



# Jaded Red

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**Description:** I'm Matthew "Red" Phillips, and I serve as the tech expert for L.A. Chapter of the Royal Bastards MC. Even the most notorious hackers pale in comparison to my skills. The reason for that is they got caught while I didn't.

The world is mine to control, and the dark web is where I thrive. Locating anyone, anywhere and their last meal is something I'm capable of. I can handle anything except one thing. One incident years ago changed my life forever. It hardened my heart and I swore I would never love again.

I've kept that promise for the last ten years. Now a small, sexy wisp of a woman has my head all over the place, making me experience emotions I never wanted to feel again. She will either be the death of me or my saving grace.

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# Page 1

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## Prologue

### Red

Sitting at a lonely barstool at the end of a nearly empty bar, the bass filtering through the speakers soothes my conflicted soul and steadies my racing heart. Looking around the dimly lit bar, I bring the glass of Crown and Coke to my lips and savor the whiskey flowing down my throat. The slow pace, sticky floor and stale cigarette smoke lingering in the air feels a little like back at home in Virginia. A place I want to forget, but never can. The images of the night that ruined my life come to me in full color. The squeal of tires, the shattering of glass and herscreams. Sounds I will never forget. Sounds that haunt me to this day.

This bar is neutral territory for all MC's and I had to leave my cut in my saddlebags. They don't allow any colors to fly in here. That way it keeps the peace and anyone who comes in respects the owners. If you didn't, Maggie, the owner, will put you out on your ass with a baseball bat to your knees.

Speaking of Maggie, she comes toward me with a dishtowel in her hand behind the bar. "You good, Hun?" She calls everyone Hun. I don't know if it's a southern thing or an age thing. With her dyed blonde hair tied on top of her head in a knot, to the scars on her hands from fighting, Maggie does not take shit from anyone. She might be small, but she packs a hell of a punch if you piss her off.

"I'm good for now, thanks Mags." I wink and my face flames red. She laughs shaking her head and heads back to the other few patrons sitting at the opposite end of the bar.

I've been coming here on and off the last few weeks trying to wrap my head around shit that's been happening in the club. So much drama surrounds us, I don't have time to think about my past and that's making me start to care for people after so many years of being told it was impossible. I'm doing everything I can to keep everyone safe and sometimes I need a break. Most of the guys have found their one true love and I snort. That shit isn't for me, not anymore. At one time I did love a girl and we were supposed to be together forever, according to my seventeen-year-old brain. God had other plans for us though. Now I'm here and she's...

Warm soft hands caress the back of my neck and hot breath, smelling of mint and whiskey fans against my ear, pulling me back to the present. My jeans tighten from the contact, my heart hammers in my chest and my face burns bright red. Not the first time I've had this reaction to a woman but it's the first time I don't feel guilt for enjoying her touch.

"Hey, handsome." The soft, sultry voice captivates me, leaving me speechless. She takes it as her cue to run her manicured fingers down my chest towards my hard abs and lower. My body reacts to her touch and dirty, nasty thoughts filter through my mind on what I want to do to her. But what I want is irrelevant.

I swallow hard and close my eyes, remembering things in my past that aren't buried but should be. Usually, when I do this, her face appears and any lust I have disappears. But not this time. This is the first time she hasn't come to me to make me stop. To guilt me into doing something I shouldn't be doing with her. Which is why I've never been able to go any further than some kissing with a woman. Her presence has stopped me from losing my virginity.

The woman's chest is pressed against my back and her hand roams further down to the crotch of my jeans. Wanting to see how far she'll go or what she will do, I remain still, my face and body blushing a deep red down to my toes. Just because I've never fucked a woman, and have been ridiculed by my brothers for it, doesn't mean I don't

know what I like or how I like it.

“Do you want to get out of here, handsome?” The woman asks.

Turning my head to see who this is and the beauty she possesses has me under her spell in an instant. Her long blond hair flows below her tight ass. Her tanned skin and slender figure, hugged by a little black dress, are a contrast to my pale complexion. She has light brown eyes, almost the color of the whiskey I’m drinking and her face has a little makeup. She is exquisite and captivating and the only woman who has been able to keep my attention. Trust me, other women have tried but her image always appeared any time I want to take them up on their offer and my dick deflates faster than a popped balloon.

But not this time.

“Yeah, beautiful. Let’s get out of here.” I drink the rest of my Crown and Coke, slamming my glass on the bar top. I throw a fifty down for Maggie and rest my arm around her waist. She raises a brow at what I’ve left but I don’t worry about it. Maggie will put it on credit for me and keep some for a tip.

She leads me outside the bar, the cool night air nipping at my nose. I’m throbbing against the zipper of my jeans, begging for release. This is the first time this has happened to me and I’m still blushing from hairline to toenails.

“Can we call this for what it is?” she asks as I lead her to my bike.

“And what is this?” I ask eyeing her suspiciously.

“No strings, no expectations. No ‘oh baby, you’re the best, I need more,’ one night stand.” She does her best to imitate a douche and gets damn close.

“Did I ask you for a name?” I ask.

“No.” She shakes her head, her long blond hair swishing back and forth.

“Then you have nothing to worry about,” I state, straddling my Harley and handing her my helmet. “We’re two consenting adults about to blow each other’s minds. Now strap that brain bucket on, climb your sexy ass onto the back of my bike and press your needy core against my back. If you’re lucky, I’ll even take you on my bike.” Holy shit. Where did that come from? My face might be flaming red, but I just did something I’ve never done before. I said what I wanted and she didn’t stop me.

The woman straps my helmet on her gorgeous head and scurries to get on the back of my bike. She’s sitting too far away, so I reach behind her thighs and pull her against me. Her breath catches in her throat as she wraps her arms around my waist.

Satisfied she’s hanging on and not going anywhere, I start my bike and peel out of the parking lot of the rundown bar. Her hands roam from my abs and travel south the whole ride and I’m ready to explode if her dainty fingers graze me one more time.

I spot a pay by the hour motel and quickly turn into the parking lot.

“Stay here,” I demand, putting my kickstand down and steadying the bike. I swing my leg over and hurry into the reception area. A few minutes later, I exit and am surprised to see her still on the back of my bike and looking as sexy as hell. I definitely want to do things to her on the beast.

My face heats at the sight of this beautiful woman straddling my bike with a sexy smirk on her gorgeous face. I jingle the keys and slide on in front of her, starting it up. I pull behind the seedy motel in front of our room.

“I hope the rooms are clean,” I mumble under my breath.

“We can always go back to my place or yours?” She questions.

I shake my head and think about all my brothers who will embarrass the shit out of me, “Definitely not my place.” Just thinking about my brothers giving me so much shit for this has my face flaming red, yet again.

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She thinks about it for a few moments. “I don’t think my place would be good either.”

I pop my kickstand down and motion for her to climb off. When she does, I miss the warmth of her against my back. I slide off my seat and remove my helmet from her head. A shiver passes down my spine when my fingers touch her delicate skin. She shakes out her long blond hair and the scent of coconuts and liquor penetrates my nose and if possible, I harden even more.

She walks toward the room looking over her shoulder, her whiskey eyes landing on me. “You coming?” She offers me a sultry smile and a wink.

I follow this sexy kitten inside the room and for the first time in years, I feel something for someone with no hint of guilt from my past eating away at me.

That night I lost my virginity to a beautiful, sexy blond bombshell. Many more nights followed for weeks, and my brothers were asking questions I refused to answer. Until one night she didn’t show up. She has haunted my dreams and invaded my headspace. I can’t get her out of my mind no matter how hard I try.

She’s captured my soul and my attention. Now I’m a mess because she disappeared as fast as she appeared. My dick had a taste of her, now he won’t get up for any other woman. I’m so screwed.

This is why I don’t do fucking roses or relationships. They always leave and I’m left behind. Hardening my heart and putting a cap on my dick, I’m swearing off women, yet again. No one will be able to make me change my mind. I might have given into

temptation with one woman, but I'll never, ever do it again.

## Chapter One

Red

Stepping onto the hospital elevator, I inhale the smell of antiseptic and I hold back the bile climbing its way up my throat. I hate hospitals with a passion and it seems like we're always here for one thing or another.

This time we're here for Derange and his Ol' Lady Jezebelle. They were out with Kensi shopping at the mall for baby stuff when Jezebelle's water broke in the middle of the food court. Thanks to Kensi's lead foot, they made it here on time for Jezebelle to deliver a healthy baby girl they named Naomi. I had to use my computer expertise to scrub some traffic cam footage from the illegal shit Kensi did to get here with help from her dad, who happens to be the new sheriff in the neighboring county. Go fucking figure, we are now working with the five-o instead of bribing them.

Thinking about bribes, my mind wanders back to a sexy tiny dancer with long blonde hair and California kissed skin. I don't know how she did it, but she captivated me the moment her whiskey eyes landed on me.

She seduced me that night in a way no woman has been able to. Which is why my experience with women in that way was nil, zip, zero. Ever since I was a teenager, this dancer is the only one who held me captive and she didn't show up to make me feel guilty. I know it's all in my head, the shrinks over the years have told me, but she haunts me daily. Now this mystery woman has done what others failed to do.

The way her tight core gripped my shaft, I'd let her continue to seduce me until I took my last breath. The way our bodies fit together like we were meant to be, drove me insane with lust. Now that I've had a taste of her sweet, succulent body, I don't have



issues jacking off thinking about her plump red lips wrapped around me until I released down her throat. Which she did several times.

Damn it! Now I have a raging hard on standing in an elevator with a bunch of bikers in leather and my face is burning with embarrassment. No one knows about my mystery blonde and if I have my way, they'll never know. Guilt engulfs me, thinking about this beautiful woman, while the one whom I was supposed to love is gone forever because of me.

The bell dings and the elevator doors slide open. I quickly make my way out of the stifling death contraption and walk to the windows at the end of the hallway. The summer sun shines through the thick glass, warming my skin. I need a minute to compose myself. I let the guilt over my mystery woman surround my heart until it beats a cold, dead beat inside my chest.

I don't deserve any type of happiness or even the dreaded word most of my brothers have fallen victim to. I'm too fucked up in the head. What I shared with the mystery woman never should have happened. I never should have given in. I don't deserve the things she gave me. I don't deserve the freedom I felt when we both climaxed and came the way we did. My soul is forever tarnished and I need to remember this when mystery woman sneaks back into my head. Which is often.

"Yo! Red, you coming?" Torch, our Enforcer shouts down the hallway, giving no fucks others are around. He's an intimidating motherfucker with a shaved head, tattoos running up and down his arms and his bulging muscles. But right now, with one of his twin daughters slapping his face, he isn't intimidating. But don't let that fool you. Torch will fuck you up if you make either one of his twins or Ol' Lady cry. This big fucker is drawing the attention of the nurses and they're swooning at the scene before them.

Releasing a deep sigh, I shove all the thoughts of the mystery woman out of my mind

and harden my heart again. Turning toward Torch and his daughter, I nod my head. “Let’s go.”

Torch leads the way down the long, disinfected hallway and panic starts to set in my chest. The beeping of monitors and dripping IV’s take me back to a memory I never want to bring up around my brothers. They have their own shit to deal with and don’t need mine too.

A small warm hand settles into my big palm startling me. I look down and Nina, Capone’s little girl, looks up at me with innocent eyes as black as her father’s. She gives me a sweet smile and it settles the panic clawing its way up my chest. Nina has a calming effect on all of us brothers.

I don’t know how this little girl settled me, but she did and I’m grateful for it. “Thank you,” I whisper to Nina.

“You’re welcome, Red. You looked like you could use a friend.” Her innocent comment takes my breath away.

Do I need a friend? I have my brothers, but they have their Ol’ Ladies and ankle biters. They always have my back as I always have theirs. But I’m not number one with them anymore. I’m alone and prefer it this way. Unless the mystery woman makes another appearance. I wouldn’t object to having her back, or the heaven between her thighs, and pouty lips. I wouldn’t mind making her mine.

The sound of boots stomping down the sterile hallway pulls me back into the present. Aftermath is heading right for me. The look on his face threatens pain but I’m not worried. He always has that look on his face, except when it comes to his Ol’ Lady Kensi Donovan.

He stops right in front of Nina and me and releases a harsh breath. “There you are!”

Aftermath growls. His pissed-off gaze lands on Nina and she stands tall, not intimidated by Aftermath. Her tiny hand still in mine trembles a little but the seven-year-old squares her shoulders and meets Aftermath's gaze. Just like her father, fear of nothing or no one. Lord have mercy on any boy who catches her attention.

"I haven't gone anywhere, Aftermath. You're paranoid." Nina rolls her eyes and tugs my hand to move. We walk toward a room. "I told you I was going to look for Red. If you didn't have your tongue down Kensi's throat, you would have heard me." Nina says over her little shoulder.

Aftermath's face turns bright red. Redder than mine and his mouth opens and closes a few times. "Don't worry Aftermath, your secret is safe with us. Right, Red?" Nina winks as we walk toward Jezebelle's room.

I turn and walk backward laughing at Aftermath. "Right, squirt. Aftermath's secret is safe with us." I zip my lips and act like I'm throwing away a key. Nina grins slyly at me and I know Aftermath is in deep shit. She's up to something and will blackmail him until he's had enough and confesses to Capone. I've seen her do it with a few of her other uncles and it was hilarious. I came back from a run to find Derange dressed in a pink tutu, gold tiara sitting crooked on top of his big head and clown makeup on his hairy face playing tea party with Nina and Aerial. He still won't tell anyone what Nina has on him and probably never will. I am guessing it has to do with Nina finding him and Jezebelle in a compromising situation.

Capone tries to shield his daughter from the indiscretions of living a biker's life, but sometimes she is sneaky. I've caught her a few times trying to sneak out from the back of the Clubhouse where the rooms are to hide while we have a party. She wasn't happy, but I wouldn't budge. No freaking way will I give her dirty details on me. Capone installed a huge gaming room, home theater and anything kids her age and teenagers would want back there to keep them occupied. But sometimes Nina has a wild streak about her and rebels. She is going to be the death of us all when she hits

her teenage years, which isn't too far away.

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We enter Jezebelle's room with Aftermath hot on our heels before he can retort and plead his case with Nina. Not that she'd listen anyway.

Derange has a tiny little pink bundle in his huge arms and he has a massive, proud grin on his face as her tiny finger wraps around his much larger pointer finger.

I avoid the kid, not that I don't like them, but they scare the ever-loving shit out of me and kiss Jezebelle on the forehead, making Derange growl. I laugh before handing her a little teddy bear for the little bundle.

"Thank you, Red." Jezebelle smiles gratefully.

"You're welcome. There's a tiny camera and microphone inside the bear and I downloaded an app on both your phones, so you can check on the little one at any time as long as this bear is with her. You'll have eyes and ears on her at all times." I smile, proud of what I pulled off in a few short hours.

"That's so thoughtful." Jezebelle gushes.

"Want to keep my new niece safe." I shrug my shoulders, my face burns bright with embarrassment. All the Royal Bastard kids have a bear and when they get older, they'll have jewelry to wear that's a tracking device. I need to make sure every member is safe.

"Some woman is going to be very lucky someday, Red," Jezebelle says looking at the bear thoughtfully.

My face heats and Torch mouths off, “He has to actually talk to a woman first and not just his hand.” He motions jerking off with his hand not holding his sleepy daughter. Daisy, holding their son, swats him hard on the chest.

“Be nice, Torch. No wonder Red won’t tell anyone anything. I wouldn’t either.” Daisy bitches him out. She’s right but I’m not saying a word. My secrets are mine and mine alone.

A little while later, a nurse comes in to take the baby for a checkup and kicks us all out. Capone, Danyella, Blayze, Monica, Nina, Tiny and Dagger head back to the Clubhouse, since the girls are getting sleepy. Aftermath, Kensi, Derange and I follow the nurse down to the nurse’s station, letting Jezebelle get some much needed sleep. We watch from the glass window separating us from the newborns.

Kensi sighs and Aftermath wraps his arms around her. “Soon, babe. That’ll be us.” He kisses her hair gently.

Kensi shakes her head. “Not until Nadia is found, Aftermath. I want my best friend back home safe before I have a baby. I’d like to have all the missing women and girls back but I know that’s impossible.”

This is the first time I’ve heard about this. “How long has she been missing?” I ask.

“Since Aftermath found me stabbed at the strip club. I’ve been looking everywhere with no luck.” Kensi sighs again in defeat. After all she went through at the hands of those Russian fuckers, I’m not surprised her heart is aching for her friend.

“Why didn’t you tell me? I would have helped. It’s what I do.” I’m kind of pissed that Kensi or Aftermath didn’t ask for my help.

“I didn’t want to bother you,” Kensi replies. A blush crept across her cheeks.

