, sure. I'm Liz, it's a pleasure to meet you?" I stick my hand out the window of the car and almost nut-check him but he steps back far enough with a smirk on his handsome face. "Oh, dear lord." I groan.

"It's OK, Sweet Cheeks. I'm pretty fast on my feet." He winks at me with a glint in his eyes. "Name's Ace. Let me pop your hood and check underneath." Ace leans inside my car and my breath hitches in my throat. His hand disappears under the steering wheel column but his eyes stay locked on mine. He's so close I can smell the mint on his breath. If I had courage, I could close the distance between us and feel his soft lips against mine but I don't. Instead, I lick my dry lips and his eyes follow.

Suddenly his hand finds what he's looking for and a pop makes me jump slightly. He breathes me in before pulling his bigbody out of my car. His long legs travel to the front of my car and I watch him opening my hood. I take a deep breath and relax my body. He doesn't want me. I'm an idiot to think otherwise. Ace is just being nice and checking my car.

I carefully open my door and step out into the scorching sun. I walk around to the

front of my car and see him leaning over the motor. His ass looks great from this angle.

“What do you think’s wrong with it?” I ask, stepping next to Ace and acting like I know what I’m doing even though I really have no clue. Ace pulls a long stick thingy out, wipes it on his dark jeans and puts it back in the hole before pulling it out again.

“Not sure but at a glance it seems your motor is seized. I can call the guys and have them tow it back to the shop down the road.”

“How will you do that if there’s no cell service?”

“We’re going to take a ride.” Ace puts the stick back into the hole and slams the hood shut.

“Take a ride?” What does that even mean?

“Sweet Cheeks, I’m not leaving you out here all alone in the middle of nowhere. You’re going to ride back to the shop with me and I’ll have a prospect bring your car to us.” Ace strolls to his bike sitting off the side of the road and he straddles it. I follow along like a lost puppy.

I’m so out of my depth here. My hands instinctively grasp the crystal charm around my neck my Memaw gave me before she passed. She told me it’ll bring me luck and keep evil away. Since I’ve been here, the exact opposite has happened. “I’ve never ridden on a motorcycle before, Ace. I have no clue what to do.”

Ace hands me a helmet. “First you’re going to put this on. We don’t want your pretty face hurt.” I take the helmet from his outstretched hands and look at it like it’s going to bite me. “Come here.” His deep voice sends a shot of lust straight between my thighs.

I step cautiously toward Ace and he takes the helmet out of my hands. “You’ve never done this before?” I shake my head no. Ace smirks while putting the helmet on my head and adjusts the strap under my chin. His touch is light and soft. “Don’t worry, you’re safe with me. Step on the peg with your left leg, swing your right leg to the other side and hold on tight. I want your tits pressed against my back. We’re only going a short distance.”

“Ok.” My voice is soft and quiet. I grab Ace’s shoulder, step with my left foot on the peg and swing my right leg over the bike, settling behind him. I surprise myself when I don’t fall off the other side of his bike. I’ve never been the most graceful. I wrap my arms around his waist, feeling his rock-solid abs under my hands. Ace grabs the outside of my thighs and pulls me closer.

“Hang on, Sweet Cheeks.” Ace fires up his bike and the loud motor makes me jump. I squeeze my eyes shut when we start to move and hang on even tighter if that’s possible. I swear I feel Ace either laughing or growling through his back.

We take off and between the deep rumble of the bike, the warmth of the sun on my back and the wind blowing at my face, I open my eyes, relax a little and enjoy the ride. Not too much longer, Ace is turning left, where I saw the bikes turn earlier, and follow the road until we reach a huge warehouse looking place. A big garage door is rolled open and I spot two other bikes sitting out front. The paint jobs are shining in the sunlight. Ace pulls next to the other bikes and turns his off. My ears are ringing and my body still feels like it’s vibrating. It’s a weird, but aroused feeling.

“You OK, Sweet Cheeks?” Ace asks over his shoulder. He puts his kickstand down and turns the handlebars slightly to balance the bike. He turns his head toward me, our faces are almost touching and raises an eyebrow.

“Yes. Uh, yeah, I’m good.” I release my grip from around his waist. I have no clue how to get off this thing now. “Ace?”

“Sweet Cheeks.”

“Why do you call me that and how do I get off?”

Ace releases a deep, burly laugh and his handsome face is making me squirm in my seat. “Well, I can think of a few ways you can get off.” He wiggles his eyebrows and I can feel my face turning as bright red as my hair.

“That’s not what I meant!” I squeal like a little girl, which in turn makes Ace laugh even harder.

A big burly man comes to the door of the garage, “Yo, Ace, everything alright, brother?”

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

“Yeah, Butch. We’re trying to get off out here. Do you mind?” Ace’s innuendo isn’t lost on me and I try moving away from his muscular body as far as I can, but the bar behind my back stops me. “Relax, Sweet Cheeks. I’m messing with you.”

“So not funny, Ace.” I cross my arms over my chest and his eyes travel to the dip in my t-shirt. “How do I get off this bike?” I ask again.

“Oh, is that what you meant?” I nod my head. “Well, you do the same thing to get off that you did to get on but the opposite. Put your left leg on the ground, stand up and swing your right leg over. Use my shoulder for balance. Don’t worry about the bike, I have it stabilized.”

I do what he says and almost fall on my ass but manage to keep myself upright. No one said I was the most graceful person in the world, but I can see myself enjoying this and getting better at it.

“I could enjoy it too if you let me.” Ace’s voice breaks through my thoughts and I slap a hand over my mouth.

“Did I say that out loud?” My eyes grow huge from embarrassment.

“Yeah, Sweet Cheeks you did.” There’s a glint of humor in Ace’s voice and his whiskey eyes are filled with lust. I watch as he dismounts the bike and stands in front of me. I swear this man is at least six foot four with muscle upon muscle but it’s not steroid bulky muscle. It’s more of a fighter and that brings him even higher on my sexy scale.



I enjoy watching and even participating in fights on occasion back home. I haven't found a gym here yet that can accommodate my needs for sparing. I tried one gym back a few months ago and never returned. The guys were dicks and didn't take me seriously. There's something that calls to me when my fist connects with bone and I love the feeling of power and darkness behind it. I grab my necklace and rub the charm with my fingers. The darkness that overtakes me scares the shit right out of me and I've never told anyone what it does and how I change when in the ring.

"C'mon, let me introduce you to the guys inside and figure out where we go from here." Ace runs his finger gently down the side of my face drawing me out of the darkness surrounding me. That's the first time anyone ever could pull me back and it scares the shit out of me.

I nod my head and follow him, watching his fine ass in his jeans. Oh, that view is even better than I imagined. I lick my lips. "Damn it, Liz. Put a lid on it." I quietly scold myself.

We enter the garage doors and I spot the man Ace called Butch leaning against a car with the hood popped up. He doesn't have a vest on like Ace does but with all the grease on his jeans and shirt, I can see why he isn't wearing it.

"Liz, this is Butch. Butch, Liz. Her car broke down up the road and I need a prospect to tow it back." I look at Butch and he's just as huge as Ace. Jesus, do these bikers take steroids or something? Butch has a scowl on his unshaven face but his eyes are soft when he looks me over.

Another man slides out from underneath the car, scaring the shit out of me. I didn't see his feet when we walked in. "I've got it, Ace. I'm finished here. All we need is your touch on the distributor to time it."

"Tex, this is Liz. Liz, Tex." Ace introduces us. Tex stands and wipes his hands on a

rag and throws it off to the side. He isn't wearing his vest either but he does have a blue bolo tie around his neck. That's fucking weird. But hey, who am I to judge? I'm a descendant of Louisiana Voodoo.

"Pleasure, Liz. Can I have your keys?" Tex holds out his hand and I stare at it. My brain hasn't caught up with the rest of us yet. "Keys?" There's a touch of humor in Tex's voice.

When it dawns on me what he needs, I facepalm before searching my jeans pockets. "Oh, no. I left them in the car. Along with my purse and cell phone."

"It's OK. I'll be back in a few." Tex draws his hand back and walks out of the garage door, whistling.

"Want a drink?" Ace asks from behind me. His hot breath fans across my neck, sending a shiver down my spine. I nod my head too tongue-tied to speak right now. Fuck my life I'm in so much trouble here.

If the wrong people find out about these guys and particularly Ace, their lives will be in danger. I can't have their blood on my hands. I can't do this again. Why did my God damn car have to break down in the middle of BFE and these nice guys have to find me? I have to figure out a way to get out of here before something bad happens to them.

## Chapter Five

### Ace

I see it the moment she realizes something and by her body language, this woman is ready to bolt. I grab her arm before she can take off out the garage doors and pull her next to me, guiding her to the counter. I sit her on a barstool. Electricity jolts my body

from Liz's soft warm flesh flush against mine. I've never and I mean never, had this happen before.

"Stay," I demand before walking around to the other side. I need to calm my racing heart and give us space before I do something stupid. Liz complies and I pour us both a shot of Whiskey setting the bottle on the counter. I walk back next to her and lean against the bar top so our legs are touching. Since she climbed on the back of my bike, I want to touch her every chance I can get.

"Drink." I push the shot glass toward her and Liz wraps her fingers around it before lifting it to her plump red lips and downing the shot.

"Holy shit. What is that?" Liz coughs into her hand before turning back to me.

"Whiskey." I shrug. "Figured you could use something to relax." I offer her another shot and she shakes her head no. I pour myself another shot and down it in a quick gulp. Liz is watching me, her fingers playing with the crystal charm around her neck.

I move closer to her and rest my palm over her fingers, looking at the charm. I'm asking for trouble, but I can't help it. My body wants her near me. Liz's heart is pounding hard against her chest. "Where'd you get this?"

"My Memaw gave it to me before she passed. It's supposed to bring me good luck, but I don't think it's working." Liz's voice is soft.

I lean in until my lips are next to Liz's ear and I inhale her intoxicating scent. "I think it's working just fine, Sweet Cheeks." Liz shivers from my hot breath across her skin and I'm hard against the zipper of my jeans. Her intoxicating scent is driving me crazy. Fuck, this woman has me in knots. From the top of her fire-red hair to her pale skin sprinkled with freckles, down to her lean sexy legs, this woman has captured my attention in no time. Don't get me started on her southern drawl or her dark blue eyes.

This woman screams sex appeal.

Liz tucks a stray piece of hair behind her ear and looks into my eyes. The pools of dark blue pull me in and I'm happily following, no questions asked. No woman has ever captured my attention the way she has.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

“Ace.” My name floating through Liz’s lips sends a roar of lust to travel through my veins and straight to my aching cock. What is it about this woman? “What are we doing?”

I pull away breaking the trance she’s enraptured me in and shake my head. “We’re having a drink and I’m fixing your car. If I don’t have the parts, I’ll give you a ride to wherever you like, for as long as you need it.”

Liz’s breath catches in her throat and her mouth falls open. “Why would you do that? You don’t even know me.”

“Does it matter? I’m not leaving you stranded in the middle of nowhere with no wheels.” I tuck a piece of her hair behind her ear that keeps falling into her face.

“Thank you,” Liz whispers.

I walk away from her and head back to the car Butch is working on. I remove my cut and hang it on a hook against the wall so I don’t get grease all over it. I can feel Liz’s eyes burn into my ass and I smirk. Hook, line and sinker. I’ve cast my line and now it’s time to reel her in. I lean over the hood of the car and get to work timing the distributor. Butch leans over so Liz can’t hear us.

“What are you doing, bro?”

“Fixing this car.”

“That’s not what I mean and you know it.” His eyes cut to Liz and she’s still

watching me. I give her a wink and her face turns red. Her blush is beautiful. The first time I saw it when she was ogling me, I knew right away I wanted to keep on making her blush. “Who is she and what’s she doing here?”

“Don’t worry, I have Rooster running her plates, finding out who she is. So far her name’s Liz and she’s from the south. I wasn’t going to leave her stranded on the side of the road.” I mess with the timing chain a little bit more before I straighten up, ending this conversation. I don’t even know where this is going between the two of us. But what I do know, I want to keep her by my side. “Ok, give it a try.”

Butch walks around the car in a huff and turns the key. The motor hesitates before coming to life. The car purrs like a champ and I close the hood, latching it. “We’re good to go with this one.”

Butch pulls the car out of the bay and parks it in the parking lot. The owner will be by to get it later tonight. Tex comes around the corner in the tow truck with Liz’s car. He pulls the flatbed up and backs it into the bay we just cleared. Liz hops off the stool at the counter and walks toward me. Her long legs eat up the path between us. Her blue eyes land on me and a smirk forms on my lips.

She watches me watching her and it’s making me hard with arousal. Liz’s fingers grab the crystal charm hanging around her neck again. I see the look in her eyes the moment she realizes something I’m not going to like. The shutters come down and her walls rise. That won’t do at all.

Tex has Liz’s car off the flatbed and I get to work trying to figure out what’s wrong with it when my phone vibrates in my pocket. I pull it out and see a text from Kayne.

Kayne: Chainz called. Tank had an issue on the way back to PA. We need to get this shit done tonight.

My heart sinks into my toes at the thought of having to leave Liz, but the Club always comes first. I fire off a response.

Me: I'll be there as soon as I can. Have to make a stop before the clubhouse.

Kayne: Copy that. Make it quick.

Shit. Liz's car isn't fixed and I can't leave her stranded with no ride. I'll have a prospect bring her my pickup to use while I'm away. It's the only thing I can think of on the fly. I'd bring her back to the Clubhouse, but I don't want to scare her off right away.

"Sweet Cheeks, where's your house?" I ask. Liz is standing right next to me and I about fall on my ass when I turn my head and we're nose to nose.

"Bridgeton Apartments 24C. Why?"

"Something came up and I need to get you home but I don't want you to go without a ride." Liz starts to protest but I put my finger up to her mouth, silencing her. Her ocean-blue eyes widen in surprise before anger flashes across her perfect face. I knew she had a fire inside of her and I'll be happy to be the one to light the flames. "No arguing. I can't fix your car right now and I'll be damned if you need something or need to go somewhere and can't. Now get your Sweet Cheeks on my bike and ready to go." I fire off a text to one of the prospects, telling him to meet me at her place in an hour. That should be enough time to get there, make sure Liz is alright, and ride back to the Clubhouse.

Liz huffs and turns on her heels. She grabs her purse and keys from the car before stalking outside to my bike. I watch her from the bay doors as she tries to figure out how to strap on her helmet. Butch and Tex come up beside me.

“Bro, I know that look. Fuck me, you’re screwed.” Tex drawls.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I scowl.

“We’ll follow you to her apartment and wait outside.” Butch doesn’t give me room to argue. “No one rides alone, brother. Not now.” He grabs our cuts and hands them to us. I put mine on and feel at home immediately.

“Fine, but if either of you fuckers say or do anything to scare her off, I’ll have your balls.” I close the garage bay and the three of us head toward our bikes. Liz is watching each of us with nervous energy radiating from her body. I take the helmet from her hands gently and set it on her head before clasping the strap around her chin. My fingers alight with flames as tingles shoot up my arms and straight to my heart. I clear my throat and my palms linger on her shoulders. “Ready?” My voice is husky with need and want.

“Yeah,” Liz whispers.

I mount my bike and stabilize it with my thighs before she climbs on behind me. Her tits are pressed tight against my back and her hands are wrapped tightly around my waist. It feels right with her on my bike riding bitch. I’ve never let anyone ride on that seat and my heart skips a beat at what this means. Have I found the one who’ll accept me for who I am? Only time will tell but right now I have to get her back to her place so I can handle Club business and then see where this is going between us.

I fire up my bike, and the deep loud rumble of my engine roaring to life centers my mind. Liz hangs on to me tighter and moves closer to me which I didn’t think was possible. Butch and Tex do the same and the three of us ride away from the repair shop toward the city.



## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

We took a longer route to avoid traffic and were pulling up to Liz's apartment complex. She relaxed her grip a little and looked around while we were riding. The laughter that bubbled from her lips sent a shot of lust straight to my dick. No woman has ever had this effect on me and that scares the living fuck right out of me.

Butch, Tex and I park our bikes in front of her building and turn them off. Liz hops off the back of my bike and struggles with the helmet. I put my kickstand down, climb off my bike and help her remove it. I'll have to teach her someday how to take it on and off, but not right now. I like having her rely on me.

"Thanks for the ride, Ace. I'll see you around." She hands me the helmet and I push it away.

"Keep it for now."

"Oh, uh... OK." She starts backing away, not taking her eyes off me. I follow her and she turns on her heels and heads up the staircase to the third level. Her ass looks perfect in these jeans with every step she takes and I want to peel them off and cherish the body underneath.

Liz pulls out a set of keys from her purse she had strapped around her chest and starts unlocking the door when we stop at 24C. The security here is cheap and old. Looking at the flimsy door and raggedy deadbolt, my blood is boiling. Someone could easily break into her apartment and she'd never know. The gates at the front were open and anyone could come in here. It's not safe for her to even be here. My mind is made up once she has the door unlocked and I push her inside. I text the prospect and tell him not to bring my pickup. She isn't staying here.

“Grab your shit. I’m not letting you stay here.” I stalk inside and take a look around.

“What are you doing?” Liz asks.

“You’re not staying here. I’m not repeating myself. This place is a shithole and I’ll be worried about you the entire time I’m not here.” I take in her apartment. The door locking her in from the outside world is flimsy. She has little things here and there to make it homely, but from the stained walls to dirty carpet and dripping faucet, this place is a fire hazard waiting to happen. This landlord needs to be taught a lesson on security for young women staying here. Anyone can come in here and Liz would be in trouble.

“Ace, I can’t just uproot my life because you think this place is a shithole. I have classes, a job, and friends. I can’t just drop everything for you.” Liz throws her hands up in the air in exasperation.

“Liz, listen to me, please.” I grab the front door and almost take it off the hinges. “This door won’t stop anyone from getting in here. If some crazy psychopath has an itch, you’re an easy target.” I walk over to the window and throw back the curtain. Just as I thought, the lock doesn’t even work. I grab the window and show her how easy it would be to get in through the fire escape outside the window. “This lock doesn’t even work. If a rapist wants in, he will get in.”

I approach Liz cautiously, trying not to scare her, but I need her to understand. I rest my palms on her shoulders and she swallows hard. “I cannot, I repeat, cannot let you stay here alone. Please, pack some things you’ll need and come stay with me. Just until I can find you a safer place to live.” I run the tip of my fingers over her porcelain skin. Liz shudders under my touch.

Liz shakes her head, not giving me what I want. Her deep blue eyes mesmerize me and I lean closer until we’re a hair’s breadth apart. Liz’s breath catches in her throat

and her eyes hood with desire. She licks her lips and I know I'm a goner. I need to taste her, breathe her in, capture her desire the way she's captured mine.

I cup the sides of her face and press my lips against hers. Slowly, gently, but firmly our mouths fuse together. Liz grabs my cut in her hands and pulls me closer. I run my tongue along the seam of her lips and she opens them allowing me inside. The moment her taste lands on my tongue, I'm done for. Stick a fucking fork in me, I don't want or desire anyone else. It's like she cast a spell on me and I'm powerless to stop it.

A loud bang comes from Liz's open front door. She jumps away from me and almost lands on her ass. Her face burns a deep shade of red when a man I've never seen before is standing inside, trying to look menacing. He stares at Liz and the hair on the back of my neck stands on end. I grab Liz's hand and pull her behind me. If this fucking lunatic wants to try and do something, he'll have to go through me first.

"Can I fucking help you?" I growl. Liz clutches the back of my cut with shaky fingers.

"Who the fuck are you?" His voice booms, trying to intimidate me.

"None of your fucking business, dickhead. What the fuck do you want?" My voice is deadly and I'm ready to knock thismotherfucker out. I clench and unclench my fists at my sides. My feet are shoulder-width apart, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice.

"I want to speak with Elizabeth."

"Too fucking bad. If you want to talk to her, you'll do it through me. Now what the fuck do you want?"

“Ace, it’s OK. It’s my boss.” Liz steps out behind me but doesn’t move very far. “What do you want Joe? I’m not due into work for another six hours.”

“About that.” Joe runs his hands through his hair and blows out a deep breath. “I figured you’d be alone and we could finish what we started a couple of nights ago.”

Liz stiffens beside me, her body frozen in place. “What we started a few nights ago?” Confusion is written across her face.

“Yeah, you know, in the supply room.” This slim ball motherfucker touched my woman.

I growl low in my chest, ready to pounce on this motherfucker and beat the shit out of him.

Liz lets out a tight laugh. “Oh, you mean when you grabbed my ass while my hands were full and I slammed you against the wall?”

That’s it. I’m done with this motherfucker. I step toward him and he takes a step back. “You touched her without her permission?” I see red. I don’t hear or see anything else when I take a swing and land a solid uppercut under Joe’s jaw and he falls to the floor like a sack of bricks. I hear a faint gasp from behind me and strong arms hold me back before I go after the ass wipe again.

“Bro, chill. You knocked his ass out.” Butch hisses in my ear.

I turn my head and see fear and admiration in Liz’s eyes. “I’m good. I’m good.”

Butch releases my arms and steps between me and fuckhead Joe to make sure I don’t go after him again. I carefully make my way to Liz, afraid of what she’ll say. I have my hands up, palms out. My adrenaline is pumping through my veins but I tamp it

down.

“Are you OK?” I ask.

“I’m fine. Are you?” Liz gently touches my face and I close my eyes from the contact.

Fuck, this isn’t what I wanted to show Liz. I don’t want her to be scared of me in any way, but by the way she’s watching me, I don’t think she is. I think she’s intrigued. I follow her into her tiny bedroom and look around. She has some weird doll shit on a stand in the corner along with some incense and candles. There are skulls and crossbones scattered about on a weird looking board and some cards. I go to touch one of the skulls and Liz swipes them away with her hand and puts them in a black bag.

“Don’t touch them, you’ll curse yourself if you don’t know what you’re doing,” Liz says gathering the cards and putting them inside the bag.

“What is all of this?”

Liz hesitates before answering. “Have you ever heard of spiritual folkways and liturgical languages” I shake my head no. “Research it before I tell you anymore.” She walks away into the bathroom and ends that conversation.

What the fuck is spiritual folkways and liturgical languages? Is she some kind of demonic princess or something? It doesn’t matter to me what she is or what she believes. I just know I want her with me for as long as she’ll have me.

Chapter Six

Liz

Holy shit. Ace just knocked out my manager in one punch. What in the actual hell just happened? One minute Ace is kissing me and making my head spin. The next, my manager, Joe, from the nightclub just waltzed right into my apartment and Ace knocked his ass out. I mean Joe did have it coming, I just wish it was me who hit him and not Ace. I don't want Ace to get into any trouble over me. He looked hot as hell when he landed that punch and I swear my panties melted right off my body.

We're now in my bedroom and he's looking at all the stuff my Memaw gave me before she died. He doesn't look worried, just curious. Which is a relief for me. If Ace was freaked out, then he would have to leave. I will never deny my heritage over some guy again. I did that once and lost one of the best people in the world. I will never, ever do it again. This is who I am, take it or leave it.

"I appreciate what you did for me and what you're saying, but I'm still not going with you, Ace." I gather all my things, including the stuff my Memaw gave me and stuff them into their bag away from prying eyes.

Ace is right. This apartment is a shithole, but it was working for now. For some reason, I feel safer with Ace than here alone. I'm not telling him that right away and I'm not leaving. He needs to understand I don't do things because a man tells me I need to. I don't take orders from anyone but if he keeps kissing me the way he just did, I'll let him boss me around any time he wants. A giggle escapes my lips and a blush spreads across my cheeks. This man has me tied up in knots.

"Why not?" He roars in frustration.

I stop putting my things away and spin on my heels, "Because I'm not some floozy who drops everything for a man because he demands it. I've done that once before and I will not do it again." I'm breathing hard with irritation and Ace's eyes flash

with anger.

“Fine. Then I’m staying here.” Ace plops his ass on my bed.

My mouth gapes open. “No, you’re not. You have things you need to do. Don’t you remember that phone call?” I counter. He needs to get off my bed and out of my apartment before I lose my mind and cave. I stand in the doorway that leads to the bathroom. Ace stands to his full height and walks over to me, crowding me in my space. My breath hitches in my throat.

Whatever phone call he got earlier must not have been good because instead of working on my car, we had to leave right away. Let me tell you, I absolutely love riding on the back of Ace’s bike. With the wind in my face, my body pressed tightly against Ace’s and the powerful rumble of his bike beneath me, it almost gave me an orgasm. I’ve never felt anything like it before and it’s something I want to repeat as many times as he’ll let me, just not when he’s being an overbearing asshole.

Ace smirks, a slight dimple appearing on the left side of his cheek giving him a sexy look. “Fine. But this is a warning. I will be back.” The deep timber of his voice sends a shot of lust through my body. I hold back a groan and follow him out of the bedroom.

Yes, I watch his ass in his jeans. I’m a red-blooded Southern American girl. Why would I not appreciate the fine things in life? Like Ace’s delectable ass, his powerful legs, the way his muscles bunch under his leather vest thingy with Savage Saints logo on the back? There’s got to be another name for it, but I have no idea what it is. The biker thing is new to me but I’m thirsty for more knowledge on their inner workings.

The one called Tex is standing in the doorway leading out of my apartment with a smirk on his face. His bolo tie is hanging down the middle of his leather vest thing. I can see the attraction in him but he doesn’t hold a candle to Ace. Not even close.



“We all good?” Ace asks Tex.

“Yeah, brother. It’s all taken care of.” Tex kicks off the door frame and leads the way down the hallway. “You can thank me later with a woman of my choice,” Tex shouts from over his shoulder.

I stop dead in my tracks. What in the actual fuck? A woman of his choice? Do they make women trust them and then force them into sex? Am I one of their conquests? There’s no fucking way I will be a part of that shit.

Ace turns around when he realizes I stopped following them and smacks Tex on the back of the head, hard. “Ass wipe. Why’d you say that?”

“You kidnap and force women into having sex with you?” My voice is barely a whisper but Ace hears me loud and clear.

“No. Absolutely not. Actually, we do the opposite. Our club helps women who’ve been kidnapped and sold into the Black Market and integrate them back into society.” The look on Ace’s face tells me he’s telling the truth.

“But why would Tex say that then?”

Ace closes the distance between us and I have to tip my head back to look into his eyes. He gently strokes my cheek, leaving a tingle where his fingers were. He leans down so our lips are merely inches apart.

“Liz, we’re bikers. When you have a club like ours, women migrate to us. They know the score before they set foot into our Clubhouse or spread their legs. These women are willing participants and my brothers treat them like they are. It’s what they want. What they crave. No string sex any way they want it. Whether is rough, kinky, slow, fast, out in the open, behind closed doors. It’s a whole new world you’ll be walking

into soon.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

My cheeks feel like they're on fire. Ace's hot breath fans across my face and a whimper escapes my lips. I can't think straight when he's this close to me. "What do you want from me?"

Ace's breath hitches in his throat and his nostrils flare. There's a fire in his eyes turning them dark, drawing me to him even more. I can sense the raw power radiation off him into me and it calls to me. "Nothing. Everything. I don't know."

"Do I have to be like the women you're talking about?"

Ace's jaw clenches, "If that's what you want." He spits out through gritted teeth. I shake my head and he relaxes. "I won't ever hold you back. If you want a bunch of bikers between your legs, I won't stop you. But understand this, once you're mine, you're mine. No one else. Understand?"

I nod my head unable to form words. I have a feeling deep inside of me that Ace means what he says and says what he means. Do I want to be his? Do I want this burly sexy biker to be mine? Ace leans down until our lips are a breath apart. "I will be back, Liz. You can count on it."

Ace brushes his lips against mine and I whimper. I know once he leaves, my vibrator will get quite the workout. His lips leave mine and I think I pout but my head is spinning and my heart is beating hard against my chest. "Lock and barricade the door behind me."

Nodding my head, I do what he says. Anger erupts from the depths of my stomach once I close the door. "Fuck, he did it again!" I growl in frustration.

I slam my fist against the door and settle in for the night, wondering when I will see the big, bad, burly biker again.

## Chapter Seven

Ace

It's been days since I've laid eyes on Liz. I had Stone drop my pickup off to her so she had a ride back and forth to work the day after I left her alone in her apartment. I gave her my cell phone number in the cab of the pickup, hoping she'd use it to call me, but she hasn't. I fucked up by not getting her phone number to check on her. I could have Rooster get it, but if she wants to talk to me, she knows how. Besides, shit is going down with the Club and Savage Saints is my first priority. I've had Stone, one of the prospects, keep an eye on her when she's working and so far nothing has happened to her, which makes me breathe a little easier.

The dance studio, Blayde's Ol' Lady, Siren is in charge of, was broken into in the middle of the night. Security cameras Rooster set up caught four men dressed all in black destroying everything inside. From ballet slippers to the full-length mirrors, the poles and bars, even the flooring was ripped to shreds. By the time we made it there, the men disappeared, which put Blayde and Kayne on a rampage. Stryker has been lashing out at everyone, except for Holly, in his own rage because Siren is his sister from the Nomad, Reaper.

Shipments for the Savage Saints bar have gone missing and one of the bartenders quit mid-shift. She said strange as fuck things were happening to them while they were working and it terrified her. Rooster hasn't caught anyone on camera fucking with shit, but we all know it's the Kozlov brothers trying to impede on our territory. They're pissed we killed their baby brother Mikhail Kozlov.

Mikhail was working with Steam and Kingston kidnapping and selling women and

children. When Rooster found out Mikhail was one of the men who tormented Alyssa growing up, we knew we couldn't let him take his next breath. When we caught them using our bar as a backdoor to their skin trade, we killed Steam and Kingston. Rooster handled Mikhail.

Kayne took pity on my brooding ass at Church and he's allowed me to take a break from trying to sniff these assholes out. I'm close, but not close enough. So, with my new time off, I'm riding solo with Stone and Butch heading to Liz's work. I can't not see her anymore. I miss the warmth of Liz sitting behind me. I'm still wondering what the fuck set her off like she did. Refusing to come with me when I needed her too? Why can't she see I'm trying to protect her?

I want to either scream or drive my fist through someone's face. Since I can't do either without being thrown into the loony bin, I settle for throttling my bike and going as fast as I can. Stone and Butch keep up with me until the need to throttle someone passes.

I slow down and turn into the dance club's parking lot. I'm still frustrated but not at Liz. I'm frustrated at myself for letting this sexy woman captivate me in ways no woman ever has before. Yeah, I've messed around with the club bunnies, but they were only to scratch an itch, nothing more. Liz on the otherhand, I've jacked off at least twice a day thinking about her plump red lips wrapped around my aching shaft. Or sliding into heaven between her legs.

Fuck, I'm in trouble. Parking my bike, I sit on it for a few minutes, willing myself to calm down. She doesn't need me barging into her work like a caveman beating my chest and staking my claim. Even though every instinct is telling me that's exactly what I need to do.

"Ready, Ace?" Butch asks. He lights up a smoke and waits for me.

Taking a deep breath, I nod my head. “Let’s do this.”

“I don’t think she’s the type to cave to demands, Ace. From what I’ve heard, you have to be smooth. Make her think it’s her idea and go with it. The minute you start throwing demanding shit her way, she’s going to shut down.” Stone chimes in.

“What the fuck?” I ask with wide eyes. “That’s the most I’ve ever heard you speak, Stone. Did you hit your head or something?”

“Or something.” Stone shrugs his shoulders, his features are cold as ice. “Let’s get this fucking shit over with.”

“Well, fuck. Is that why she didn’t come with me last time? Because I didn’t ask?”

Butch nods his head, “I would guess so. With the way you’ve been moping around, she means something to you, then I’d go with Stone’s advice and ask her, not demand.”

I stare at Stone wondering who the hell he actually is as he walks off toward the dance club’s main doors and doesn’t even stop for the bouncers to check IDs. They look up at his six-six frame and turn away. Butch and I follow close behind. Our cuts are intimidating but add Stone into the mix and no one will blink if he starts shooting up the place, which I’m wondering if it’s possible.

We make our way into the dance club, the strobe lights are flashing all around us, making it trippy as we walk to the bar. Sweat, sex and alcohol permeate the air, making it hard to breathe. I spot Liz behind the bar, slinging drinks with a smile on her face. My heart picks up speed as she flips a bottle of Jack behind her back and catches it in front of her, then pours a shot, like Tom Cruise in that movieCocktail. Stone leads us to an empty booth set up in a dark corner.

A feisty blonde comes by and takes our drink order while trying to flirt with all of us. Butch flirts right back but Stone and I both ignore her. My eyes haven't left Liz's body since we walked in. The sexy curve of her hips, her plump ass, traveling up her body to her luscious chest has me hard in an instant. Then she smirks at one of the customers and I feel like my head is going to explode. It's not a flirty smirk or a come-hither smirk, but it's enough to get my blood boiling.

"Easy, brother." Stone puts his hand on my arm. My body stiffens and now my blood is boiling for other reasons. I don't like to be touched by anyone. The last person who touched me without my consent ended up buried beneath some extinct plants, never to be seen again. Stone realizes his mistake and immediately moves it away. "Fuck. I'm sorry, Ace."

I wave him off, trying to calm down. I don't want to kill one of my brothers. Butch is ready to spring into action if I lose it on Stone.

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Liz turns in my direction and the moment her eyes land on me, everything falls away. All the rage, the pain, the hatred, everything disappears and my body relaxes slightly.

“What the fuck?” Butch asks quietly. “How in the hell did that happen?”

“Fuck. I have no idea.” Stone answers in awe. Their eyes follow my line of sight and see Liz staring back at me, not moving. She is ignoring everyone around her, she’s only watching me as I watch her.

I stand and she steps around the bar, heading right for me. “Ace, what are you doing here?”

“I’ve come for you,” I answer gruffly, my heart hammering in my chest.

Liz frowns, her forehead wrinkling in frustration. “Ace, I’ve told you I won’t jump at your demands.”

Stone clears his throat behind me and I close my eyes, locking away my emotions, which I don’t know how to handle. “Come to the Clubhouse with me.” Liz’s frown deepens. “Please.”

She puts her hands on her hips and glares at me. “Not until you know how to ask me properly.” Liz jabs her finger into my chest to drive her point home. “Now, I’m going back to work. When you become man enough to ask instead of demand, maybe my answer will change.” I watch as Liz spins on her heels, her fiery red hair up in a ponytail almost whips me in the face.



I grab her wrist before she can walk away and pull her flush against my body. “Tell me you’ve missed me,” I whisper in her ear. Goosebumps break out along Liz’s pale skin.

She turns and rests her small palm on the side of my face. I close my eyes breathing her in. “Even if I have,” Liz leans in close until our lips are millimeters apart. “I won’t tell you unless you ask me.”

She’s out of my grip and heading back behind the bar before I can even process what the fuck just happened. Stone is trying not to break his hardened stare but Butch doesn’t give a fuck. He’s the sickest one in our Club, but he isn’t afraid to let others know him or see him.

“Bro, I told you. She wants to be asked, not demanded.” Stone shakes his head in frustration.

“It’s like I forget how to ask when I’m around her. I go all caveman and shit.” I plop down on the faux leather seat and growl in frustration.

Stone stands up and leaves without saying a word to either Butch or myself. He disappears around the corner. “Should one of us go after him?” I ask.

“Fuck, no. Stone is Stone. There’s no telling what he’s up to and it’s in our best interest, not to find out.” Butch runs his hands down his face and folds them in front of him on the table. “Last time I thought he was getting into trouble at a bar, I found him getting a blow job from one of the bar sluts while being five fingers deep in another one. Just leave him be and when he’s done, he’ll be back.”

The waitress drops off another round of drinks and I slowly sip my Casa Amigo and Lime. Stone isn’t back yet but nothing is on fire, no one is running and screaming in the other direction and the police haven’t shown up yet, so I relax while watching Liz

work the bar. A few times she's had to leave my line of sight and I'd tense up but a few minutes later, she'd pop back up and I'd relax.

Her eyes keep drifting to mine all night long and it's doing wild and crazy things to my body. Stone finally returns after an hour. His face isn't as calculating but I wouldn't say he's relaxed in the slightest. A couple of scantily clothed women pass our table, grinning but Stone doesn't bat an eye. He picks up his drink, offers the two women a raised brow and they scurry off with lust in their eyes.

"Last call!" The DJ shouts.

After ten minutes he turns down the music. The lights flip on, bathing everyone in brightness. I blink a few times until my eyes adjust. I immediately look for Liz, who is still behind the bar. The three of us don't move from our spots until movement behind Liz catches my attention. She's batting her boss Joe's hands away from her ass.

"Leave me alone!" Liz shouts trying to push away from her boss.

"That motherfucker." I growl. I'm out of the seat in a flash.

"You're a cock tease. Shimmying around here in those tight shorts, showing off your ass." Joe cages Liz in against the wall.

I reach the asshole and he doesn't see me coming since his back is to me. He goes to reach for her crotch and I snatch his hand up, twisting it backward. "I warned you, motherfucker. You don't touch what's mine."

"Ace, no," Liz shouts.

I pull on Joe's wrist until I hear bones cracking and he screams out in pain. I release

my hold on him and stand between Liz and her boss. “You’re going to pay for this,” Joe shouts while holding his hand to his chest. “Do you know who I am?” He tries to glare at Liz behind me. “Liz, you fucked up and I’ll get you one way or another.”

“Try it motherfucker and I’ll guarantee they won’t find your body.” Liz grabs onto my cut with trembling hands. Instead of freaking me out, her touch relaxes me.

“Just leave it, please, Ace,” Liz begs. I turn my head to look at her. Fear is rolling off her in waves, a look I can relate to. That sends my blood boiling and my hands begin to tremble, itching to kill this motherfucker.

“He doesn’t put his hands on you again and you expect me to leave it alone, Liz,” I growl, cupping her face. “That’s not how this works. You. Are. Mine.”

I turn my attention back to Joe but he’s gone. “Where’d he go?” I ask.

Stone shakes his head and looks around. “I don’t know, brother. But we need to get out of here. I’m sure someone has called the cops on us by now.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:54 am*

Butch comes from the backroom. “He’s gone. I don’t know how or where, but I’ll have Rooster dig into him and figure out why he thinks he can get away with that.”

I nod my head and turn my body fully toward Liz. She’s trembling from head to toe and tears are glistening in her sapphire eyes. “I need you to come home with me, Liz, please.” I plead.

“Ok, but only because you sort of asked and I’m terrified to be alone.”

“Get your things and let’s blow this joint.”

Liz nods her head and disappears with Stone following. I know if I go with her, I’ll have her pinned to the wall with my dick inside of her and that’s not what she needs right now. We need to get the fuck out of here and figure out why this asshole thinks he can touch my woman. If I see him again, I swear to all that is holy, I will end him, no matter what the consequences may be. That motherfucker doesn’t touch what belongs to me.

## Chapter Eight

Liz

I was shocked and excited the moment I saw Ace walk in the door to the nightclub. I’ve seen Stone here every night that I worked and even parked outside my apartment. I’ve talked to him a few times, trying to get information out of him, but all he would tell me is that Ace was busy with Club business and that he left his pickup for me to use while my shitty car is getting fixed. His words, not mine. I found Ace’s

note with his phone number on it, but I've been too chicken to call or text him. I know the moment I hear his voice, I will cave to every demand. And I will not go down that path again.

Then when he demanded I stay with him again, anger bubbled through my system. I won't allow any man to control me again. Ace will have to learn that, even if it's the hard way. I will not bow down to any man ever again. Last time I did, I was almost killed for it.

I still can't believe my boss tried to touch me without my permission, while Ace was here! Does he have balls of steel or something? My whole body is trembling after that fiasco. Stone is following me to get my things and I'm thankful it's not Ace. I need a moment to pull myself back together. Flashbacks from my ex kept playing on repeat in my head while Joe had me pinned against the wall. The last thing I expected was to have Joe lay his nasty hands on me.

"Ok, I'm ready," I tell Stone after grabbing my purse.

He leans against the wall with one leg kicked up behind him. He doesn't move, only stares at me intently for a few minutes. I open my mouth to ask him what's his deal when he beats me to it. "Ace is a different breed. We all are. He's had a tough life and you're the first person to ever be able to touch him without him turning murderous. He doesn't know how to ask for things. Like the rest of us, he's always taken what he wanted. Be patient with him and teach him how to ask you for things."

I open my mouth to respond but snap it shut. Stone can't or won't answer my questions. Why am I the only person who can touch him? What happened to him to make him this way?

"Come in before Ace gets the wrong idea and comes barging in here, looking to kick my ass. I mean, he's one of the best fighters I know, but I don't think he can touch

me.” Stone pushes off the wall he leaned against and I follow him out to the bar. The relief I am going with them is evident on Ace’s face. His strong arms grip me when I get close enough and his lips land gently on mine.

“Let’s go, Sweet Cheeks. I need to get you home and in my bed.”

I follow Ace out of the nightclub with Butch and Stone behind us, protecting my back. Am I making the right decision in trusting Ace?

Only time will tell which way this is going, but right now I don’t care. Right now, I feel safer than I’ve ever felt. Once Ace learns about me and my past will he care or will he send me away like everyone I’ve ever known, besides my Memaw, has done? Will he cast me aside for someone who isn’t as fucked up as I am?

All these questions invade my headspace while we’re riding and I don’t pay attention to where we’re going. Ace slows down and turns right into a long driveway surrounded by trees. Once he reaches the end of the driveway, it opens to a beautiful huge two-story house and a pole barn with cars and pickups parked around it. Bikes are parked out front, sitting side by side in the setting sun. Four men come onto the porch with their arms crossed over their chests and snarls on their faces. One with light blonde hair and piercing blue eyes flicks a cigarette into the driveway and watches us pull in. He raises an eyebrow at the sight of me but doesn’t say a word. Ace backs into a parking spot before turning off his bike.

“Ace, we all good?” The blonde hair man says. Jesus, they’re all huge and ooze sex appeal. I see why women flock to them. They give off a hint of danger, bad boy and hot steamy sex all rolled into one fine-ass package.

“We’re good, Prez,” Ace responds before tapping my leg. I jump at the contact and scramble off his bike almost falling on my ass, again. Ace catches me quickly and pulls my body flush against his. How in the hell did he move so fast? “Easy Sweet

Cheeks. Don't want you hurting that fine ass before I get my hands on it." His hot breath fans across my skin sending goosebumps down my arms.

I don't know what to say until someone clears a throat behind us, making me jump again. Ace grips my waist with his hands and his jaw ticks, tightening with agitation. He breaks eye contact with me and glares at whoever cleared their throat behind us. I spin around and eight sets of eyes are watching me. Three are women, five are men. The women all have huge grins on their faces and the men look confused as hell. I back up into Ace and try to hide, but he won't let me. He wraps his arms around my waist and the top of my head comes to the bottom of his chin. I can feel the hardness behind his jeans press against my ass and I try not to moan. With the hint of the size of that thing, I'm positive Ace can do more than make me moan. I wiggle trying to release some pressure between my legs when Ace grunts behind me.

"Who's our guest?" The blonde-haired man, Ace called Prez, asks. He struts down the porch, eating up the distance between us. I get a closer look at his vest thingy and it has Kayne on one side and President on the other. Oh good, they wear name tags so I know who people are.

"Kayne be nice. She's obviously scared out of her fucking mind right now." A woman with blonde hair and green eyes comes down the porch. She also has a vest thingy on too. Hers reads Poison on one side and Cleaner on the other. Everything I've always read about bikers said no women are allowed into the inner workings of a club. But these men must live by different rules which puts me at ease a little.

"Her name's Liz and she's staying in my room for a while," Ace responds. His deep voice vibrates behind me sending a chill down my spine. "I'll also need a prospect, preferably Stone since she's used to him, driving Liz to and from work and staying with her while she's there." I open my lips to argue about needing a babysitter, but Ace's grip on my hip tightens. He leans in and whispers in my ear, making me putty in his hands. "No arguing Sweet Cheeks. I'll explain later."

Kayne raises an eyebrow and smirks. “Good to meet you, Liz. Name’s Kayne.” He pulls the woman who told him to be nice into his arms and kisses the side of her head. The love these two share is something I’ve always wanted but never had. “This is Poison. Up there is Duke, Talon, Stryker and his Ol’ Lady Holly, then Blayde and his Ol’ Lady Siren. Rooster and Alyssa are at Rooster’s house with their daughter, Elsa. Come on in, make yourself at home. We have Club business to discuss.” With that, Kayne turns on his heels and walks back up the porch leaving no room to say anything else. “Church in twenty, Ace.” Kayne throws over his shoulder.

“Is he always so bossy?” I ask. Chuckles vibrate around me from the others listening to our conversation.

“He’s my Prez. His word is law.” Ace nuzzles the side of my neck before stepping away taking his warm body with him. He grabs the bags I packed out of his saddle bags and throws them over his shoulder. “You can get more later if you need to. Come on, I’ll show you where you’ll be sleeping.”

Ace wraps his free arm around my shoulders and pulls me next to him. A spark surges through my body and goes straight to my under-used core. I snuggle into his embrace feeling safe and empowered at the same time.

“What you might see, will be a shock to you. Since Rooster and Alyssa are at their house with their daughter, it’s free rein in the Clubhouse. Remember all these women inside want to be here and want to do things you might think should be done behind closed doors. The ones who wear Ol’ Lady patches are the untouchable ones. Once a brother stakes his claim on a woman, no other brother will touch her and they’ll treat her with the utmost respect.”

“Uh... OK.” I’m not sure how to respond to that but I pull up my big girl panties and walk with Ace into the house. He’s right to warn me. If he didn’t, I might have made an ass of myself.



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Music is pumping through the speakers in the house, playing some heavy metal I haven't heard before. Women are giving some of the guy's lap dances, others are on their knees with their head between the men's legs, giving blow jobs. Some of the men are getting attention from two women at the same time. It's like walking into a whole other universe. Some of the women glare at us when we walk in, some guys smirk and keep doing what they're doing.

I pull myself closer to Ace and look anywhere besides the sex scenes playing out in that room. Ace releases a deep chuckle and guides me up a set of stairs. I swear my face is flushed from embarrassment. He passes door after door on each side of us until we get to one on the left. Ace releases my shoulders and pulls out a key. He unlocks his door and swings it open, motioning me inside. I take a small step, taking in the room around me. It's cozy with a dresser against the wall, a big screen TV mounted on the wall above the dresser, a huge bed with a dark blue comforter, a nightstand on each side, a leather chair in the corner and two closed doors to the left.

Ace opens the first door and turns on the light. "The closet is here if you need to use it." He flicks off the light and shuts the door. Ace walks to another door and opens it, turning on that light. "Bathroom's here with a full shower. Make yourself at home. I have Church and will be back."

Ace crowds my space making me crane my neck back to look into his eyes. "Church? Do you pray or something?"

Ace barks out a laugh, throwing his head back. "No, Liz. Church is where we have club meetings to discuss details of certain things that we don't want others to hear and take things to a vote. There's so much you'll learn. Poison and Siren are the best

women here to answer any questions while I'm gone."

Ace pushes a piece of my hair out of my face and leans in. The moment his lips touch mine again, I'm done for. I thought the first time we kissed it was a fluke, but twice in a row, I know it's not. Pray to the Gods of whoever or whatever, I'm completely smitten with this man. I don't know much about him, but the way his lips move against mine, I want to know everything about him. The way he empowers me, the way his fingers lightly caress my sides and cup my face, I don't think I'll be able to let him go if or when the time comes. I hope my past won't come to bite us in the ass.

## Chapter Nine

Ace

The last thing I want to do is leave Liz right now, but I have to. The club comes first. Hopefully, she understands. I'll have to talk to Poison, Siren and Holly and teach Liz the ropes of the MC ways. There's so much for her to learn about what we do, when, how and why that those three will be great at helping her.

I pull away from Liz's lips and a whimper escapes her throat. I'm rock hard behind the zipper of my jeans. This woman has me tied in knots. I've never had this reaction to a woman so quickly after the trauma I experienced as a teenager and I want to explore it further but I can't right now.

"Liz," her name rolling off my lips sounds perfect. "I have to go to Church. I'm gonna send Siren and Holly up to talk to you about the MC ways."

Liz's eyes widen in shock, "Uh... OK?"

"It'll be fine. They're Blayde and Stryker's Ol' Ladies. They're the best to answer any questions you have." I tap the side of Liz's head and run my fingers through her

red hair. “I know you have a million of them.”

“I do, yes. But I don’t know those women. How can I trust them?” Liz clamps her hand over her mouth after what she says and I see the fright in her eyes.

I pull her hand away from her mouth. “Baby don’t be scared about voicing your concerns. I won’t let anyone harm you. You have my protection from here on out.” I hold her face in my hands, soothing the scared look in her eyes. “Siren and Holly have been a part of the MC world for a long time. They’ve been through some shit and know the score. Which is what they’ll teach you while I’m gone.”

“Where are you going?”

“I have Church now and we’re leaving on a run for a few days. I hate to do this to you, but one rule you’ll have to learn is the Club comes first. No matter what is going on or happening, the Club is my number one priority. The girls will teach you all you need to know.” I leave a lingering kiss on Liz’s lips again before I go.

“Will I see you before you leave?” The look in her blue eyes tells me all I need to know about us.

“We won’t be leaving until tomorrow morning, so we have all night to get to know each other better.” I wink and walk out the door, closing it behind me before I stay and really get into trouble with Kayne.

I hurry down the stairs and find Holly and Siren in the kitchen. I stop quickly. “Ladies, can you go and talk to Liz? She needs guidance on Club life.”

“Sure thing, Ace. She’s a cutie.” Holly smirks.

“I’ll tell you if she’s a keeper later.” Siren winks.

Anger flows through me and I grit my teeth to keep from lashing out at Siren. “She isn’t going any-fucking-where.”

“Perfect then, Ace.” Siren pats me on my chest as she walks by with Holly. “We’ll make sure she knows the rules. Didn’t want to waste my time with a hang around.”

I see what she did there and chastise myself for walking right into her trap. She was testing the waters to see how I’d react to her comment. I’d facepalm but I’m a badass biker and don’t do shit like that. Instead, I grunt and storm off toward Church. I take my phone out of my pocket and put it in the box by the door. Slipping inside Church, I close the door behind me and take my seat between Stryker and Rooster. Kayne, Blayde, Butch, Tex, Duke, Poison, Talon, Stryker and Rooster are already in here waiting for me.

“Bro, that chick is fine as hell. Where’d you pick her up?” Rooster asks with a grin leaning back in his seat with his hands around the back of his head.

An evil sneer pulls my lips and I kick Rooster’s chair out from underneath him, sending his ass crashing onto the floor. The room erupts in laughter while Rooster pulls his ass up from the floor and fixes his chair. “Fucking asshole.” Rooster grumbles, making everyone laugh harder.

“Bro, she’s fucking mine. Keep your cock away from her and I won’t have to rip it off and beat you with it.” I growl deep from within, surprising myself and everyone around me. “Besides, don’t you have an Ol’ Lady now?”

Rooster rolls his eyes, “Duh, asshole. Like I’d cheat on Alyssa, who is currently waiting for me at home with nothing on but her birthday suit, so let’s get this shit handled.”

The laughter dies and Butch clears his throat. “A week ago, we were at Liz’s

apartment when her boss showed up. Ace knocked the slimeball out with one hit.” Butch stands up and shadowboxes, throwing an uppercut against an imaginary person. “Fucking, what! The bitch went down like a fucking sack of bricks. He’s gonna have a fucking killer headache when he wakes up inside that dumpster.”

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“Bro, it was fucking epic. That douchebag didn’t know what fucking hit him.” Tex pipes in. “So Butch and I took his sorryexcuse for a man out and threw him in the smelliest, nastiest dumpster we could find.” Tex and Butch shrug their shoulders like it was no big deal and Kayne groans slamming the gavel on the oak table stopping further shit talk. Butch sits down and the room falls silent.

“Fuck. We’ll come back to that in a minute. Right now, there are other important things we need to discuss.” Kayne leans forward in his seat, steepling his fingers together. “Tank and the others ran into an issue down by Detroit trying to get back to PA. We all know what that means. Kozlov brothers are making a move to stop them and we need to get ahead of it.”

“What kind of issue?” Duke asks.

“Someone tried to kill them before they got to the border. Tried to run them off the road. Cobra laid his bike down, but it wasn’t too damaged. Fucking amateurs. This shit needs to end now.” Kayne leans back in his seat. “We’re leaving for PA first thing in the morning to meet up with Chainz and the Krymson Destroyers and help them. Only a few of us are going. Stryker, Ace, Blayde and Siren, Rooster, Stone, Poison and myself. The rest of you will stay here and hold down the fort, watch for blowback and get shit set up to finish Senator Graham. Any objections?”

The room is quiet with no one arguing or objecting. “Good. Now, Ace. What’s the deal with this fiery redhead?”

All eyes land on me and I swallow hard. I don’t like being the center of attention but apparently, that isn’t happening today. “I found her broken down on the side of the

road near the mechanic shop. I sent Rooster her plates to run for info.”

“Her name’s Elizabeth Madeline-Rose LeRoux. She’s a Louisiana native born and bred. There’s something you should know before you take this any further.” Rooster leans forward. The seriousness in his face sends a chill down my spine. “She’s the descendant of Madeline LeRoux.”

“And that is who?” I ask.

“Madam Madeline LeRoux was the queen of Louisiana Voodoo. She was the one the natives went to for help. Madam LeRoux was a powerful Voodoo witch, according to the research I could find. She died last year in a tragic accident and Liz was supposed to take her place. She had a huge falling out with her family and came here.”

“Ok, so we have a Louisiana Voodoo dark princess in our Clubhouse. Is she a danger to any of us?” Kayne asks. I clench my jaw to stop myself from disrespecting my President. He’s looking out for the good of his club but sometimes he’s an asshole.

Rooster shakes his head, “No. She’s a timid little mouse. Nothing I found online stated she’s a danger to us.”

I think back to the fire I lit in her earlier at the shop and I smirk. The way her eyes burned into me when I pissed her off. She might be a timid little mouse right now, but I’ll bring the dark princess forward and together our souls will match.

“Now that this is out of the way, does anyone have anything they need to share?” Kayne asks, picking up the gavel. No one answers or shakes their head. “Good. The eight of us will ride out tomorrow. Party, fuck, smoke, do whatever you want tonight. Tomorrow, it’s show time. Church dismissed.” Kayne slams the gavel on the table ending our meeting. Everyone’s chairs scrape back as they get up to leave. I join them and head out to find a fiery redhead I can’t wait to see.

I don't talk to anyone and that's nothing new. I usually keep closed off and observe. I was taught a long time ago that you can see better using your eyes and ears and learn more when the mouth stays closed. I stop in the kitchen to grab Liz and me a couple of beers and head up to my room.

I stop in front of my door and hear giggling coming from the other side. That's a good sign, I hope. I take a deep breath and turn the knob opening my door. The sight in front of me is priceless. Liz is sitting on my bed with her legs crossed in front of her eating a bag of chips one of the girls brought in. Her eyes widen while shoving a mouthful of chips in when she sees me. Holly is sitting next to Liz also with a mouth full of food and Siren is sitting in the chair in the corner of my room. She tosses her long dark hair over her shoulder and stands. Holly scrambles off the bed and stands next to her.