“Kensi, look at me.” When her hypnotic, multicolored eyes meet mine, a shimmer of tears swell. “It’s never a bother to help a sister out. That’s what you are to me and the rest of the Royal Bastards. You’re an Ol’ Lady which means you are family and we protect our family. I know you’re used to doing things alone, but understand me, Kensi. You are not alone. Not anymore.”

When I finish my little impromptu speech, Kensi and Aftermath are both grinning at me. “What?” I bark out and my face turns bright red. I can feel the flush to my hairline.

“And there it is.” Aftermath laughs. Fucker did it on purpose.

Ignoring him, I turn to Kensi. “Do you have a picture of your friend Nadia?”

Kensi pulls out a photo of a young woman with long blonde hair, tanned skin, and legs stretching for miles standing next to the infamous Krimson and Nolan Ryan. My jaw drops when I realize who I’m looking at.

“No fucking way,” I mutter under my breath.

The woman missing is someone I thought I’d never see again. My world just flipped on its ass and I don’t think it’ll ever go back again.

## Chapter Two

### Red

Her body molds perfectly to mine as her naked thighs straddle my waist. Long blonde hair cascades over her hard nipples as she sinks down onto my throbbing shaft. We’ve met up several times over the last month but something about tonight feels different. The way her body moves with mine feels different. It feels more. More of

everything. Like I cannot breathe without her and she cannot breathe without me. I shouldn't be having these feelings. The shrink told me it was impossible for me to feel any kind of affection after what happened. This woman brings it out in me and I can't stop it. I don't know if I want to stop it either.

"Fuck," she moans pulling me back to the present. Her body bows above me as I hold onto her hips. My hips slam up while pulling her down onto me. "I'm going to come, Matt." She shouts as she squeezes me, sucking everything out of me.

I flip us over and push her knees to her chest. Sweat beads off our skin as I pound into her over and over. She squeezes my shaft while I thum her nub with my finger, stimulating her body and not letting up. She throws her head back as I take us to the edge and we fly over, up and up and up until we both come crashing down. When I open my eyes, she's smiling at me with a perfect, just fucked look on her face. My heart skips a beat.

This cannot be happening, not to me, but it is and I'm powerless to stop it.



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“Red!” Capone slams his gavel on the scarred table dragging me out of this passion filled memory. “Want to fill us in on what the fuck is going on, brother? You look like shit.”

I shrug, holding back what I want to reveal. It's not time yet. If I have my way it'll never be time and I'll never reveal my secrets. Many of my brothers have thought the same thing and they opened up. Not me though. I've learned how to control my emotions and after all the shit I went through in prison and when I got out, I don't speak of my past. It's how I cope.

“Prez, I'm looking into Kensi's friend's disappearance.” My face flames red at the thoughts of the things Nadia and I did, but I do what I can to control my emotions. Now that I have a name to my dirty fantasies, I let it roll through my mind, loving the way her name sounds.

“Do you have any news?” Capone asks.

I shake my head. “Only she's been missing for a few months. I think it was Lattimer. All signs point to him but he's covering his tracks.” I snap my mouth shut so I don't say anything else, but Blayze picks up on it.

“You look like you want to say something else.” Blayze leads and I follow.

“I figured out how she's connected to the club besides Kensi's friend. Which is why I don't think her missing is random. It was planned.” I pause before sending my brothers into an uproar. “Nadia is Nolan Ryan's little sister. One his father had and abandoned. He kept her hidden from the world.” As I predicted, everyone starts

shouting and talking over each other causing chaos. Capone slams his gavel on the table while releasing a shrill whistle, silencing the room. Everyone shuts the hell up and gives Capone their attention.

“Red, are you sure?” Capone asks.

I nod in confirmation. “One hundred percent positive, Prez. She is supposed to be protected by Krimson, her crew and the Savage Saints MC. Here’s the kicker though, Krimson might have an idea she exists, but Nolan doesn’t.”

Capone tightens his grip on his ivory gavel, his jaw ticking. “Red, see what you can dig up on their father. Anything you can find will be useful. I’ll be making a phone call to Krimson and Kayne. If shit goes down, we might have visitors in the near future. Trigger, have the prospects clean shit up. Tiny, Dagger and Torch get the patch bunnies in line and make sure they understand their place here. Get them to clean out all our spare rooms. Derange, Blayze and I will get the Ol’ Ladies on board and have them do the shopping in preparation.” Capone slams his gavel on the table, dismissing us.

I’m the first one out the door and in my sanctuary. I take a deep breath and sit at my computers, searching for anything I can find on Nadia, Nolan, their piece of shit father and anything else I can get my hands on. I’m obsessed and not afraid to admit it. Nadia wormed her way into my heart and under my skin. I haven’t felt anything since Nadia came on to me at the bar. I don’t know how many times I’ve gone back in the last few months, hoping she’s there but disappointed when she isn’t. I’d blame her for all these emotions I was feeling when she didn’t show, but in reality, I let her pull me in. I let her make me feel again and the time we had together are memories I want to cherish and not tarnish with my past. I’m locking the past away and focusing on finding Nadia.

Several hours or possibly days later, a loud knock on my door draws my focus back

to the real world and out of the dark web. There is some sick, twisted shit out there I found trying to find Nadia and Nolan's father. From what I've discovered, they're better off without him.

Capone pops his head in and I don't look his way. Codes and images flash across my three monitors. Every once in a while, I'll check the camera's security feeds above my head or use the bathroom but I don't stop searching for Nadia. I can't.

"Red, did you hear me?" Capone asks.

I shake my head but don't stop what I'm doing. I'm so close my fingertips are buzzing as they fly across the keyboard. "No, what'd you say, Prez?"

"When's the last time you ate or slept?" The concern in his voice makes me pause and think.

"Right before Church, why?" I respond. Suddenly my chair spins around and I almost fall on my ass. "What the fuck?" I shout, righting myself.

Capone gets right in my face. His black eyes are screaming murder. "Church was three fucking days ago, Red. What the fuck is going on?"

My eyes widen in surprise. "No, it wasn't. It was like three hours ago." I argue.

"No. It was three days ago. I gave you your space and privacy but now it's time to come clean. Why are you so obsessed with finding Nadia? I haven't seen you like this since you first came here looking for those men who sent you to prison. I left it alone then, but not anymore. What's going on, Red?" Capone takes a seat in the other chair and won't let me turn back to my sanctuary. A place I can get lost in for days and it keeps my memories from surfacing. He's really making me do this.

“I...” I start then stop. Taking a deep breath, I exhale. “I know Nadia.” I pause. Capone opens his mouth then shuts it, knowing I have more to say.

My face flames red. “I was sleeping with her for the past few months before she went missing. I didn’t know who she was. Nadia approached me at Maggie’s Bar and we hit it off. We’d meet every few days at a hotel. We didn’t know each other. I didn’t even know her name. When Nadia didn’t show up the last time, I knew something wasn’t right but I didn’t have any info on her. I chalked it up to her bored with my inexperience and locked it away like I do with all my feelings. The only thing is, she won’t stay put. I’m feeling something for her I haven’t felt since Tanya. I’m not capable of feeling anything or so the shrinks told me. When she hit on me and my body responded, it freaked me out but I threw caution to the wind and went with her. Then I was addicted and kept meeting her. Guilt surrounds me but I couldn’t give Nadia up, even if I’m not worth it.”

It feels fantastic getting all of that off my shoulders. I release a deep breath waiting for Capone to respond. As he processes everything, I sit on pins and needles waiting for my punishment I’m sure he’s going to give me. It’s what I deserve after betraying Tanya and having sex with someone after I swore I never would when Tanya died.

“When you’re ready, you need to tell us what happened with Tanya and what you plan on doing when you find Nadia. I think this is connected somehow.” Capone motions to Nadia’s picture up on my screen.

“I’m ready.” I nod my head. I puff out my lips, anxiety crawling its way up my neck.

Capone leaves my communications room and I send a mass text to all my brothers. As soon as I hit send, my computer beeps a warning. It’s found something on Nadia. An email from Kensi’s dad, Sheriff Donovan, pops up. He has been working with me, looking for Nadia behind the scenes. Using his resources through the databases at his disposal to sift through cameras I can’t get access to.

I open the email. “Holy shit!” I whisper, staring at Nadia’s photo Sheriff Donovan sent as an attachment. His email states this was sent to his personal email with a warning that if he doesn’t back off from finding Nadia, they’re going to kill her and then come after Kensi. Sherrif Donovan asked me to track where it came from since I have the means to do it without getting caught.

I quickly run a code on the email and after fifteen minutes, I get a ping and the location where it came from. It came from a strip club called Slamming Joint in Studio City. My mouth turns dry reading the name of the strip club and I know this was meant for me to find.

## Chapter Three

Nadia

## Page 5

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Pain ricochets across my body as I wake up with my neck aching from sleeping at an awkward angle. Another night full of my mystery man assaulted me again and I want to cry. Giving me hope that he will come and rescue me. Then I wake up to this nightmare I'm living in every day. The assholes who kidnapped me then dumped me in this flea-infested room with fifteen other girls and my tormentors I can't escape, no matter how hard I try.

Nausea climbs its way up my throat, my skin breaks out in a sweat and I do everything I can to hold it down. I need to keep as much sustenance in my body as possible and save my energy. Throwing up all my so-called breakfast would counter what I'm trying to accomplish. A piece of dry toast and a warm cup of water isn't much but it's better than the alternative. I inhale through my nose and exhale through my mouth, closing my eyes and concentrating on keeping my food down.

"Nadia, are you ok?" Exleigh, a girl who can't be older than fifteen asks me. She has bruising on her arms and thighs where these assholes raped her. The right side of her face is swollen from their fists, her dark hair covering most of it. Her once vibrant blue eyes are now dull and fading each day we're trapped in here and it makes me fight harder to get her out of here. I couldn't stop them from taking her last night and ended up face down in my vomit and blood after they beat me for interfering and left me there.

I wince before shifting slightly trying to take the weight off my bruised hip. "I'm ok, Exleigh." I cover my stomach with my left hand protectively.

"Please don't do that again, Nadia. They could have killed you or worse." Exleigh's eyes drop to my stomach and I get what she's saying without her saying it.

“Ex is right, Nadia. There is more than just you now.” Syvannah, another woman trapped in this nightmare with me, crawls her way over to us across a dirty carpet. Her hands are bruised and busted from fighting the men off. She didn’t win but she tried like hell. Her light brown hair is knotted and hangs just past her shoulders. Syvannah brushes my long blonde hair out of my face. My skin is clammy from sweating through the nausea and I really want a shower but that won’t happen any time soon.

We’ve been stuck in here for almost three months and never once did these assholes offer us a chance to shower. We’re lucky they let us use the bathroom attached to the room. Both the bathroom and this room are stripped bare of anything we could use as a weapon against them or to kill ourselves with. Trust me, I’ve searched every inch of both these rooms, looking for anything to use to get us out of here.

“You’re right but it’s not in me to sit back and watch others get hurt.” I counter.

“I know but you have to let us take care of each other. You take care of us when we come back beat down, bloody and hurt. If you’re unconscious from their fists, you can’t help us heal.” Syvannah grabs my right hand and squeezes it.

“I don’t understand why they do violent things to all of you, but only hit me when I’m being insolent.” I shake my head and look around the room.

We’re all crammed into this tiny ass dirty hotel room. Our ages range from the youngest, Exleigh, at fifteen to me pushing thirty. We’ve all been through hell and back for the last three months and I’ve formed a bond with these two. I look around the dirty room at the women still here. Some of the women are huddled together on the floor or the bed. Others are by themselves with their arms wrapped around their legs that are pulled up against their chests, trying to make themselves disappear. Those are the ones I worry about the most. They’ve been here the longest and are the most broken.

There used to be more here from the markings on the walls, but they've disappeared without a trace. My guess is they've either been sold or are dead. I won't let that happen to these women.

I can't.

I've been told my whole life I wasn't good at anything and I was a huge mistake. My father was the worst kind of man I've ever known. He never raised a hand to me when I was a child, but words cut deeper than actions. Then when I was sixteen, my mom and I found out he had another family, one he kept hidden from everyone. That sent my mom into a tailspin of alcohol and drug abuse. She never recovered and the day she died a year later was the worst day of my life. My father's verbal abuse turned physical. He beat me until I blacked out from the pain, all while spitting on me and blaming me for my mom's death. He was the one at fault. He was the one to blame. He was the one who couldn't keep his dick in his pants.

All I knew at the time was I had a brother named Nolan. Once I healed from my father's beating, I took off with only a small bag and a pocket full of money, to find my brother. I traced him all the way to Michigan and it turns out he wasn't the hidden family. I was. Nolan is three years older than me.

Devastated about the news, I went back to L.A. without talking to Nolan or telling him who I was. He had a happy life, a great racing career and the last thing I wanted to do was destroy it. I stayed under the radar when I got back to Los Angeles to keep away from my father and found a home with the racing circuit. I had natural ability behind the wheel and I give that credit to my brother Nolan, only he didn't know about me.

A couple of years after I found him, he came to L.A. with his girlfriend Krimson, who is the head of the racing circuit. Nothing goes on without her knowing it and it's a little intimidating, but I managed to stay away from her crew's attention. I saw



Nolan at almost every race, only he didn't see me hiding in the shadows. Krimson's crew was more worried about finding out who killed her parents and little brother, they didn't notice me. Not until the last day Nolan and Krimson were going to be in L.A. for a while.

The smell of racing fuel and burnt tires fills my nose as I relax against the hood of my Supra, waiting for the cue to race. The deep thumping of someone's bass vibrates through my body, making my adrenaline burn. Rumor has it Krimson and her crew won't be here tonight and it's been a while since I raced the streets for cash, I figured, fuck it, I should be safe tonight. Besides, I need the cash.

A tall, muscular, dark-skinned man with dreadlocks grabs everyone's attention. The music turns down. "Ladies and gentlemen, tonight's race is a special one. With a five K buy-in, we are shaking things up a bit. It won't be like anormal quarter-mile race. Instead, we have downloaded GPS directions to your phones. The winner will receive their special prize at the end of the race. I promise you will not be disappointed."

Once he is finished, the five driver's, including mine, phones ping with a location. We'll end up at the old warehouse in Culver City, about three miles away from here. This means we will have to battle, not only with each other but with L.A. traffic too. The first one to make it there will have a special surprise, which will be given at the end of the race.

"Line 'em up!" The man shouts.

I hurry to my car and fire her up, plugging my phone into the console, so the coordinates pop up on the screen. The purr of the engine settles me and I pull up to the makeshift starting line. Questions about what awaits the winner at the end fade away as all five of us line up. I'm directly in the middle, just where I like to be. Once everyone is lined up, I reach under the passenger seat and turn on the two tanks of NOS. Can't win a race without a slight edge. I pull my long blond hair out of my face

and focus on the woman standing between my car and another racer. She's wearing a short white skirt that barely covers her ass, a tight red blouse and a red scarf. She points to each of us one by one to make sure we are ready. Once she is satisfied, she unties the scarf around her neck and raises it above her head. Once she releases the scarf, all five of us take off from the starting line, neck and neck. I fight to overtake the car to my left when we come to a corner. I ease up on the gas a little, throw up my parking brake, shift down once and floor it. I squeal around the corner in perfect precision, overtaking two drivers. There are still two in front of me, but I'm eating at their bumpers, waiting for the perfect time to pass.

According to GPS, we have less than a mile before we reach the warehouse. The light in front of us changes from green to red but I don't stop. I weave in and out of traffic, crossing the intersection. Horns blare but I can't let up, not if I want to win the twenty K and the surprise at the end. Weaving in and out of traffic, I smoothly shift gears and am ready to pass the two cars in front of me. I flick the switch to the NOS and activate it with a push of a button. The power it sprays kicks me back in my seat and the adrenaline flows through me like a wave. A heady rush steadies my nerves as I overtake the two drivers and come barreling down to the finish line. With only seconds left, I cross the finish line ahead of the rest of the drivers, winning the race. Bringing my car to a complete stop, I'm swarmed with people congratulating me on my win. A different man comes up to congratulate me. He is tall, and has dark hair with blond highlights and I recognize him at once as Rush, from Krimson's crew. Oh shit.

"Great win, what's your name?" Rush asks me.

I panic and give him a false name. "Tatianna."

"Well, Tatianna, since you've won, we are going to make your dreams come true. We have a spot open in our crew and you have the skills we need. What do you say?" Rush's bright white smile is supposed to relax me, but all it does is send me into a

panic attack.

“Thanks, but I’m not interested,” I say quietly.

Rush frowns, “Are you sure? There are a lot of people who would die to be in your boots right now.”

“Yes, thank you for the offer, but I really can’t.” I shake my head. My father’s words ring in my ears. You’re not worth it. You’ll never be worth it.