"We good in here?" I ask raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah, Ace. We're good for now." Siren smirks. I catch on to what she's doing and tamp down the rage flowing through my body.

"Thanks. See yourselves out." I dismiss the two heathens and they laugh while closing the door behind them.

Liz hasn't moved a muscle besides swallowing the mouth full of chips, since I walked in. I take off my boots, remove my cut and hang it on the back of my door before approaching her on the bed. I kick back on my bed with my feet on either side of Liz.

"What's up?" I ask casually, even though I'm kind of freaked out right now wondering what she's thinking.

Liz swallows hard before shifting her body in my direction. "Uh, well... The girls



have told me some things about being in an MC and I'm more confused but curious than I was before." Liz grabs the charm around her neck and rubs it with her fingers.

"Well, ask away. I'll answer what I can and tell you if I can't." I put my hands around the back of my head, leaning against the headboard. Appearing relaxed, even though I'm not. I'm nervous this is too much for her.

She shifts her body so she's facing me on the bed and inhales a deep breath. "What exactly is your role in the club?"

"My job is the financial part. I keep track of the spending and receiving of Club money, called the Treasurer. I also set up and run fights, both legally and illegally. I participate in them too."

"Is that where the faint bruising and the scarred knuckles came from?" Liz is shy about asking and it has my curiosity peaked.

"Yeah, it is. Do you fight?" I sit up a little bit so our bodies are closer.

"Not professionally, no. But I haven't been able to find a gym around here to accommodate what I like to do." Liz's cheeks turn red and she blushes. It's the sexiest thing I've seen in a while. Most women around here know what they want and aren't afraid to tell you. Liz is different and I really like it.

"I'll make a deal with you." Liz scoots closer to me on the bed and my heart beats hard against my chest. Her scent drifts around me and sends a shot of lust straight below my belt. "When I get back from this run, I'll take you to the gym out back and see if what I can do can accommodate your needs."

Liz swallows hard, following along with my innuendo. "I'd like that, Ace." Her face turns bright red again and I lean forward.

“Any more questions?” I ask, brushing my finger along her cheek. I can’t help it. I crave to touch her.

“Only one.”

“What is it?”

“Will you kiss me?” Liz’s husky voice sends my blood pumping hard through my veins and my stomach clenches with excitement.

I cup the side of her face and bring my lips down onto her soft ones with urgency. Liz opens her mouth and I plunge my tongue inside, relishing her taste. She melts into me and it’s the greatest feeling in the world. A feeling I’ve been missing. Club bunnies were a means to blow off steam, but what’s happening between Liz and I is different. I don’t feel stressed or anxious having Liz touch me. In fact, I want her to touch me. I want her to be a part of me and who I am and that scares the shit out of me.

I pull her closer so she’s straddling my lap while I kiss her with so much built-up passion, that my lungs burn. Liz grinds her hips causing her core to press against my hardness and I want to touch every inch of her body. I crave to kiss every inch, mark her as mine.

Both of us are panting hard when I pull my lips away. My hands grip her hips holding her in place so I don’t come like a teenage boy watching his first porno. She does this to me. Liz has ahold of my shoulders and we’re pressed against each other. I’m at a loss for words but my body is full of lust. Liz shifts slightly trying to relieve some pressure but instead, she rubs against me and a moan escapes my throat. Afraid of going too far, I release my hold on her hips but she doesn’t move.

I look into her lust-filled eyes, “What are you thinking?” My voice is husky with

need.

“I’m thinking I need you right now. When do you have to leave?” Liz whispers.

“In the morning.”

“So, we have all night.” A smile lights up Liz’s face and she leans into me, capturing my lips with her own.

I grip the bottom of her shirt and yank it over her head along with her bra, exposing her chest and stomach. The sight before me takes my breath away. She’s beautiful with intricate tattoos trailing up each of her sides and wrapping around her back.

I lean in and capture one of her breasts and suck. Liz grips my head, pulling me closer and moans the sexiest noise I’ve ever heard. It spurs me on to take things further. Too many clothes are separating us. I release her from my mouth and pull my shirt over my head, tossing it to the side. I trail my hands down Liz’s stomach to the button of her jeans and pop it. She climbs off the bed and pulls her jeans down her long, lean legs, kicking them away. Liz sways her hips to a beat only she and I can hear. I sit on the edge of the bed, enjoying the show she’s putting on for me.

I stand to my full height and pop the button on my jeans and breathe a sigh of relief from the pressure on my raging dick. Liz grabs my jeans and pulls them down my legs along with my boxer briefs.

I kiss Liz hard while pushing us onto the bed. She spreads her legs wide making room for my body. I break the kiss and trail my lips down her body. I suck one breast into my mouth and my hands keep going further south until I reach the apex of her thighs. I run my fingers over Liz’s mound and rub it. She moans, grabbing the headboard and arching her back. I kiss down her body until I’m at her entrance. Her scent pulls me in and I lick, feasting on what’s become my favorite treat.

“Holy shit, Ace.” Liz moans breathlessly, arching her back. I groan while plunging two fingers inside her heat. Her walls clamp down signaling she’s close to exploding. I keep up my ministrations, sucking, licking and biting while my fingers slide in and out of her wetness. “I’m coming. Don’t stop.”

I keep up with Liz’s demands and take her over the edge of ecstasy. Her wetness coats my mouth, lips and tongue. I slow down my pace, bringing her back down slowly. Once she’s fully back in our universe, I slowly slide my way up her body, kissing every inch of her skin. Liz is getting worked up again, pushing her hips into mine.

“You ready for more?” I ask, gazing into her blue eyes.

“I’m more than ready, Ace. Mark me and make me yours.”

I don’t know if she understands the words she just said to me and I’ll talk with her about it later. Right now, I’m living in the moment and kiss her. Lining up my aching shaft, I slowly inch inside her until I’m at the hilt. I’ve never felt the sensations skirting over my skin. Only this woman has done this to me.

“Fuck me. You’re made for me.” I pant. Liz moans and wraps her legs around my waist. I pull out and push back in again. I do this several times until she’s close again and so am I. “Come for me, Liz. Coat my dick with your come.” I grunt and thrust forward hard. Liz moans and her walls clamp down. I drive in and out of her body at a fast pace chasing my release as Liz comes. I explode inside of her. I’ve never come so hard in my life.

I slow down my pace and kiss her gently, bringing us both back down from the high we were on. I reluctantly pull out and go into the bathroom to clean up and piss. When I come back to the bedroom, Liz is covered with just a sheet, still naked and watching me.

I walk toward her with no shame in being naked. Her eyes rake over my body and it brings my heart back to life. I stand next to the bed and hold my hand out, “Come get clean with me.” Liz settles her palm against mine and I lift her off the bed like she weighs nothing. Which she does. She’s a small little thing with darkness lurking inside of her that I’m going to bring forward.

We shower together, I explore her body, kissing, nipping and licking every inch of her skin until the water turns cold and we’re forced to get out. After I wrap a towel around my waist, I dry her off, paying close attention to the things she likes. She giggles when I dry off the bottom of her feet and when my hands brush her sides.

“Ace, don’t.” She swears at me and blushes which makes me want to keep on tickling her. “Come on, stop. That’s not fair.”

“What’s not fair?” I ask, teasing Liz.

“You. All the power you have over me and I have nothing over you.”

I stand up and wrap a towel around her body. I can’t have this conversation with her naked. “I’m going to be honest with you, Liz. No one has ever made me feel the way you do. It just isn’t about getting hard and fucking. With you, I want to know everything about you. All your secrets, your past, everything.” I cup the side of her face and bring my lips next to hers. “I mean everything.”

Her breath hitches in her throat, “What do you want to know?”

“First, let’s get dressed and find something to eat. I’m starving.”

“I’m not that hungry.” Liz’s belly growls, giving away her lie.

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I smirk, “Yeah, that’s not going to happen. Let’s get some food and then we’ll talk more.”

“Ok, but nothing fattening. I’m trying to lose weight.” Liz’s face flames red when she says it.

I pull the towel away from her body and drag my eyes down her full breasts to the flair of her hips, to the meaty parts of her thighs. I like what I see and tell her. “I see no reason for you to lose weight. You look perfect just the way you are.”

Liz snorts and covers herself up with the towel. “Thanks, Ace but I think you need to have your eyes checked. I’ve gained a lot of weight since I’ve been up here and I’m not skinny like the other girls around here.”

Ok, so her weight is a touchy subject. I’ll have to tread lightly on this one. I pick her up and set her on the counter. I crowd my body between her thighs. Liz opens her legs to make room for me “Liz, it doesn’t matter what you look like, how much weight you put on or lose. I’ll want to be nestled between these thighs for as long as you’ll let me.” I kiss the side of her neck, trailing my lips to hers. “Now, let’s get some food.”

“Hmm... OK, Ace. But I meant what I said.”

“So do I.” I kiss her again and step away. If I don’t we’ll never make it downstairs for food and I can’t have her starving on me. “Besides, you need fuel for the rest of the night.”

“Promises, promises.” Liz hops down off the counter and makes her way into my bedroom. She drops her towel and grabs her clothes.

Fucking right, promises. I will promise her the moon and stars for the rest of my life even if she doesn’t want me anymore. It doesn’t matter. Something shifted inside of me when I laid eyes on Elizabeth Madeline-Rose LeRoux. She is mine and I will protect her with my life.

## Chapter Ten

Liz

Holy shit. Holy shit. Holy shit. I imagine if Memaw were looking down on me right now, she’d be turning in her grave. I’ll have to get out my cards and see what she’s thinking. That’s something Ace doesn’t know about me and I don’t know if I have the will to tell him and lose the way he looks at me now. Every time someone finds out about who my Memaw is, it sends them running far away from me.

With the way Ace makes me feel beautiful, wanted and respected, I don’t want to lose that, but I won’t hide who I am either. With my mind made up and me fully clothed, I can think properly again. I head for the door and wait for Ace. I turn around and lean against the wood, watching him. Can he handle what I am and where I came from? I watch him slide on a pair of jeans over his long muscular legs. I notice Ace’s tattoo crawling over his back. It’s a full-back tattoo with the Savage Saints logo. Normally I find full tattoos gaudy, but the way it’s designed, it’s nothing but flawless, making him even more appealing.

I love tattoos, which is why I have a ton of them, but nothing of this detail. I’d love to meet the artist who did this one. Ace slides a shirt over his head, covering up his body and I lose my eye candy. I think I whimper cause his head whips in my direction with a smirk on his face.



“Something on your mind, Sweet Cheeks?”

My face flames red from embarrassment. “Nope. I’m good. You ready to eat?”

Ace stalks over and pins me against the door. His nose drifts down the column of my neck, inhaling my scent. “For more than food, but I need to keep you fueled for what I have planned next. We only have a few hours until I have to leave and I’m going to spend it reminding you who you belong to when I’m gone. I’m going to fuck you so hard, you’ll feel me for days.”

“Promises, promises,” I whisper against his skin.

“A promise I will keep.” Ace nips at my neck sending a tingle down my spine.

“What are we waiting for then? I’m starving and you’re stalling.”

Ace releases me from the door and pulls it open. The music from downstairs pours up into the hallway making the walls vibrate. “I’m going to warn you again, Liz. There will be some things you’ll see down there that might make you blush. But you’re safe with me. No one will touch you or do anything to you. My brothers are down there, letting off steam and partying it up since most of us are leaving in a few hours. Don’t be embarrassed. I’ve got you.”

Ace puts his arm around my shoulder, kissing the top of my head. I love it when he does this. “OK, let’s get this done with. If this is going to be my life, I’ll need to get used to it. But Ace.” I look up at him to make sure he’s paying attention to me. “I’m not as innocent as you think I am. I might not know much about the biker’s life, but I do know about sex. I grew up in the swamps of Louisiana with a grandmother people turned to for help. God rest her soul.” I rub the crystal around my neck while my thoughts drift to the sweet, no-nonsense woman I love with all my heart. Everyone around her loved and respected her just the same. Well almost everyone. Someone

killed her and I don't know who or why. But it's something I need to find out. And when I do, those fuckers will pay for messing with my family. Maybe Ace and the Savage Saints can help? Can I bring him into my world and get the answers I need?

"You'll have to tell me about her when you're ready. I'd love to hear more." Ace says pulling me out of the darkness trying to take over. The look in his eyes tells me he knows where my head was going. Maybe we're more alike than I thought.

"That would be wonderful. But not tonight. There's so much to say, we wouldn't have time."

"I'll be here and ready to listen when you're ready to talk."

We make our way down the stairs and the first thing I see is the guy Tex from the mechanic shop getting a blow job from some girl with chestnut brown hair. I avert my eyes to give them some privacy. I laugh a little and tuck my head into Ace's chest. I can hear the deep rumble of his voice against my ear. We make our way to the kitchen but before we enter through the door, Ace loudly knocks and shouts before walking in. I look up at him with a raised brow.

"The kitchen isn't a safe place to just walk right into. I don't know how many times I've caught either Kayne and Poison or Blayde and Siren in compromising positions." We enter the kitchen and Kayne and Poison are fixing their clothes. Her hair is a mess and Kayne has a satisfied look on his face.

"Oh my God. That's funny. Has anyone ever caught you in a compromising position?" I tease. I really want to know the answer but am afraid to ask.

Poison snorts. "Ace has never been caught in a compromising position." She stands up and makes her way to the fridge pulling two waters out. She hands one to Kayne and sits on his lap. "I think that might change though."

“Poison.” Ace growls.

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“What?” She bats her eyelashes like she's all innocent and sweet. “I’m not saying you’re a prude, Ace. I’m saying what you do, stays behind closed doors.” Poison looks me over and smiles. “But I have a feeling that might change.” She winks at me and turns her attention back to Kayne.

“Sit here.” Ace pulls out the barstool at the island. He glares at Poison, “I’ll keep you over here so she can’t corrupt your mind while I fix us something to eat.”

Poison laughs as I take a seat. “Oh, c’mon Ace. I’m just teasing you. It’s good to see someone finally catch your attention.”

“Poison,” Kayne growls low in his throat warning her. “Leave the man alone and stop meddling.”

Ace told me Kayne’s word is law so it doesn’t surprise me when Poison stops and huffs out a breath. “Keep it up woman and I’ll punish your ass.”

“Promise?” Poison grabs Kayne’s face and kisses him hard. You can feel the love the two of them share and it feels like I’m imposing by watching such an intimate scene. I find myself craving what they have. Is it something Ace and I might have? It’s hard to say this early on, but I flick my eyes to him and he’s watching me with a hunger radiating from his whisky-colored eyes. I bit my lip and he groans. He’s affected the same way I am.

“C’mon, let’s give Ace and Liz some time alone. You can meddle later.” Kayne stands and lifts Poison with him. She wraps her legs around his waist as they exit the kitchen, leaving Ace and me alone.

A powerful surge of something I can't put my finger on radiates from my body as Ace stalks over to me with two bowls of food in his hands. He gently sets them on the counter and sits next to me. Ace slides my stool until I'm practically straddling him and we eat in a comfortable silence, stealing looks and touches. Once I'm finished, I push my bowl away and wait for Ace. Being this close to him sets my skin on fire. Like I can't stop touching him. There's something about him that drives me insane with want and need.

Ace brings his nose against the side of my neck and licks my skin causing goosebumps to roll down my spine. I try to hold back a whimper, but he's been teasing me since we got down here and I want him. I want him like I've never wanted another man in my life.

I bring my lips to Ace's and kiss him hard. He grabs my hips and pulls me onto his lap so I'm straddling his waist. My greedy core pressed against the bulge behind his jeans. I want him inside of me, I don't want to wait. I unhook his belt and pull down the zipper of his jeans. I do the same with my jeans and pull them down one leg. Ace doesn't say a word but sits back in the barstool and lets me do what I want. I straddle him again, sinking onto his thick shaft.

"Fuck." Ace hisses through clenched teeth. My core contracts around him.

"God damn it, Ace. You feel so good." I kiss him hard and push down onto his shaft all the way. I raise my hips and push back down again. Ace's grip on my hips tightens as he thrusts up into me.

"Oh fuck, Liz. You're driving me crazy." Ace groans. He bites my nipple through my bra and piston his hips, hitting the right spots.

I shift down onto him at the same time he thrusts his hips, causing friction on my nub, sending me spiraling higher and higher. My toes curl and a deep sensation rolls into

my gut. “I’m coming Ace. Fuck. I’m coming.” And I do. I come so hard, my vision blurs and it feels like I’m having an out-of-body experience.

“Fuck, keep going, Sweet Cheeks. I’m right there with you.” Ace growls against my neck. I slide up and down his shaft, soaking him. He swells inside of me and grips my back, pushing me down onto him when he pushes up into me, sending me over the edge again. Ace empties himself inside of me. Breathing hard, I curl into Ace’s arms and let my body relax against him.

“Damn it. Not you too!” A deep throaty laugh comes from the door but I’m too worn out to look and see who it is.

“Fuck off.” Ace’s grip tightens around me and I snuggle into him further totally spent. Ace kisses the side of my head. “Let’s take this upstairs.”

I reluctantly climb off him, missing his warmth and we go upstairs. We make love and talk late into the night and I can’t keep my eyes open any longer. I don’t know when it happened, but sometime throughout the night, something between us shifted and I don’t want to be anywhere but with Ace for the rest of my life.

When I wake up, I’m groggy, confused and disconnected. My thighs ache deliciously and most of what happened in the last twenty-four hours comes flooding back. I peel one eye open. Ace is sleeping next to me and I take my time observing him. He’s on his back with his left leg out from under the covers, showing me his smooth, muscular tattoo covered thigh. His left arm, also covered in tattoos, is draped over his eyes and his mouth is partially open. There’s a dark shadow forming on his face from not shaving and it ramps his sex appeal up to smoking hot.

My gaze travels down to his lightly dusted dark chest hair. He has skulls and a pair of red boxing gloves covering his chest trailing down to his abs. He has a flaming ace sleeve tattoo on his right arm. The smoke from the ace opens up to a grim reaper that

expands his right shoulder and disappears out of sight. This man is a walking work of art and sex appeal and I'm not sure what he sees in me. I'm as plain Jane as they come. The only thing even slightly appealing on me are my Voodoo tattoos.

Before I can gaze even further down his body, Ace's raspy voice pulls my eyes up to meet his. "Are you done checking me out or do you want me to pretend to sleep some more? Maybe I'll get lucky and you'll lift the covers."

My mouth drops open from being caught checking Ace out and my cheeks flame as bright as my hair. "I wasn't..."

"Don't even say it. I could feel your eyes all over me." He rolls to his side so we're face to face. His whiskey-colored eyes are lighter than normal. I bring a fingertip to his cheek and lightly caress his face. A shudder wracks through Ace's body and he groans, pulling me against him. I straddle his thighs and plant kisses across his face. His light beard scratches my lips. We're both naked from last night and it's easy for me to slide down onto his growing shaft. I'm soaked and he slides right in. We both exhale at the same time.

Ace grips my hips hard enough to bruise, but I'm so lost in the feel of him, I don't care. He lifts me and pulls me down onto him at the same time he lifts his hips and slams into me. "Holy shit, Ace. Fuck that feels good." I slide onto him at the same time he impales me. I'm so close to an orgasm, I can't breathe.

"Fuck, Liz. I'm not going to last long." Ace bites my neck hard enough to leave a mark but I don't care. I sit up, driving Ace deeper into my swollen, greedy core. I ride him, swiveling my hips back and forth. Ace sits up with me, his huge hands expanding across my back. I come so hard, I can't think, let alone breathe. Ace moans before he swells inside of me.

"Fuck. Me. Liz." He grunts against my chest. I feel another orgasm right on the brink

and I keep moving my hips, sheathing him even tighter. “I’m coming.”

“So am I again, Ace.”

Ace cups my face and he explodes inside of me at the same time he kisses me and I follow right behind him. His kiss turns from frantic to tender before we both need to breathe.

Ace flops back onto the bed, pulling me with him. He’s still inside of me but he’s growing soft. “Hmm... That’s the best wake-up call ever.” Ace kisses the top of my head and his fingers gently caress my back. Once my breathing evens out, I kiss his chest, right over the red boxing gloves and climb off him. Ace doesn’t take his eyes off me. It should make me nervous, but it doesn’t. “That’s the most fucking beautiful sight I’ve ever seen.”

“What? Your come dripping between my legs?” I should be embarrassed, but I’m not. There’s no shame in our game.



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“That and the just thoroughly fucked look you have going on. I’ve marked you woman. You’re mine now.” Ace climbs out of bed and scoops me up over his shoulder so my bare ass is in the air.

“Ace, what are you doing?”

“Getting you clean to get you dirty again before I have to leave.” He swats my ass with an open palm before running his nose along my thigh and inhaling. “You smell like sweetness, sex and a dirty biker. I love it.” For some reason, that turns me on again, but I don’t tell him that. I’ve turned into a God-dam nympho around this man. I need to control myself or I’ll never know if what we have is strictly sex or something more.

Ace slides me down his body and I cup his face. “Ace, we need to stop. I need a break.”

“You’ll get a break when I leave. I want you to feel me until I come back, hungry for me.” He kisses me hard and my willpower snaps. I kiss him back with everything I have. Fuck it, he’s leaving for a while and I want him more than I’ve ever wanted another man in my life. Pouring every emotion I’m feeling into this kiss, I give in. Ace growls low in his throat and before I know it, my ass is planted on the bathroom countertop and he’s pounding into me hard and fast. I’m coming and my orgasm detonates like the Fourth of July firework show. Once he comes inside of me again, we take a shower where we get clean and dirty at the same time.

What is this man doing to me? He’s driving me insane with lust, want, hunger and need. He’s satisfying me in ways I’ve never been satisfied before. He’s my addiction

and I don't want to give up this drug. Not now, not ever.

I send up a silent prayer to Memaw to keep her eyes closed while I find myself and who I want to be. Because I have a feeling deep down, that I've been living under a rock, hiding in the shadows of who I really am, and Ace is the man who will help me spread my wings and fly.

## Chapter Eleven

Ace

I can tell the moment something shifts between the two of us. Liz is cuddled into my side and we're lying on my bed. I have to get up and get my shit around soon and I don't want to. For the first time ever, I want to tell Kayne to shove this ride up his ass and stay in bed with my woman. Knowing I can't, I grunt before rolling out of bed.

Liz is sound asleep and doesn't stir. I wore her out over the last twenty-four hours and a sense of pride swells inside my chest. I silently fill my go-bag with a couple of changes of clothes, guns and ammunition before zipping it shut. I pad into the bathroom, take a piss and wash my face and hands. I stare into the mirror and the man staring back at me isn't full of vengeance or pain. From the scars on my knuckles and across my body to the memories deeply rooted in my mind, I can push all of those back and focus on the future and what that will look like with Liz in it.

Shaking my head, I hang up the hand towel. I don't have time for sappy shit right now. I didn't snap a man's neck yesterday and undo everything I've done because of a woman. Right now, I need to be the cold-hearted asshole everyone knows. It's the only way to make it through this meeting without having Liz near me.

Fuck.

I can't go ten minutes without thinking about her. What has she done to me?

I open the bathroom door and quietly exit my bedroom. Leaving Liz in there sleeping without having a goodbye. If I woke her, I wouldn't have left. This is the best way to handle this situation. I hope she understands that when she wakes up. If she doesn't, then she'll be free to leave, but I will drag her back here kicking and screaming.

Blayze, Stryker, Talon, Kayne along with Poison and the prospect Stone are sitting on their bikes waiting for me. There is no sign of Holly or Siren but I don't question it, maybe they thought the same thing I did. I throw my bag in the saddlebag, toss on my helmet and gloves and wrap my Savage Saints bandana around my head to keep the chilly wind off my face for a while. The sun is just peaking over the horizon and while it's summertime, it's still cold in the mornings in Michigan.

Kayne twirls his right pointer finger in the air and that's our cue to roll out. We all fire up our bikes, the vibrations rumble under my feet and take off down the driveway. I glance in my side mirror and see Liz standing at my bedroom window, watching me. There's a haunted look on her face but my focus has to be on what's coming up and not what's behind me. Until the thing coming up is put behind me and then I can focus on what's in front of me, which is Liz.

Several hours and a few pit stops later, we reach our destination in East Bumfuck, PA. Night has fallen while we ride up the steep mountain leading us to a set of rolling gates. Once we reach the top, the gates open welcoming us inside The Krymson Destroyers compound. Tank and Cobra bitched about us being in the middle of the woods with creepy crawlers at our Clubhouse but this place takes the cake. My ears pop from the steep incline and my head is swimming from the elevation change. I pop my kickstand down and turn off my bike. Looking at my brothers, they're all battling the elevation change too. I shake my head and remove my brain bucket, hanging it on the handlebars of my bike.

Chainz, the Krymson Destroyers President comes outside with a few guys we haven't met yet on his heels. Music is coming from inside the Clubhouse and He saunters down the porch, heading right for Kayne and Poison. Blayde and Stone quickly dismount their bikes and cut Chainz off before he can reach Kayne. "Easy brothers, we're friends, not enemies." Chainz holds his hands up, offering peace.

"Blayde, Stone, it's good. Chainz isn't stupid, are ya?" Kayne asks, lighting up a cigarette and blowing out the smoke like he doesn't have a care in the world, but his stiff body language says otherwise.

"Fuck off Kayne," Chainz replies with a grin. Kayne gives him one back and dismounts his bike after Poison climbs off. "Welcome to Krymson Destroyers Clubhouse. We have booze, women and music available to you." Chainz spreads his arms wide, proud of the place he's built from scratch.

"Thanks, brother." Kayne shakes Chainz's hand and together they head inside with Poison tucked under Kayne's arm.

Blayde and Siren follow suit with the rest of us bringing up the rear. Jealousy hits me when I look at the two couples walking off together and it makes me long for a fiery redhead I left at home, thoroughly satisfied. Once we enter the Clubhouse, I look around for Tank and Cobra but don't spot them anywhere.

Turning to one of the men who came outside with Chainz, I shout over the loud music, "Where's Tank and Cobra?"

"I'm not sure but if anyone knows where they are," Freedom trails off, pointing to a woman at the bar talking animatedly at Chainz. "She'd know."

I cock an eyebrow and wait for an explanation but one doesn't come. I turn my attention back to the scene at the bar. The nosy chick crosses her arms over her chest,

releases a loud huff and turns her back on Chainz. He shakes his head when his eyes land on a beautiful woman with dark hair. She rests her palms on his chest, calming him down.

I step closer to the scene in case I need to help out Stryker. Chainz relaxes from the woman's touch, then nods his head. The music is cut off and silence descends onto the Clubhouse. "Kayne, Blayde, I know you had a long ride to get here and want to relax, but a few of my men are in trouble. I need to hold Church and want you there. Will your Ol' Ladies be ok out here with Raven, my Ol' Lady?"

Poison steps forward pointing at her cut. "I'm not sure how you do shit around here, Prez, but this patch states I'm a full member. Where my brothers go, I go."

Chainz cocks an eyebrow but nods his head. "Fine. Is she a patched member too?" He asks pointing at Siren.

"No, she's my Ol' Lady," Blayde speaks up. "She'll stay out here with Raven." Siren nods her head and Raven leads her to a table occupied by a couple more women.

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“Let’s get down to business.” Chainz leads us down a long hallway and into their Chapel. Once the door is shut and Chainz takes his seat at the head of the table, he brings down his gavel. “Tank received some intel earlier about Dia that was meant to take both of them out. Luckily, Elle overheard this information and relayed it to me. Cobra, Fuel, Hound and Reaper found him on time but our Prospect Denny suffered a serious blow to the head and now Dia is missing. They’re towing her car back here to the Clubhouse and we need to have a game plan to get Dia back. Her husband is a worthless piece of shit that will hurt her if given the chance. We can’t let that happen.”