“Well, if you change your mind, please reach out to me, any time, night or day. We really could use a driver with your skills. Besides, your racing reminds me of someone close to me.” Rush studies me intently before he hands me a plain business card. On it is a single number. “Remember, any time Tatianna. We’d definitely be able to use your skill.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

I take the card with trembling fingers and thank him before hurrying to my car and taking off like my ass was on fire.

Holy shit, that was close.

The lock rattles and the door swings open with a hard slam, making me jump and bringing me out of my memories of almost meeting my brother. My old boss from the strip club, Mr. Lattimer, comes strolling in. With his slick black hair, a tailored three-piece suit, and eyes as black as the devil himself comes waltzing into the room without a care in the world. Behind him is his henchman, Josiah. I don't miss the way Josiah's eyes linger on me a little too long. He has always given me the creeps and still does.

Lattimer's deadly black eyes survey the room until they land on Syvannah crouched next to me with her trembling arm wrapped around mine. Her bruises and cuts are fading and she's finally getting some mobility in her left wrist. I shake my head, my muscles coiled, ready to protect these women.

"No, Nadia," Syvannah whispers in my ear, not breaking eye contact with Lattimer. A wicked grin splits his face, accentuating the scar above his lip.

A groan breaks the quietness surrounding us, followed by a high pitch scream. All of our attention moves to the opposite corner of the dirty room where two women are huddled together. One is screaming at the top of her lungs and the other is thrashing around on the carpet, foaming at the mouth before she stills. Her eyes grow blank, staring at the wall.

Shit. This isn't the first time one of the women has died in my care, but it still hurts when there is nothing I can do to help.

"Get those two bitches out of here, Josiah." Lattimer motions to the two women, like her death is more of an inconvenience than a tragedy.

"Yes, boss." Josiah hesitates.

"What?" Lattimer barks.

"We need to replace these two, sir."

"I know this, Josiah. Get the fucking job done." Lattimer turns on his pristine shoes and leaves the room.

Why two? One is still alive. Are they going to kill her for being near the dead one?

Josiah drags the girl whose screams turn to whimpers by the arm, forcing her to stand. He grabs the dead girl by her arms and starts dragging her body across the room like a caveman while gripping the other woman's arm painfully. Two other men come into the room to get rid of the body.

Relieved Lattimer isn't taking Syvannah is short-lived when Josiah stops in the doorway. A menacing glare aimed right at me. He strides to me in quick steps and leans over so his wretched breath fans across my face. "Don't get too comfortable, Nadia. It'll be your turn real soon." Josiah inhales against my neck and disgust swims in my belly. I swallow the vomit threatening to come up and stare back at Josiah. I'm not afraid of him and he knows it. His glare swings to Syvannah and Exleigh huddled next to me. He brings his knuckles against my cheek caressing it like a lover. His other hand grabs Exleigh and hurls her against his open legs. I turn my head and Josiah grabs my face painfully with his fingers forcing me to watch what he does

next.

“Unzip and take me out, bitch.” Josiah’s face is filled with hatred and longing. “This is all your fault, Nadia.” Exleigh does what he told her to do with shaky fingers. “Suck it and if you bite, I will kill her.” Josiah says to Exleigh but his eyes never leave mine. She starts sucking him while gagging. “Soon, this will be you on your knees deep throating me.” Josiah warns. He closes his eyes for a brief moment and then opens them.

I shake my head but his fingers grip my chin harder making my jaw rub together. He makes me watch him abuse Exleigh for longer than I figured. His grip tightens again on my jaw and his other hand wraps around Exleigh’s throat, choking her. Tears and snot run down her face, while trying to breathe. He releases a guttural moan and reaches his peak, unloading himself down her throat. Josiah releases both of us and shoves Exleigh against the wall.

“Fuck, that was hotter than I imagined.” Josiah pants, tucking himself back into his pants and zipping them up. Syvannah holds Exleigh while she sobs and tries not to vomit in front of him. He’d make her clean it up and do it all over again. We’ve seen it several times and after a while the women know not to throw up after they get him off. Anger and rage vibrates through my veins and it takes everything in me to not beat the shit out of Josiah. His time is coming and it’s coming soon.

“Why?” I ask through clenched teeth.

I’m not sure if it’s from him getting off or something else, but Josiah’s answer shocks me. “Why them and not you?” he asks. I nod my head. He leans down close to my ear, inhaling my scent again. “Because you’re not worth it.” The bitterness in his voice tells me he means it.

According to my father, I’m not worth it and never will be. I’ll never be good enough

for anyone to love me, only use me for what they want. I should feel relieved at Josiah's words but the self-doubt I've had my whole life rears its ugly head and I hold back tears as Josiah's evil laugh penetrates the room.

"That's right, you're a worthless whore. You're not worth it." Josiah storms out of the room and I release the breath I was holding.

Yeah, I know I'm not worth anything. That's been clear to me for years. Now how do I get the fuck out of here and prove I'm worth everything I want? That includes a hot man who blushes at everything and rides a Harley.

## Chapter Four

Red

"Shit!" I save everything on my laptop, grab it and search for Capone. He's playing pool with Torch in the common room. Danyella, Daisy and their kids aren't around, thankfully. This cannot wait. Capone spots me making a beeline right for him and before I can say anything and cause myself embarrassment, he sets his pool stick down.

"We'll finish this later, Torch." Capone's dark eyes are full of rage and compassion if it's possible to express both emotions at the same time. Capone heads to his office and I follow close behind before Torch can react.

"Shut the door," he commands, sitting behind his desk. Framed photos of Danyella and Nina are all over the top along with papers scattered across the desk. "What do you have?"

I swallow back the bile crawling its way up my throat and take a deep breath. My face and neck are burning and I don't know if it's from embarrassment or rage this

time. “Sheriff Donovan sent me an email threatening Kensi and anyone connected to him if we don’t back off the investigation into Nadia’s disappearance.”

Capone’s eyes darken even further hearing one of our own is in danger. He steeples his fingers together, “Go on.” The words come out as a growl. He’s doing all he can to keep his rage in check.



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I clear my throat and open my laptop. Clicking on a few buttons, I push my laptop across the desk, turning it so Capone can see what's on the screen. "It came from a strip club called Slammer Joint in Studio City."

Capone raises an eyebrow, "And?"

This is it. This is where I tell the secrets I've been holding onto so tightly for all these years. "And Slammer Joint is a synonym for a place I never wanted to visit or think about again. A place I ended up after Tanya died and I spiraled down a dark path. As you can tell, they're not very creative."

"OK..., but what does this have to do with you?"

"Because of my past and why I was in prison. I was mixed up with a Russian mafia and did tech stuff for them. Only I didn't know it was the Russians until I was arrested and the FBI's foreign counterintelligence showed me proof. I was hired as a tech consultant to Slammer Joint Security firm. That's how I knew this was meant for me." I point to the email on the laptop.

"Why didn't you turn on them and who is this Russian?" Capone asks leaning forward, his elbows resting on his desk.

Shaking my head, I respond. "I couldn't turn on them. Apparently, they were watching me for a while. They knew how and when Tanya died. They knew my parents and their routines. They even knew I had a dog that came up missing. If I went against them, they would have and probably still will kill anyone I care about."

“Who is this Russian asshole?” Capone growls.

“Valdimer.”

“Jesus fuck! Can’t we ever catch a break from these fuckwads? No sooner do we eliminate one, more pop up like cockroaches. Is this why they took Nadia? They found out about the two of you, which I had no idea about and I’m still pissed about.”

“I would think so, but I’m not sure.” I swallow hard. “I’m...”

Capone cuts me off with a raise of his hand. “I get it, Red. But don’t let it fucking happen again. Text everyone. We’ll have Church in an hour and you’re going to tell them everything. Every last fucking detail and then you’ll get your fucking head right and we’ll come up with a plan to find Nadia and get her back.”

Exactly one hour later, I’m sitting at the scarred oak table with the Royal Bastards logo etched in the center. If I were a smoker, I’d light up right about now to calm my nerves. Instead, I adjust my black-rimmed glasses for the thousandth time and bite my nails, waiting for all my brothers to file in.

Over the years this table has held our secrets, suffered our rage, soaked up our tears, felt our happiness and succumbed to our fears. Many men have confessed their deepest, darkest secrets in this room, at this table and now it’s my turn.

Capone is sitting at the head of the table with Blayze, our VP, on his left. Torch, our Enforcer, on his right. I’m sitting between Aftermath, our Sergeant at Arms, who is next to Blayze and Tiny, our Road Captain. Trigger, our Treasurer, Dagger, the Chaplin and Derange, the Tail Runner, are sitting across from me. Everyone is quiet, waiting for the meeting to start.

None of these men know why we’re here but that’s about to change. Capone slams

his gavel, made by Dagger, onto the table.

“Church is in session. As you all know, Kensi’s friend Nadia is missing.” Everyone nods their heads in agreement. “There is more to this story, but it’s not mine to tell.” Capone points to me. “The table is yours, Red.”

My face flames bright red from being put on the spot, but I take a deep breath and clear my throat. “I know Nadia.” Shame for feeling something for someone after Tanya died fills my voice.

“What the fuck?” Aftermath growls. “That’s Kensi’s best friend outside this club and you didn’t mention you fucking knew her when Kensi came to you?”

My shame turns to rage, matching Aftermath’s. “It’s not your fucking business that I know her, Aftermath. It’s your business she needs help.” Capone clears his throat, warning me to be honest. “You all know she’s Nolan Ryan’s sister, but what you don’t know is, she’s the woman I’ve been seeing. We met at a bar a few months back, hit it off and well, the rest is history.” Heat builds from my chest and crawls its way up my neck. I swallow hard and try to steady my racing heart and calm the blush creeping through my body.

“Holy shit! Red got laid! It’s about damn time, brother.” Derange exclaims, pounding his fist on the table.

“I thought for sure you’d die a virgin.” Torch laughs and sits back in his chair.

The teasing and taunting continue until I’m hot and my face is fire engine red. God, how embarrassing. I rest my head in my hands and wait for the ribbing to stop. I think about Nadia and the way her body fits perfectly with mine like we are made for each other. Guilt eats away at me for caring about her. Capone slams the gavel on the table, putting an end to my misery.

Everyone quiets down. “Now that’s out of the way, there’s more. Red, go ahead.” He motions for me to continue.

"Before I came here, I did hard time. When I was eighteen, my girlfriend died in a hit and run and I spiraled. I went nuts looking for her killer. She was the love of my teenage life. My family sent me to counseling. When that didn’t help, I cut everyone off. I swore the night she died that I’d never love or care about another woman ever again and I left. I have been highly skilled with computers and hacking since I was about fourteen. I honed that skill until I became the best hacker on the West Coast. A man named Lance Obolensky approached me with a job I couldn’t refuse. He made me believe I could use their resources to find Tanya’s killer. So, I took the job at a security firm in San Francisco called Slammer Joint. For a few years, I’d hack people’s accounts, move money from accounts, and all that bullshit. Then shit got real. I was getting closer to finding out who killed Tanya when I received a phone call from Lance. His boss needed me to hack into a system and send him the information. So, easy, breezy, I did it. A few days later, the FBI’s counterintelligence was knocking on my door and I ended up in prison for hacking into a government website and selling information to the Russian mob.

“That’s when I really shut off all emotions and feelings. I was sentenced to five years in prison since I had no priors and had no idea I was working for the Russian Mafia. I spent five long years in maximum security, fighting off the worst of the worst in there every day, including the guards, until one day a man took me under his wing. I was so tired of fighting for my life, I was at the end of my rope when he offered me protection and told me about the Royal Bastards. His name was Crawl, whose brother is Rage from the Georgia Chapter.

“I did my time, got out and here I am.” I take a break from speaking to let all the information soak in. Thirsty as hell, I open the mini fridge behind me, crack open a beer and guzzle it.

“There’s more isn’t there?” Dagger asks. He’s gone from brother to Chaplin in a heartbeat. I can feel the sympathy radiating off him in waves.

I nod my head and take my seat again. “After I got out and came here, I’ve been looking into Lance and who he works for. What I thought was a security firm was actually a front for the Russians. The name of the security firm, which I already told you, was Slammer Joint Security Firm.” I snort at my stupidity. “Yeah, I know but I was eighteen and spiraling. They offered me the world and I took it.”

“What does that have to do with Nadia missing?” Aftermath asks, still pissed as hell, which I don’t blame him.

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*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

“Sheriff Donovan, Kensi’s dad, sent me an email a few days ago. It threatened him and the club to stop looking for Nadia or we’d be sorry. I’ve been tracing it and this morning I got a hit at a strip joint in Studio City named Slammer Joint. Creative, huh.” I raise an eyebrow. “So that tells me Nadia’s disappearance is because of me and not Kensi or Nolan.”

“Let’s go down to this strip joint and break some fucking skulls.” Tiny smashes his meaty fists on the table, making it rattle. He’s called Tiny for always loving the smaller animals. The tinier they are, the more his big ass heart melts for them. But he is anything but Tiny. His name is a contradiction to the size of the guy. He might be the complete opposite of his road name and will bash anyone’s head in with a flick of his wrist, but he has a soft side to him and women love it. He is the size of John Coffey from *The Green Mile* and he is just as gentle too.

“We can’t,” Capone speaks before anyone else thinks Tiny’s idea is the best. “If we go in there guns blazing, they’ll know we’re on to them and kill Nadia.”

“What’s the plan, P?” Torch asks.

“We call in reinforcements.” Capone picks up his phone, puts it on speaker and dials a number. Voicemail picks up and a gruff, male voice tells him to leave a message. Capone hangs up without leaving a message and points to me. “Red, take Torch, Dagger and Tiny, find Nolan and bring him here. I’m going to call Allura from our Royal Harlots sister chapter to see if she can get anyone on the inside of this fucking strip joint. I’m done playing hide and fucking seek with these asshats.” Capone orders.

“On it, Prez.”

Torch, Dagger, Tiny and I are on our bikes and pulling out of our compound in less than five minutes. It's been days since I've seen the sun and I squint through my Ray Bans as the four of us speed toward the PCH. We weave in and out of traffic and turn right, down a private drive that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. No cars are in the driveway which tells me Nolan and Krimson aren't here. Where the fuck could they be?

I pop my kickstand down and turn off my bike. Torch, Dagger and Tiny do the same. The ticking of our cooling engines and the waves hitting the shoreline are the only noises surrounding us. “Let's check it out in case they're here but hiding,” I order.

I'm pissed they're not here and even more pissed I have to look for them. Tiny and I take the rear. Torch and Dagger take the front. Walking along the side of the house, we stay out of sight, against the side of the house until the back opens up to a massive porch overlooking the ocean. Below the porch is a cement slab with outdoor furniture and a glass sliding door. From my understanding, someone blew up this house and Krimson had to have it rebuilt. It's dark as fuck as I peer inside. I can't see in at all which makes me very uneasy. Once Tiny and I have the bottom cleared, we take the steps on the side of the porch two at a time. When we reach the top, we're facing the house and our backs are to the ocean. A massive swimming pool sits in the middle of the deck, and patio furniture is strategically placed around the pool. A small changing room to the left and the banister to the porch wrapped around the whole thing. Glass sliding doors and huge glass windows surround this side of the house and it's also dark inside.

We cautiously approach and Tiny taps a window. “Bulletproof glass. Smart girl.”

My eyes scan around the perimeter spotting several security cameras. I point to one. “They know we're here now.” I approach one and stand directly in front of it, to my

full intimidating height. “Nolan Ryan, I will find you.” I glare into the camera and lean closer. “Your sister needs you.” I turn and walk off the porch, Tiny following.

If I were Nolan-fucking-Ryan, where would I be?

Dagger and Torch come from the front of the house. “No one is here.” Torch states.

“Fuck!” I scrub my hands down my face. I keep playing everything over in my head that I know about Nolan, Krimson and their merry band of misfits.

Tiny lets out a low whistle near the garage, pulling me from my head. “Check this fucking beast out.” He points to the window and I walk to him. A nineteen sixty-two grey Shelby Cobra 260 CSX 2000 sits inside in all its shiny glory.

“That’s it!” I shout and run to my bike.

I straddle the beast and fire her up. I’m done waiting and fucking around. The guys can follow me or not, I don’t give a flying fuck anymore. I need to get Nadia back. I roll out of Krimson’s driveway and throttle the gas, making my bike scream and the rear tire spin. Once it catches, I shoot off like a rocket on my way to find Nolan-fucking-Ryan and end this waiting shit. I will get Nadia back with or without his help.

## Chapter Five

Red

Night has settled as I pull into the old warehouse district in downtown L.A. Tiny, Dagger and Torch follow close behind. We slowly roll through the throng of people waiting for the race. Women dressed in skimpy outfits with their tits and ass threatening to spill out doesn’t shock me and I know the brothers behind me are



enjoying the view. Our bikes growl and draw all eyes to us. It's rare to see a bike at a street race, but unheard of to see the Royal Bastards at a race. We're whispered about in the circuit but never confirmed. We're feared and respected for how we race and what we do.

The crowd parts in silence as we stop in front of a dark blue Toyota Supra GR. Krimson's long blond hair falls over her shoulders. She's wearing a pair of fitted ripped jeans, a black tank top, a flannel over that and racing boots. She's badass and smoking hot leaning against the hood, her brown eyes are watching me, assessing my moves. If I were a lesser man, my balls would have shriveled up and scurried away. But fear is not something I know. Not until Nadia.

I rev up my bike before turning it off, making it growl. Setting the kickstand down, I remain seated on my bike. I remove my brain bucket and run my fingers through my hair.

"Where's Nolan?" I ask, agitation filling my voice.

Krimson's spine stiffens and she crosses her arms over her ample chest. I thought her crew was good with my club but that's not the vibe I'm getting. "Why the fuck do you want to know?" She questions.

"I have business with him." Krimson snorts and that pisses me off. Does she think I'm not good enough for their business? I'll show her who's in charge. I dismount my bike and my brothers do the same. Anger is radiating through my body. Step by step, I get closer to Krimson, until I'm standing a few feet away from her, raising myself to my full six-foot-two height. I snarl and clench my fists. I know if I get close enough, Nolan will come to Krimson's side. She can hold her own but he won't let her.

I'm less than a step away when Nolan appears out of the shadows with a gun aimed at my head. "Step the fuck back, Bastard, before I put a bullet through your skull." He

stands next to Krimson, not lowering his weapon.

My eyes whip to his, a sinister smile on my face. “It’s about time you show up. What’s the problem, Nolan-fucking-Ryan? You got to have your Ol’ Lady do your dirty work now?”

“Oh fuck no.” Nolan lowers his gun and steps to me. We’re close to the same height but he has about thirty pounds more muscle. “You got a problem, Bastard?” Nolan snarls.

Anger thrums through my veins. Red blurs my vision as I step closer, my breathing harsh and my heart beating rapidly in my chest. “The fuck you say to me?”

Tiny and Torch reach us and pulls me back before I can deck Nolan-fucking-Ryan square in his smirking jaw, which is similar to his sister’s.

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*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

“C’mon man, he won’t help,” Tiny says pulling me toward my bike.

“What’s the problem, Bastard? Have to have yourbrothersfight for you?” Nolan argues.

I stop dead in my tracks and spin my body to face Nolan. His whiskey-colored eyes, just like his sister’s, pin me thinking he knows me and how my club works. “At least I don’t let my family get kidnapped and sold into a sex trafficking ring.” I reach inside my cut, pull out the picture I have of Nadia and their father and fling it at Nolan’s feet.

“Fuck this, I’ll find her myself.” I stomp off as Nolan reaches for the picture. I straddle my bike and strap on my helmet. Before I have a chance to fire her up, Nolan is on me. His big fist lands directly on my jaw and my head snaps back.

“Fucker wants to tango. Let’s do it.” Tossing off my helmet, I dismount my bike and head right for Nolan.

He’s crouched, waiting for me. I tackle him around the waist, pushing him against the hood of the car. He hits it with a thud and punches me in the kidneys. I loosen my grip around his waist and he slips out of my grasp. Swinging around, Nolan lands an uppercut to the side of my face. I hit him back with a cross-jab. We go at it blow for blow. I can feel blood trickle down the side of my face and my nose. I split Nolan’s eye open and his lip is swelling.

“That’s enough!” Krimson shouts. Rush and Redline hold him back, Tiny and Dagger are holding me back. A huge crowd is surrounding us, cheering and whistling. Crazy

fuckers. Now that we're separated, I see that I did get a few good hits in. A cut above Nolan's left eye is bleeding down the side of his face, his nose is swollen and his right cheek is red and bruising. His eyes are wild with rage, his chest is rapidly rising and falling and if they let him go, he will try and kill me. The thing about it is, that I'm not afraid to die. After everything I've been through, death is the least of my worries. Krimson approaches Nolan with her hands up. I can't hear what she is saying because my ears are ringing where the fucker caught me in the side of the head.

I shake off Tiny and Dagger. I'm sure I look just as bad as Nolan-fucking-Ryan does, but with the adrenaline running through my veins, I can't feel shit. I'm sure that'll change once I come back down. I pace back and forth across the street, my chest heaving with every breath I take. I shake my hands and roll my shoulders back, staying loose in case he wants another crack at me.

The more Krimson talks to him, the more the rage in his eyes settles. She cups his face in her small hand and he closes his eyes. What the actual fuck is happening here?

Nolan breathes deeply and opens his eyes. They land on me but the aggression he showed earlier is gone. His jaw relaxes and I can see the moment Nolan is back in control. I've never seen anyone lose control like that and have some tiny woman bring them back from the dark hole they spiraled down. It's kind of amazing. Nolan's body visibly relaxes and I find myself relaxing too.

Krimson leaves him and approaches me with determination in her stride. The photo of Nadia I flung at Nolan in her tight grip. "Where did you get this?"

Rubbing my sore jaw, I shrug, not taking my eyes off Nolan. "Found it."

"Where?" She's persistent.

"The file I have on her," I answer. Nolan approaches us, his body ridged but not in

killer mode like earlier. He doesn't release my stare. Fuck it, I'm done with games.

Clenching my teeth, I don't back down. "She is missing. You can either help us or not. I really don't give a shit anymore. I figured since she's your sister," I pin my glare on Nolan, "you'd actually give a fuck, but must be the apple doesn't fall far from the rotten tree. Like father, like son?" I ask, cocking an eyebrow, crossing my arms over my chest.

"Why should I believe you?" Nolan spits out.

"You don't have to. The choice is up to you." I shrug my shoulders. "I'm done here, let's go," I say to Torch, Dagger and Tiny. We turn and walk toward our bikes. Once we're mounted and ready to roll out, I look Nolan-fucking-Ryan dead in the eyes. "We're getting your sister back one way or another. You can either join us or hide, the choice is yours. We'll be at the Clubhouse until two a.m. tomorrow morning." I fire up my bike and we take off. The crowd parts for us like the Red Sea and we head back to the Clubhouse to see how Capone's plan is coming together.

Whether Nolan-fucking-Ryan joins us isn't my problem anymore. Getting Nadia back is my top priority and I can't let her down. Not this time.

I refuse to let this emotion go I haven't felt it in years and getting Nadia back will amplify these feelings. She's it for me. Something I never thought I'd have again. It's a blessing and a curse at the same time, but I'm not fighting it anymore.

## Chapter Six

### Red

Torch, Tiny, Dagger and I roll into the Clubhouse thirty minutes later, after leaving Nolan at the races with his thumb up his fucking ass. Capone is waiting outside for us

pissed off and I know I'm going to get my ass handed to me for fighting Nolan-fucking-Ryan. He immediately approaches me once I get my kickstand down. His fist rears back and punches me square in the jaw. My head whips back and blood fills my mouth.

"Fuck." That's twice in less than an hour someone has hit me in the jaw. I spit out the blood pooling in my mouth.

"If you ever do something stupid like that again, Red, I will put you to ground. Are we clear?" Capone spits out, fury in his voice.

"Clear, Prez," I grumble in my response. Capone has worked hard for an alliance with Krimson and her crew and my actions tonight could have severely hurt it. But the fucker pissed me off and I'm dealing with emotions I'm not used to having.

"Good, now get your face cleaned up. Grab your laptop and meet us in Church. We have a lot to discuss and plan." Capone turns on his boots and goes back inside, dismissing me.

Tiny snickers, "Bro, you got off easy." Torch and Dagger laugh with him. I don't respond, only climb off my bike and flip all the assholes off.

"Red must like this woman to pull that shit." Torch says to my retreating back. I stop dead in my tracks and turn to glare at Torch. The fucker has a huge smile on his face, itching to egg me on. Waiting for my reaction.

"What'd you expect?" Tiny goads. "It's his first woman."

"Our baby isn't a virgin anymore. We need to celebrate," Torch cheers.

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“Fuck yes! Women, beer and more women. I’m down.” Dagger chimes in. I walk into the garage attached to the Clubhouse, ignoring the three stooges following behind me.

I open the door to my room and flip the lights on. Closing the door, I remove my cut, wallet and gun, setting them on my nightstand next to the head of my bed. I strip my bloody shirt over my head and toss it in the corner. Next, I remove my boots and jeans until I’m down to my boxer briefs. Walking into the bathroom, I take a long hard look at myself in the mirror.

Am I worth all the trouble?

Will Nadia even want me after she finds out who I am?

Will this last once I have her here?

She deserves so much better than me. Should I let her go?

Will she want to go?

My eyes land on the purple butterfly on my right pec. Nadia asked me about it once but I refused to answer her. She didn’t need to know it was a representation of my dead girlfriend, Tanya. Purple was her favorite color and she loved butterflies. She died before she could spread her wings, so I got the tattoo to remember her. Even though Tanya haunted all my headspace until Nadia came into my life, I still got the tattoo. I shouldn’t have been a dick and told Nadia about it. She means something to me and I should have told her everything. Should have, could have, but didn’t.

I clean up the cuts on my face and get into the shower. The hot water washes away the dried blood and relaxes my muscles. Nolan gave as good as he got. I have a black eye and busted lip, but it was worth it to honor the woman I care for. Images of Nadia in the shower at the hotel flash through my mind in full force. Her full chest, small waist and glistening core soaking wet as I fill her. Her sweet moans bounce off the walls as I plunge inside of her heat, clamping around me as she comes. I lean my head against the cool tiles and calm myself down. I'm rock hard, wanting a release. I won't relieve myself until Nadia is back home safe in my arms. I need to keep feeding the anger and aggression so I can do my job and find her.

Turning off the water, I grab a towel and dry myself off. I'm still painfully hard but I do everything I can to make it go down. Once I have control of myself again, I get dressed and head to my communications room. I grab my laptop and lock up behind me.

When Monica, Blayze's Ol' Lady and Daisy, who is now Torch's Ol' Lady, got it in their heads to search for Danyella when she was missing, I didn't lock up this room and they broke in. Not used to having anyone here except the patch bunnies, I didn't think about it. Well, because of my mistake, Daisy was shot and almost died. Capone came down on me pretty hard but didn't put me to ground because Danyella was home safe. That was my saving grace. Since then, I have made sure to lock up this room and set an alarm that alerts my phone if anyone steps foot in here without me knowing.

I put my phone in the glittery box that Rose, Nina and Aerial made and enter the Chapel. Everyone's already here and Capone signals for me to take my seat. I do and as I fire up my laptop, Capone slams his gavel on the table and speaks.

"Brothers, we have a lead on where Nadia is. According to Red's intel, she's being held in a motel next to the strip club Slammer Joint. Allura, the president of our sister chapter Royal Harlots, has agreed to help. She will be here in an hour with Calypso



and Iris." Capone levels me with a glare as he speaks the next part. "Nolan, Krimson and their crews will help too. No thanks to you, Red."

Relief washes over me, and I breathe easier. But Capone isn't done yet. "You will tell Nolan everything about Nadia. You fucked up today, Red, so now you have to fix it. They'll be here in ten minutes. Once they get here, we'll continue. Until then, do we have any other pressing issues, concerns, problems or comments we need to have?"

Capone opens the floor for everyone to speak but I tune them out as I think about what I'll say to Nolan-fucking-Ryan. How can I make him see why I was so pissed? Thankfully, he is helping but I'd still do this without him. So, fuck him. If this works out with Nadia, Nolan-fucking-Ryan will become my brother-in-law. Holy fuck, where the hell did that come from? I'm not ready to be married or make Nadia my Ol' Lady. As soon as the thought enters my head, I know I'm lying to myself. I would do everything to make Nadia mine. She will be my Ol' Lady wearing my patch and my brand. My body comes alive thinking about her delicate bronze skin marked with my brand, being my Ol' Lady. Nothing or no one will stop that from happening. Nadia is mine.

A knock on the Chapel doors echoes through the room snapping me out of my thoughts of Nadia. Tiny opens the door to Seth, Jezebelle's son, who is one of the prospects, on the other side. Krimson and Nolan are behind him.

"Sorry, Tiny. They said they have business with Capone." Seth chucks a thumb behind him at the duo.

Tiny growls low in his throat making Seth swallow hard. We give the prospects shit and a tough time to make sure they can handle whatever is thrown at them. We do this to build up their character and make sure they will always have our backs and we can trust them implacably. "Move." One menacing word has Seth scurrying away fast.

Nolan and Krimson come into the room and Tiny shuts the door behind them. They've been here before so they know the drill.

Satisfaction settles through me seeing Nolan-fucking-Ryan's face. His lip is split and his left eye is black and blue, making me smirk. He narrows his eyes at me but I don't waver in my stare. I'm not scared of Nolan-fucking-Ryan, even if others are.

Capone stands addressing Nolan and Krimson. "Are you in?" Those three little words have us all holding our breaths for an answer.

Nolan tosses the picture of Nadia and their dad on the table. "Is this real?"

"Yeah, it is," I respond through clenched teeth. Capone knocks on the table as a warning for me to explain further. The tension in the room is at explosive levels. Releasing a huff, I fire up my laptop and pull Nadia's information up. I know it by heart but, it still seems like the first time as I read it aloud.

"Nadia Louise Ryan, born August sixteenth, nineteen ninety-eight to Andrew Ryan and Renee Lopez in Venice Beach, California. Renee Lopez died when Nadia turned eighteen due to a drug and alcohol overdose. Nadia took a trip across the US after her mother died and ended up in Michigan for a little while. Then she came back to Los Angeles and stayed hidden from her father for years. She entered the racing circuit and was pretty damn good. Good enough to gain your crew's attention, Krimson. Only no one knew who she was because she used a fake name, Tatianna." I turn my laptop toward Nolan and Krimson, showing Nadia standing next to a purple Supra with Rush standing next to her. They're in a deep conversation. "Did she find you when she went to Michigan?" I ask Nolan.

He shakes his head, no. "That's the time Xavier and Izzy had that stalker and I was focused on helping them and not some girl hanging around the track." Krimson is shocked and walks out the door. We let her go because we know she is looking for

answers.

“Well, she knew who you two were, which is probably why she gave Rush a fake name and turned down his offer to drive for them. She didn’t want to expose who she was. She was probably afraid you were just like your old man. An arrogant asshole who mentally abused her her whole life. See, Nolan, I went to her school and found some kids she graduated with. Every single one of them said Nadia’s father, your father, was abusive toward her. Always made her feel less than worthless. When she told some of her classmates she was leaving and not coming back, they were relieved she’d be out of that house.”

“Fuck,” Nolan runs his hands through his blond hair. “Why didn’t she come to me? Why did she stay away?”

Sympathizing with Nolan, which is something I don’t want to do, but the look on his face is devastating, I turn my laptop around. “Help us get her back and ask her yourself.”

“I’m in. What do I need to do?” Nolan responds with no hesitation.

“Good,” Capone says as Krimson comes back in.

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“It’s confirmed. She gave Rush the name Tatianna back when she won that race a few years ago. After that race, she stayed away from our racing circuit.”

“She went into stripping,” Aftermath growls. “Because she was afraid of running into you guys again.”

“We can’t assume that Aftermath,” Nolan states pissed off.

“Like fuck I can’t. She’s my Ol’ Lady’s best friend outside of this club.” Aftermath’s nostrils flare. “You failed her like so many others in her life. Now’s the time to fix it.”

“Is that why the Royal Bastards are involved?” Krimson asks.

“No,” I respond sharply, so my voice is clear and my intentions are heard loud as day. “We’re involved because of me and my past. Nadia and I were seeing each other for a few months until she disappeared.” I tell them the whole story, minus the intimate details they don’t need to know, and how I found out she was missing. “I failed to protect her. Once we get her back, I will do everything I can to make it up to her and make her mine.” The finality in my voice doesn’t let anyone question my motives. I fucked up and I will fix it.

“What’s the plan?” Nolan asks.

Capone goes through the plan with all of us from start to finish. He also tells us how Allure and the Royal Harlots will fit in.

“I think that will work. When are we rolling out?” I ask.

“Red, you’re not going anywhere,” Capone responds.

“But...” I protest.

“But nothing.” Capone interrupts. “I need you here checking every single security detail on this. Let us do our job and you do yours. I need you here to make sure everyone else is safe.” Capone doesn’t let me get a word in otherwise. “Wheels up at six a.m.” He slams the gavel onto the table, ending the meeting and any chance I can change his mind. There is no room for argument about what Capone says. His word is law.

“Fuck.” I scrub my hands down my scruffy face wishing things were different. Wishing I’m the first person Nadia sees. I push away from the table and storm out of the Chapel. I stop at the bar, grab a shot of whiskey and slam it back. Striding into my communications room, I slam the door shut and let out a frustrated yell. This is bullshit. I should be there, boots on the ground, rescuing my woman.