“What do you want us to do?” Kayne asks.

“We need to dig up anything and everything on Ben Cross and Cross Shipping. An informant told us about Steam and Savage Saints MC. Steam was deeply involved in the Black Market Railroad and used our ports along with theirs to move kidnapped and abducted women and children. Kayne, Blayde, Rooster and I will work on the documents Hound found. Freedom, Taz, Crusher and Poison will work on looking through all the security footage of the possible abduction. The rest of you, check our stockpile of weapons, make sure they’re good to go and pull whatever contact you have to bring this fucker down.” Chainz slams his gavel on the table, ending the meeting and we all get to work.

After a little while Rooster speaks up from his laptop. “I’ve found something.” He rises from his seat, blinking a couple of times before heading to the maps strewn across the table. He looks them over before grabbing one that has blood splatter on it and laying it over another. “They’re here.” He points to a warehouse in the business district just outside the city.

“Are you sure?” Chainz asks.

“Positive, Prez. I’m the best in the business.” Rooster answers cockily.

The church doors burst open and Tank comes barging in with four other men I don’t recognize. My defenses rise, itching to hit someone.

Tank blinks rapidly at the frenzy of activity. “Tell me you found something.”

“We think we found her.” Chainz taps his finger on the bloody map. Tank leans in to look. He’s pointing to a warehouse in the business district on the outskirts of the city.

“How do you know?” Tank cocks his eyes at him suspiciously.

“I tracked the van’s movement with street cameras,” Rooster speaks up. “It was last picked up making a right turn at this intersection.” Rooster points to the map on the table.

Chainz picks up the map our prisoner Lucas used to circle the locations of the Black Market railroads used to move girls. Drops of his blood stain the page, but it’s clear enough. Chainz lays Lucas’s map over top of the bigger map.

“Fuck.” Tank growls, seeing what Chainz is showing him. “If this is true, my father didn’t take her. Ben did. We need to move up the attack,” Tank growls.

“We can’t go in there halfcocked. We send someone ahead to scope it out first.”  
Kayne cuts a sideways glare in Tank’s direction.

Tank’s fists clench at his sides and he’s having a tough time holding in his rage right now. “Fuck that. I can’t sit around for twenty-four hours knowing she’s in danger. I’ll go alone if I have to.”

“You’re a loose cannon right now, Tank. We send Cobra to run reconnaissance.” Chainz orders.

“I agree. Stryker will go with him.” Kayne looks at Stryker who’s nodding in agreement.

“Fuck no. If anyone is going, it’s me.” Tank growls

“Tank, you’re my right hand but you’re sitting this one out.” Chainz is not giving him an inch. “Cobra and Stryker take the lead. Recon both locations. The rest of us head out at midnight.”

I leave Church after all the weapons are locked and loaded and find a quiet spot outside. There’s a nip in the mountain air that feels good against my heated skin. I pull my phone out of my cut and send a text to Liz. I know it’s late but I really need to talk to her. It’s been a hot minute since we left and I haven’t had a chance to let her know we made it.

Me: Are you up?

Liz: Yes. I’m at work but can take a break.

I check the time. It’s eleven pm and she should be getting off her shift soon. My phone rings and Liz’s name flashes across the screen. I slide the green button and answer.

“Hey,” I pause waiting for Liz to respond.

“Hey yourself. How’s it going?” Her soft sultry voice has me wanting to keep her on the phone until I can see her.



“It’s going as good as it can be. How’s work?”

“Eh.” Liz pauses, “My boss didn’t show up at all tonight so that’s a plus. Except there is this asshole biker sitting at the bar, bitching about everything.” Liz holds in a giggle.

I laugh knowing who she’s talking about. “If Tex gets out of line, grab him by his bolo-tie and tell him you’ll fuck his mother if he doesn’t stop.”

Liz snorts, “What are you talking about?”

“It’s a running joke with Tex. He gets super sensitive when you joke about his mom. It’s how we get him to quit bitching all the time. Try it. I’ll bet he shuts right up.”

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“Hmm... I’ll think about it.”

A comfortable silence surrounds us as I listen to Liz’s breathing on the other line.

“Do you miss me yet?” I ask teasing her.

“Maybe. I do know my lady bits are glad to have a break.” Liz giggles again when I release a low growl.

“Woman, I’ll make your lady bits scream when I get back home.”

“Promises, promises.”

“A promise I plan on keeping, Little One.”

Liz’s breath catches in her throat. “Don’t make promises you can’t keep, Ace. I’ve already lost too much on broken promises.” A loud crash comes through the phone with a woman bitching and grumbling. “Shit, I’ve got to go. I’ll talk to you soon.”

Liz hangs up before I can respond, leaving me staring out into the darkness of the night, wondering what that was all about. Who promised her something and broke it? I have the urge to wrap my fingers around their necks and squeeze the life out of them for hurting my woman, whether it was intentional or not.

Midnight comes and we are rolling through the city. It’s quiet except for the rumble of our Harleys. What Liz said on the phone has been playing on repeat in my head and I’m crawling out of my skin wanting to seek vengeance on her behalf. Chainz and Kayne take the lead, followed by me, Tank and Hound as we take a sharp left to

Cobra's location. Rooster, Blayde, Fuel, Crusher and Freedom continue toward Stryker's location. A van with a prospect driving follows each of our groups. Once the two of them had done their reconnaissance, they called back to have us meet in smaller groups at each location. It's been a pain in the ass to rein Tank in, but I can't say I blame him either. I'd move hell or high water if Liz was in danger.

We stop around a half mile from our target location. We'll go on foot from here and have the element of surprise on our side.

"Stay close to the buildings." Chainz orders. "Kayne, Poison, Ace and Tank through the front. Hound and I will disable their wheels and then Hound will cover the back and I'll meet you inside. Remember there are innocents in there." Chainz reminds us of the plan.

"My woman's in there, watch where you shoot." Tank growls.

"We get her out and then we find Ben. Everyone clear?" We all nod and draw our weapons. Tank is antsy as we approach the doors. Cobra stops us with his hand up and checks his watch.

Once Cobra lowers his third finger, all hell breaks loose. We enter the building and bullets drop the unsuspecting guards. We enter another room and Tank loses his shit when he sees that his woman is trapped in a fucking cage. He aims his gun at the lock, ready to pull the trigger when Chainz stops him. I don't hear what words are exchanged but soon after, the cage door is open and Tank is inside kissing Dia. I turn away, letting them have their moment.

"I got this." I turn back around when Poison steps around Tank. I'm on alert, ready to fuck someone up if Poison gets hurt. Kayne feels the same way, he is standing right beside Poison with his hand on her back, guiding her to the three other women trapped.

Once they coax the women out and have them moved to safety, Kayne and Cobra go after the other men who ran away. I stay with Poison and watch her back as we take the women to the Clubhouse. Once they're inside and settled, Kayne, Chainz and a pissed-off Tank come in. Hushed words are exchanged before Kayne commands our attention.

"It's late, brothers. We'll rest our heads tonight and take off first thing in the morning." Relief fills me. I'm itching to go home and see Liz.

I make my way to the room Chainz has for me and lie down. I don't bother to strip out of my clothes as I flop onto the bed. My body is beyond exhausted but my brain won't shut the fuck up. My phone buzzes in my pocket and it takes a lot of effort on my end to pull it out. It's from an unknown number. I read the text and my heart sinks to my toes.

There in full color is a picture of Liz in her tight little shorts and tank top tending the bar with a caption.

IS SHE WORTH THE PAIN I'M GOING TO BRING YOU FOR KILLING MY BROTHER?

Well, fuck.

## Chapter Twelve

Liz

Ace has been gone for a couple of days and it feels like a part of my soul is missing. Holly has been with me every night, missing Stryker who went on the ride with the club. Together we're just a hot mess of missing our other halves and planning on what we're going to do to them when they get back.

Kayne, Poison, Rooster, Siren and Blayde all came back early this morning but Ace and the rest of the brothers had to stay behind for another job that should let them head home tonight. They're being secretive about why they came back sooner than the rest of the brothers, but I know I won't get any answers from them. It irritates me, but there is nothing I can do about it. From what Holly has said, I'm not an Ol' Lady or a member, so I don't have a right to know unless Ace tells me. I have to trust they have my best interest in mind while keeping me in the dark. Something I will have to consult my cards about after work since I don't have time right now.

My long locks are up in a high ponytail and I'm applying my mascara when there is a knock on Ace's bedroom door. I put the wand down, adjust my tank top in the mirror and leave the bathroom. I open the door to Butch and Rooster standing on the other side.

Butch still scares the crap out of me with his permanent scowl and bulging biceps. I heard he is a Marine with a discharge, but he's tightlipped about his past. I consulted my cards the first night Ace left after Butch took me to work and stayed there watching me, then drove me back to the Clubhouse. They told me he is struggling with issues in his past and needs to learn how to let it go to be happy. They also told me there is a love interest but they are on two different paths at the moment. I have contemplated telling Butch about this, but no one here knows what I'm capable of and I haven't figured out if I want them to know or not.

Rooster, on the other hand, I can't stop smiling when I see this burly biker holding his daughter, Elsa, who looks just like him. His story is heartbreaking but he did get his happily ever after with Poison's sister, Alyssa. I haven't had much time with Alyssa since she and Elsa stay at Rooster's house most of the time. Some of the patch bunnies have no qualms about walking around here with clothes that barely cover their ass when a kid is around. I can feel this will be changing very soon though and the change will be for the better.

“You ready, Red?” Rooster asks, crossing his arms over his chest.

“You’re going with us tonight?” I ask in surprise.

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“Yeah, we got a sitter for Elsa so Alyssa and I will be accompanying you to work,” Rooster responds.

“Great. I love hanging out with Alyssa, so this will be perfect.” The excitement in my voice makes Rooster grin.

“She used to bartend at our bar before we got Elsa back and I’m sure she misses it.” Rooster has a faraway look on his face and I imagine he is reminiscent of when Alyssa bartended. Butch grunts before turning his back on us and walks down the hallway.

I raise a brow at Rooster. “Is he moodier than normal tonight?”

“You can say that again, Red.” Rooster laughs and it echoes down the hallway.

“You two done primping up there? We’ve got to go or Liz will be late for work.” Alyssa shouts up the stairs.

“Coming, Spitfire.” Rooster shouts back. I grab my purse and keys off the dresser, exit Ace’s room, and lock it up behind me. We’re walking down the stairs when Alyssa’s voice rings out.

“Not yet, you’re not.” Alyssa giggles.

“Fuck, woman. Why do you have to tease me?” Rooster grumbles pulling a tiny blonde into his arms and plants a hot kiss on her lips. Alyssa moans and a gag comes from behind us.

“I don’t want to watch my sister play tonsil hockey with the biggest cock in the henhouse.” Poison fakes gag.

“Bite me,” Alyssa responds. “I didn’t want to see my sister bent over the counter in the kitchen the other day with Kayne’s jeans around his ankles and his white ass on display, but you two don’t give us a choice in the matter.”

Poison’s face burns red from embarrassment but she shrugs it off. “Hey, I have to get it when I can. It’s hard when you have a baby who doesn’t sleep but a few hours at a time.”

Poison and Kayne have a baby girl who is three months old and doesn’t sleep very much. Kayne’s mom Cougar has been helping them out a lot and tonight she is watching both Poison and Kayne’s daughter and Rooster and Alyssa’s daughter at Rooster’s house while they go with me to work.

Technically it’s a night out for them, but not for me. I’ll be slinging drinks all night, trying not to let the green-eyed monster out, wishing Ace was here with me while my friends have their men with them.

Kayne and Poison, Blayde and Siren, Rooster and Alyssa are all riding to the nightclub I work at while Butch, Duke and I are riding in the SUV. It would be a perfect night for a ride too. If Ace was here, I’d call into work and have him take me on backroads. Shit, I’d even let him take me on backroads. I giggle to myself and remember what Ace said to me before he left. How I’d feel him for days and be ready for him when he got back. Well, I’m definitely ready for him if the achiness between my legs is any indication.

“Red, you about done fantasizing about our boy Ace back there or do we need to give you a few minutes alone?” Duke jokes from the front seat.



“Ha, very funny ass.” I slap the back of Duke’s head.

Normally I’d be terrified to even joke around like this, but Duke has been a constant since Ace has been gone and he’s made me extremely comfortable. Also, I consulted my cards on him that first night too and they gave me positive vibes for him. He just wants to be loved and not by a patch bunny. I grab the charm around my neck and rub it with my thumb. Memaw, God rest her soul, taught me a lot about our heritage before she passed and I miss her every day.

Pushing the thoughts of Memaw to the back of my mind, I open the door to the back seat and climb out. Since Duke is waiting for me Butch takes off and parks the SUV in the closest spot he can find. Kayne, Blayde and Rooster park their bikes to the side of the building into the nightclub so no one will mess with them while we’re all inside.

Once everyone is together, Duke opens the door and I enter first. The air conditioner blasts me in the face, sending goosebumps down my arms and it takes a moment for my eyes to adjust to the low-lit bar. The nightclub isn’t open yet so the music is down low and the lights are dim but not dark, like it will be later in the night. The strobe lights pointing on the dance floor are off and there are very few employees here.

I leave everyone to find a booth and head into the back where the employee breakroom is. I stow my purse and keys in my assigned locker, lock it up, and pin my badge to the apron I have to wear. I swipe my badge through the time clock and get ready to start my shift stocking the coolers behind the bar and getting my till ready. Once I finish the final prep work, I lean against the counter with a Sprite in my hand and take a long drink while looking around. The dance floor is sticky and gross, the bar has seen better days and the awful smell from the backroom is covered by sweat and who knows what other bodily fluids.

God, I hate this place with a passion. I love being a bartender, slinging drinks, and

talking to people but hate the slimeball manager, Joe. I haven't seen him since he showed up at my apartment unannounced and Ace escorted him out. Which is a good thing. If he were to try anything with the Savage Saints watching, I'm sure he would meet a fate worse than Ace's fist.

Sighing, I set my drink down and push thoughts of Ace to the back of my mind. I cannot afford to have him take up this much headspace, but damn, the man has me under a spell. I can't wait for him to get home so I can climb him like a spider monkey.

"Girl, who are you climbing like a spider monkey?" Darrien, my very gay coworker, asks. "If it's those hot as S-I-N bikers over there, then, honey, I'm down."

My eyes bulge out and I almost choke on my spit. "Shit, Darrien. Did I say that out loud?" I cover my eyes with the palm of my hand and shake my head. "He's not here," I respond.

"Lord, lady. If he's as hot as all those men, I don't blame you for having an inner monologue. I have one each time I lay my eyes on those juicy men." Darrien dramatically fans his face.

I release a laugh and nudge Darrien with my shoulder before turning around to make sure all the liquor is stocked. "Sorry, D. Most of them have Ol' Ladies."

"A man can dream." He flutter his lashes before slapping my ass with his towel.

A low growl from the end of the bar has me stopping in my tracks and turning my head.

"Damn girl, you are lucky," Darrien crosses his arms over his chest as he takes in the sight before us.

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My girly parts scream in victory as Ace levels Darrien with a deadly glare before his whiskey eyes drink me in. I do the same to him and before I know it, Ace is out of his seat and heading right for me. He lifts me and I wrap my legs around his waist, peppering his face with kisses. Ace squeezes my ass and catcalls erupt around us. I blush but Ace doesn't put me down.

"You. Are. Mine." Ace growls against my neck, his voice vibrating against my skin.

"I'm yours," I respond. Fuck, I am so screwed. Ace knows what to say and how to say it and I will drop everything I'm doing for him.

### Chapter Thirteen

Ace

I wanted to surprise Liz tonight by sweeping her off her feet, not going all Alpha male on her. I have never wanted to rip someone's head off like I wanted to with Liz's coworker when he slapped her ass with a towel. That's my ass to swat, not his. Something inside of me snapped and before my brain could register what I was doing, I strolled over to her, lifting her against me. When Liz's legs were wrapped around my waist and her lips peppered kisses all over my face, I knew I was a goner.

Finding the door that leads to the backroom, all I could think about was sinking inside of her. I've only been gone for two and a half days, but that length of time has proven it's been too long. I stumble my way through the kitchen and out the backdoor, not giving a shit who sees us.

Liz shifts her hips so her hot, sweet core is grinding against my growing erection. I'm hard as steel when I pin Liz to the outside wall of the nightclub. She lets out a moan of approval as her back hits the concrete wall and my lips descend upon her neck, sucking and biting, marking her as mine.

"I need inside of you," I growl. My voice vibrates against the thumping in her throat.

"Please," Liz begs.

I shove the flimsy material of her booty shorts to the side and then slide my zipper down and pop the button of my jeans. I free myself from the confinements of my boxer briefs and plunge inside her hot, wet core. I moan as I plunge inside and Liz releases a groan. I pump in and out of her at a fast pace. Liz's nails rake down my back, under my cut as she pulls me impossibly closer to her.

"Oh, God." Liz wails as her walls clench around me.

"No God here, Sweet Cheeks. Call me Justin." I ground out through clenched teeth. My orgasm coming in fast.

Liz grips me tighter as her walls flutter around me and she shouts my name. "Oh, Justin. Shit, Justin."

Hearing my name roll off her lips and Liz reaching her peak, I find my release and it plummets through my body hard. I roar, groaning Liz's name. Once we both come back down, I gently pull out of her.

"Wow," Liz whispers, fixing her shorts.

"That's what I call a fantastic welcome home." I grin, tucking myself back into my boxer briefs and jeans. A frown mars Liz's beautiful face before she changes her

features. “What’s wrong?” I ask.

“Nothing, it’s stupid.” Liz shakes her head.

“Nothing you think is stupid. What’s wrong?” I ask again. I cup Liz’s face and make her look into my eyes.

She hesitates before opening her mouth. “Is this all we are?”

Now it’s my turn to frown, “What are you talking about?”

“Well, I haven’t seen you in a few days and the first thing you do is fuck me against the wall at my place of employment. There was no, Hey Liz, you look hot tonight or How have you been? Just pure sex. Is this all we are?”

I stare into her beautiful bright blue eyes and words vomit from my mouth. “This isn’t all we are. I want more with you. I want it all. I want you on the back of my bike with your thighs tight against me. I want to wake up every day with you by my side. I’ve never felt like this with anyone before in my life. I want you and only you. I’m not good at this babe. I’ve never had a relationship before.” I lean in and kiss her. “My past is fucked up but if this is something you want with me, I will tell you everything.”

Liz’s eyes grow wide with shock. “I do, but there are things about me you don’t know about. Things I’ve kept a secret from everyone. If you can’t handle it, I can’t move forward with you.”

“Babe, there is nothing you can say or do that will scare me away. Let’s make a deal. Tonight, after your shift, I’ll take you on a long bike ride and together we can divulge into our past together. How does that sound?” I wrap my arms around Liz and pull her against me.

“I’d like that, Justin. I’d like that a lot.” Liz smiles up at me and the worry on her face disappears.

“Then we have a date.” I kiss her gently and Liz kisses me back.

“A date. But first I have to work before I get fired.” She kisses me again before detangling herself from my arms.

We walk back into the nightclub, my arm around her shoulders, breathing in her scent. “Fuck, you smell delicious,” I say against Liz’s hair.

“I smell like sex and you,” Liz counters. We walk to the bar and I reluctantly release her from my grasp.

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“Like I said, delicious.” I wink before swatting her ass and taking my seat at the bar.

The other bartender that swatted Liz’s ass with a towel winked at me before giving Liz a look with his hands on his hips. “Girl, you better spill.” I realize now, he isn’t after my woman and my face turns a dark shade of red. “Good lord, he is big, bad, and blushes!” He squeals and fans his face.

“Darrien, shut up.” Liz swats him with her towel. I laugh and they both turn to look at me. Liz smiles brightly while it’s Darrien’s turn to blush.

Hours later, Liz has served her last customer and the lights turn back on in the nightclub. I hung out with Kayne, Poison, Blayze, Siren, Rooster, Alyssa, Stryker, and Holly the rest of the night while keeping an eye on Liz. Each time a customer tried to get handsy with Liz, I’d stalk over there and stand behind them until they realized they messed with the wrong woman.

Liz would shake her head with a smile on her face. She isn’t ashamed of my caveman ways and I’m not ashamed of them either. It might have been bad for tips, but fuck it, I’m not letting any man touch my woman.

Liz does the last of her closing shit and comes out the back with her purse and keys. I rise from the stool and plant a heated kiss on her lips. “What was that for?” Liz asks breathlessly.

“I’ve been wanting to do that all night. It’s hot watching you work.” I respond.

“Girl, does he have any friends that swing my way?” Darrien asks with his hands on

his hips.

I smirk, “Unfortunately, no. But if we do, I’ll send them your way.”

“Appreciate that biker man.” Darrien taps me on the chest before sauntering out of the nightclub.

“I’m sorry we didn’t get to hang out,” Alyssa approaches us and hugs Liz.

“It’s ok. Tonight was busier than normal.” Liz responds.

“Hey, brother you good?” Kayne asks. Poison is wrapped around him like a spider monkey.

“Yeah, we’re good. I’m going to take Liz for a ride then return to my apartment tonight instead of the Clubhouse.” I give Kayne a bro-hug.

“All right, we’ll see you tomorrow. Church at nine.” I raise an eyebrow. That’s in less than six hours. I don’t foresee anyone being up

“See ya then,” I respond. Blayze, Rooster, and Stryker give me a bro-hug and their Ol’ Ladies hug Liz before they file out of the club. Now, it’s just the two of us, alone.

“Ready?” I ask raising an eyebrow.

“Ready.” Liz nods her head and inhales a deep breath.

The fresh night air enters my lungs as we leave the nightclub with my arm draped over Liz’s shoulders. She is snuggled against my chest and her arm is wrapped around my waist. Once we reach my bike, I kiss the top of her head and reluctantly release her, grabbing her helmet I had stowed in the saddle bag. Settling the brain bucket on her head, I lean down and capture Liz’s lips with my own. Her taste drives



me insane and I can't get enough of her sweet flavor.

Liz settles her hand on my chest and gently pushes me away breathing hard. "If we don't stop, we won't be going anywhere."

"While I think that is a fantastic idea, it's not what I promised you." I strap on my brain bucket and straddle my Harley. I pop the kickstand up and balance my bike between my thighs. "Hop on Sweet Cheeks and let's go for a ride."

Liz climbs on the back of my bike and wraps her arms around my waist. She doesn't have the hang of getting on with confidence, but I'm not planning on letting her go, so we'll work on it together. Liz snuggles against my back, her thighs squeezing me tightly as I fire up my bike and put it in first.

We ride for a couple of hours until we reach the shoreline of Lake Michigan. I pull into a deserted parking lot near the shoreline, pop my kickstand down and turn my bike off. Daylight is rising behind us and soon this place will be full of people. Liz climbs off the back of my bike and her legs wobble slightly.

"Damn, my ass hurts." Liz groans. I dismount my bike and pull her body against mine, rubbing her ass with my large hands. A shiver of lust traces my spine as Liz's groan turns into a moan. Images of what I could do to her out here flips through my head but I tamp that shit down. I can't hold up my end of the bargain if all I can think about is her wrapped around me while we sit on my Harley, naked.

"How's that?" I ask, stepping back and releasing her ass. Liz pouts but smiles when I put my arm around her shoulders, drawing her into me.

"Better. Only, I'm worried about the ride home. What if my ass falls asleep and I tumble off the bike?" Liz looks at me seriously and I try to hold back a laugh.

“If it gets to be too much, let me know and we’ll stop and rest. I won’t let your cute little ass tumble off my bike.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.” We walk to the end of the pavement where it meets the sand and I remove my boots and socks. Liz cocks an eyebrow, but I grin at her. “Take them off and come on. We’re going to miss the best part.” I point to her shoes and socks. Liz takes them off and we walk toward Lake Michigan, hand in hand.

I sit on the sand, close to the waves crashing against the sand and pull Liz down next to me. This conversation will be hard, but it needs to be done. Liz settles against my side and I kiss the top of her head.

“What I’m going to tell you is something not many people know about. I need you to promise me you won’t ever repeat this to anyone. I’ve done what I had to do to deal with the memories.” I can’t look Liz in the eyes as I tell her about my childhood. She nods her head against my chest and I inhale a deep breath.

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“I fight for a living. The only time I feel alive is when I’m in The Cage and it’s either me or my opponent, fighting until the death. That has been the only time I let any emotions out. It’s the only time my body has come alive until I met you.

“I was fourteen when it happened. It was late at night and my little brother, Spencer, was in a mixed martial arts class I signed him up for. I went to the store and was returning when a group of teenage boys cornered me in an alley. I knew I was fucked when there were eight of them and one of me. The things they did to me were unspeakable.” I swallow hard and take a deep breath. I need to keep going and get this all out.

“You don’t have to tell me, Justin.” Liz’s voice shakes with every word while her grip tightens around my waist. Anyone else, I would recoil from their touch, but not her.

“I need to though. It will help you understand why I do the things I do and why staying with me will drag you into the darkness, but I can’t let you go. I’ve got a taste of your light and I can’t let it go.” I stand up and start pacing along the beach, looking for the right words. Once I find a way to tell her the next part, I stop and fall to my knees in front of Liz. I still can’t look her in the eyes, so I keep them fixed on the sand near her little blue painted toenails.

“The leader and one other held me down while the rest yanked off my jeans and all eight of them took turns using me for a punching bag and raping me. It went on for what felt like hours until I passed out from the pain. Spencer’s teacher found me and took me to his apartment above his studio where we stayed until I healed. I told Spencer some assholes beat me up, he still doesn’t know to this day what they did to

me. I learned how to fight once I was healed and not afraid of my own shadow. I learned to channel everything inside of me and only use it in the ring. I push all the pent-up rage, aggression and fear down deep until I can't hold it in anymore and the only way to push it back down again is to rip someone's head off. I'm afraid of someone touching me. Even by accident, a brush of a hand or a shift of a leg brushing against mine sets my skin on fire and I flip out. Only four people can get away with touching me without sending me into a fit of rage. Spencer, Kayne, Rooster and now you.

"Liz, I have avenged every single one of those motherfuckers, except the two that held me down and now I can't find them. I brought six of them into The Cage and killed them. I lured them in and snapped their necks. But the worst part about it? I'm not even remorseful they are gone and I won't stop until the other two are found and handled the same way." I take a chance and look into Liz's bright blue eyes. They're filled with unshed tears and when she blinks, they fall down her cheeks. "Can you handle knowing you're sleeping with a killer?"

Liz's fingers rub along her crystal necklace while tears fall from her eyes. I've made her cry and that breaks my heart. "I can handle it. Can you?"

Her question throws me off for a second. "What are you talking about?"

"There is a reason we are so attracted to each other Ace and it's not because I'm someone new you found. Our souls are the same and they connected the moment you found me on the side of the road. You might think I'm a light in a world of darkness, but I'm not. I have darkness inside of me, begging to come out. Begging to be let free. My darkness is reaching out to yours." Liz climbs to her knees, so we're face to face. She releases her crystal and cups both of my cheeks staring into my eyes. "Set me free, Ace." She whispers against my lips.

Liz's mouth crashes onto mine and the beast inside of me takes over devouring every

inch that she is giving me.

## Chapter Fourteen

Liz

“Set me free, Ace,” I whisper against his lips. My mouth crashes onto his in a heated kiss. Our bodies are flush against each other. I pour everything I’m feeling into this kiss. Every touch, every breath, every word spoken between us over the last few weeks pours out and my body comes alive. Our souls connect on a deeper level.