A soft knock on the door shuts my tirade up before I punch a hole in the wall in frustration. “What?” I bark.

Kensi pops her head in and enters when she sees I’m a wreck. “You good?”

“What the hell do you think? Would you be good sitting back if Aftermath were in trouble?” I spit out. I know I’m being an asshole and she doesn’t deserve my wrath, but fuck, how much can a man take?

Kensi crosses her arms over her chest, cocks an eyebrow and gives me a perplexed look. It’s the look she gives Aftermath when he’s being a cumquat. “I’ll let that tone slide, Red. Only because you’re dealing with a lot right now. But if you talk to Nadia

that way, she will walk so fast your head will spin.”

Releasing a defeated sigh, I sit on my chair with an ungraceful plop. I ignore Kensi because she is right and I’m too stubborn to tell her that at the moment. I need to get my shit together fast. Spinning around in my chair, I unlock my computer and all eight monitors come alive. Four are of the Clubhouse. Capone, Blayze and Derange along with Iris and Allura from the Royal Harlots and Krimson and the youngest kid in her crew, I think his name is Noah, are standing together at the bar. On another screen Torch is with Nolan-fucking-Ryan, Rush and Calypso, also from the Royal Harlots. Bones, my prospect, Dagger and Tiny are on the third camera getting the van ready. The fourth is outside at the gates which is quiet at the moment with one prospect, Pretty Boy and a Royal Harlot with him. There are more cameras but I limited them so I can watch the strip club, hotel and all the roads leading to it. I hacked into LAPD’s camera pods and took them over. The speakers are muted so there aren’t a million voices distracting me. I look back to the first screen when the rest are quiet and see Capone’s hands moving wildly around and Krimson looks pissed. I shouldn’t listen, but curiosity gets the best of me and I unmute that screen.

Krimson’s voice filters through the speakers plain as day. “What the hell, Capone? I thought you wanted our help.”

“I do, but this won’t work. They’ll know who you are the moment you step foot in there and Nadia will be dead.” Capone responds. “And that won’t happen on my watch.”

“What do you propose then?”

Capone turns to the kid, “Noah goes in with Iris. She’s the Harlots tech expert and since I can’t send in Red, she’s my next best option. Red will guide you two into the hotel safely. Iris can open any door with her skills and won’t trip any alarms. Iris and Noah go in, gets Nadia and whoever else is in the room and get the fuck out. Blayze,

Torch, Tiny and Trigger will go in after they clear out and end anyone else.” Capone explains the change in plans and it’s pretty solid.

“Can I take care of any of the scumbags if I see them?” Iris asks. She sweeps her short blond hair out of her crystal blue eyes. Those eyes look familiar, but I push it to the back of my mind for now.

“If you see them.” Capone and Allura agree.

“But you don’t have to, Noah. You don’t even have to do this if you are unsure.” Krimson speaks up.

“She’s right, Noah. It’s your choice.” Capone confirms.

“I’m in. There’s no way in hell I’m missing this.” Noah speaks up. God, he looks like a little kid being thrown to the wolves. They all agree and leave the first camera, heading to Nolan, Rush, Torch and Calypso. I mute the first speaker.

“Holy shit! That is so cool!” Kensi exclaims, making me jump. She takes the empty seat beside me.

“Fuck, I forgot you were still here.” I place my palm over my chest, trying to calm my racing heart and cool down my face.

“Is it OK that I’m here?” Kensi asks.

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“Yeah, it’s fine. Just stay out of the way. If I need your spot, you better move fast. Oh, and don’t touch anything unless I say to. Got it?”

“Got it, Captain.” Kensi salutes me. Any other time I’d laugh but there is no time for joking right now. She zips her lips and sits back in the chair watching the monitors with me. Everyone who is going on the rescue mission has left, leaving Capone, Derange, Aftermath, myself, Nolan and Krimson. The rest of their crew is following our club members for backup. All the Royal Harlots who made it besides Iris are here. Derange goes into the makeshift infirmary room with Calypso, Rebel and Sloan to get it ready for Nadia and anyone else they bring back.

Capone paces back and forth in the common room, his anxiety at an all-time high. He made Danyella, Monica, Daisy, Jezebel and all the little Bastards stay in the back of the Clubhouse to stay safe. Nolan is sitting at the bar nursing a drink with Krimson next to him. The look of rage that crosses his face is something I’m getting familiar with. He’s just as concerned about his sister as I am. I should reach out an olive branch to him. I’m standing up to talk to Nolan when Kensi grabs my arm, pointing at the screens. “Red, look.”

A sleek black Town Car pulls up to the curb of the strip club with a non-distinct white van following close behind. I can’t see the plate on the car because the van is blocking the view and there is no plate on the van itself. Fuck, can’t run it that way. Lattimer steps out of the Town Car adjusting his jacket.

I never knew what someone meant when they said they literally see red until right this moment. My heart is pounding in my chest and my vision blurs at the sight of this man. Images of me ripping him limb from limb and beating him with his own



body parts fill my mind. Cutting off his dick and shoving it down his throat wouldn't satisfy my need for revenge against this asshole.

Lattimer speaks to the driver of the van. The driver nods his head and goes into the hotel with several men on his heels. I click on the driver's face and take a screenshot. I run it through the facial recognition software I created. If he's in the system, he will pop. Lattimer gets back into the car and his driver takes off like his ass is on fire.

I check our van's location and see they're about five minutes out. I click on a button on my laptop and insert an earpiece to talk to Noah, Iris and Blayze. "Watch your six. White men can't jump and women have the ropes," I speak. Kensi looks at me with confusion written all over her face. "Go tell Capone it's show time," I tell Kensi.

Kensi leaves and Blayze answers. "Fucking riddles man. Got it." He laughs and I hear his bike speed up. He will take the lead and make sure it's all clear for everyone else.

I look back to the van at the hotel as my door opens and Capone, Nolan, Krimson, Derange and Kensi pile inside. I'm too busy running codes and facial recognition on all the men who came out of the van to pay them any attention. Kensi takes her seat next to me. The air in my room is stifling with all these big bodies piled in here. "Fuck, can we fit anyone else in here?" I grumble looking around.

"I'm sure we can if you want to sit on Derange's lap." Capone jokes.

I roll my eyes and turn back to the screens. The men are escorting ten women out and taking off. Thankfully, Nadia isn't with them. Only two men stayed behind. The creepy fucker from the club Nadia and Kensi worked at and a young kid. They go back inside.

"Show time," I say into the mic. Our van pulls up to the curb and Noah climbs out.

Iris waits a few minutes and follows him inside. Now we sit and wait with bated breath.

I pray they get Nadia out unharmed.

I pray she stays with me.

I pray to God, to give me faith over fear and that all my past sins be redeemed if He will give me Nadia back.

## Chapter Seven

Nadia

Josiah comes back with someone I don't recognize in tow. He looks like a kid with chestnut hair cut short, whiskey brown eyes and scars marring his young skin. Josiah kicks my thigh, making me move. I'm so fucking tired, my body screams in protest. I pick my head up from the dirty floor, glaring at the creepy fucker and the new kid.

Josiah squats down until he's level with me. "Today's your luck day, whore. Get the fuck up now."

Fear surges into my system and I scramble against the wall, my head pounding like crazy. Something heavy and cold is clamped around my neck and a chain swings from it when I move. I look around the room and most of the women are already gone. I must have been so tired I didn't hear them come in and move the women. Exleigh and Syvannah are the only two here with me. Someone placed collars on their necks with chains hanging down. The new guy yanks on the chains, making them get up. They don't fight him and he drags them out of the room, leaving Josiah and me alone.

“Get the fuck up princess before I shove my dick up your ass making you move.” Josiah snarls. He reaches for my chain and rage replaces fear running through me.

“No,” I growl low and shove up the wall standing straight up. I will not let him touch me. I’ve held back for the girls’ safety but they’re not here now.

Josiah stops and cocks his head, giving me an evil smirk. “No? Bitch, you don’t have the room to tell me no.” He brings his meaty fist up and smacks me across the face, splitting my lip and tears swell in my eyes from the sting.

I grip the chain tight around my wrists. I spit the blood pooling in my mouth out at his feet, hitting his shoes. “Is that all you got for a big guy? There’s no one here to stop you now.” I taunt.

Josiah is all muscle and no brains and I have to play my cards right to overpower him. He might have a hundred-plus pounds on me but I have more brains and training than he does.

“You whore.” Josiah hits me again and I smirk, my teeth coated with fresh blood. If he were to punch me, I’d go down, but he’s toying with me like I am with him.

“A toddler hits harder than you do.” I taunt. Anger flashes in Josiah’s dark eyes. “What’s the problem? Are you really a woman in a man’s body and love having a big hairy dick shoved up your ass? I mean, you do hit like one. If you do, it’s OK. I get it.” Now Josiah’s pissed and about to lose his temper, just like I want. “C’mon Josiah or should I call you Sophia who likes dick. Sucking, licking, or having it shoved...” That’s all I say when he attacks like I knew he would. Josiah drops his shoulder and barrels right for me. I tighten my grip on the chains and step as far away from him as I can. He hits the wall and leaves a dent in it with his big body. I swing the chain and catch him on the side of his head, making him stumble. I have to stay on the offense because one good hit from him and I’m done for. I keep using the chain as a weapon,

hitting him. I step behind Josiah when he shakes off the last blow to the head and jump on his back, wrapping the chain around his beefy neck. I pull with all my strength cutting off his air. I will not give up. I will not go down without a fight. I have more than myself to fight for.

Josiah shakes, trying to throw me off his back. He turns and slams my body against the wall. I don't let go no matter how much it hurts. He slams me again and I tighten my hold on his neck, the chain is digging into my fingers and his neck while trying to catch my breath. Josiah tries to reach behind him and grab me but I push back away from his hands.

I scream in frustration. I'm in pain, hurt and angry that this fucker isn't going down. I'm exhausted and can't hold on much longer. My grip slips and Josiah uses that to his advantage. He yanks the chain away from his throat, sending me up and over his body. I land on my back on the floor, the breath sucked from my lungs. Josiah is breathing heavily, his face turning back to normal coloring instead of red. The tinge of red on his cheeks reminds me of Matt. The one man who worshiped my body, mind and soul. Who made me feel loved and cherished. I hang onto the memories of us together as I cough and sputter. I flip around and try to climb to my feet. Josiah snarls and grabs my hair, fisting it with his unforgiving grip. He's pulling so hard tears swell in my eyes and I can feel little hairs ripped from my scalp. I claw at his hands, trying to loosen his grip. Josiah pulls me up by my hair and I follow, trying to stop the pain from blinding me.

He slams my face against the wall and crowds my back, shoving me into the wall. His hardness pushing against my ass. "I'm going to take this." He breathes against my neck, his meaty palms wrapping around my throat above the collar, cutting off my oxygen. I fight as much as I can until black spots fill my vision.

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

Josiah rips the flimsy pants away exposing my naked lower half to him. I close my eyes and send up a prayer to God to help me. To save me from the evil of this man and his unforgiving hands.

My ears ring and I can't breathe, my lungs are on fire. I can't fight anymore. Against my will, my body gives up to the darkness surrounding me. Josiah's heavy body settles over mine, his rancid breath panting in my ear. He's going to rape me and then kill me.

Suddenly Josiah's weight falls off me and I collapse to the ground, trying to drag air into my burning lungs. A grunt followed by a single gunshot fills the room. I drag my swollen eyes up from the floor to see what's happening. Small footsteps approach me with a blanket. "Here use this to cover yourself," a female says. "My name is Iris and we're here to rescue you." She has short blonde hair, sweeping into her eyes, a lip ring on the left side of her lip, and a small hoop on the right side of her nose. Her crystal blue eyes are shining with sympathy and understanding. She finds a key in Josiah's jeans pocket, gently removes the collar around my neck and offers me a small smile.

"Thank you," I croak out and hold my burning throat, looking at Josiah. He's not moving, there's blood seeping out from underneath him, pooling around his body. I breathe a sigh of relief.

"Did that fucker touch you?" The new guy who was with Josiah earlier steps up next to Iris and my heart hammers in my chest remembering he took Exleigh and Syvannah. I try to push away from him but I'm too weak.

“Easy, Darlin’” Iris soothes. “He’s with us.”

“He, he, he took Exleigh and Syvannah,” I whisper. It burns like a motherfucker to talk but I’ll be damned if I let him lead me to my death.

“I took them to safety,” the guy says. After dealing with these monsters for the last couple of months, and the shit my father did to me growing up, I can tell when someone is being honest and there is no hint of betrayal in his voice.

“Who are you?”

The guy holds out a hand, “I’m Noah. I’m working with Capone from Royal Bastards MC.”

“What do the Royal Bastards want with me?” I ask with wide frightened eyes. I know who the Royal Bastards are and I’d rather stay as far away from them as possible.

“Noah, we have to go. Sheriff Donovan will be here any minute,” Iris interrupts. “And he told us to be gone before he gets here.”

Noah steps next to me, holding out his right hand. “Can you walk or do I need to carry you?”

“I can walk.” I take his hand and Noah helps me to my feet. My throat is still burning, my muscles ache and I’m ready to pass out but I push through. Noah keeps a gentle but firm grip on my waist.

Iris leads us to an unmarked van and opens the side door. I take a moment to inhale the clean air before I’m put into the van. I close my eyes and tip my head back, enjoying the sun shining on my face. A woman pops her head out of the van, scaring me. She has long jet-black straight hair, tattoos cover her arms and her chest. She has

a nose ring and piercing blue eyes.

“This everyone?” She asks. She’s wearing an MC cut that reads Calypso. I can’t see the back of it since she’s in the dark.

“Yeah, let’s get the fuck out of here,” Iris answers, climbing into the driver’s seat. Noah helps me up and when I see Exleigh and Syvannah, I throw myself at them, hugging both of them tightly with tears in my eyes.

We hold onto each other the entire ride. I don’t know where we’re going but I have a deep ache in my gut that wherever it is, we are going to be safe. A fluttering movement happens in my belly and my breath hitches. My thoughts drift to Matt again. Riding on the back of his bike, making me feel cherished and cared for. How he worshipped my body every single time, even when his face turned beet red, blushing.

I wish I knew who he really was and where I could find him. I know that’s impossible. I don’t know where he lives, his last name or if he has anyone in his life. No one has ever been able to make me feel like he did and I didn’t want to burst our bubble by asking questions I had no right to know.

My father’s words ring in my head and I push them away. I am good enough. I am enough. I am me.

The van slows down and comes to a stop. A loud clunking noise fills the silence. I can’t see where we are and fear settles into my stomach. Iris pulls the van forward and the loud clunking noise starts again and finishes with a thud, making me jump. I hang onto Exleigh and Syvannah tighter. I will defend these two no matter what. They’ve been through enough these last two months, they need peace and I will do everything I can to give it to them.

The side door slides open and I blink against the harsh sunlight. A tanned strong hand

comes into view but I can't see who it belongs to since the sun is blocking his face. I push Exleigh and Syvanna behind me and crouch onto my bare feet, ready to strike. Iris, Noah and Calypso climb out of the van and I can't see them anymore. I feel like a caged tiger, ready to pounce.

"You're safe." A smooth male voice echoes into the van. Something about the tone is familiar, but I cannot figure out how or where I've heard it before. "Trust me, Pulchra. You're safe here."

I cautiously take his hand and he helps me out. My eyes travel up to the man and I suck in a sharp breath. His warm, strong hand holds onto my waist, gripping me tight like he doesn't want to let me go. My eyes rake from his worn black riding boots to his tight jeans encasing strong muscular thighs, past his narrow hips, over a black t-shirt under his leather cut hiding his eight-pack abs I've licked and kissed until they move up to his blushing face. A splatter of familiar freckles crosses the bridge of his nose, his dirty blonde hair hangs loosely over a set of pale blue eyes watching me and waiting for a reaction. I look at the leather cut I'm gripping tight and immediately release it. The patches on his vest cannot be missed.

"Holy fuck! Are you kidding me?" I'm shocked. The man who gave me something special is an outlaw one percent biker and he never told me.

I step back toward Exleigh and Syvannah who are now out of the van watching us.

"Pulchra," Matt reaches out but drops his hand. The pain in his pale blue eyes is gutting me.

"No, no, no. This cannot be happening." I laugh a humorless laugh.

"Nadia?" Kensi steps forward from behind a beast of a man and my eyes grow wide. My heart is pounding hard against my chest, making my head throb.



“Kensi? What the hell is happening?” I cry. Tears burn my eyes.

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“Nadia.” Kensi swallows and glances behind her. A man with thick dark hair and black cold eyes nods his head. His patch reads President. “You’re safe at the Royal Bastards Compound.”

“Why?”

“Because I asked Red to help me find you. I knew you didn’t leave on your own like Josiah tried to make me believe before he stabbed me and left me to bleed out at the dumpsters.” Kensi reaches for me and I let her pull me into her warm embrace.

“How... How did you find me?”

Kensi motions to Matt. A man I know very intimately. “Red found you.” Matt or Red, as Kensi calls him, looks at the ground, a shy smirk crosses his lips and his face flames red. “He’s the tech guy for Royal Bastards who can find anyone.”

“I...” I stammer at a loss for words. I look past Kensi and Matt and see a woman with long blond hair standing next to my brother.

His whiskey-colored eyes are focused on me. “Oh fuck.” My heart speeds up and my vision swims. Nolan steps towards me and fear grips my spine. My vision blurs and before I know it, everything turns black and I hit the ground.

## Chapter Eight

Red

“Fuck!” I shout, catching Nadia before she hits the ground. Having her in my arms settles my heart and my world feels like it clicked into place. She belongs with me. I clutch Nadia’s limp body in my arms and head into the Clubhouse.

“Red, where are you going?” Kensi asks, worry etched in her voice.

“My room,” I grunt out, not waiting for someone to stop me.

Once I reach the door, I unlock it with one hand while holding Nadia tight with my other. Whispering soothing, sweet words I’ve never said to anyone before, I gently lay her on my bed. I step back and look at her. Her small body is swallowed by my big bed. She’s lost weight but hasn’t by the swell of her breasts under her shirt if that makes any sense. Nadia’s long dark lashes rest against her unnaturally pale skin. Her blond hair is dirty but I don’t give a shit, she’s still the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. My pulchra. She’s staying right here for as long as she wants to.

I’m sitting in a chair next to my bed watching Nadia for God knows how long, holding her small hand in mine, making sure she is breathing and safe when Kensi peeks her head in. Her multicolored eyes are sad and it sends a pang to my heart. “Derange is in the hallway. He needs to check over Nadia.” I nod my head.

Derange and Jezebelle enter my room. “Red, give us a few minutes please,” Jezebelle asks.

“I’m not leaving her,” I disagree. I rip my gaze from Nadia and settle it on Jezebelle standing in the doorway. Tears fill my eyes. “I’m not leaving her again.” The pain in my throat makes my voice harsh.

“Please, Red. Just for a few minutes.” Jezebelle pleads.

I shake my head and a tear falls. “I want to be here when she wakes up, Jez. Please

don't ask me to leave. I've already failed her once." My voice breaks but I hold it together the best I can.

Nadia's soft hand squeezes mine, drawing my attention back to her. "It's ok, Matt." Her soft voice sends a pain right to my beating heart. Nadia's awake and she sits up, watching me. I squeeze her hand again and kneel on the floor.

"I'm so sorry, Pulchra. I failed you. Please forgive me." My voice is thick with emotion.

Nadia gives me a small smile and returns the squeeze of my hand. "It's not your fault. None of this is your fault. Let the big guy here do his thing and you wait outside of the room, please."

"C'mon, Red." Aftermath grabs me by the shoulders, lifting me off the ground. "Let D do his thing, brother."

I give Nadia's hand another squeeze, "I'll be right outside, Pulchra." I hold her hand for as long as I can until she's out of reach. Hanging my head, Aftermath leads me out into the hallway. Jezebelle quietly closes the door with Kensi and Derange in the room.

"What if something's wrong? Should she have passed out like that? Will she be ok?" I rapidly fire questions no one has the answers to, pacing the hallway. Back and forth. Back and forth. "What's taking them so long?"

Aftermath barks out a laugh. "Red, it's been like five minutes. These things take time. Let's go grab a beer and a smoke. You're stressing me out. I can't imagine how Nadia feels knowing you're out here pacing like a stuck hen."

"I'm not leaving this hallway," I reply harshly.

“Yes, you are, Red,” Capone demands from the end of the hallway. “Go take a chill and relax. They’ll get you when they’re done.” I push off the wall and stomp down the hallway like a scolded child. “I swear these grown men acting like children will be the death of me,” Capone grumbles when I pass him.

Out in the common room, someone has cranked up the music and everyone present is drinking and celebrating a job well done. Allura, Sloane, Calypso, Iris and a few other Royal Harlots are gathered around a table, taking shots and causing a scene. I smile at the sisterhood these women share. Calypso stands up with Sloane, whispers something to Allura, and she nods her head in return. The two women leave the Clubhouse and it’s not my job or place to question where they’re going.

Nolan, Krimson, Rush and Noah are sitting at the bar. Nolan is nursing a whiskey in his hand when his gaze locks on mine. Releasing a sigh, I head over to them, ready to rip the band-aid off. Krimson and Noah leave their barstools, giving Nolan and me some time to talk. Krimson trails her hand across Nolan’s shoulders and the love that passes between the two of them makes my heart skip a beat. I want what they have. Will I have that with Nadia someday?

“How is she?” Nolan asks.

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“She was awake when Derange and Jezebelle came in to look her over. They’re supposed to get me when they’re done.” I answer, taking a stool next to Nolan. I signal for the prospect, Pretty Boy, behind the bar to get me a shot of Crown. He places it in front of me and I swallow the shot down in one gulp. The burning sensation going right to my gut. “You really didn’t know about her?”

“Not even the slightest hint she existed. My father,” Nolan lets out a deep breath. “My father is a piece of shit who deserves all he gets. I cut him out of my life a long time ago.”

“What do we do from here?” I ask. I look around the Clubhouse for Aftermath but he is nowhere around. My best friend has bailed on me.

“I don’t know but I know I want to make it up to Nadia if she will let me.” My eyes snap to Nolan, accessing him. He’s staring right back at me and doesn’t even flinch.

“We all have a lot of making up to do to her.” I signal for another shot, which Pretty Boy promptly fills. “I know I’m not ready to let her go.” I swallow down the second shot. “You know, my gut is telling me this was too easy. This isn’t the way the Black-Market Railroad and Lattimer work. Something isn’t sitting right with me.”

Nolan shifts in the seat next to me and rests his scared hands on the bar top. “I agree. What do we do now?”

The prospect gives me another shot and I swallow it back before speaking, “I don’t know, but I do know I will protect Nadia with everything I have.”

“I’m there with you.” Nolan pats me on the back and stands up. He walks to where Krimson and Noah are standing and wraps his arm around Krimson’s shoulder. She leans into his chest and smiles up at him.

Capone comes into the common room from the garage and is pacing back and forth with a pissed-off look on his face. Danyella is there trying to soothe him. I stand up from the stool and make my way over to them.

“What’s going on, Prez?” I all but growl out. Barking at my President is an effective way to get my ass kicked.

“Take a breath, Red.” When Capone tells me to relax, this won’t end well for someone.

“Why? What’s happening?” I try to peek around him toward the garage, but he keeps standing in my way. Torch comes up beside me and Tiny stands on the other side. This can’t be good.

“Kensi and Aftermath just left with Nadia,” Capone finally answers.

My heart drops into my toes and rage fills my stomach. “What!”

“She asked to leave and they took her.”

“Where did they go?” I’m beyond pissed my best friend hightailed it with the woman I care about. I’m going to fucking kill him.

“I didn’t ask and they didn’t tell me.”

“Fuck this!” I storm past Capone and down the corridor that leads outside. Once I’m outside, I mount my bike and fire her up. Tiny and Dagger are behind me doing the

same thing.

“Where are you going, Red?” Tiny asks.

“Don’t fucking know, but I can’t stay here while she’s out there still in danger,” I respond and fire up my bike. The deep rumble centers me and I take off like hell is hot on my heels.

I don’t know where Nadia lives or where Aftermath would be taking her so I don’t know where to go. Tiny, Dagger and I ride up the PCH for a little while, looking for Kensi, Aftermath or Nadia when my phone vibrates in my pocket. I spot our tattoo shop overlooking the ocean and pull into the parking lot. Calypso’s bike is parked out front with another bike I don’t recognize next to hers. I settle my bike between my thighs and pull out my phone. It’s a text from an unknown number

UNKNOWN: Listen, I’m sorry I left without saying anything to you. I had to go home and get some of my things. We will be on our way back to the Clubhouse in a few after Kensi convinced me it’s the best place for me to go right now. I’ll see you soon. We need to talk. XO-Nadia

Who knew a simple text would lighten the burden on my shoulders?

ME: We do need to talk. You can’t just take off on me when your ass gets itchy. I’ve been worried sick. I will see you soon.

I call Aftermath to make sure it is Nadia messaging me. He picks up after the third ring. “Yeah.”

“Did you give Nadia my phone number?” I ask, no greeting, right to the point.

“Kensi did. Said it would be good for Nadia to reach out to you to ease your mind.”



Aftermath admits.

“Do you know how fucked up this is?” I ask, blowing out a long breath. “My best friend takes off with the woman I care about and doesn’t even tell me.”

“She made me promise not to say anything. I know I should have told you, but Kensi hijacked my phone until we made it to Nadia’s apartment.” Aftermath gets quiet for a moment. “I will take care of my woman about the disrespect, but Red...” Aftermath trails off. I grind my teeth waiting for him to continue. “Nadia has been through a lot and if you’re not willing to be in this at one hundred percent, let her heal and move on, on her own.”

Aftermath hangs up the call before I can respond. I think about what he said. Asking me if I’m in it with Nadia at one hundred percent.

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Can I be that guy for her?

Can I give her all she deserves?

Will she still want me after she finds out what I've done?

I don't know the answers to these questions, but I do want to at least try. It's the first time since Tanya died that I want to see where this goes. I want to be the man Nadia deserves. I turn around and peer up at the tattoo shop looming above me. With my mind made up, I make my way into the shop. Tiny and Dagger wait outside with shit-eating grins on their faces having heard the call between Aftermath and me.

The bell above me jingles and Calypso comes out of the back with her Ol' Man, Farris, hot on her heels. She is the first Royal Harlot to be tied down and he is the first cop turned outlaw welcomed into our folds. Farris's clothes are disheveled and his face is burning as red as mine. I know what those two were doing before I walked in. To save both of them and myself the embarrassment, I don't say a word.

"Red, what can I do for you?" Calypso asks.

"I need a tattoo," I answer, taking a seat in the chair. I give her the idea I have in my head and for the next couple of hours, Calypso works her magic, inking my skin. Tiny and Dagger have come in and out a few times, watching the progress on my chest, just above my heart, next to the purple butterfly tattoo.

Once we're done, I pay Calypso and the three of us ride back to the Clubhouse. As we get closer, I spot two SUV's tailing us. My heart starts hammering in my chest,

wondering who this is. The three of us speed up and the two SUV's do the same. I take a hairpin right-hand turn and the SUVs are still on our asses. The closer they get, the more nervous I am. I hit the Bluetooth button on my bike and the call connects to Capone.

"Red, what's happening?" Capone asks as soon as he's on the line. I'm our tech guy and since I'm not at the Clubhouse, Capone and the rest of the brothers are blind.

"Prez, we have two SUV's hot and heavy on our asses. Tiny, Dagger and I have been trying to shake them but it's no use." I shout over the wind whipping through me. A loud thunk rings out, followed by a few pops and Tiny's bike wobbles. "Shit, we're under fire, Prez."

"Where are you?" Capone asks. I can hear bikes start up in the background.

I swerve all over the road, Tiny and Dagger do the same, to make us smaller targets. "We're about ten minutes south of the Clubhouse."

"We'll be there. And Red, stay safe." Capone ends the call and I speed up. Hoping beyond hope Capone and the rest of the brothers will make it to us. More shots ring out and I check my mirrors. Tiny is leaning over his bike trying to stay upright. Red-hot anger penetrates my body and I unholster my gun from my cut. I look back, aim and fire. I hit a tire on one SUV and it skids out of control, rolling end over end. These motherfuckers just messed with the wrong club. I fire off a few more rounds but miss when Tiny loses control of his bike. I watch in horror as he skids off the road, through the field and comes to a stop at the edge of a drop off.

Screaming, I drop gears and spin my bike around. Dagger does the same and we take off, heading right for Tiny. The bumps and jolts are doing damage to my bike, but I really don't give a fuck. Tiny is in trouble and he needs my help. The one remaining SUV takes off down the road, not bothering us anymore. I skid to a stop and don't

bother to put my kickstand down when I reach Tiny. The sounds of other Harleys vibrate the air around me as I reach him. Tiny isn't moving and his big body is covered in blood. I gently turn him over and put pressure on a gunshot to his shoulder with my hands. His jeans are torn and bloody, along with his arms. The helmet saved his head and his leather cut saved his body from the skid.

"Shit, Tiny. Hang on, help is coming." I keep talking to him, offering him some form of comfort until another set of hands comes into my line of vision.

"Red, I've got this." Derange soothes and pulls my hand away from Tiny's shoulder. I stand up with the help from Aftermath. His forehead is wrinkled with worry and anger is radiating through his body.

I know how he feels. This is all my fault. If I didn't take off because my ass was hurt, Tiny wouldn't be here right now. But I always find a way to fuck things up.

Derange, Dagger and Blayze have Tiny loaded up into one of the cages Trigger's prospect, Pretty Boy, brought and I watch as they drive toward the Clubhouse. Capone, Torch, and Seth check the overturned SUV. They shake their heads and come back our way. I don't say a word and neither does Aftermath. What happened here tonight never should have happened. It's my job to keep my brothers and their families safe. I will scrub and scour every inch of every place until I find out who did this and no one will stop me.

Vengeance is a bitch, and these assholes just messed with the wrong Royal Bastard.

## Chapter Nine

Nadia

Kensi, Aftermath and I made it back to the Clubhouse a few hours later. Aftermath

carried my bags into the room and left Kensi and me alone. Completely exhausted but still needing to take a shower, Kensi helps me into the bathroom and turns the shower on for me. I didn't see Matt or my brother when we walked through and I remember they were together when I was rescued.

“Kensi?”

“Yes, Nadia?”

I hesitate to ask the question on the tip of my tongue, but curiosity wins out. “What can you tell me about Matt?”

Kensi's brow scrunches, thinking hard. “Matt? Do you mean, Red?” I nod my head. “He is the Royal Bastards' Tech guy. He has mad computer skills, but he is very shy and everything makes him blush. I don't know much more about him than that. He pretty much keeps to himself and stays holed up in his communications room.”

“Why is he called Red?” It's a strange road name but who am I to judge? Kensi raises an eyebrow at my question and realization dawns on me. I thought his blush was cute at first and when we became more intimate, I found it attractive for some reason. “Oh. All the time?”

Kensi nods her head, “Yes, all the time. Aftermath and I could be giving each other a hug and Red would blush.” She shrugs her shoulders like it's no big deal.

“What's his story?”

“That I couldn't tell you because, like I said, he stays to himself and never opened up to me about his past.”

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For not giving up on me and thinking I left without a word. Kensi, you are the closest person I have to a friend. I’d even go as far as saying you’re my best friend.”

Kensi draws me into a hug and I stiffen at first before relaxing against her hold. “I knew something was wrong the day Josiah tried to kill me. I never gave up on searching for you. You are my best friend too and Nadia, no matter what happened or what will happen, you will always have a place here with me.”

Not realizing I needed to hear those words, I let out a sob. My malnourished frame shakes in Kensi’s hold and I can’t stop it. I cry for the abuse the other women went through, I cry for the abuse those assholes inflicted upon my body and I cry for the way we are all changed after this and will never be the same. After a few minutes of crying in Kensi’s embrace, I sniff and straighten my spine.

“I need a shower. Can you give me some time?”

“Sure. Just holler if you need anything.” Kensi opens the bathroom door. She turns around before leaving. “Oh, and the doc these guys have on hand will be here later to look you over. Just in case Derange missed something.” I nod my head and Kensi closes the door behind her.

I pull the t-shirt over my head and lower the sweatpants Kensi gave me to wear and I step into the shower to let the hotwater wash away all the dirt, blood and grime from

my body and hair. Once the water turns from a murky brown to clear, and my skin is red, I turn the shower off and carefully dry the bruises and cuts on my skin. I wrap another towel around my hair and study myself in the mirror. My bones are sticking out but my belly has a slight bump and my breasts are full and sore.

I carefully slide on the clean clothes Kensi brought in for me and open the bathroom door. Kensi is sitting on the bed with a brush in her hand and a smile gracing her lips. Her multi-colored eyes are shining with happiness. Something I haven't seen since I've known her. A small smile graces my lips as I carefully step into the bedroom. I sit on the bed with my back facing Kensi and let her brush my tangled hair. After carefully getting the knots out, she creates two French braids on each side of my head.

We catch up on everything that has been going on since I went missing and some crazy shit she's gotten herself into. I haven't laughed this hard in a long time. "Kensi, I can tell Aftermath is good for you. I'm happy you finally found someone who completes you." I hold her hand tight in mine, wanting to confess my secret. I keep my lips sealed shut. Red has a right to know first before anyone else.

Kensi squeezes my hand back. "Thank you. He is pretty great. All these guys here are great and I know one particular one that has probably been pacing outside the hallway since they came back. Do you want to talk to him before you see the doctor?"