Ace pulls away first, panting heavily. “That’s not the reaction I thought you’d have.”

He moves a stray piece of hair from my face and his eyes never leave mine. A smile graces his handsome face, showing off his beautiful white teeth and it takes my breath away. I inhale and exhale a few times, my chest heaving, until I get myself under control. I don’t know what to say to everything Ace has confessed to me, but he’s staring at me like he’s waiting for something.

Before I can answer him, Ace’s phone vibrates in his pocket, breaking the spell we’re under. He pulls it out and reads the message. “Shit, we’ve got to go. Are you good?”

“Are you?” I counter.

“I...” Ace trails off, staring into the cloudless blue sky, the waves lap at our bare feet. He shakes his head, “Yeah, I’m good. I’ve had that bottled up inside of me for so long, I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders.” Ace leans in and gives me another kiss on my lips. “Let’s go home.”

“Home,” I respond.

Ace stands and holds out a hand. I grab it and he lifts me to my feet. Threading our fingers together, we walk back to his bike. We grab our socks and boots and put them on before Ace helps me with the helmet. His fingers brush against my cheek, sending a shiver down my spine and a need burning between my legs.

“Ace,” I kiss his fingertips. The rising sun reflects in his whiskey eyes staring into mine. “I don’t think any less of you for what happened. It wasn’t your fault and you didn’t instigate or encourage those fuckheads. If anything, I’m in awe and wish I had the courage you have when I needed it the most.” My right thumb runs along a jagged scar on my left wrist, covered with a tattoo of a phoenix rising from the ashes.

“What happened to you?” Ace asks, leaning his forehead against mine.

I open my mouth to answer him when his phone goes off again. This time it’s an incoming call and not a text. Ace pulls away, exhaling a harsh breath and takes his phone out of his pocket. I miss his warmth already. “We will continue this, Liz.”

He answers his phone in a gruff tone. His nostrils flare before his eyes land on me and he smiles, while I patiently wait for him to finish his call. “Got it. Be there in a couple of hours.” Ace hangs up and shoves his phone into his pocket. “That was Rooster. We really need to get back.”

Ace straddles his bike and lifts the kickstand. I rest my right hand on his shoulder and put my left foot on the peg before swinging my leg over the seat and settling in behind him. I wrap my arms around his waist and lean my head against Ace’s back. He starts his bike, the vibrations thrum through my body. I close my eyes as Ace takes off and think about everything he has told me. Then I think about what I need to tell him. Will he be able to protect me once he hears my secrets about why I’m two thousand miles away from home? Will Ace be able to understand my heritage and accept me for who I am? Will he throw me away like yesterday’s garbage or will he fight for me? Will he run away in fear or will he stick around and help me? I’ve been at this

for so long on my own, I don't know how he will react. My own twin betrayed me when I needed him the most. Will Ace do the same?

I contemplate how much I'm going to tell Ace and by the time we pull into the Clubhouse driveway, 2 hours later, I've decided to tell him everything. Ace pulls into what I've discovered as his parking spot between two bikes and he turns his bike off. The engine ticks in the quiet morning. With my mind made up, I climb off his bike on shaky legs and a sore ass and wait for Ace to do the same. He helps me remove my helmet and sets it on the seat of his bike. Ace grabs my hand and we walk up the concrete slab to the wrap-around porch.

"Ace, there is something I need to tell you." I pull on his hand to make him stop walking.

Ace turns and looks down at me with fear and concern in his smoldering gaze. "What's wrong, Liz."

"I..." I inhale a deep breath and release it before speaking, staring down at the wooden floorboards instead of at Ace. "My brother killed my Memaw, then, when I found out the truth, he tried to kill me and make it look like a suicide. Then my parents didn't believe me, so I left and ended up here, two thousand miles away from home." I ramble, trying to get everything out. I take another deep breath. "And my Memaw is Madeline LeRoux, Queen of Louisiana Voodoo and she was a powerful Voodoo witch. I don't have the ability to do half of what she could, but I do have some of her talents and I'm not going to stop practicing my heritage." I snap my mouth shut and wait for Ace to reply.

Ace lifts a hand and pulls my chin up, forcing me to look into his beautiful eyes. There is no annoyance or fear. Their depth brings me love and understanding. "That's a lot to unpack. First of all, I'm never going to make you stop doing what you love, if it brings you peace. Secondly, I'm sorry about your Memaw and third, I'm going to

kill your brother.” The anger in those last six words makes my heart skip a beat. I’ve never had anyone defend me the way Ace has since the moment he found me stranded on the side of a back road in the middle of BFE.



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“There’s one other thing,” I say, dropping my gaze to the floorboards again. I raise my eyes until I’m staring into Ace’s gaze. “I have to go back to Louisiana in a couple of weeks for Memaw’s death-ivesary. It’s tradition in our culture to come back on the day the Voodoo queen died and pay your respect to her. The only thing is, I’m terrified to go alone.”

Ace kisses the top of my head before pulling me into his arms. “Let me talk to Kayne and I’ll go with you. I’m not letting you out of my sight, even for a moment.”

Relief fills my body from Ace’s words. “You mean that?”

“Every word, Sweet Cheeks.”

“Thank you, Ace.”

“Don’t thank me, Liz. I want to do this with you.”

The front door swings open with force and Butch is on the other side scowling at us. I hide behind Ace, terrified of this big brute, but I realize he isn’t giving me a nasty look. Instead, he is glaring at the car pulling up the driveway. A beautiful woman with long brown hair steps out of the car with a matching scowl on her face.

“What the fuck are you doing here, Detective?” Butch’s deep voice spits detective out. He’s glaring at the woman as he stepsoff the porch. His posture is ridged and his big hands are clenched at his sides.

She crosses her arms over her ample chest, barely confined behind the white silk

dress shirt under a black blazer. She has on black dress pants, black shoes, and a gun strapped to her hip. “I’m here to speak with Kayne. Not that it’s any of your business, Mr. Christiansen.”

“If it involves my club, Detective, it involves me.” The fury in Butch’s voice is making me shake in my boots. But this woman stands strong. She doesn’t back down. Instead, she steps away from her car and approaches Butch with the same amount of hatred in her silky brown eyes.

My gaze ping-pongs between the two of them. There is a lot of tension festering between them and I wonder what that story is about. I don’t hear Poison or Kayne step outside until a baby squeaks next to me, making me jump.

“Detective Kendrick, please come inside.” Kayne interrupts Butch and Kendrick’s standoff.

Butch’s back straightens even more from Kayne’s words. He towers over the best of them at six foot six and is intimidating as hell, but this detective has balls of steel. “Gladly, Kayne. Good to see some people are still polite, instead of brooding assholes.” She pushes past Butch, brushing her hand against his junk, giving him a smirk as she passes.

Butch scowls even deeper at her brazen grope but doesn’t say a word. Instead, his dark eyes follow her as she sways her hips and walks up the porch. Ace wraps his arm around my shoulders, pulling me to his side protectively. I watch with fascination at this big burly biker being manhandled by a woman. Butch shakes his head and releases a deep growl before following Kayne, Poison and the detective into the Clubhouse.

“What was that about?” I ask when they’re out of sight, fanning my face.

“No idea, but I need to go with them in case Butch loses it,” Ace responds.

I snort. “That man has it bad for her. If he loses it, it’ll be her pleasure.”

Ace shakes his head. “No way. Bikers don’t get mixed up with cops. It’s bad for business.”

“Tell that to Butch’s dick,” I respond. Ace scowls at me and I hold my hands up in mock surrender. “Just saying, is all. He’s either going to blow a gasket or blow his load.”

“When did you get so crass?” Ace asks with a grin.

“I don’t know.” I tap my fingers against my chin. “Maybe about the time I met this biker and he corrupted my innocence.”

Now Ace snorts, “Innocent my ass.”

I swat him on his chest just as Ace’s lips land on mine. He kisses me hard before pulling away “Babe, I’ll corrupt you every day if you’ll let me.”

“Keep kissing me like that, and I’ll let you corrupt me,” I respond breathlessly.

A loud crash comes from inside the Clubhouse and I jump. “Shit, I’ve got to go. I’ll see you in a little while. Don’t get into trouble.” Ace gives me a quick kiss before disappearing inside.

I stay out on the porch for a little while, soaking in the morning sun and enjoying the quiet. I pull my phone out of my pocket and type out a text.

ME: I’ll be home in two weeks but I’m not staying.

MOM: Please come home for good. Your brother and father miss you.

I snort and roll my eyes at the last sentence. I know better. My brother wants me dead and my father wants to cover up his indiscretions. My mom is blind to it all or she's afraid.

ME: Can't. I have to finish school and I have a life.

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MOM: Your family needs you here, Elizabeth. Memaw would be so disappointed if she knew you threw us away.

ME: I'll see you in a couple of weeks.

I shove my phone back in my pocket and wipe away angry tears. I'm not the one who pushed them away. They pushed me away and called me a liar and a slut. Saying I was the one to instigate what happened to me.

I didn't ask for any of this. I didn't ask for Memaw to die. I didn't ask to have my wrist sliced open. I didn't ask for the betrayal of the one man I thought I could trust.

The only good thing to come out of the whole fucked up situation is Ace and this Club. I hope he can handle the craziness of a Voodoo family.

### Chapter Fifteen

Ace

Detective Kendrick is standing at the end of the table with her arms crossed over her chest and a pissed-off look on her face, aimed at Butch, who's sitting in his seat. If she could spit fire, I'm sure it would be directed at Butch. Butch is glaring back at the detective with the same mirth, not giving her an inch of space. The tension in the room is at an all-time high and if someone farts wrong, Church will detonate in seconds. Huh, maybe Liz is right and these two have something going on neither will admit. This should be interesting.

Kayne slams his gavel onto the table, causing Butch to turn away from Kendrick and toward him. “I don’t know what the fuck is going on between the two of you,” Kayne pauses, pointing his gavel between the two hot-blooded people glaring daggers at each other, “but it needs to stop. Butch, I need you to have a clear head when it comes to Detective Kendrick since the two of you are going to be working together.”

“What?!?” Both of them snap at Kayne.

Kayne leans back in his chair with a smirk on his face. “The FBI is breathing down our necks right now after Senator Kingston disappeared. They’re looking hard at Holly since she is the only kin around the area and I need you, my SGT at Arms to handle the situation with Detective Kendrick. She is the only one in MPPD that I trust. When she saved our asses after the warehouse fire, she proved her loyalty to the club.”

Butch wants to argue, but he wisely keeps his mouth shut. “Aye, Prez.”

Kayne looks up to Detective Kendrick, his cold blue eyes leaving no room for argument. “I expect you to treat my brother with the same respect you have me. If not, Detective, I won’t hesitate to make you. Do you have anything you want to add?”

Detective Kendrick shakes her hair. “No, Kayne. I won’t let you down.”

“Good, I didn’t think you would. Now that you know you’ll be working with Butch, the two of you can get started. Butch, make sure you can answer your phone in case we need your assistance on anything until this is cleared up.” Kayne slams his gavel, dismissing Butch and the detective. Butch rises from his seat, not happy at all and follows Detective Kendrick out of the Chapel.

The tension lifts, but only slightly. Kayne’s gaze lands on me next. “What’s going on with Liz?” I stare at Kayne, wondering how in the hell he knows something is going

on when I just found out myself. I blink several times before Kayne takes mercy on me. “Rooster has cameras set up all over the Clubhouse, Ace. Except in Church, the bathrooms and bedrooms.”

“Liz needs to head back to Louisiana in two weeks and I’m going with her. After what she told me, I’m not letting her out of my sight.”

“And what about the other problem?” He asks raising a blonde eyebrow. When I don’t answer, Kayne steeples his fingers in front of his face, resting his elbows on the table. “Look, I get you are secretive about your past, but understand this, Ace, nothing good ever comes from keeping these things from your brothers. Ask Blayze, Rooster and Stryker, they can verify how much easier it was to confess their secrets. You don’t have to tell us everything, but we need to know how to help you when you spiral.”

Fuck.

I scrub my hands down my face and bang them on the table. I’m at a crossroads and if I go one way, I lose all respect and trust from the Club. If I go the other way, they’ll all know how much of a pussy I was as a teenager. But, if I don’t tell them, they’ll never understand why I do what I do and why I need to do it. Why I crave vengeance with every pound of my fist.

“Can I have a few days, Prez?” I need to think this over before I open my mouth and spew all of my hatred about the teenagers who did what they did to me.

“You have one day, Ace. In the meantime, you are not to step foot in any ring. Not until you are ready to tell us why.” Kayne demands. “We have pick-ups today at the bar and dance studio.”

I zone out when Kayne hands out orders of who is going where and doing what. He

doesn't give me any jobs right now which I'm grateful for. My head wouldn't be in the game one hundred percent. Not when I have a huge decision coming up in twenty-four hours.

Kayne dismisses us with a slam of his gavel on the table. I stand and make my way out the door when Rooster approaches me. We've been closer than brothers since we both patched in and I know no matter what I decide, Rooster will have my back.

"Drink?" He asks with a raised brow.

I nod my head, "Drink and make it a strong one."

We walk together to the bar and Knuckles slides two shots of Tequila our way. I down mine with no chaser, letting the liquor burn my throat. I look around for Liz but she is nowhere in sight. She's probably up in our room sleeping since neither one of us had any since sometime yesterday and she has to work again tonight. The thought of her in her tight booty shorts and top makes me instantly hard.

Knuckles slides another shot my way and I slam that one back. "Fuck." I growl.

"What are you going to do?" Rooster asks, sitting down next to me. I look around for Rooster's Ol' Lady Alyssa but don't see her anywhere. Usually wherever Rooster is, so is Alyssa. "She's not here. Poison and Siren took her baby shopping. We have eight weeks until our little Rooster comes."

"That means there are no Ol' Ladies here. Why aren't the Club Bunnies all over everyone, trying to ride their dicks?" I ask amused.



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“Nope.” Rooster pops the P. “Kayne had a lengthy conversation with the Club Bunnies and told them they need to not be so provocative in their attitudes. We don’t have to keep them here and they’re not being forced to stay. If any of them don’t like the fact things are changing and kids are welcomed here, they can see their asses out.” I must have an incredulous look on my face because Rooster keeps going. “Ok, he laid down the law and some of them didn’t want to listen so they left.”

“Who left?” Like I give a shit since I’ve never touched one, but some brothers are attached to the willingness of the Club Bunnies.

“Bambi and Trixie left. The old-school ones don’t agree with the changes. Violet, Scarlet and Amber decided to stay and were good with the new rules. No sex out in the open unless there is a special party planned for just that. And no hitting on the brothers who are taken. There’s been too much drama with the Club Bunnies and the Ol’ Ladies that Kayne isn’t putting up with it anymore.”

I nod my head in agreement. “I’d hate to see another Bunny get the shit kicked out of her for messing with a taken brother.” I think back to the traitor Candy. She tried poisoning Holly because she was jealous and wanted Stryker. She almost succeeded in killing Holly too. Poison and Siren kicked her ass and let Holly finish the job. “Speaking of Ol’ Ladies,” I set my glass on the bar and stand up. “I’m going to find mine and bury myself between her thighs for the rest of the day.”

“Lucky fucker. I have another three hours before mine comes back to follow your plan.” Rooster laughs. “You know, I never thought I’d see the day you found someone who completes you, Justin.” The use of my real name tells me Rooster is getting personal. I stop walking away and turn back to my best friend. “If you can

trust her with what you've been through, you need to put your patch and mark on her ASAP. And if you can trust her with your truth, you really should trust the rest of us.”

I walk away, thinking about what Rooster said. I know I can trust my brothers, it's me I don't trust to not go off the rails, telling them.

With my mind made up for Church tomorrow morning, I find my Ol' Lady and do exactly what I told Rooster I was going to do until she has to leave for work.

## Chapter Sixteen

Ace

Kayne called Church early this morning and I'm dragging my feet to make it there on time. He needs an answer from me today. I'm out of time and don't know what to do. Liz and I talked about it last night while she was at work and her advice rings through my head.

The music from the DJ is loud behind me and the dance club is packed. Liz finally has a break when she comes to me on the opposite side of the bar. She won't come around to my side because every time she does, I can't help but put my hands on her, driving her crazy. There's been a few close calls tonight, but Darrien, Liz's coworker, always watched our backs when I wanted to get handsy with Liz. Her boss that met my fist a while ago still hasn't shown up and that worries me. I send a quick text to Rooster, asking him to check on his whereabouts before I give Liz all of my attention.

“Why don't you trust your brothers on this, Ace? The man I know wouldn't let his past define him.” Liz asks, wiping down the bar with a white towel. I've been sitting on this stool for five hours, waiting for her to get done. I love watching her sling drinks and chatting with the customers. But what I really love is the way her eyes always find mine, even if she's deep in conversation with someone. Her body is

always facing me, knowing I'm watching her and enjoying every minute of it.

"It's not that I don't trust them." I exhale a deep breath and slam my palms on the bar top in frustration. Liz places her hands over mine, calming me down.

"Ace, look at me." I drag my eyes from the scarred wood until I reach Liz's beautiful bright blue eyes. Liz is smiling at me, waiting until she has my full attention. How can a woman so perfect be interested in an asshole like me? "The Club isn't going to fault you for what someone did to you when you were a kid. They're not going to shun you for the way you seek justice or how you fight to feel. If anything, I'm sure Stone will help you in killing those sons of a bitches."

I snort because, like normal, Liz is right. "Stone would wipe the floor with half the guys I've gone up against."

"I'll tell you what. After we get home, I'll consult my cards and see what they tell me. Will that make you feel any better if the spirits guide us?" My ears perk up at her use of the word us. Liz grins, "Yeah, ass. I used the word us. Because without you, there is no me."

"And without me, there is no you." I finish for her.

"We're a package deal." Liz shrugs her shoulders. "Whatever decision you make, I will support you."

"And the same goes for you, Sweet Cheeks." I bring Liz's hands up to my mouth and press my lips against the back of them. "That sounds like a deal. You consult the spirits and I will consider their advice." Liz blushes when I release her hands and she goes back to work.

Liz consulted the spirits and I consulted between her thighs when she was done. Who

knew I'd enjoy watching her in herelement, teaching me what her Memaw taught her? I sure in the fuck didn't. I also stole some of Liz's old textbooks so I could read up on spiritual folkways and liturgical languages and understand her when she starts speaking Louisiana French. She's done it to me before but I never knew what she was saying. Now I do and when I let her know I understand, she will be shocked. Let's just say, her vocabulary is very colorful when it comes to the size of my dick inside of her. Miss Prim and proper isn't so proper when she thinks others can't understand her.

I enter Church and take my respective seat, avoiding eye contact. Everyone is already here, waiting for me. Kayne slams his gavel on the table and leans back in his chair. "What'd you decide, Ace? Are you willing to trust us into your past or are you walking away?"

The last thing I want to do is walk away. When I needed this Club, every single one of these men was here. When Stryker, Blayde, Rooster and even Kayne needed us, we were there for them no matter what. That's what Liz's spirits told us last night. Even in our darkest days, these men will be here for me.

"Aye, Prez." I gaze at Rooster, and he nods, encouraging me to continue. "I was fourteen when it happened. It was late at night and my little brother, Spencer, was in a mixed martial arts class I signed him up for. I went to the store and was returning when a group of teenage boys cornered me in an alley. I knew I was fucked when there were eight of them and one of me. The things they did to me were unspeakable."

I talk for over an hour, giving my brothers more details about the rape I endured and how Spencer's Sensi helped me than I told Liz. She didn't need to know all of it. I explain how I've tracked down all of them but two and killed them in The Cage.

Once I finish speaking, I take a long drink of water someone set next to me. The

burden I've been carrying for years has lifted off my shoulders and I feel lighter but exhausted. Kayne's eyes are locked on mine and the room is quiet for a moment. No one knows what to say or do. He finally breaks the silence. "Why do you spiral so deeply when you fight?"

"Because I have so much rage and aggression built up inside of me, I have no way to release it unless I'm ending those assholes' lives. I could control it when they were in the ring with me, but when it's not them, I have no outlet. If that makes sense."

Kayne nods his head. "So, what are you going to do when you find the other two and end them?"

I haven't thought about that. I've only been focused on getting my revenge for the past fourteen years. "I don't know. I'd like to start a fighting ring but control it. With the Savage Saints' approval of course. Maybe giving me a goal will help alleviate all this rage?"

"Get all the facts and figures to Maddox in the next couple of weeks and show how it will make us money and we'll bring it to vote." Kayne sits forward in his chair and lights up a cigarette. "One last order of business, who do you want to ride with you to Louisiana?"

Having discussed this with Liz already, I have an answer immediately. "Stone, Duke, Tex, Damon and if the shit with Butch is finished, him too. If we can't spare all of them, I'd like Stone, Duke and Butch."

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“Plan for Stone, Duke and Tex. If Butch is done with Kendrick, then he will go too.”  
Kayne counters.

“Thank you, Prez.”

“Now that’s out of the way, does anyone have questions or concerns?” Kayne asks.

“I do.” Duke raises his hand with a smirk, like the smartass he is.

“What?” Kayne barks.

“Are there any hot chicks in Louisiana? I mean, if I’m going to be sweating my balls off down there, I at least want to sweat them off a happy man.” Everyone laughs, lifting the tension in the room and I flip Duke off. The man is always thinking with his dick and one of these days it’s going to get him into a world of trouble.

“Fuck off,” Blayze responds to Duke's question.

Duke feigns being hurt by placing his hands over his heart but laughs. The fucker is covered in tattoos and has a clean shaved head. No one takes him seriously.

Kayne whistles over the laughing group of brothers and they all quiet down. “Now we know what’s going on, Ace, you can fight again, but only if you take Stone or Rooster with you. Also, Butch will be out of the Clubhouse for a while. Once this shit with the Feds is situated, he will be back. Maddox, get the figures together on how the bar, repair shop and dance studio are doing and get those to me by the end of the day. I want to get everyone paid tomorrow. Also, Cahal has another run for us

coming up in a few days. This one will go to Ohio and back. Once we get that done, there will be another big payday.” Kayne looks at Blayde. “Did I get everything?”

“No one rides alone for the foreseeable future. Until the blowback from ending Steam is handled. Also, Kick and a few of the Savage Saints, Detroit members will be here at the end of the night. Make them feel welcomed.”

Kayne slams his gavel on the table, ending Church. We all file out and I immediately find Liz with Alyssa, Poison, Siren and Holly playing pool. She doesn’t know I’m behind her and I use that to my advantage. Liz bends over the table, giving me an unfiltered view of her round, perfect ass and my dick takes notice. As she lines up her shot, I grab her hips, pulling her luscious ass against my raging hard-on. Liz squeals and misses her shot.

“Ace, you asshole.” Liz pushes against my chest with strength I didn’t know she had.

“Wanna get out of here?” I ask.

“And go where?” Liz stares up at me with lust in her eyes.

“I want to show you something if you’re up for it.”

“I’m always up for it. Are you?” She responds wiggling her eyebrows. The little minx.

“Cap that thought for later. Stone is going with us.” Knowing where I want to take her has me anxious and nervous at the same time.

“Ok.” There is no hesitation in Liz’s voice and that makes me proud of her trust in me.

“Stone!” I shout over my shoulder.

“Yeah, Ace.” Stone answers a few seconds later like the good prospect he is.

“Saddle up, big boy. We’re going for a ride.”

“Copy that.” Stone’s grey eyes don’t flinch at my command. His nerves of steel would be intimidating, but the place I want to take Liz to, you have to have a set of balls just to get through the doors.

Half an hour later, we’re on our way to the secret destination. Liz still has no idea where I’m taking her, but remembering a conversation we had those first few days we met, I know this is the perfect place to bring her. She is wrapped around me tightly as I weave in and out of traffic in the busy part of the city. Stone is keeping up, riding right beside me down the main street. I pull off into an alley and park my bike next to the familiar brick building. Normally, it’s dark when I’m here but my hands have been itching since yesterday and I can’t wait for nightfall.

“What is this place?” Liz asks, struggling to get her helmet off. I laugh while helping her and she growls.

“Don’t worry Sweet Cheeks, you’ll get it one of these days. Besides, I like taking things off you.” I wink at her and Liz’s cheeks turn a bright shade of pink. I kiss her on the lips before setting her helmet on my bike seat.

Stone is standing sentinel at the door, waiting for us. His cold grey eyes are scanning our surroundings, waiting and watching. He doesn’t say much, but when he does, it’s important to listen. I approach the metal door, holding onto Liz’s hand.

I turn to her before knocking for entrance. “What we’re walking into isn’t for the weak. Keep your chin up and whatever you do, don’t show fear. Remember I’ve got



you and you're safe or I never would bring you here." Liz's grip tightens in mine but she squares her shoulders, nodding her head. "Welcome to my world."

I pound on the door in three rapid successions, pause then two more before pausing again and bang on the door four more times. The lock slides back and the door swings open. It's so dark, you can't see inside but I've been here so many times, I don't need to see. Liz's grip tightens even harder on my hand while we walk further down the dark musty hallway. Once we reach the light at the top of the metal stairs leading to the basement, Liz's grip slightly relaxes. The further down the stairs we go, the darker it gets, and the more Liz hangs onto me tightly. Stone's footsteps echo behind us and the tension is streaming off him in waves.

We reach the bottom of the metal stairs and the scent of blood and sweat permeates the air, making my skin tingle. I walk us down another dark hallway until we reach a metal door. Without banging on it, I push it open and my hands begin to tremble with adrenaline. I glance down at Liz and her mouth is hanging open in shock. I close her mouth shut with a finger and she looks up at me. Her baby blues are dark with lust and anticipation.

I lean down so my lips are against her ear, "Welcome to my world, Sweet Cheeks." My voice is raspy and a shiver skates down Liz's body when my lips linger against her heated skin.

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I look into the room through Liz's eyes. I've come here so often, I don't ever stop to take it all in. I'm usually here to fuck someone up and not take names. The ring in the center of the room has bright lights shining down onto the two fighters battling it out. Blood and sweat stains coat the mat under their bare feet. There is a metal cage wrapping around the ring keeping the fighters in and the crowd out. A ref is standing inside of the cage, keeping the fight somewhat under control. I've seen refs die inside trying to break up two men full of adrenaline battling it out. If that happens, even by accident, the fighter is punished until they can't breathe anymore. Men and women surround the cage, shouting, screaming and yelling at the carnage in front of them. Even in the middle of the day, this place is always packed when there is a fight.

To the left of the cage, money is being exchanged between the bookie and the spectators. The bookie is guarded by three men, showing their weapons and the warning not to fuck with them. To the right of the cage are the changing rooms for the fighters. Some share a locker room and others, like me, have their own room that no one is allowed to enter. Behind the cage and all around us in the darkness are men and women fucking when the adrenaline gets to be too much. Fighter bunnies are walking around to both men and women, seeing if they need any sexual assistance. I've never had one before, but many fighters have and so have the spectators. The bunnies aren't forced to be here, but like the Club Bunnies, they enjoy the same proclivities and help keep things under control.

"Wow," Liz whispers, releasing her death grip on my hand. I'm not letting her go, but I am letting her loose. Her feet carry her to the edge of the cage and she watches with rapt attention as the two men inside pound the shit out of each other. Stone and I stand tall behind her, watching her back as she soaks up the adrenaline. Liz turns her head in my direction and pulls me close. "Can I get in there?"

Her words shock the shit out of me and I'm speechless for a beat. "Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

"Ace, this is what I was trained to do in Louisiana. Like I said before, I haven't found a gym that can handle my type of sparing. All those pussies thought I was nuts for wanting blood to be shed."

Cue my jeans growing tighter from Liz's words. Damn, this woman is perfect for me. "Let me see what I can do."

My eyes connect with Seth to the right of the cage and motion for him to meet me in my dinky room. He nods back twice telling me to give him a few. "C'mon." I turn to Stone who hasn't shown any emotion since walking down here. "Need you to keep watch outside my door. Don't let anyone but Seth inside with us." Stone nods his head and follows us to my room. Once I open the door, I pull Liz in behind me and Stone stands guard.

"Fuck, I need you right now," I growl picking Liz up. She wraps her legs around my waist and grinds herself onto me.

"I need you, Ace." Liz moans between kisses. She's rocking her hips back and forth, trying to create friction on her clit. I lean her against the wall on the far side of the room and unbutton her jeans. I don't have time to fuck her properly, but I can help her take the edge off. My hand dives behind her panties and my fingers graze her clit causing Liz to moan. I plunge two fingers inside of her and flick her clit with my thumb. In a matter of moments, Liz is screaming out my name as I take her over the edge.

Once she comes back down, I pull my hand out and lick my fingers clean. "Heaven." A knock on the door has me settling Liz on her feet. I walk to the door and wait for her to straighten her clothes and her hair the best she can. She nods and I open the

door. Seth comes in and his gaze goes from me to Liz, then back to me.

“I’ve got a fight set up for the both of you.” I shake my head. “Ace, you’ll want to take this one. If you win, which I have no doubt you will, you’ll get a lead on the issue you’ve been working on.”

“Are you fucking serious? How?” I ask in shock.

“Thank Rooster for getting us this far, man. He’s the one who found this guy.”

“And Liz?”

“Her opponent needs their ass kicked for being a cocky bitch and a cheater.” Seth shrugs, then he looks at Liz. “Can you handle it?”

“Oh, I can handle her alright,” Liz confirms.

“Thanks, Seth. I owe you one,” I hold out my hand and Seth takes it.

“Nah, every time you fight, I roll in the cash. You don’t owe me anything.” Seth shakes his head. “When this is over, what are you going to do?”

Seth knows why I do this, but he doesn’t know the real reason why. He only knows what I’ve shared and that was the bare minimum.

“I’m not sure, but when this is over and I do anything, I’ll be taking you with me.” I offer Seth.

“Fuck yeah, we’ve been in this together for so long, it’d be weird without you.” I release Seth’s hand. “5 minutes until your girl is up.” Seth leaves and shuts the door behind him.

My girl in the ring, fighting. A smile lifts my lips and pride fills my body. Liz is my girl and she's going to kill it tonight.

## Chapter Seventeen

Liz

Sweat drips from every pore in my body as I control my breathing the best I can. My sports bra is soaked and my hair is plastered to my face. Ace taped my hands and I removed my socks and shoes before entering the cage. My body and jeans are splattered with both my and my opponent's blood. Adrenaline is pumping through my system while I deliver the final blow and knock my opponent on her ass. Seth was right, she was a cocky bitch and thought she had the upper hand on me. I prove that bitch wrong when I land a hard uppercut directly to her chin watching her eyes roll to the back of her head and she falls like a sack of bricks.

The crowd goes crazy when the fan favorite goes down and I'm declared the winner. Seth comes into The Cage and holds one of my bloody fists up announcing me as the winner. My ears are ringing and my body is shaking from the adrenaline rush running through my system. I haven't felt this way in years and it's a feeling I don't want to let go, especially when my gaze lands on Ace next to the doors of The Cage. He is whistling and clapping over the roar of the crowd with a huge grin on his face and pride in his whiskey depths. Stone is standing behind Ace, watching his back and making sure no one touches him. He has a slight smirk on his face, but nothing else. Typical Stone.

Seth opens the door for me to exit and before my bare feet hit the concrete floor, Ace lifts me in his arms and plants a smoldering kiss on my lips. The crowd quiets down from our display and now I'm really uncomfortable.

Stone stands tall and whistles moving everyone's attention away from us. "You got a

problem with our champ kissing his woman, you can take it up with me. Get your fucking eyes off them or I'll remove them from your skull while you're still alive and shove them up your ass!"

Murmurs and groans of disapproval filter around us. Ace lifts his head and stares at a man who is the loudest. "Who the fuck do you think you are?" He snarls at Stone.

Stone steps up to the man and leans in close enough to kiss him. "I'm your worst fucking nightmare, asshole." The deadly glare in Stone's grey eyes doesn't even blink when he delivers his threat.

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The man swallows hard, “Are you threatening me?”

“I don’t make threats, I keep promises.” The man steps away, shaking his head. Stone scared the living shit out of him and I can’t help but giggle.

Stone turns his gaze on me, but I’m not afraid of him. “You got a problem, Red?” A small smirk appears on Stone’s lips before he turns his attention back to the crowd.

“Quit instigating him, Sweet Cheeks.” Ace murmurs against the side of my neck. I groan when his lips make contact with my sweaty skin.

“You’re up next, Ace. Do you really think you should be teasing me?” I ask.

Ace’s lips leave my skin and I shiver missing his warmth. “Consider this a warm-up, Liz. Cause once I’m finished taking this fucker out, we’re not leaving my dressing room until you can’t walk.”

I stare into his mesmerizing eyes. “I’ll hold you to that.”

Ace releases me and slides his shirt over his head, revealing his chiseled body. He hands me his shirt before walking into the cage in only a pair of jeans and his knuckles taped. He took his shoes, cut and socks off before I went in for my fight. Said he wasn’t going to let me out of his sight for a moment tonight.

Ace’s opponent is a big-ass man, with back and chest hair already inside. A clean shaved head and solid muscles. He has to be around six-two or six-three. He cracks his neck from side to side and starts waving his arms around like a pinwheel. I try not

to laugh at how ridiculous he looks but I can't help it. Ace looks at Stone and Stone nods, stepping closer to me, protecting me. Ace is satisfied because he steps further into The Cage and Seth closes the door.

The bell dings and Ace is light on his feet. He's teasing and taunting this big-ass man with light slaps to his face or feather-like kicks to his chest and knees. The guy plows into Ace a few times and hugs him, but Ace manages to push him off. The guy is gassed and is losing steam pretty quickly.

"FINISH HIM!" I shout over the crowd. Ace smirks before he goes in for the strike. He throat punches the guy so hard, that he falls on the mat, his hands wrapping around his throat trying to breathe. Ace brings his fist down onto the guy's temple and he hits the mat, not moving. The bell dings and Seth unlocks and enters The Cage. He holds Ace's fist covered in blood up, announcing he is the champ. The crowd goes wild with shouts, catcalls and whistles.

Ace climbs out of The Cage and heads right for me. He picks me up and I wrap my legs around his waist. He sways a little bit on his feet but shakes his head and carries me into his room. We don't leave the confines of the little room for several hours. Ace upheld his promise and what a promise he delivered.

It's been two weeks since the cage fights and we are getting ready to ride down to Louisiana. I have stayed at the Clubhouse the whole time, too scared to go back to my apartment alone. I even quit my job at the nightclub and Kayne is letting me start working at their bar once we get back. No one has said anything about my old boss Joe, but I'm learning if it's Club business, it's not mine.

I've gotten used to climbing on and off Ace's bike but I still struggle with getting the damn helmet off. I suggested we fly, but those who were coming with us refused. Said they'd rather have a biker butt than fall out of a tin can and plummet to their deaths. Whatever.



“Ready?” Ace asks, carrying my bag and stowing it in his saddle bag. I don’t bring as many clothes as I normally would have since we’re taking Ace’s bike and there isn’t enough room.

“Ready.” I nod my head. Settling the helmet on my head, Ace tightens it for me. His fingers linger a little too long on my chin and I shiver. The whole Clubhouse is out here to see us off and it’s kind of unsettling.

“If we get down there and something makes you uncomfortable, you tell me and I’ll get you out of there faster than you can blink. Don’t hold anything back because you think it’ll be an inconvenience to us. We’re here for you, not the other way around.” Ace stares into my eyes, willing me to argue with him. I snap my mouth shut and nod my head.

Stone, Duke and Tex are riding down with us. Butch was supposed to, but he’s been missing for the last couple of weeks. No one will tell me where he is, yet again, it’s Club business. I swear if I hear that excuse one more time, I’m going to junk punch the person who said it.

“Ok, Ace,” I answer rolling my eyes. I have my stones with me to help ward off negativity, but it’s not working too well. I’m edgy and in a pissy mood and I can feel it grating on everyone else. I know going back home is a big mistake, but it’s one I have to face so I can move on with Ace and the family I’ve grown to care about up here. Besides, if I don’t show up to Memaw’s death celebration, she will haunt me until I go. I don’t want to have her all up in my juju, she’d be hitting on Ace every chance she got. She might have been old, but she wasn’t senile and she liked to look at good-looking guys. Ace is a very good-looking guy.

“You guys be safe and keep both tires on the ground.” Kayne offers Ace, Stone, Duke and Tex all bro hugs. Blayde is next, then Stryker, Rooster, Maddox, Axel, Talon, Tatt and Knuckles.

“We will, Prez. Thank you.” Ace acknowledges Kayne.

Poison and Siren come up to me. Poison’s baby is sitting on her hip, babbling about everything and anything. Poison hugs me and I return her hug. “If you need anything, do not hesitate to call me.”

“I won’t,” I promise her.

“Same goes for me. If you can’t get Poison, try my phone. You never know what kind of position Poison will be in.” Siren winks at me and my face heats up, knowing what she’s talking about. I’ve walked in on her and Kayne a couple of times in the kitchen and it’s not something I want to repeat.

Alyssa and Holly approach me next and Poison and Siren step back to give them room. Alyssa leans forward to give me a hug, her belly getting in the way. “I have 4 months left and this baby is the size of an overinflated balloon.” I chuckle.

“But it’s cute on you.” I praise.

“Be safe down there and don’t let anyone boss you around. You are the queen bitch down there.” Alyssa says.

A couple of nights ago, I was drinking Tequila with the Ol’ Ladies (minus Alyssa who had pop) and spilled to all the ladies who my Memaw was and how powerful she was. How I was supposed to take over the Voodoo lineage but couldn’t. I didn’t tell them about my ex or my twin brother trying to kill me and make it look like a suicide. Ace doesn’t even know about my ex, only what my brother tried to do to me.

“I will, thank you, Alyssa.”

Holly hugs me, “Be safe and give those men riding with you as much shit as you

can.”

“I will.” I grin.

Ace comes up and settles his arm around my shoulders. “Let’s go. I want to get as far as possible before it gets dark out and you can’t walk not for the reason I’d like to give you.” Ace winks and kisses the side of my head. I blush from head to toe.

I climb on the back of Ace’s bike and wave to everyone standing around to see us off. If I had consulted my cards or stones before we left and didn’t shake off the deep feeling of dread in the pit of my stomach, I never would have let Ace, Stone, Duke and Tex travel with me. I’m being punished for something I never did and these four happen to be in the crosshairs.

### Chapter Eighteen

Ace

Daylight is fading fast into nightfall two days later and we finally make it to Parish District Five. Liz directs us to a small house sitting back on a two-track road covered with huge trees. I pull up to the small house and park my bike. The sweltering humidity is making my clothes stick to my body and sweat beads on my forehead. Liz looks comfortable in this weather as I slap the bugs bigger than my head away.

“Where the fuck are we?” Stone asks. If he’s creeped out, then the rest of us should be too.

“Our stop for the night. We can’t go any further when we lose daylight or the gators will eat you alive. Besides, we can’t take the bikes where my Memaw lived.” Liz

dismounts my bike, her legs are a little wobbly so I steady her.

Stone and Duke check out our surroundings. Tex slaps the side of his neck. Stone grumbles before dismounting his bike and Duke does the same.

Duke wipes the sweat from his brow and swats a bug away, “If I’m murdered by some backwoods hillbilly playing the banjo, I’m coming back to haunt your ass.” I try to hold back a laugh but fail. Duke is so uncomfortable down here, worse than the rest of us. “What are you laughing about asshole? It’s like Deliverance down here. Gives me the creeps.”

We all lose it when Duke shudders and glances behind him trying to peer through the woods. Once I stop laughing at him, Liz grabs my hand and pulls me toward the single-story house. “Come on. I want you to meet someone.”

She walks up the steps, opens the screen door and knocks on the other door. I’m right behind her, crowding her with my body, ready to move her out of the way if there is any threat inside. The door slowly creaks open and I have my hands on Liz’s hips, ready with tension rolling off my body. A single watery, blue eye peeks at us through the crack in the door. It blinks once, then twice before the door opens wider and Liz enters with me on her heels. My brothers hang back a little bit, waiting for something to happen.

A musty smell permeates the air the further inside we go and the humidity from outside is nonexistent. I check behind the door but the body that belongs to the eye isn’t anywhere in sight. “I don’t like this,” I whisper to Liz.

She turns her face up to me with a bright smile. “Be patient. He doesn’t take to strangers very well and I’m sure your size is intimidating to him.”

“Then why the fuck would he answer the door if I’m intimidating?” I question.

“Because you’re with me. If you came here alone, I’m sure he’d place a hex on you.” Liz giggles like it’d be funny if I were cursed. We walk further into the house and old newspapers are strewn everywhere. Melted candles, dice I’ve seen Liz use, decks of cards and dust are scattered across every surface of the house I can see.

We step into what I’m assuming is a dining room and it’s completely different than the rest of the house. It’s cleaner, for one and for two there is only a single deck of cards, melted candles and a pair of dice on the old oak table with no dust or newspapers scattered around.

“Very funny, ha-ha. If he harms you in any way, I don’t give a fuck about hexes or curses. I will end his life.” Suddenly a cold, wrinkly hand lands on the crook of my right arm making my skin crawl. A growl radiates from deep inside my chest but the hand doesn’t let go. If anything, it tightens further. My vision changes to a hazy red, ready to kill this motherfucker for touching me. “Let go of me, now.” I tightly clench my teeth together, surprised I don’t crack a tooth.

The hand disappears and I take a deep breath in through my nose and out through my mouth, trying to calm down. An old man with a hunch walks past us, not even batting an eye that I was close to killing him for touching me. He shuffles toward the table and takes a seat at the end, motioning for us to follow. Liz tries to sit in the chair closest to him, but I subtly move her into the seat furthest away from him. If he is a threat, I’ll be damned if I let him get close enough to my woman to harm her. I take the seat closest to him, keeping Liz behind me. The old man’s eyes are closed like he’s in a deep thought or sleep.

The stubborn woman won’t have any of this bullshit and she moves to the spot across from me and next to this guy. Before I can protest Liz isn’t safe, she gently places her palm on the old man’s arm, startling him. He blinks a few times, his blue eyes watering slightly.

“Petite-fille.” The old man smiles widely, showing off his perfect teeth. With this guy's age, I'm shocked at how straight and white they are. I had a precognitive notion they'd be missing or rotting.

“Pawpaw. How are you?” Liz asks, squeezing his arm a little tighter. Tears are glistening in her bright blue eyes. He grunts before wiping his eyes.

I give Liz a questioning look and she motions toward me before giving Pawpaw her attention once again. “Pawpaw, I want you to meet my friend, Ace.” Her eyes lock onto mine again. “Ace, this is my Pawpaw, or my grandpa, Amir Elijah LeRoux, sixth generation Cajun. He met and fell in love with my Memaw, Madeline who was a Creole descendant and the Queen of Louisiana Voodoo, over sixty years ago. Back then, it was unheard of for a Creole and a Cajun to be together, but those two did it. They loved each other so much that no matter who tried to stop them, they thrived together and overcame the odds. Pawpaw's time is coming soon to be with Memaw.” A lonely tear trails down Liz's cheek and her grandfather wipes it away.

“No tears, Petite-fille. I'll be with Memaw soon and you'll be free.” He taps on the deck of cards before lighting a candle next to him. “Free Rose.”

“What does he mean, Liz? Free from what?” I ask. Amir shushes me in a stern tone and I snap my mouth shut.

Amir mumbles something in another language I can't understand while holding onto Liz's hands. His boney fingers tighten around hers as the flame from the candle flickers. He continues to chant before releasing Liz's hand and taps on the deck of cards with a long nail. “This will tell us your future, Petite-fille. Do you want to know your fate or your future?” His watery blue eyes land on me. “You have many demons in your past, buoy. But my Petite-fille will bring you into the light if you allow her. She has darkness inside of her too.” He grabs my hand before I can protest and the candle flickers rapidly, creating a smokey haze surrounding us. “You will help her

channel this darkness and control it.”

Amir takes hold of Liz’s hand while still holding mine and he motions for Liz and me to hold hands across the table, completing the circle. Once our hands interlock, the candle flickers and then goes out. The tension in the room is heavy and there’s something else pressing down on me but I can’t identify what it is. “He’s coming. Protect my Petite-fille from him, Buoy. Promise me you will protect her with your life.”

“I promise, Amir. I will always protect what’s mine.” The candle flickers back to life and I swear the heaviness in the air lifts.

Amir releases our hands and pushes away from the table. He kisses Liz on the head before shuffling over to me, pressing his cold lips against my forehead. “Protect her heart and free her soul.” He shuffles out of the room before either of us can say anything.

I’m sitting at the table with my mouth hanging open, not knowing what to say. “What the fuck?” That’s all that comes to mind.



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“Come on, Ace.” Liz stands with tears in her eyes. “We need to get set up for the night.” There’s a sadness in her voice but I don’t push it, not yet.

We walk out the way we came in and the humidity slaps me in the face. Night has fallen and I cringe when I notice how uncomfortable my brothers are. “I didn’t think we were in there that long,” I state.

Liz shrugs, “Time has no meaning inside Pawpaw’s house.” She steps off the rickety old porch and walks down a single path leading into the woods. “This way.”

I follow her with Tex, Duke and Stone trailing behind us carrying our bags. “What about our bikes?” Duke asks, unsure if we should keep someone on guard.

“The bikes will be safe there,” Liz replies, there’s a sadness in her voice that she tries to hide. She walks further into the woods, moving tree branches and brush out of the way. I grab her hand, needing the contact between us and squeeze it. Liz returns the gesture and looks up at me. The pain in her bright blue eyes hurts my heart and I will do anything I can to help her through this. I kiss her softly on the lips, offering to take her pain and put it on me before we move again.

Duke and Stone take notice of the slump in her shoulders and the sadness in her voice. They give me a questioning look, but I shake my head. It’s not the time to get into it. I’ll fill them in later.

“This place is giving me the creeps,” Tex grumbles as he brings up the rear, not realizing the sadness radiating off Liz as he slaps another bug away. Duke lets go of a branch and it swats Tex in the face. “What the fuck, Duke?”

Duke glares at Tex, the bandana covering his bald head is sweat-soaked. “If you value your balls, you’ll keep our mouth shut and quit bitching about shit.” He motions to Liz and Tex snaps his mouth shut thankfully. If he didn’t quit bitching I was going to do something about it.

There is a break in the trees, opening up to a small white house sitting proudly in the middle of a clearing. “We’ll stay here for the night.”

Liz opens the front door and a blast of cool air hits me in the face. I deeply inhale, thankful to be out of the sweltering humidity for a little while. Turning on a light in the living room, Liz looks around before disappearing into another room. I follow, wondering where she’s going.

I find her in the small kitchen, grabbing five water bottles and closing the refrigerator door with her hip. “Talk to me, Liz.” I take the water bottles out of her hands and set them on the old table in the center of the small room. Pulling Liz into my arms, she sobs uncontrollably for a few minutes before she quiets down.

“I didn’t think it would be this hard coming back here. I loved my Memaw and I love my Pawpaw. Losing him is going to hurt just as bad as when I lost her.”

“I know you told me a little bit about her, but I’m listening if you want to tell me more,” I reply, kissing Liz on the forehead. “Whatever you need, I’m here.”

“Thank you, Ace. I don’t think I could do this without you.” Liz leans up on her toes and kisses me. Our gentle kiss turns passionate and all I can think about at this moment is commanding Liz’s body beneath mine. She pulls away too soon and I release a deep breath.

“The things you do to me, woman,” I growl while nipping at Liz’s lips. She whimpers but stands strong.

“I have guests and now isn’t the time, Ace.” She chides me.

“Now is the perfect time, Sweet Cheeks. Those assholes can wait.” I try to kiss her again, but she pushes against my chest.

“Not those guys. We have guests coming any minute. I’m sure Pawpaw told my mom and dad we are here.” Her fingers clutch onto my leather cut tightly at the mention of her parents.

A sudden knock on the door has me pushing Liz behind me and unholstering my gun. Tex and Duke follow my movements and Stone disappears down the hallway. Duke opens the door but before he can see who it is, a strong breeze blows through and shoves the door open further, pushing him back. A woman with tan skin comes barging in dressed in an elegant, long white and gold dress that flows past her ankles with tons of necklaces, bracelets and big hoop earrings. She’s wearing a gold and white silk hat that matches her dress. The woman’s blue eyes glare at Duke holding his gun up but not threatening before she searches the room and her eyes land where I am with Liz still tucked behind me.

“Elizabeth Madeline-Rose LeRoux, get your behind out here so your mama can take a look at you.” The woman’s authoritative voice raises the hair on the back of my neck. Liz’s grip tightens on my cut and I don’t let her move.

“Who the hell are you?” I respond before Liz steps forward.

The woman tsks before stepping toward us with disdain written all over her face. The closer she gets to me, the more similarities I see between her and Liz. “Well, that’s no way to speak to a woman. Didn’t your parents teach you any manners?” My spine stiffens from the woman’s hoity-toity voice and the mention of my parents.

“Mama, please. You don’t know the first thing about any of these men.” Liz returns

her question before I can say or do anything.

“Hmph, what I do know is Memaw would be very disappointed that you’re running around with a bunch of bikers.” She looks down at me from the end of her nose.

I open my mouth to say something but again, Liz beats me to it. And what she says next makes me question everything I ever knew and my blood turns cold. “Memaw already gave us her blessing.”

## Chapter Nineteen

Liz

My mother is a whirlwind. I don’t know how else to describe her. She radiates negative energy and the temperature in the room drops about twenty degrees. If she thinks you’re not better than she is, she will treat you like the scum at the bottom of the swamp, but she’s forgetting where she came from. My mother would still be sitting in the swamps if it wasn’t for my father.

“Memaw already gave us her blessing, mama.” I stand tall, my voice is strong.

“Well, that can’t be, Elizabeth.” Mama adjusts the hat on her head in frustration.

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“It is.” That’s all I’m going to say on the subject. From the look on Ace’s face, I’ve really freaked him out; that wasn’t my intention. “What are you doing here?”

“Pawpaw called and told us you were back.” Her words implemented I’m here to stay.

“Just for Memaw’s death-ivesary. Once this is over, I’m heading back to Michigan with Ace.” I state.

“Well,” Mama adjusts her hat again. “We’ll see about that. Your father, brother and Aerik are excited to see you.”

Cold fear grips my spine and I stiffen at the mention of my brother and Aerik. Ace notices, of course, he does and he squeezes my hand, giving me support. Is this woman crazy? Is she so out of touch with reality? The last people I want to see are my brother and Aerik. Not after what they did to me.

I never told Ace about Aerik and I don’t know how he will take it. “Where is Dad?” I ask, keeping the subject off Tomas and Aerik.

“He stayed home with your brother. You know, the twin you abandoned.” The accusation in her voice is clear. She still doesn’t believe me when I pleaded with her after the accident that Tomas was responsible for it.

“Tomas is a grown adult, Mama.”

“Exactly, Elizabeth. A grown adult missing his twin.” She fakes pushing back tears.

This woman really knows how to play her cards right. If I hadn't told Ace about what had happened, he would have been siding with her right now. It's happened before. "All he wants is what's best for you, Elizabeth. When will you stop blaming him for your accident?"

Oh my God! If I could murder anyone and get away with it, she'd be at the top of my list! "I'm not blaming Tomas, Mama." I return pointedly. I'm done with this conversation and really starting to hate the way she says my first name. No matter how many times growing up I've asked her to call me Liz or Rose and she refused. The way she can say Elizabeth makes me feel like a scolded child, not a grown adult.

"Of course, not dear. You just ignore your twin and don't return his phone calls. Doesn't matter the two of you shared a womb. He told us you had some issues," she points to her head, "you were working on."

A low growl erupts from Ace's chest and he steps between my mother and me before I can say anything. Tears form in my eyes and I do my best to keep them back. She really knows how to hurt someone with her words.

"ENOUGH!" Ace bellows, making my mother jump. "I don't know who you think you are, Mrs. LaRoux, but Liz does NOT NEED your accusations!" Ace is pissed off. His chest is rising and falling in rapid succession and his hands are shaking. "You're done here. Please leave." Duke opens the front door and Ace motions to it. "It's not up for debate or discussion, Mrs. LaRoux. You said your peace, now leave."

Ace crosses his arms over his massive chest, glaring at my mother. No one has ever talked to her this way and my heart soars with love. Ace is the first man to ever put my mother in her place and defend me. Everyone else is terrified of her.

I just hope she doesn't try to place a hex on him.

“We will discuss this later, Elizabeth.” Mama huffs and storms out the door. It slams shut behind her and I breathe a sigh of relief.

“I’m so sorry about her. She has gotten worse since I left.” I apologize.

“Don’t ever apologize for that woman. She doesn’t deserve your kindness.” Ace rubs my shoulders and pulls my back against his chest. His warmth radiates into my skin, taking away the chill my mother left behind.

“That was intense.” Duke chuckles from the doorway. “Should we be worried about any kind of retaliation from that woman?”

“If I know my mother, she will wait until our defenses are down to come at me again. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I’m exhausted. Tex, Duke and Stone,” I stop talking and look for Stone. “Where did Stone go?”

“He’s doing his job to keep you safe. Don’t worry about him, Sweet Cheeks.” Ace kisses the side of my head.

“The three of you can use any room but the one in the back. That’s where Ace and I will be staying. Feel free to roam, sleep, eat, drink, shower, do whatever you need to do. We will be heading out at first light.” I pull Ace toward the back bedroom and open the door. When we step inside, I flop onto the queen size bed and stifle a yawn.

Ace chuckles before checking the lock on the door and the windows before placing our bags on the bed and securing the rest of the room. The room is simple. Made up of a queen size bed, dresser, two nightstands with lamps on top, a small closet and a small, attached bathroom.

I sit up and pull my bag between my spread legs. I open the middle part and pull out the stones my Memaw gave me. I place a few in front of the door and windows. Ace

comes out of the bathroom as I'm finishing up and he raises an eyebrow.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm warding off the spirits of my mother and keeping us safe for the night," I answer nonchalantly.

"Should the guys have the same thing?" Ace asks with concern in his dark eyes. No questioning my sanity or giving me reasons why this won't work.

"Will they think it's weird?" I ask hesitantly.

"Not at all. They've all seen some crazy ass shit and this doesn't even reach the top. Come on, I'll help you." Ace opens the door to our room and I shiver from the cold blasting me in the face. Shit.

I hurry to the back door and place some stones on the floor in front of the door. I give Ace a handful and tell him to place them on the ledge of any window and on the floor next to any door that leads outside. He does this without question. The air starts turning warm and together, Ace and I complete the process to every window and door littering the house. Duke, Tex and Stone watch but don't say a word. Once we're finished, I step into the middle of the small house and close my eyes. The coldness trying to seep in has disappeared and it's quiet for the time being.



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“We should be safe, but to reiterate what I told you earlier, don’t go outside this house for the rest of the night. It’s not safe out there right now.”

“Got it,” Tex responds. Stone and Duke nod their heads.

“Thank you,” Ace kisses the top of my head and my heart swells even more. Ace is taking this in stride and it’s making me fall for him even more. Now to get through the rest of our time down here with my family. If he can handle their crazy, he can handle anything.