I shake my head, "I would like to talk to the doctor first. Is he here?" Even thinking it's a male doctor shakes me to my core, but I need to see them sooner rather than later.

"She is here, yes. After everything you've been through, Capone wouldn't let a male doctor in here. Do you want me to stay?"

"No, I need to do this on my own," I answer.

“OK, I will be out in the common room if you need anything. Don’t hesitate to ask.” Kensi climbs off the bed and opens the door. I spot Red standing at the entryway, taking up the entire door frame. His pale blue eyes lock on mine and they soften making my heart skip a beat.

Suddenly a slender, feisty brunette shoves Red out of the way and slams the door in his face. I wince, waiting for him to barge in here and do something to her. When it doesn’t come, I release my breath and rest my head against the headboard.

“Hello, Nadia. My name is Emma Lynn and I’m an OB/GYN.” Emma’s thick Irish accent has me captivated. “I’m a friend of the Royal Bastards and would like to check you over. Is that ok?”

I nod my head, “Yes, that’s fine.”

Emma gives me a bright smile that eases my nerves. “Wonderful. Anything you would like to tell me about? Any medical conditions, allergies?” I shake my head no. Emma listens to my lungs and wraps a cuff around my arm. “When was your last period?”

I hesitate and she waits patiently for me to answer while looking over the burn marks on my wrists from the ropes and chains those assholes used. “Four months ago.” I place a protective hand over my stomach, keeping this secret safe.

Without batting an eye, Emma smiles. “Have you seen anyone about this?”

I shake my head. “I was taken before I knew I was pregnant. I figured it out a few weeks after they took me and it became real when I was losing weight from not being fed enough but my belly was still growing if that makes sense.”

“Yes, that makes perfect sense, which is why I want to start an IV and get your



nutrients up.” She gently rubs my arm, making me flinch. I’m still not used to physical contact. “Is it OK if I get an ultrasound machine in here? I’d like to see how far along you are and take measurements, just to make sure you and the baby are healthy.”

“Yes. But can it wait a little while? I’m getting my appetite back and need to rest. Also, no one here knows about this yet. I’d like to keep it between the two of us for as long as possible.” I confess. “I want to tell the father about it before anyone else knows.”

“Your secret is safe with me. I will have to tell Capone something when an ultrasound machine comes here, but you let me worry about that. It will take a few hours for it to get here anyway. Let me give you some cream for your cuts and scrapes and some prenatal vitamins to start right away.” Emma pulls a tube of cream and a bottle of prenatal vitamins out of her doctor’s bag and sets them on the nightstand. She gently takes my wrists and I don’t flinch. She applies the cream which instantly soothes the burn marks and starts an IV on the back of my hand.

“Thank you, Doc Emma. I appreciate it.” I hold back the tears burning my throat. It’s been so long since anyone has been kind to me besides Kensi and Matt, I don’t know how to handle my emotions.

“You’re welcome, Nadia. Take two of these,” Emma shakes out two prenatal vitamins and hands them to me with a bottle of water. “Get some rest and I will come back to check on your IV drip when the machine is here.”

“Thank you, again.” I lay down and close my eyes, drifting off to sleep.

Sweat drips from my brow as I hide in the shadows of the changing room at the strip club. A masked man enters the doorway and the evil radiating from him makes the hairs stand on the back of my neck. I crouch lower, trying to make myself smaller

under a desk at the back of the changing room. Wishing I would have stayed closer to the door for an easier escape, I released a shaky breath. The heavy footsteps draw closer to my hiding spot and fear crawls its way up my spine.

“Where the fuck are you?” The man growls. I don’t move a muscle or breathe as he steps closer. He’s so close now, I can smell the whiskey radiating off his pores. I try to calm my racing heart because I swear he can hear it. His boots move further away from me and I exhale quietly. He stops walking and silence fills the room. He begins walking again, his footsteps echoing through the changing room.

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“I know you’re in here, Nadia. Come out, come out, wherever you are.” I hold in a gasp when he says my name and he keeps walking away from me. I uncurl my body from underneath the desk as quietly as I can. Sweat drips from my skin at the same time fear crawls through my body, making me shiver. I peek over the desk and I don’t see him anywhere. I listen for a beat before moving. It’s now or never. I slowly and quietly move away from the desk, keeping low to the ground and my breathing even. It’s a long and slow process, but I keep going. My legs are burning, my lungs are screaming at me for air and my body is trembling from fear.

“Nadia, I’m going to find you.” The male voice sing-songs further down the changing room.

I quietly and carefully reach the door, he’s still not in sight. My fingers shake as I reach for the doorknob and it takes me a couple of tries to turn it. When I do, I push it open quietly and breathe a sigh of relief. Only that moment is short-lived.

“There you are.” A new voice growls in my ear at the same time one hand clamps around my mouth and the other around my waist. I scream into the palm but it’s muffled and he squeezes me hard. My breathing becomes ragged as I’m dragged back into the changing room. “Boss, I’ve got her.” The man squeezes me harder, making me gasp for breath.

The male voice that was taunting me, comes around a corner and my heart sinks into my toes. Shit, this is bad, this is really, really bad. Lattimer, my boss, approaches me with fury written all over his cold, black eyes. He squeezes my jaw, pulling my face toward his.

He inhales and I shudder. “You smell nice, Nadia. You’re going to make a great one.” He shoves my head back and I try to wiggle out of the other person’s hold. It’s no use, he has a cobra-like grip around my waist, squeezing the life out of me. I stop struggling long enough for his grip to loosen and I use that to my advantage. I bring my head back as hard as I can, trying to connect it to his nose, but he shifts his head at the last second and I hit his cheek instead.

“I like you feisty, bitch. Keep fighting me, Nadia. It makes me hard.” The man holding me presses his crotch against my ass and I freeze when I feel his hardness.

“Josiah, we can’t do that to this one.” Lattimer pinches the bridge of his nose. “If she’s damaged more than bruising, I’ll shoot you myself.”

Josiah, the bouncer from the strip club? What is happening here? Why are they doing this? “Why?” I ask through bated breath.

“Why not?” Lattimer shrugs his shoulders. “Money, power, does it really matter? All that matters is someone paid a hefty fee for you and I intend to take you to them.” Lattimer steps so close, that I can smell the whiskey on his breath as he grabs my face again and squeezes painfully. “Don’t even think about trying to escape. Josiah might not be able to fuck your tight holes, but he will fuck with your mind.”

“You will never fuck with my head.” I try fighting Josiah’s hold on me again. He’s so much stronger than me and he slams my head into a set of lockers. Blood drips down my face but I keep fighting. I kick, punch, elbow, scratch and stomp every body part I can reach.

“You bitch.” Josiah drops me onto the ground and I crawl backward away from him as fast as I can. His big hand reaches for my foot, but I kick it away. I don’t know where Lattimer is, but he is the last of my concerns. I’m still crab-crawling backward when I hit something hard with my back. I look up and into the deadly eyes of

Lattimer. He leans forward with a syringe in his hand and jabs it into my neck. I scream as loud as I can as my world goes dark.

I wake up screaming with sweat pouring down my face and tears rolling down my cheeks. My breathing is rapid and my heart feels like it's going to pound right out of my chest when a warm set of arms and a soft male voice soothes me. My skin is clammy and the blankets are tangled around my legs. I turn my head to see who is trying to help me when my gaze lands on a pair of soft blue eyes, staring back at me with concern.

"Matt?" I ask, trying to clear my sore throat.

"It's me, Pulchra. It's ok. I've got you." He brushes the sweaty hair away from my face and gently cups my cheek. "They can't hurt you anymore."

He leans closer to me like he wants to wrap me in his arms and I instinctively pull away. Matt's face falls but then he masks the hurt just as quickly. "I'll get you a glass of water. Do you want anything else?"

I shake my head no, not trusting myself to speak right now. I know I need to tell him about the baby, but I don't want him to want me around because of it or because I was traumatized. I've fought through the worst things in my life but if he rejects me, I don't know how to come back from that. He hands me a glass of water and I gulp it down, letting the coolness soothe my sore throat.

"Thank you. What are you doing here?" I ask, leaning against the headboard. Matt stares at the door like it'll give him all the answers.

"I haven't left that hallway since I got back. I've been waiting and going out of my mind, wondering if you were ok or if I needed to give you more time." The pain in his eyes when he lifts his head is unbearable. "When I heard you scream, I couldn't

wait any longer.”

I can’t stand to see the hurt in his eyes or his heart. So, I pat the bed next to me and hope I don’t unintentionally pull away from his touch. The only way to get past the traumatic things I experienced is to move forward and try. “Come sit with me, please.”

Matt hesitates before sitting. I lean forward, my heart beating rapidly in my chest. He wraps his strong arms around my shoulders, pulling me into his chest. My heart slows and I’m at peace for the first time in a long time. The last time I felt this way was when Matt and I were together in the hotel.

“Thank you,” I whisper into the silence filling the room.

“For what?” Matt asks.

“For everything.” I lean my head up to look into his eyes. “If it wasn’t for you, and the Club, I would have been sold and who knows what would have happened to me.”

Matt swallows hard, “Did they? You know, did they?” He can’t even say it and his body is tight with tension and he holds me a little tighter, like he can do something about the pain if they did.

I shake my head, “No. they didn’t.” I don’t tell him what they did to me was far worse than being raped.

Matt relaxes his grip and the tension leaves his body. “Good. I’m still going to kill the motherfuckers for laying a finger on you though.”

I hold onto him tighter. “Do you really mean that?”

“With everything I stand for. They will not get away with this.” Matt cups my face in his strong hand. “I failed to protect you once and don’t deserve your forgiveness. But if you will let me, I won’t fail you again.”

I smile up at him, pulling my face closer to his, “It’s not your fault, Matt, so there is nothing to forgive. And yes, I will let you protect me, but I do come with stipulations.”

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Matt rests his forehead against mine and I don't freak out from his touch. "What's your stipulations?"

"Don't ever make me feel I'm not good enough or worth it."

"Deal, because you are worth it. If anything, I'm not good enough for you, but I don't give a shit. You are mine."

"And you are mine." I lean in and kiss Matt with everything I have. All the feelings that have been building for him since that first night I saw him in the bar, to all the pain and suffering I went through while kidnapped. How he was the one to rescue me in my dreams while being held captive. To watching my belly grow each day, hoping to keep this baby healthy, even when my health was diminishing. I break the kiss and we're both breathing hard.

"Since it's confession time, there is something I have to tell you, Matt." I pull away from him and rest my hands on my belly. It's not much of a bump but it's enough. He leans forward, confusion etched on his brow. "I haven't told anyone about this, except for Doc Emma because I wanted you to know first."

Matt looks at my hands splayed protectively across my belly, to my face, back to my stomach, back to my face. "Wait. What are you saying?" His face turns a dark shade of red from embarrassment. "Are you saying the first time I slept with a woman and now you... You're... you... Are you pregnant?" He pauses for a moment "With my kid?" Shock is written all over his face.

Wait, the first time he slept with someone was me? How can that be? He has got to be



lying to me. There's no way he was a virgin when we met.

I nod my head, shaking off my thoughts. "I'm three, maybe close to four months. I didn't know until a couple of weeks after I was taken. Only Exleigh and Syvannah knew while we were there and they did everything they could to protect the two of us." A lonely tear slips down my face thinking about what they went through and I can't look at Matt right now. "They took the abuse, the rapes and the molestation so those men wouldn't harm me or this baby. I tried to fight them off every time they came at any of the girls, but I wasn't strong enough and the things they'd make me watch..." I trail off and a shudder runs down my spine. Tears spill from my eyes when I look up at Matt.

His face is passive, but he does pull me into his arms and lets me cry on his chest. His voice is soothing, comforting and peaceful. "It's going to be all right, Nadia." He runs a hand over my braids.

"What's going through your mind now?" I ask, even though I'm afraid of the answer.

Matt lets out a small laugh, half pained, half humor. "I don't know. I'm ecstatic, I'm freaking the fuck out and I'm pissed."

"At me?" I tense from his words. He's taking this news pretty well. Either that or he's really good at hiding a freak-out session.

"No, Pulchra, never at you." He kisses the top of my head and I relax against him. "I do however need to update Nolan and my brothers. Will you be ok for a while?"

"Yes, I think I'm going to sleep some more. But, Matt, will you please not tell them about the baby until Doc does her ultrasound? I don't want..." Matt cuts me off by placing a kiss on my lips.

“This is our secret until you say otherwise.”

“Thank you.” I lay back down and watch Matt watching me.

“Don’t thank me, Pulchra. Get some rest and I’ll be back in a little while.”

Matt quietly closes and locks the door and I drift back off to sleep. This time nightmares don’t fill my head but I dream about a beautiful baby girl with long blonde hair, dimples, pale blue eyes and a blush that rivals her dad’s.

## Chapter Ten

### Red

I’m lost at the moment. I don’t know what to feel about the news Nadia dropped on me. I’m terrified I’m going to fuck this up. I’m afraid that this is not real, that Nadia is lying to me, but after seeing the prenatal vitamins on her stand, I know she isn’t lying. I kept the shock and freak-out session held back when I was in her room, but now, all bets are off.

I should have opened up to Nadia about my past and everything I’ve been through, but I chickened out. She has dealt with enough over the last few months, the last thing she needs to worry about is someone who doesn’t feel things for anyone besides her and what she can do to me both physically and mentally.

The Clubhouse is relaxed, the music is low key and people are drinking, dancing, playing the X-box and pool. Nolan and Krimson are sitting at a table without Noah. Allura and Iris from the Royal Harlots are sitting across from them, deep in conversation. Capone and Danyella are dancing with Nina, and Blayze and Monica are playing pool with Derange and Jezebelle. Jezebelle’s son, Seth, who is prospecting for us, is currently standing by the front door, waiting for someone to

give him something to do. Tiny is still in recovery and Dagger is with him. Torch, Daisy and the twins are playing in front of the TV, giggles floating through the room. My prospect Bones is tending bar and I smile, proud of him. We will be voting on patching him in when he reaches his year mark in a few days. Bones has earned his patch, especially after he protected Daisy when he was a fresh prospect and almost died from it. Every once in a while he will have pain in his shoulder, but nothing he can't deal with.

Pretty Boy is tending bar with Bones and he too will be close to getting his rockers. He put up a hell of a fight when Jezebelle, who is Derange's Ol' Lady, was attacked. Her son, Seth, is the product of rape by an Italian mafia Mufasa when Jezebelle was fifteen. Seth was shot while they were at a race and Pretty Boy was guarding them when they were attacked. They beat Pretty Boy so badly, that he had to spend two weeks in the hospital and have multiple surgeries. He still isn't one hundred percent, but I think it's more mental than physical.

I spot my best friend Aftermath and his Ol' Lady Kensi sitting at the bar, both are nursing beers and making googly eyes at each other. I approach them and nod my head to Aftermath. He kisses Kensi and follows me to the dart board set up on the other side of the room with two fresh beers in his hand. He hands me one and leans against the wall.

"What's up, Red?"

I pick up a set of darts and start throwing them at the bull's eye. Hitting it twice and missing the third. I exhale a deep breath and run my hands over my head. "I wish I could tell you, Aftermath. I don't know what I'm doing or how to do this."

"Do what?" Aftermath probes.

"A relationship, a fa.." I stop before I tell Aftermath about the baby. I promised Nadia

I wouldn't say anything. "This thing between Nadia and me. I don't know how to do this."

"Do you want it?"

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“I don’t know. I think I do, but then I remember what happened in my past and I’m afraid it’s all a joke. The universe is fucking with me and will take it away when I believe it to be true.” I swallow more of my beer.

A pair of long slender fingers ghost across my chest and I release a shudder. I look down and know I’m not imagining it. A new Club Bunny, Pearl, runs her hands down my chest, closer to the button on my jeans. In shock, I don’t say anything, which she takes as an invitation. She steps closer to me in a tight skirt, short enough to see her ass hanging out, a tight tube top, sky-high heels and tons of make-up on her face.

“Bitch you better move on.” This comes from another club bunny who’s been here long enough to know the score.

“Fuck off, Booty. You’re just jealous.” Pearl snarls. She obviously didn’t get the run down on the way things work around here. I’m about to tell her that when she pushes herself against me and her lips are on my neck.

Before I could remove her grasp from my crotch and neck, I heard a screech behind me and I turned my head to see Nadia standing in the doorway.

“What the fuck, Red?” Nadia spits my name out in disgust. “I tell you my biggest secret and the first thing you do is come out here to fuck around on me?”

“Shit. Nadia, wait. It’s not what you think.” I finally get Pearl to release my crotch and stumble after Nadia. “Nadia, wait!” I shout.

Kensi steps in my path, pure hatred rolling off her body in waves. “Leave her alone,

Red. You've done enough."