“Ready for bed, Sweet Cheeks?” Ace growls in my ear and I hold back a groan, nodding my head.

He leads me back to the bedroom without a word to Tex, Stone or Duke and shuts the door behind us. Once we’re alone, Ace peels off my clothes slowly, kissing, nipping and loving my body the entire night. Each caress to my skin, every time he sinks inside of me, making me lose my mind, brings me closer and closer to filling the void in my heart from my Memaw’s death. Ace is becoming my addiction and I won’t ever let him go.

### Chapter Twenty

Ace

The bright sunlight streams through the sheer curtains waking me. Liz is still sleeping, naked and wrapped around my body like a cobra, bringing my morning wood to full attention. I had her in so many different ways last night, you’d think I’d

be all out of gas, but that isn't the case with her. Never with her. This woman brings me alive with every look, every touch, every caress. She makes my heart beat stronger than before and means something more to me than anyone else, even my little brother Spencer.

Is it love I feel for Liz? Fuck if I know since I've never been in love before, but if this is what it feels like, sign me up.

I tighten my hold on Liz, dying to tell her my realization, but hold back. There are still things she hasn't told me about her past and the last thing I want is for her to feel obligated to tell me she loves me in return until she really knows I'm who she wants.

When her mother mentioned a man named Aerik, Liz's body stiffened and fear replaced her bravado. Is Aerik an ex of hers? Did he hurt her somehow? Was her fear of her mother mentioning him in front of me or mentioning him in general? Does she still have feelings for him? These questions only Liz can answer but I have a feeling deep in my gut, I'll get my answers today.

Liz stirs and rubs her leg draped over my waist up and down. Her heat pressed into the top of my thigh. I adjust us slightly so she is straddling my waist, my aching erection seeking her entrance. Liz shifts her hips and I slip inside. A groan rumbles through my chest as she begins to move. No words are needed while she takes us to a place made for just the two of us. Her hips move faster while she bounces up and down. My shaft swells, close to finding my release when Liz releases a long guttural moan from deep inside. The sounds she makes drive me to the edge and I'm running off a cliff, powerless to stop myself. Liz's heat squeezes my shaft and we both explode into a million pieces as her lips find mine and I kiss her with every feeling deep inside of me.

Once we come back down from the heavenly bliss, Liz kisses me again before shifting her weight off me. "That was quite the wake-up call." She blushes and I grin

back.

“If you want to wake up doing that every day, I’ll die a happy man.” I counter.

Liz stretches against me and looks through the curtains at the rising sun. “Shit. We’re late.” She hops out of bed and hurries into the bathroom while I’m left lying on the bed in confusion. Liz comes out of the bathroom and hurries around the room, throwing clothes at us left and right. “Shit, I need a shower. Fuck, I don’t have time for a shower. Ace, we need to get moving.”

She throws a pair of jeans at me that aren’t even my jeans, they’re hers. “Sweet Cheeks,” I respond trying to defuse the situation. When Liz doesn’t stop throwing clothes around, I rise from the bed and stalk over to her. I grab her gently by the shoulders and make her stop. “Liz, what’s going on? Why are you acting this way?”

“You don’t understand.”

“I know I don’t understand because you’re not explaining anything to me. Come on,” I lead her to the bed and make her sit. “Take a deep breath and tell me what’s going through that pretty little head of yours?”

“We need to get to Memaw’s island before anyone else. I have to set up my stones to ward off the evil coming. Please, Ace,” Liz grabs my hands with hers. “You’ve trusted me this far, please trust me on this. If I don’t get there and do this, anything can happen.”

“Ok, Sweet Cheeks.” I handed her the jeans she threw at me. “These are yours. I don’t think one of my thighs will fit into these.”

Liz giggles before taking the offered jeans from my hands and we get dressed without

any more clothing casualties. “I wish I had time for a shower,” Liz grumbles.

I pull Liz against me and kiss the top of her head, breathing in our scents mixed together from last night and this morning. “I love the way you smell. It’s intoxicating and tells everyone you are mine just as I am yours.”

Liz blushes before gathering her stones and we leave the room together with our bags in hand. Tex, Duke and Stone are ready to go, standing by the front door with their bags in their hands. Duke is nervously fiddling with the straps.

“Is there a problem?” I ask, raising an eyebrow and waiting for an answer. Duke looks up at me and then his eyes shift to Liz, then back to me.

“We uh...” Duke stutters and rubs his bald head. “Didn’t know if it was safe to go outside.”

Liz stifles a giggle, “Yes, it’s safe now.” She bends down to remove the stones by the door. We all gathered the rest of her stones and put them in her little bag.

Once we’re finished, Liz leads us outside and down to a river about five hundred yards away from the little house. The humidity this early in the morning is manageable but not by much. There is an airboat waiting for us tied to the weathered dock. Duke, Tex, Stone and I all climb on board. The three of them sit on the bench seat near the front and I sit on the seat higher than them in the back. Liz unties the boat from the dock and pushes it away with her foot before hopping on and taking the seat next to me.

“Have you ever ridden in one of these?” She asks, firing up the engine.

“Never. What does it do?” I ask over the roar of the motor.

“Down here, there are places boats, cars or trucks can’t go. This airboat will allow us to travel swamp and land to get where we need to go.” Liz leans forward, speaking loud enough for Tex, Duke and Stone to hear. “I’m going to need you three to watch for gators. They’ll try to tip us or climb on board if we get too close. If you see one, I’ll need you to use the sticks under your seat to point them out so I can avoid them or push them off if they climb on board. Can you three do that?”

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“Sure, let's get some gators!” Duke rubs his hands together and Liz sits back laughing.

“What do you want me to do?” I ask.

“Sit there and look hot.” Liz winks and damn if it doesn't do things to me.

The ride to the island where Liz's Memaw lived was uneventful. We only spotted a few gators but they stayed far away from us. The biggest bitch from the guys were the bugs. Some of them were huge blood-sucking vampires. Liz slows the airboat down and gently guides it into a clearing made of sand. She shuts the motor off once we reach a little way inland and takes a deep breath.

“This is it.” Liz climbs off her seat and grabs her bag. “This way. We still have a little bit of time before everyone else shows up.”

Duke, Tex, Stone and I follow suit with our bags. I take hold of Liz's hand and give it a gentle squeeze. We walk further into the woods until it gets so dark, you can't tell it's still morning. We reach another clearing and the morning light streams through the trees. The birds and creatures quiet down once we step foot onto the property. A small shack with a rundown porch and rotting boards appears before us. The once white paint is now murky brown and peeling. A swing suspended on the porch is broken and hanging on my one chain. Liz stifles a sob trying to break free.

“This place used to be so beautiful. Now it's just a memory. I'm so sorry Memaw.” Liz whispers into the breeze. She closes her bright blue eyes and a tear falls down her cheek. I watch as Liz turns her face up toward the sun and the breeze turns into a

warm gust of wind that wraps around the five of us.

Liz opens her eyes and nods her head like she's having a silent conversation with someone I can't see. She turns those pretty blues toward me and I open my arms and hold her against my chest.

"Remember, I am with you the whole way. No matter what goes down today, I'm not going anywhere." I state into the softness of Liz's hair.

"Thank you, Ace. This is going to get nasty." I hold onto her for a moment longer before she pulls away. "We have work to do before the others show up."

Liz gives us directions on how and where to place her stones around the perimeter of the shack to ward off evil. Once Duke, Stone and Tex wander off to do their assigned jobs, that leaves Liz and me alone. I can finally ask her the questions that have been on my mind.

"Can I ask you something without you getting offended?"

Liz places a stone down before answering. "Sure."

"Who's Aerik and why did you stiffen at the mention of his name? I know about your brother, but not this guy." I am not holding back on this. I need to know how to protect her and from who.

"Aerik is no one you need to worry about." Liz answers. She doesn't look me in the eyes when she speaks. Instead, she keeps her head down and places stones around the sand.

"Liz, I'm not buying that bullshit. Tell me who Aerik is and why you're so afraid of him." I approach Liz and make her stop what she's doing and look at me. The fear

and sadness in her blue eyes guts me, but I need answers. Liz opened her mouth to tell me when shouting came from behind us. “We’ll pick this up later. But Liz, don’t ever lie to me.” I kiss the top of her head in reassurance and take off toward the noise.

What I walk into once we reach the shack is something I didn’t think I’d ever see. The man I met last night, Liz’s grandpa, Amir, is standing in the clearing pointing an accusing finger at Liz’s mom. He’s shouting obscenities at her with tears in his watery blue eyes. Liz’s mom is shouting back at him and her screeching makes my blood turn cold. A man is standing behind Liz’s mom who looks like a younger version of her Grandfather. A guy with the same fiery red hair as Liz, with similar freckles and bright blue eyes is next to him. That’s where the similarities stop. Liz has a peaceful, elegant, innocent nature surrounding her and her twin radiates bitterness and I would say evil if I believed in such things. When his gaze lands on Liz, he snarls, curling up his top lip.

“Look who finally graced us with her presence, Princess Elizabeth.” Tomas snarls.

Liz’s spine stiffens at Tomas’s words. She doesn’t speak, instead, she goes to her grandfather’s side. I follow her with Duke, Tex and Stone surrounding Liz and her grandfather.

“Haven’t you done enough to destroy this family, Elizabeth?” Liz’s mom’s snide remark hits Liz right in the heart. Her face crumples but she doesn’t shed a tear. She doesn’t speak as her mother and brother both belittle and criticize her for something she didn’t do nor was she responsible for.

“ENOUGH!” Liz’s grandfather bellows. I didn’t think the old man had it in him to be so boisterous. “You might be married to my son, Jalinda, but remember where you came from. If it wasn’t for my wife, God rest her soul, you would still be slinging crawfish to the gators in the swamp. Your daughter’s innocence was robbed from that buoy you are desperately clinging to. Now, if you don’t mind, we are here for



Madeline. To celebrate her life and bring us answers for her death.”

Liz takes Amir’s bony hand gently and guides him up the stairs into Madeline’s home, ignoring the glares and rude comments each of her family members is spewing at the two of them. I follow close behind Liz, protecting both of them. Once we’re inside, Amir breathes a sigh of relief and Liz helps him into an old worn rocking chair.

“Thank you, my sweet Rose.” He looks past her toward me. “Protect her with everything you have. She’s going to need it in a few moments.”

Amir closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He smiles, “Memaw is waiting for me. I’ll give her your love.” Amir pats Liz’s hand before it goes limp at his side and he stops breathing. His body sags in the old rocking chair and Liz has tears streaming down her face. I want to comfort her and give her my love, but she has to do this on her own.

After a few moments, Liz stands, kisses her grandfather on the cheek, chants something I can’t understand then turns and lights two candles. “One for Memaw and one for Pawpaw. May they rest in peace together for eternity.” She grabs a big white candle and lights it with the two smaller ones at the same time. “Now no one can separate the two of you ever again.”

A light warm breeze picks up, ruffling the hair on my head. Peace settles over me and I don’t know how I should feel but I feel happy and even though my heart is hurting for Liz losing both grandparents now, I can feel the love between the three of them in the room.

The door bursts open, creating a cold gush of wind. Liz is still holding the big candle in her hands. It flickers but doesn’t go out. “What have you done!” Jalinda screeches at the top of her lungs. She lunges for Liz with her hands outstretched, screeching.

She wraps her fingers around Liz's throat before I can stop her and digs into the sensitive area around Liz's neck. Liz doesn't let go of the candle nor does she fight back right away.

I try to pull Jalinda off Liz, but before I can, something heavy hits me on the back of the head, sending me to the ground. A heavy boot stomps on my back, holding me in place. I smell the evil radiating off Tomas. When Liz sees Tomas holding me down, she tries to fight back. Where are Duke, Stone and Tex? They should be here by now helping us.

"Your three friends are currently incapable of helping." Tomas sneers down at me like he can read my mind. "Aerik has graciously tied them up."

A man with blonde hair swept into his green eyes steps into the shack. "Well, well, well. What do we have here?" His deep voice commanded everyone to freeze. Jalinda's fingers loosen around Liz's neck slightly. The fear in Liz's eyes shined brightly at this stranger's voice. Tomas' boot didn't let up as he kept me pinned to the ground when this guy walked in.

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“Aerik, darling where do you want her?” Jalinda asks with a coo in her voice that makes my stomach churn.

“Over by the high priestess temple.”

Jalinda keeps ahold of Liz’s neck and shoves her toward the spot Aerik pointed to. Inside, there is a square table with a green cloth. Drawn in white on the cloth is a circle divided into four quadrants with various symbols etched inside each one. Two backless chairs are set up on one side of the table. On the other side is another chair, a high-backed one painted in a myriad of colors and symbols. Jalinda shoves Liz into one of the two chairs and Aerik takes the other. With a sinister look on his face, he grabs Liz’s hand with her scars and begins rubbing them.

“You know, Elizabeth, all of this could have been avoided if you would have just married me like you were supposed to. I wouldn’t have threatened your brother into cutting your wrists and making you out to be the crazy one. Actually, I didn’t have to threaten him, but I did threaten his addiction. Heroin can make people do crazy things.” He tightens his hold on Liz and pulls her against him. “We would have been so happy together, Elizabeth. This is all your fault. Madeline would still be here if you didn’t tell her what Tomas did for me. I wouldn’t have had to kill the nosy bitch if she would have just given me her blessing to become the high priest by marrying you.”

Jalinda takes a seat across from Liz and Aerik and places her hands on the table. “Mama, what are you doing?” Liz asks, fear trembling her voice.

“What I need to do for this family to survive. You will marry Aerik, have his babies

and once he gets a male heir, he will kill you.” Jalinda’s voice doesn’t waver from her words. No regrets, no remorse.

“Daddy?” Liz asks with tears running down her face.

I shift my head slightly to look at the man Liz is pleading with and he too has tears streaming down his face. “I’m so sorry, baby. She took everything from me and I can’t help you.” His bottom lip quivers as he casts his gaze back to Jalinda and then lowers it to the floor in a submissive pose.

“Now that you know your daddy is a helpless, weak man, shall we begin?” Jalinda asks with excitement in her voice. She takes a pile of bones in her hands and begins to transfer them from one palm to the next. With the bones in her hands, she pressed her palms together and began to shake them as if she were playing Yahtzee. After a minute, she drops them onto the green surface. The bones are glossy and smooth, caramel and off-white color. I don’t know what she’s doing, but the look of rage on her face makes me smile. She scoops up the bones again and repeats the process. Jalinda does this several times until her eyes land on me.

This is his fault.” Jalinda hisses, pointing a perfectly polished nail my way. Tomas grinds into my back making me wince.

Aerik leans forward dragging Liz with him. “Finish this and then end him.” He hisses at Jalinda.

Jalinda closes her eyes and begins chanting something I can’t understand. A cold breeze rips through the shack and wraps around our bodies.

“NO!” Liz shouts in agony. She begins clawing and fighting Aerik. Scratching her nails down his face, punching and hitting him the best she can from her position. Aerik stands up and backhands Liz, sending her spiraling out of the chair onto the

wooden floor. Her body hits the unforgiving floor with a thud and she doesn't move.

"Finish it!" Aerik bellows through clenched teeth. He kneels where Liz is lying and moves her hair out of her face. Her nose is bleeding and her eyes are closed.

Anger and rage thrum through my body from being helpless. I was helpless once and I won't let it happen again. With renewed strength and darkness pounding into me, I lift myself off the floor with Tomas' boot still pressing into my back and stand up to my full height. I ball up my fist and slam it into Tomas's face as hard as I can. His eyes roll back into his head and he drops like a sack of potatoes. I didn't kill him, but I really wanted to.

I turn facing Aerik who has a hold of Liz by the throat again, this time instead of squeezing it, he has his hands placed so he can snap her neck with a flick of his wrist. The darkness trying to break free pounds away inside of me and I let it go. I don't hold back as I lunge forward. Just as I reach Aerik, something cold pierces my abdomen. I look down to see Jalinda's hands move away from my side. There is a silver knife wedged in my side and my blood is flowing freely from the wound.

Liz comes too in time to see her mother stab me and I watch as something inside of her changes. Gone is the peaceful, elegant, innocent angel I've come to love and in its place is a powerful, beautiful, sinful woman who takes my breath away.

Liz reaches behind her and with unforgiving strength, she slams her palm into Aerik's nose, making him bleed instantly. Then she spins on her butt and shoves a foot into his stomach, causing him to bend over and lose his breath. Before Aerik can retaliate, Liz balls up a fist and smashes into his face, knocking him out cold.

"You will pay for this, mother." She turns to her mother and advances on her so quickly, that it's all a blur.

Blood is pouring out of my wound, and I try to cover it with my hands unsuccessfully. My body is turning weak and I fall to my knees. Warmth wraps around me, cocooning me in safety as my world turns black. I wish I would have told Liz how I felt before this. I wish I had told her I loved her before all of this went down. Since I didn't, I'm going to have to face the reality she will never know.

## Chapter Twenty-One

Liz

"Help us!" I scream into the small room, hoping and praying someone will come to our aid. Ace is bleeding and I can't stop it. His eyes slide open for a brief moment before closing again. He's still warm to the touch, so I know we still have time. This isn't something I'm capable of taking care of. This is out of my element.

Strong arms pull me out of the way. I protest and fight, not letting Ace out of my sight. "Let us fix this." I look up into the familiar eyes of my father and brother. The haze and hatred that was clouding their vision are gone. In its place are clear blue eyes like my Pawpaw had.

"If he dies, I will end you," I warn, taking a chance my dad or brother won't harm Ace.

"I know, baby girl and I'm so sorry for everything I put you through," Dad responds.

"Me too. I don't know what happened to me." Tomas responds shaking his head like he's trying to clear it.

I'm shocked and speechless. Were they under some sort of spell?

Stone and Tex come barging into the small room and pull their guns, aiming them at

my dad and Tomas, who are working on saving Ace.

“What the fuck!” Stone’s deep growl has the hair on the back of my arms standing on end.

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“That’s not necessary,” My dad responds without looking up. “I’m saving his life, train your guns on those two over in the corner if you need someone to shoot.”

Tex glances at me and I nod my head. “My mother and Aerik tried to force me to marry Aerik and then when it didn’t work, she tried to kill Ace while Aerik tried to kill me. I never thought I’d say this, but my father and twin are innocent in all of this.” I point to Jalinda and Aerik in the corner, unconscious. “This is all their doing. I’m not sure how, but they drugged my dad and Tomas.”

“It’s been happening for years,” Tomas confesses as he holds Ace’s wound with his bloody hands. “At first, I tried to fight it, but then I was too tired to continue to fight them off and just went with it.” My dad nods his head as he leans over Ace’s body. He’s chanting something I’ve heard Memaw and Pawpaw chant but I could never get the hang of this type of Voodoo.

“There, that should do it so we can move Ace safely back to Pawpaw’s house.” My dad stands up and wipes his bloody hands on his dress pants. “If you’ll allow me, Rose, I would like to come back with you and watch over Ace. He’s done something I never could and I will forever be indebted to him. He sacrificed his life to save yours.”

He called me Rose. He hasn’t called me Rose in years. The sadness in my father’s eyes is my undoing. I don’t know if I’m being an idiot for trusting him, but I’m willing to take that chance to have a relationship with my father.

I nod my head with a lump in my throat, “Of course, but you’ll be under heavy watch.” I gesture to Stone who’s standing over Aerik’s unconscious body with a snarl



on his lips. He dips his head toward me, silently telling me he will end anyone who messes with me or Ace. I take the place where my dad was and grab ahold of Ace's warm hand.

Looking around the room, I realize someone is missing. "Where's Duke?" I ask.

"Outside. He didn't want anyone to get the jump on us if we were all distracted in here." Tex responds, not taking his gun off my mother. "What do you want us to do with these two?"

"I don't care what happens to them," I respond. Tex aims his gun at my mother's head. She's awake and glaring at me like I was the one who committed this crime on my Memaw's death day.

"Wait." My father says, stopping Tex from putting a bullet in her brain. "Look, I know she has done a lot of wrong, but there was a time in our lives when she wasn't this way. She was a loving human being. Let me try something and if it doesn't work..." My dad trails off and exhales a deep breath, looking up at the ceiling. "If it doesn't work, you can shoot her." That has to be hard for him to allow.

I watch as Tex lowers his weapon. "Fine, but if she tries anything, and I mean anything, I won't hesitate to put a bullet in her brain or yours." From the look in his eyes, I wouldn't doubt he'd do it and not bat an eye.

My dad takes hesitant steps toward my mother. Tomas follows him, ready to help. "Grab Memaw's stones on the tables scattered through the room." Tomas does what he asks. "Tex, will you help me move Jalinda to the spot with the pentagram on the floor and then help me hold Jalinda down? I have to make sure she is very still for this next process."

Tex and my father move a kicking and screaming Jalinda to the center of the room.

Tex spots some rope hanging on one of the outer walls and grabs it. He ties my mother's feet and knees then threads the rope through eye holes drilled into the floor by her feet, inside the circle. Then he wraps the rope around her torso, holding her arms at her sides. My dad ties the rope around her shoulders and threads it through eye holes drilled into the floor above her head. Jalinda fights them both the entire time, but she is no match for their strength.

Tomas comes over with all the stones he can find. "Good, job. Now, place them around her entire body as close as you can get them, without touching her." Tomas does what my dad tells him. Once he's done, my dad places several candles on my mother's body, "If you move, Tex will kill you. I know you're not a bad person, Jalinda, you're just lost. If you want to survive this, hold as still as possible." My dad leans down and kisses my mom on the forehead. "I love you always and forever."

He begins chanting as he lights each candle. My mother screams bloody murder but doesn't move. Warm and cold air whips around us as my father's chanting gets louder and louder over my mother's screams. This goes on for fifteen minutes, and neither of us moves as we watch with rapt attention as my father tries to save my mother. Suddenly a heavy boom shakes Memaw's shack, it gets eerily dark and quiet before the sun comes back into the room bringing a warmth across my skin.

My dad quickly removes all the candles on my mother's still body and then proceeds to remove all the stones surrounding her. She hasn't opened her eyes or taken a breath since the light came back into the shack. I don't know if she's alive or not.

"Dad?" I ask with a tremble in my voice. My mother might have been trying to kill me and Ace, but I know that wasn't her. It wasn't the woman I remember growing up.

"Jalinda, come on baby, open your eyes." My dad begs. He gathers her into his arms and holds on tight. "Come on, love. Breath."

I can't be here any longer. If my mom doesn't survive, I don't know how I'll feel now. Ace's hand tightens against mine and I look down. He looks up at me, his whiskey eyes are full of sympathy. "Sweet Cheeks."

My nickname rolling off his lips breaks open the floodgates and tears roll down my cheeks. Ace carefully sits up and I hold onto him tightly. "I thought you were dead." I cry against his chest.

"Me too, Sweet Cheeks. Me too." Ace looks around the room. My dad is still holding onto my mom, crying into her hair. My brother is next to them, holding her limp hand. Tex and Stone have taken Aerik out of the room, hopefully to feed him to the gators and Duke is guarding us while watching my family mourn another death. "Come on, let's give them some space to deal with what happened."

I stand, helping Ace off the floor. He's moving slowly but every time he moves, his energy comes back. I don't think my dad or twin needs to follow us back, he has his own grief to deal with. Not only did he lose his mom and dad, but quite possibly his wife, too.

Duke, Ace and I walk out of my Memaw's shack. I hold my head high and raise my face to the warmth of the sun. I feel a presence wrapping around me and a light kiss on my temple. I know who that is. If my mother doesn't survive, she will be well cared for by the two people who welcomed her into their lives when my dad found his true love.

Tex and Stone come toward us with no Aerik. I don't want to know, so I don't ask. "Come on, let's head back to Pawpaw's house so Ace can rest and we can head out. I've got all I need from here." I head to the airboat with Ace, Duke and Tex following. Once everyone is on, I fire it up and we slowly make our way back to the mainland. I send up a prayer that my family can heal from this ordeal and move on, even if it's hard.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

Ace

We've been back at the Clubhouse for a couple of weeks since the whole, Jalinda and Aerik trying to kill Liz and me, fiasco. Liz hasn't left my side and I wouldn't want it any other way. We are dealing with what happened together. She quit her job at the nightclub before we left and Kayne has agreed to hire her at Savage Saints Bar when she's ready to go back to work.

I'm healing nicely from the stab wound. I don't know how and Liz is tight-lipped, but I'm thankful for it. I even asked Stone and Tex what happened and all they would say was that it was a miracle and they're still trying to process it.

Liz heard from her dad, fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, her mom is alive. He said she's different than how she was when I first met her, but only time will tell. I'm hoping for Liz's sake her mom isn't an evil psycho anymore.

Kayne wanted a sit-rep the moment we got back on what went down in Louisiana. I could only tell him what I remembered and that was up until I was stabbed. Stone and Tex filled him in on what they knew, but since they weren't in the building when everything went down, they could only tell Kayne they heard Liz screaming for help. They also said her dad saved me from death but couldn't explain how. I don't think Liz could explain it either or she wouldn't explain it. Either way, I'm good with not knowing.

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“Hey, are you listening or did I fry your brain?” Liz asks, tapping me on the chest. We’re lying in bed, naked and she’s sprawled out on top of me.

“Huh? What’d you say?” I ask, teasing her. Even though I have no clue what she said because I was lost in my head.

“I asked if you’ve heard from Rooster about the two things.” Liz folds her hands and rests her chin on them, looking up at me with those sensual blue eyes.

I blink once, then twice, trying to figure out what she’s talking about when it dawns on me. “Not yet. He’s still looking.” I wrap my arms around Liz’s back and hold her against me.

“Does he have any idea how long it’ll take?” Liz bites her lip when she asks, looking down instead of at me.

“Is there a reason why you’re in a hurry for Rooster to find them?” I counter.

Liz shakes her head no, but I know she’s lying. “Elizabeth Rose, you better tell me the truth,” I demand.

Liz’s eyes snap up to mine and there is fire in them. Good girl. Get pissed off enough to tell me the truth. “Fine. I want to fight.” Liz huffs.

“Was that so hard?”

“No,” she pouts.

“Then don’t tell me what you think I want to hear. Just tell me the truth. If you want to fight, I’ll set up a fight for you. There is nothing wrong with it, Liz.” I lift her chin so she can’t dip her chin again. “Do you hear me? There is nothing wrong with you wanting to get into the ring and fight. Besides, I find it quite sexy.” I wink.

Liz leans in and kisses me but before we can go further, my cell phone rings. “Fuck,” I growl. Liz moves off me and I climb out of bed. Finding my phone in my jeans I discarded last night, I pull it out at the same time it stops ringing. It immediately rings again and Rooster’s name flashes across the screen.

“Yeah,” I say, answering the phone.

“Bout damn time.” Rooster chuckles. “I was going to visit you but didn’t want to see you in your birthday suit. Get dressed and get down here. I’ve found something.” Rooster hangs up the phone before I can respond.

“I’ve got to see what Rooster found. Are you staying here or heading downstairs?” I ask, leaning over Liz and kissing her.

She smacks her lips together, drawing her eyebrows down in a frown. “I’ll head downstairs with you. I’m getting hungry.” Liz’s eyes drift down to my erection and she raises an eyebrow.

“Not for me, woman. I have to see Rooster.” I laugh and back away.

“That ass is such a cock-blocker. I’m going to give him hell when I see him.” Liz slides off the bed, heading to the bathroom. Before she can shut the door she mumbles, “Maybe I’ll make a voodoo doll of Rooster and when he’s getting ready to get head from Alyssa, I’ll poke him in the dick. Then I’ll be the cock-blocker.” She shuts the door and I can’t help barking out a laugh.

Rooster would lose his shit if Liz even pretended to make a Voodoo doll of him. I slide my boxers and jeans on and grab a fresh t-shirt from the closet, a clean pair of socks and my boots. I'm dressed by the time Liz comes out of the bathroom, still naked. She pouts when she sees I'm fully dressed.

"Come on, woman. Get dressed and if you're good, I'll reward you later." I tell her, smacking Liz's ass when she walks by.

"How good do I have to be? Is there a level I can't go beyond?" She asks sliding a pair of silk underwear on. She slides a Savage Saints tank top over her head with no bra. I know what she's trying to do and I have to nip it in the ass before she goes too far.

"Sweet Cheeks," I stride to Liz in three quick steps.

"Yes?" Liz asks, batting her eyes.

I nuzzle my lips against the side of her neck, making Liz putty in my hands. I nip the sensitive part of her flesh before speaking. "Put a fucking bra on or I'll have to murder someone. And I'm not feeling murderous today."

Liz inhales a sharp breath and gives me a saucy grin. "Ok, but I'm still making a Voodoo doll of Rooster. I just won't tell him I'm not going to use it against him, yet."

"Deal. I'll even help you fuck with him. I'm sure Poison will be down with it too. She's always looking for ways to fuck with one of us." I peck Liz on the lips one last time. I swat her ass, "Now get dressed."

Liz slips on a bra under her tank top and gives me a wink. God, I love this woman.

Holy shit.

I love this woman.

“Earth to Ace.” Liz snaps her fingers in front of my face. “Are you with me or did I lose you again?”



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I shake my head, trying to clear the thoughts running through my mind. “I’m here.” I rake my gaze up Liz’s sexy feet covered with black riding boots, to her long lean legs, past her stomach then my favorite thing on her body, her chest, up to her face. She’s dressed in a pair of grey leggings with Savage Saints scrawled up one side in black, a black Savage Saints tank top with Property of Ace and her red hair is pulled up in a bandanna.

“You look fantastic in my colors.” I swallow hard, curbing my growing erection. She is one fine piece of ass and I’m lucky she’s all mine.

Liz wraps her arms around my neck. “Thank you.”

Before she can distract me again, I kiss her quickly before removing her arms and pulling her along with me out of the bedroom. We make our way down the stairs hand in hand. I want to tell her I love her but I hold it back. Now isn’t the time. Not when I don’t know what I’m walking into with Rooster.

We come down the stairs to Rooster playing with his daughter Elsa, a very pregnant Alyssa, Stryker and Holly, Kayne and Poison with their baby girl Emine Eve, and Blayde and Siren sitting in the living room. This is very domestic and it makes me raise an eyebrow at the scene in front of me.

“What’s going on?” I question.

“Ace, good you’re here.” Kayne stands up but leans down to kiss Poison before whispering something in her ear. She nods her head while holding their baby. Kayne gently kisses Lillith on the top of her head. Rooster stands, gives Elsa a peck on the

cheek, gives Alyssa a heated kiss, then gives her baby bump a gentle kiss. Stryker and Blayze both kiss their women before they turn to me.

“Church.” Kayne’s gruff voice demands. “Poison is staying with the women while we attend to some Club business. Liz, you’re staying here with them.” Liz opens her mouth to give him some sass when I pin her with a glare. She snaps her mouth shut and nods her head. She’s learning.

I kiss Liz before pulling away. “You can tell the ladies your plan while I’m gone.” I wink and Liz’s eyes light up at the idea.

The five of us head to the back of the Clubhouse and enter the Chapel. Kayne takes his seat, Blayde next to him, followed by Stryker and Rooster. I take my seat when Stone slips in and shuts the door behind him. He sits across from me, his face is unreadable, hard as stone. We’re missing Tex, Duke, Butch, Maddox, Axel, Damon, Knuckles, Tatt and Rebel.

Kayne slams the gavel on the scarred table. “Only a select few are here for this because it’s in the other’s best interest to not be involved right now. Blayde will fill them in later, once we have a plan. Rooster, go ahead.”

“A couple of hours ago, I got a hit on one of the men you wanted me to find, Ace. He’s currently living an hour south of here, near Lansing. From what I gathered, he likes the three F’s. Fuck, fight and food. He likes the young boys for all three. This sick motherfucker needs to be taken down.” Rooster looks like he’s going to be sick but he trudges on.

“While I was doing some research for a job from a highly paid customer, I came across some information. This customer has asked us to look into the attack on his sixteen-year-old son. His son won’t say what happened, but after reading the details from the police report, it fits with what happened to you, Ace. So, I did some digging

and it turns out these men are the ones responsible for your attack and I'm seeing a pattern of more attacks. The man who hired us to take care of this problem said if we do a good job, there will be more business heading our way. Prez, I'm seeing this as a way to get out of the drug and gun trade."

"Aye, I agree. We'll take it to vote when it comes to it." Kayne responds.

Rooster turns his laptop around and my stomach feels like it's in my throat. I do everything I can to keep what little food I have down. Staring at me are the men nightmares are made of. Their cold, black eyes and smirks are something I will never forget. Rage pumps through my blood.

"I want them both in The Cage tonight." My voice is deep and deadly. "Together." I stand up from my seat and leave Church, not looking back.

I spot Liz with Poison and Emine in the kitchen sitting at the breakfast nook and I pause. Liz is holding Kayne and Poison's little girl on her lap and they're giggling and playing together. Would she be this good or even better with our kids? Where the fuck did that come from? What the hell is wrong with me? I'm too fucked up to even think about having kids, but damn, if this woman stops the rage thrumming through my body just by looking at her, maybe I can do this family thing.

A shoulder gently nudges my arm and I see Kayne out of the corner of my eye. "She's good for you, brother. Don't fuck it up and let her get away."

"Not planning on it, Prez."

"Good." Kayne turns his head to look at me. "Listen, I know what this will do to you. Who do you want there with you?"

"Stone, Liz, Rooster, Blayde and you." There is no hesitation when I answer Kayne.

“Do you want Poison to come?”

“Yes, she can stay with Liz. I’ll feel better knowing there is someone Liz trusts watching her back when I can’t.” I nod my approval.

“Ok, I’ll have Rooster get it set up and hopefully this shit ends tonight.” Kayne slaps me on the back before entering the kitchen and joining Poison, Emine and Liz.

Liz spots me watching and she dips her head in acknowledgement. I don’t know how, but she knows what I need when I need it. And right now, I need a few minutes alone to process this and get my head on straight.

I head for the garage to the left of the Clubhouse. Tex, Duke and Blayde are out here tinkering around. My hands are vibrating with the need to ride. Blayde spots me coming and meets me halfway.

“Wanna ride?” He asks, motioning to our bikes.

“Yup.”

“Fast or slow?”

“Fast.”

“You got it.”

We mount our bikes and fire them up. Taking off, once we reach the pavement, I open the throttle and let everything go. Blayde keeps up with me as we shift gears, letting the world pass us by. After three hours of just riding, the sun is setting, creating an eeriness, which I find ominous for what’s going to happen tonight. Blayde and I turn down the driveway and pull into our parking spots. I figured Liz and Siren would be out here when we pulled in, but neither of them came out. That’s strange. I can hear another rumble of a bike heading our way from the distance. I set my kick stand down and wait in the seat of my bike for whoever is coming. It sounds like they’re coming in hot and heavy. The rumble grows louder and I recognize Butch’s bike. He’s back from whatever Kayne sent him on with Detective Kendrick.

Butch pulls onto the driveway and doesn’t stop until he’s in his parking spot. He removes his helmet without saying a word to either Blayze or me and heads right into the Clubhouse. I look at Blayze but he shrugs his shoulders. We dismount our bikes and head inside. I spot Butch in the kitchen drinking shots of whiskey. He releases a loud belch before he sets his glass down.

“Fuck, I needed that. That woman is a tornado! She’ll be the death of me sooner or later.” Butch grumbles before pouring another shot.

“Do you want to tell us what you had to do and where you’ve been for the past month?” I ask.

“No.” One word and Butch leaves the kitchen disappearing with his bottle of whiskey and his bad attitude.

“That was...pleasant,” I mumble.

“Don’t worry about Butch. He’ll come to us when he’s ready. Right now, we need to get you ready for tonight.” Blayde slaps me on the back, setting my teeth on edge. “Poison, Kayne, Liz and Stone are already at The Cage. Kayne didn’t know how long we’d be gone and he wanted to get the ladies safe and secure before all the assholes show up. Once you’re ready, we’ll head on over and take care of business.”

“That explains where Liz and Poison are, but where are Siren and Alyssa?”

“Siren, Alyssa, Holly, Stryker, Tex, Duke, Maddox and Damon are split between Stryker’s house and Rooster’s house with the kids. Everyone else that isn’t going with us is staying here with the Bunnies and watching over them. We don’t know what’s going to go down or how tonight will affect us, but Kayne figured it would be beneficial for everyone if we split up instead of being in one place. These guys you’re taking out are into some dark shit and have connections in the dark web. Kayne didn’t want blowback on the ladies.” Blayde explains.

“Will Poison and Liz be OK or should I have them go to Stryker’s house?” Now I’m worried I made the wrong decision in bringing those two with us.

Blayde shakes his head, “Nah. They’ll be protected by us.”

I frown, “If it gets bad, promise me you’ll get Liz and Poison out of there.” Blayde nods his head but doesn’t promise. “Promise me, brother. I wouldn’t be able to handle it if something happened to Liz or Poison.”

“Fine, but I’m positive they’ll be well guarded and protected tonight.” Blayde approaches me, “I need you to focus on what you’re doing, not everything else. We have that covered.”

Fuck, I hope he does. If things go sideways, the last thing I want or need is for Liz to get hurt because of what I need to do.

“Ok, Blayde. I’ll trust you to watch my Ol’ Lady.”

We leave the Clubhouse with Rooster and make our way to The Cage. Tonight is do or die. Either I finish this or Liz watches me die.

I’m hoping for the former, but not everything is handed to me. I’ll have to fight my way back to the top and take back what these two assholes took from me years ago. I just hope I’m strong enough to do it.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

Liz

Kayne leads Poison and me into the building Ace took me to a while ago called The Cage with Stone bringing up the rear. I’m not sure why we had to leave before Ace and Blayde got back from their ride. I really wanted to see Ace before he stepped into The Cage and wish him luck, but Kayne said it wasn’t safe. If it’s not safe, then why are we here? I don’t ask these questions, even though I want to. Ace has expressed numerous times that I don’t question Kayne. His word is law and if I am disrespectful, it’s not me that gets the punishment but Ace. He has enough to worry about tonight rather than me being an asshole. So, I keep my mouth shut and follow along like a good little sheep, even though I don’t want to. There isn’t anyone in here yet, except for the Emcee, Seth. He nods his dark head in our direction and gestures for Kayne to meet him. They step up to each other and shake hands.

“I heard we have a couple of special guests tonight,” Seth says to Kayne.

Kayne nods his head, his eyes cut to me, warning me not to question his remark.

“Aye, we do. But let’s keep that on the down low.”

Seth doesn’t say a word and gestures for us to follow. I look at both Kayne and Seth in confusion and my forehead wrinkles trying to figure out what Kayne is talking about. Before I can ask what Kayne means, Seth leads us up a set of stairs hidden from view and opens a door.

“You’ll be in here tonight. Consider this VIP Access for you beautiful ladies.” Seth motions with his hand for Poison and me to enter and we do. “The door can only be opened from the inside unless you have this special key, which no one but myself has. I will hand it over to Kayne so he has access to get in here if you need something. You ladies will be safe here, and still be able to see everything that is going on. The windows are one-way, double-paned, bulletproof glass. You can see out, but no one can see you unless you flip the switch on the wall.”

I look around the vast room and take in my surroundings. There are huge picture windows overlooking The Cage below. There are soft leather seats placed strategically around the room for anyone to sit anywhere and still see all of the action. There is a fully stocked bar at the back of the room and a couple of bathrooms off to the right. Under my feet is a dark plush carpet that my feet sink into. Tables are set up next to each seat, some are tall to stand at and others are level with the furniture. Paintings and photos of previous MMA fighters line the walls around us. This room is comfortable and made for someone with high security.

“Thanks, Seth. We owe you one.” Kayne reaches out to shake Seth’s hand while I wander further into the room.

“Only thing I ask is when Ace takes over with that beautiful woman, he keeps me on. I’m as loyal to him as they come and his safety is my number one priority.” Seth responds grabbing Kayne’s hand. They shake on it.



“Can I ask why?” Kayne questions.

“Of course. If you’re going to be my new bosses, boss, you should know. Back when I was a teenager, Ace and his little brother Spencer took me under their wings. They kept me out of the bad shit and showed me I can still be me, even if others don’t approve. I might not be a strong fighter like the two of them, but no matter what, they’ve always had my back, just as I will always have theirs. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to leave you to it and get shit around for tonight.” Seth backs out of the room after he hands Kayne the key.

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

I pour Poison and me a couple of drinks then take them to the loveseat Poison is sitting on, next to Kayne. She takes a sip and hums her approval. “Girl, this is fantastic, what is it?”

“It’s Casa Amigo Blanco Tequilla with lemon-lime soda. It’s my favorite mixed drink.” I answer, taking a drink of my own.

“Don’t get too drunk on me, Poison,” Kayne says while nuzzling Poison’s neck. “I’ll need you to be able to hang on, later.” He raises a blonde eyebrow and Poison giggles.

“Don’t worry, Kayne. I’m sure I’ll be able to hang on, later.” She wiggles her eyebrows at him. Kayne leans in and plants a steamy kiss on Poison’s lips and I have to look away. I feel like I’m intruding on a private moment whenever I’m around these two. Kayne reluctantly pulls away, whispering I love you to Poison and stands up, adjusting himself. He cants his head to the door and Stone and him leave. I hear the lock in place and take a calming breath.

Looking through the double-pane windows, the floor below us is filling up with spectators waiting for the fights. None of them know what’s about to go down, but the tension radiating from them is seeping everywhere, putting me on edge. Who are the special guests tonight? Me and Poison or someone else? Is there something going on I am not aware of?

“Liz, will you chill? You’re making me nervous.” Poison settles her hand on my bouncing leg. I didn’t even realize it was moving it.

“Sorry. I don’t know why I’m on edge. Do you know what’s going on? Why we’re up here instead of down there with Ace?”

Poison shakes her head. “Kayne said it was Club business.” I roll my eyes. “Ace wanted you up here tonight.”

“I’m so annoyed with the,” I raise my hands using air quotes, “Club business.” I lower my hands. “If Ace’s life is on the line, I should know what to expect.”

I sound like a whiney little brat. So, I do the next thing that comes to mind. I cross my arms over my chest, flop back in my seat and stew like a sulky teenager. Poison laughs at my antics.

“Listen, Liz.” She leans forward getting my attention. Her normally smiling face is gone. In its place is Kayne’s Ol’ Lady. The one everyone respects and listens to. The one in charge next to Kayne. I uncross my arms and sit up straighter. “Sometimes when the guys say Club Business, it’s to protect us. We might disagree with it, but sometimes the less we know the better. I get you’re new to this world and that’s OK. Just know every member of this MC will do everything they can to protect their family and protect us. If that means some things are kept between them and not shared with us, then we need to learn how to adapt to it. We don’t have to like it, but we do have to accept it and do our part to stay diligent in our surroundings. Does that make sense?”

“It does, but I still don’t like it.”

“Neither do I sometimes, but like I said, I learn to adapt.”

“How do I adapt to this situation? I see what’s going to happen and I want to be down there offering Ace my support, but I’m stuck up here.”

“You adapt by staying up here where Ace knows you are safe from whatever is going on down there. No matter what you see or what happens, if you leave this room, Ace will worry and it will distract him from getting this job done. Which could lead to him being hurt badly or killed.”

Well, shit. When Poison puts it that way, the last thing I want to do is get Ace hurt or killed. “How do you know so much about this?”

“Honey, I grew up in this life. Drex, who I thought was my father, was the President of Deadly Sins MC.”

“What happened to him? If you don’t mind me asking.” I question, intrigued by Poison.

“Siren and I killed him.” Poison says it so flippant and takes a sip of her mixed drink.

“Wait, what? How?”

“Let’s just say this particular Club Business Siren and I were involved in was for our peace of mind, which is why Kayne pulled us in. It’s a story for another day, look, Ace is about to go into the cage.” Poison points out the window.

Ace steps into The Cage in a pair of shorts, his hands are tapped up. He’s barefoot and shirtless, his powerful muscles rippling with tension. He’s focused on the two men entering The Cage together. One is as tall as Ace, built like a bull with all brawn and no brains. The other man is shorter than both Ace and the other guy but evil radiates off his skin. I can feel it from here and it sends a shiver down my spine.

“He’s going against two men!” I leap from my seat and pace in front of the windows, agitated. “Does anyone know what this will do to Ace?” I am worried about his mental state once this match is over.

“Kayne knows, Liz. Now stop pacing, you’re making me nervous.”

I give Poison an incredulous look. “I’m making you nervous? This whole situation is fucked up. I should be down there in The Cage with Ace, not locked up here in some tower like a fucking damsel in distress!” I slam my fist onto the window. “DAMN IT!”

Poison makes her way over to me, “Liz, look around The Cage.” I do as she requests. “There are brothers all over protecting Ace, not to mention Seth and his men won’t let anything happen to Ace. He needs to finish this job, Liz.”

I see Stone next to the door, ready to plow into it at a moment's notice. Kayne, Blayde and Rooster are surrounding the area with Seth’s men, keeping people back and ready to act in a heartbeat. I breathe a little easier, but not much, not until this is over with.

The speakers come to life in the room and the voices make me jump. “Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we have a special fight in store for you. Our man, Ace will be battling not one, but two men in The Cage. The first man is from Lansing, Michigan, weighing in close to two hundred and fifty pounds, standing at six foot three inches, Steven.” Most of the crowd boos and some cheer. The cheering side has Kayne and Blayde alert to where they are. “Up next, he comes in a six foot even, weighing one hundred eighty pounds, also from Lansing, Michigan, Anthony.” The crowd gives the same response, except this time the cheers are more widespread, causing Kayne and Blayde to check their surroundings. I focus on the crowd and from my vantage point, I see a handful of men dressed in business casual moving around The Cage, just out of Kayne’s sight. “Tonight's event will be winner takes all. Only one man will walk out of The Cage.”

“Oh fuck.” My blood turns cold, making my stomach drop to my toes. Vomit works its way up my throat and I do what I can to hold it back.

I have to get down there. I have to help Ace.

### Chapter Twenty-Four

Ace

The bell dings and the two assholes advance on me. Like before, Steven tries to sneak up behind me, while Anthony tries to distract me. But unlike last time, I'm a lot stronger and a lot quicker than these two pedophiles. My elbow lands in Steven's solar plexus, knocking the wind out of him. I hear a grunt as he backs up. Moving my body, I'm facing both Steven and Anthony with the cage at my back. I know Kayne and Blayde are out there in the crowd, watching my back, so I'm not worried but I keep alert in case someone sneaks by him.

Anthony's fist swings toward my face, but I duck at the last second to avoid his blow. Steven's knee comes up at the same time I duck, and I can't move out of his way fast enough. It connects with my chest but doesn't do much damage. I kick out with my left foot, connecting with Steven's chest again and the blow staggers him back a few steps. I swing with my right fist, connecting with Anthony's face, but not before he gets in a good hit to my ear, making it ring.

Together, they advance on me again, like they did when I was younger and a flashback of how they held me down assaults my mind. I was weak and vulnerable then. They pin me to the mat, face down as one punches me in the head and the other kicks my stomach. I try to get up, but one puts their boot on my back, forcing me to stay down. They kick and punch until my body is bruised and bloody.

"Does this look familiar, Steven?" Anthony hisses in my ear.

“Oh, yeah, Anthony. I remember that little sweet virgin ass.” Steven’s hot breath hits the side of my face and rage builds inside of me.

I let the darkness take over, but something is holding me back from grabbing ahold of it fully.

“GET UP, ACE!” I hear Liz’s voice shout through the crowd. “GET YOUR ASS UP NOW!”

How is she down here? Is she in danger? I thought she was locked in the room above me. My eyes drift up to where Liz and Poison are supposed to be, but I can’t see them through the tint.

“GET UP, ACE!” Liz screams and it’s coming from directly in front of me. I see my Sweet Cheeks, my dark Voodoo princess with her bright blue eyes, pleading with me to fight back. Her fingers wrap around the links and she leans in close. “Get up and fight, Justin. I need you to fight.” Her voice cracks and tears roll down her cheeks. “I need you with me. I love you.”

I close my eyes and channel everything I have inside of me. I tap into the darkness lurking under my skin. My skin is vibrating from pent-up hatred toward these two men. How they ruined my childhood and almost ruined my life. I will not let them ruin me anymore.

With a loud snarl, I push with everything I have, knocking Anthony over. Steven looks stunned so I attack him first. I wrap my arms around his middle and plow him into the cage. I grip his neck with my taped hands and squeeze until he’s tapping me on the arm. I squeeze tighter and fling him to the ground toward Anthony.

“I’m not done yet, motherfuckers.” I hit my stride and attack both of them at the same time. My right fist lands directly into Anthony’s face, shattering his nose. He goes



down painfully clutching it.

Steven tries to take my legs out from under me, but I dodge it at the last second and jump into the air. When I land, My fist rains down a deadly blow to his throat, crushing his windpipe. Steven gasps for air with no success. With him out of commission, I can go after the leader, the one who starred in my nightmares all those years ago. I should play with him, but I'm ready to get this over with.

Anthony spots me coming for him and he tries to wrap his arms around my waist to slow me down. When he connects with my body, I grab him by the head and spin him around, so his back is to my chest. My arms lock around his neck and I squeeze.

"Say goodbye motherfucker. You will never hurt another boy again." I adjust my hold on his neck with my hands and twist until I hear a crack vibrate up my arms. Anthony's body falls forward, his cold, dark eyes staring into the crowd, not seeing anything.

The crowd goes crazy, thirsting for more. Steven is still alive, trying to breathe with his hand around his throat. "END HIM! END HIM! END HIM!" The spectators chant with every beat of my heart.

I approach Steven and look into the crowd, getting them riled up. With one final vicious roar from my lips, I drive my fist into Steven's face, shoving his nose into his brain. Blood sprays everywhere and he collapses on the mat.

The bell dings and the doors open, allowing me out. My breathing is ragged and harsh as I step from the ring straight into my woman's arms. Even though I'm covered in blood, sweat and spit, Liz still flings herself at me and I hold on tight.

"Did you mean it?" I ask, my breath fanning across Liz's ear.

She pulls her head back to stare into my eyes. “Every word. I love you, Ace.”

“I love you, too.” My lips descend on Liz’s and I kiss her like she’s my air. My last breath.

I pull my lips from her and we are ushered into the locker room with Stone leading the way, Blayde and Rooster trailing behind us and Seth’s men circling us. I don’t know if what I did tonight will change the outcome of what Savage Saints is trying to move into by helping those who have been wrong, and the law can’t do anything about it, but if it does, I hope it moves us in the right direction.

Stone opens my door and Liz and I enter. He shuts it on us, leaving Liz and I alone for the first time since before Church.

I wrap my arms around Liz’s shoulders and pull her against me. Images of us together the last time we were in here assault me and I harden in my shorts. I press Liz against my growing erection and kiss her hard.

“Say it again,” Liz’s husky voice breathes against my lips.

“I love you, Elizabeth Madeline-Rose LeRoux.” My voice is a whisper in the wind.

“Je t’aime gros, mon beau.” Liz smiles at me.

“What the fuck does that mean?” I ask, amused.

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“It’s Cajun meaning, I love you too, my handsome,” Liz smirks.

“It sounds so much sexier in Cajun,” I answer, brushing my lips against hers. I pick Liz up and she wraps her legs around my waist.

We’re a mess of teeth and tongues as we kiss hard and fast. Liz pulls away and lifts her shirt over her head along with her bra, giving me her supple breasts. My tongue darts out and sucks one into my mouth. Liz groans, rubbing herself against my hardened shaft. If she keeps this up, I’m going to come like a teenage boy.

I set Liz down on her feet and quickly remove her leggings, panties and shoes until she’s bare in front of me. I drop my shorts and Liz licks her lips when she notices I’m primed and ready to go. “This is going to be fast, Sweet Cheeks.”

Liz approaches me with a little sway in her hips and when she gets close enough to me, I grab her and spin her around. I move us forward until Liz is leaning against the wall her ass rubbing against me. “Do it, mon beau. I’m ready.”

I follow Liz’s request and bring us both to the edge, tipping us over until we’re a mess of sweaty limbs, tangled legs and erratic breathing. This woman has changed me and for the better too. I don’t know how or when it happened but I’m thankful it did.

I kiss Liz hard once we catch our breath. “What was that for?” She asks licking her lips.

“Normally after a fight like the one I just had, I’m a mess of adrenaline and am out

for days at a time. But since you came into my life and this shit is finally over with, I don't feel that crash coming on. I feel like I can take on the world as long as you're with me."

"That's cause you love me," Liz responds giving me a peck on the lips.

"You bet your sweet cheeks I do."

We get dressed and leave the confines of the room. I never thought this nightmare would end but it did. It took several years, but now I can get on with my life with my dark Voodoo princess by my side.

## Epilogue

Ace

"Oh, shit, mon beau!" Liz screams out as I drive into her hard, I can feel her walls flutter around me and that's my signal she's about to explode and I'm following right behind her. I'm insatiable when it comes to my woman, especially when she's wearing her Ol' Lady cut, which I proudly gave to her a couple of days after I took down Steven and Anthony.

"Fuck, Sweet Cheeks, you're going to be the death of me," I respond, collapsing on the bed beside her. I'm breathing hard, trying to get oxygen in my lungs.

"Trust me, Ace. I'm not going to kill you, just keep you in shape." Liz flips over until she's straddling me, moving her hips in a seductive dance until I'm hard and ready to go again. We're a mess of sweat, bodily secretions and who knows what else, but I don't give a shit. The moment my woman sinks down onto me and shifts her hips back, all rational thoughts fly out the window.

Once we both come again, I swat Liz on the ass. "We've got to get into the shower

and get ready to go before we're late, again."

Liz pouts before her bright blue eyes light up with mischievousness. I don't like that look on her. "What's that look for?" I ask with a scowl on my face. It either means I'm going to be on the receiving end of whatever she's thinking or one of my brothers will be in her crosshairs.

"I was thinking..." Liz trails off and runs her nails down my chest. "That once the match is over, you and I can take care of some things in the ring."

Six months ago, after I killed Steven and Anthony, Kayne allowed me to buy The Cage, since I had so much pent-up energy flowing through my body, I needed something to do. So, Liz and I bought it and turned it into a sanctioned MMA ring where we host true MMA fights for both men and women. Sometimes we have dirty ones when a pedophile needs to be eliminated and we decided together to keep Seth on as the Emcee. The man might have a lot of demons on his back, but he's one hell of an Emcee. People love him.

"If you behave tonight." I answer Liz, "You have a deal."

One of her favorite places to be with me is in the ring once everyone goes home. We'll grapple and that turns into groping, which turns into us having passionate sex on the mats.

Liz squeals and climbs off me, heading into the bathroom. She shuts the door and after a few minutes, I hear the water turn on. I grab us some clothes and join her in the shower. We might be late yet again, but at least I'm satisfied and my woman is happy. That's the way it should always be.

Who knew my life would turn out this way? I know I didn't see her coming but I thank God every day for Him bringing Elizabeth Madeline-Rose LaRoux into my world, tipping it on its head and keeping me on my toes. I'm going to ask her to

marry me, once her brother and mine arrive later in the week. I know she'll say yes and I'm excited about this next adventure in our lives together.