"Kensi, move," I growl. I try to step around her but she steps with me.

"No. You've done enough. Leave her alone." Kensi crosses her arms over her chest, glaring at me.

"I don't want to physically move you, but I will." My voice is low and deadly.

"Step the fuck back now, Red." Capone snarls. He moves in front of Kensi, blocking my path.

"Prez, don't do this." I plead.

"You get your shit together and do it now." Capone points down the hallway away from Nadia's room. "Get the fuck out of here and cool off."

"I need to explain."

"You need to leave." Capone's word is law and there is no arguing with him.

"Fine. But if anything happens to Nadia, that's on the both of you." I point between the two traitors.

I stomp back to the bar and grab a full bottle of whiskey. I take a swig and then another and another. I watch as Nolan rises from his seat with Krimson behind him and they leave the Clubhouse. That's weird, but fuck it, I don't care. I keep drinking until a quarter of the bottle is left and then stumble outside. I sway on my feet, my head is spinning and I can't see straight.

"Fuck!" I scream into the night air. I didn't do anything wrong and Nadia thinks I did.

What do I do now? How do I fix this?

“Red.” I hear someone call my name but I ignore them. “Red, get inside and sleep it off.”

“Fuck off.” I slur, stumbling more. Someone grabs my arm but I fling them off, falling on my ass in the dirt. “Fuck all of you.” I down the last of the whiskey and lay down, staring up at the stars littering the sky. “Fuck it all.” I slur and my world goes dark.

Fuck, my head is throbbing. I’m lying on my stomach and peel an eye open to look around. I’m in my room but everything is a blur since Nadia accused me of letting a club bunny touch me. If she only knew the truth, she wouldn’t have been quick to react like that. That fuck up is on me. I should have told her about my past but I didn’t want to burden her with more stress.

I try to move but my head is spinning and my stomach lurches. All the alcohol I drank last night is sloshing around and I’m going to vomit. A warm hand brushes across my back and I freeze. I’m partly dressed in my jeans, but my boots, cut, gun and t-shirt are off. I’m afraid to move my head and see who is here with me but I have to. I can’t play turtle for the foreseeable future. I slowly move only my head and I sag with relief. It’s Nadia next to me. Her IV is still hooked up but the color is slowly returning to her complexion and the bags under her eyes aren’t so thick.

I release a shuddering breath and give her a tentative smile. “What are you doing here?” I ask, my brain is still hazy.

Nadia rolls her eyes, “Don’t you remember?”

I sit up a little and wait for the room to stop spinning. “Remember what? The last thing I remember is you coming out of the rooms and freaking out, thinking I was

fucking around.” I sit up further when I know the room isn’t going to turn into the Matrix and spin me into a black hole. “Which I didn’t and wouldn’t by the way.”

Nadia rolls her eyes again and huffs out a breath. “I know that now, Matt.” She sits next to me on the bed and hands me a bottle of water. “I fucked up and let my insecurities get the best of me.”

“What made you realize you were wrong?” I ask, raising an eyebrow. Did I confess my secrets in my drunk-induced haze?

“Kensi and Aftermath. You have an amazing family here. Then I went to find you and instead, I found Pearl literally in Trigger's lap, face down, ass up while Dagger had her from behind.” She shivers with a giggle. “But hey, it’s his life to do with what he wants. I can’t judge someone for wanting a blowjob from a club bunny when she’s willing to give it to them while getting it from behind. But if I ever catch her hands on you again, I won’t be responsible for my actions.” Nadia huffs out and I can’t help but release a low chuckle. “What’s so funny?” Nadia scowls.

“You’ve got a little green,” I brush my fingertip over her nose. “Right there.” Nadia swats me and I release an umph.



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“You’re such a bastard.” Nadia laughs.

“That’s a Royal Bastard to you, Pulchra.” I grin. I take Nadia’s slender hand in mine and bring it to my chest. “Want to tell me what really set you off last night?”

Nadia shrugs her shoulders and won’t look at me. I raise her chin until she is forced to meet my gaze. I raise an eyebrow waiting for her to tell me. “Fine. But you’re going to think I’m an idiot.”

“No, I won’t. Anything you tell me will be between the two of us and I would never think you’re an idiot.” I answer with conviction. The last thing she could ever be is dumb. “You’re the most resilient, smart, beautiful woman I’ve ever had the pleasure of knowing.”

“It’s just,” Nadia pauses. “We don’t know much about each other. I know nothing about your past and what made you the way you are. I don’t know how many people you’ve slept with or if you’ve ever been in love. I don’t know if you have always been outside of the law or where you’re from. Shit, Matt, I don’t even know your last name or if Matt is your real name. I know nothing about you except the way you make me feel alive with every touch. Make me feel cherished and wanted with the way you look at me.” My face turns a deep shade of red hearing the way I make her feel. “And that blush is the most intimate thing about you that I really enjoy.”

I clear my throat in an attempt to calm my racing heart and blushing face. “Well, that’s a lot to unpack. I’ll make a deal with you.”

“I’m listening.”

“I will answer every question you have under one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“You don’t think differently of me when you find out the truth and won’t use it against me.” I look into Nadia’s whiskey-colored eyes and the sight still takes my breath away. “There are parts of my past I’m not proud of. I’ve done things I wish I could change but I can’t. The only thing I can do is learn from them and move forward.”

“Deal, but you have to promise me something in return.” Nadia looks uncomfortable and unsure. A total contrast to the confident woman from the bar who came on to me.

“What’s that?”

“I might screw up a few times. When I do, talk to me. Don’t go on a drunken bender again and make me have to kick your ass. I’ve dealt with abusers, alcoholics and drug addicts for many years and I don’t want to deal with it anymore.”

“Deal but you will have to let Kensi know we’re on the same page. She was the one that stopped me from talking to you last night, which only pissed me off further.”

“I know. She and I had it out pretty good last night after the incident.” Nadia’s stomach growls and she grins.

“Let’s get you and our baby some food and bring it back here.” I climb out of the bed and offer my hand to Nadia. She takes it and pulls herself up. The top of her head is level with my chin and I can’t help but pull her against me. Her soft curves fit perfectly against my hard ones. Nadia’s arms wrap around my waist and she lays her head on my bare chest. “God, you feel wonderful in my arms.” My body is alive from her touch. My heart is pounding against my chest, my jeans are tightening and my

soul feels complete. “I never thought I’d get to do this again, Pulchra and I’m honored you are trusting me.”

Nadia lifts her head to look me in the eyes, “What does that mean?”

“Pulchra is Latin for beautiful.”

Nadia raises on her tiptoes and brings a hand up to the back of my head, creating a shiver down my spine. Her soft lips land on mine and I return her kiss with every beat of my heart. I cup her cheeks and explore her mouth with my tongue. She moans and I swallow it up pulling her closer to me. My body is on fire and she’s the one lighting the match. It’s one of the most intimate kisses we’ve ever shared and I don’t want to stop. I want to ravish every inch of her body and bring her pleasure like she’s never experienced it before.

Nadia pulls away first, breaking our kiss. “Matt, I need you.” She’s pleading with me to make the ache go away. I lift her and she wraps her legs around my waist, grinding onto me.

“Fuck, Nadia.” I groan against her lips. “Are you sure?”

“I’m more than sure, Matt. I need you to make me forget all the bad and focus on the good.”

“You’ll tell me if it gets to be too much or something triggers right?”

“Yes, I will.” Nadia agrees.

I kiss her again pressing my hardness against her core and Nadia moans. I lift the hem of her sleep shirt over her head and toss it behind me. Now we’re bare chest against bare chest. Nadia’s lips are back on mine, devouring me. I lay her gently down on the

bed and kiss my way down her slender throat to her chest. I kiss and suck and knead her breasts with my tongue and hands. Nadia is writhing against me, pushing her hips into the thickness in my jeans. I move further down her body until I'm at the apex of her luscious thighs. I slide her sleep shorts and panties down her slender legs and toss them behind me. I remove my jeans and boxers and add them to the growing pile of clothes. Nadia's eyes stay on me the whole time, watching me and it turns me on more.

I crawl my way up Nadia's body, stopping for a moment to kiss the slight swell of her belly. Nadia grips my hair when my lips brush against her stomach and a groan escapes my throat. I continue kissing my way up her body, lavishing every inch of her skin. Nadia opens her legs for me and my hardness brushes against her heated core. A shuddering breath escapes both of us as her heat wraps around my shaft and for once in my life, I feel complete.

I kiss Nadia and bring us to the edge of bliss before slowing down and drawing out our orgasms. We're a mess of sweaty limbs, racing hearts and satisfying moans as her hips meet mine thrust for thrust and I can't hold off any longer.

"Come for me, Pulchra." I drive in harder until Nadia squeezes me tightly and releases a long moan. I follow right behind her into heaven and bliss.

Once I get my bearings back, I lay down next to Nadia and pull her against my chest. She rests her head against my racing heart and I kiss the top of it. "Will it always be like this?" Nadia asks.

"I hope so," I answer honestly. "I don't ever see myself doing this with anyone else. In all transparency, I never thought I would ever have sex."

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Nadia lifts her head and scrunches her nose, “Like ever?”

I nod, “Yeah, like ever.”

“Why?”

“That is a long story and I need to feed you first.” I slap her ass gently and Nadia giggles.

“I do need to eat.” She looks at me with hunger in her eyes.

“Food, Nadia. You need to eat food, not me.”

Nadia pouts with a giggle. “Fine, but you’ll be on the table later.”

“Deal.”

We get up, use the bathroom and get dressed. She’s wearing a pair of black yoga pants with RBMC etched down the side and one of my RBMC t-shirts. Seeing her in my colors has my jeans tightening again. I watch as she bends over, giving me a peek at her delectable round ass, and pulls her blonde hair into a high ponytail. “Are you ready?” I ask.

“I guess. Let’s get this over with and our little one fed.” Nadia covers her belly with her hand and I cover her hand with my own, showing her, we are in this together no matter what. There is still fear and trepidation in her features but Nadia squares her shoulders, lifts her head high and together we exit my bedroom.

## Chapter Eleven

Nadia

The Clubhouse is quiet when we leave the safety of Matt's room and it's making me a little uneasy. "Where is everyone?"

Matt checks the time on his phone, "Well it's only eight a.m. so I'm guessing most of them are still sleeping."

He leads me into the kitchen through the double swinging doors and I stop in awe. The kitchen is industrial size. A chef's dream comes true. There are two, thirty-six-inch stainless steel stoves against one wall with a cutting board in between them. Below them are two stainless steel ovens. To the right of the stoves is a double-door stainless steel refrigerator.

The island has a sink made for washing your hands or washing vegetables. Behind that is another white and blue marble countertop and a dishwasher with a bigger stainless-steel sink. Cherry Oak cupboards wrap around the space completing the whole kitchen.

"Wow." I'm in awe of this kitchen. I spot Capone sitting with a beautiful woman with long blond hair and bright green eyes and a girl around eight or nine years old who looks just like Capone, sitting on the opposite side of them at a small nook in the corner. The woman smiles when she sees us and comes our way.

"Hi. I'm Danyella, Capone's wife and Ol' Lady and that is our daughter Nina." Danyella points to the girl sitting at the table. She gives us a shy wave and Matt narrows his eyes at her. She grins back and continues to eat. Danyella rolls her eyes and grins. "I swear she will be the death of all of us. Anyway, there is food in the warmer, and if it's not something you want, feel free to make whatever. This is a

free-range kitchen. The only stipulation is that you clean up after yourself.”

“Thank you,” I answer quietly. Capone is glaring at us but I can’t tell if he’s pissed or intrigued.

Danyella frowns. “You don’t have to be quiet or shy around us. We’re all family and if you make Red happy, then we’re all happy. And the same goes for you. If Red makes you happy, then we’re all happy. If I need to kick his ass, you say the word.”

“Geez, thanks Dany. Glad I can count on you to have my back.” Matt glares at her mockingly.

“You know it, Red.” She grins and goes back to the nook with Capone and Nina. Once she’s within reach, Capone pulls her down next to him and wraps his arms around her, kissing her hard on the lips.

Matt blushes and I look away while Nina rolls her eyes and pretends to gag on her fork. “What would you like to eat?” Matt asks.

“Anything. I’m starving. Do you want coffee?” I counter, needing to do something.

“Yes, and you’re not picky?” Red asks as he rummages through the cupboard. I shake my head. “Ok. Let’s see what we have here, my boy needs a lot of sustenance.” Matt replies. I fix his coffee and pour myself an orange juice and grab a bottle of water. I sit at the island while Matt goes to work making me a bacon, sausage, ham and cheese omelet. He also makes Texastost, hashbrowns and extra bacon. I’m enjoying the view of his backside as he moves around the kitchen, stopping every once in a while to give me a kiss or a wink. By the time he is done, my body is on fire and my stomach is growling full force. I feel like I could eat him and a cow. Matt makes two plates and brings them over. He sets my plate down in front of me and his down in front of him. “Bon Appetite.”

“This looks and smells delicious.” I lean over and give him a small kiss on the lips.  
“Thank you.”

Matt blushes and my heart skips a beat. “You’re welcome.”

We’re almost finished eating in silence, enjoying each other’s company when the door swings open and Pearl comes sauntering into the kitchen wearing nothing but a thong and a strappy undershirt. She fixes herself a cup of coffee. Forks clatter onto plates and grumbles of disapproval filter in but I keep my eyes on my plate. Matt wraps his arm around my shoulders, pulling me closer to him.

“Have some self-respect, Pearl, and put some damn clothes on,” Danyella growls from the nook. I look up and Pearl smirks before shaking her thong-covered ass and leaving the kitchen.

I shake my head. I’ve never been one to be petty but that bitch is going to get what’s coming to her and maybe she will fall in line. I don’t wait for anyone to say anything about her actions. I slide out of the barstool and enter the common room. It’s starting to fill up with Royal Bastard members, their Ol’ Ladies and club bunnies. I spot Pearl perched on a barstool, her bare ass still hanging out, drinking a cup of coffee and approach her.



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“You got a sec?” I ask, tapping Pearl on the shoulder. She looks me up and down and rolls her eyes turning her back to me. “Ok, that wasn’t a question.” I grab Pearl’s arm, pushing on the pressure point hard enough to get her attention and force her off the stool.

“Ouch, you bitch.” Pearl whines trying to yank her arm out of my grip.

“Look, we can do this privately or in front of all these people. You decide.” I stand firm, letting Pearl make the decision. She motions with her hands for me to go, so I do, bringing her along with me. Once we’re out of earshot and prying eyes, I release Pearl’s arm. She rubs it tentatively. “Listen, I know you’re new here but there are ground rules that need to be followed. Did anyone give them to you when you came?”

Pearl rolls her eyes and nods her head. “Yeah, they did but how the hell was I supposed to know Red was off-limits? I was told any single man here is fair game. He’s single and looked lonely. The other girls told me he didn’t have sex and I wanted to help him get past it.”

Now it’s my turn to roll my eyes. “Pearl, as you can see, he isn’t single.”

“I see that now.” She hesitates, “Are we good?”

“You and I are good, yes. But there’s a little issue with Danyella you will have to address. She is the queen around here and you disrespected her and her daughter in the kitchen with your lack of clothing and the shaking of your ass.”

Pearl swallowed hard and shame fills her big blue eyes. “Shit.”

“Yeah, shit,” I confirm. “Go get some clothes on and take care of business. If you want to be able to stay here, the first thing you need to do is get on Danyella’s good side. She will appreciate the gesture and don’t let it happen again.”

“Ok, thank you.” Pearl offers me a sheepish grin and scurries off toward the room the club bunnies share.

I watch as Pearl disappears around the corner when warm arms wrap around my waist from behind. “God, I love watching you work your magic.” Matt nuzzles his nose against my neck making me giggle.

“I know what it’s like to be in a different place and not knowing the rules. Then have other women look upon you with disgust. Pearl doesn’t deserve that. Yes, she made a mistake, but not one big enough to regret. If I didn’t help her, she wouldn’t last.” Matt’s big palms roam over my stomach caressing our baby.

“Capone said Doc Emma will be back this afternoon to do a follow up with you, Exleigh and Syvannah. Who are, by the way, slowly working their way through everything. I figured you’d want to see them so they’re waiting for you in their room.”

I turn in Matt’s arms and wrap my arms around his neck. I lean in and give him a gentle kiss. “Thank you for being good to me, Matt.” Matt blushes and I place a cool palm on his cheek. “Don’t ever change the way you are.”

Matt clears his throat before giving me a sweet kiss that curls my toes and makes my head spin. Matt rests his forehead against mine. “You’re the best thing that has happened to me in a long time. When you get done visiting Exleigh and Syvannah, I need to answer some of your questions. I’m going to visit Tiny and see how he’s

doing. Come find me when you're done." He gives me another kiss that leaves me trembling with need when he pulls away. "Later, Pulchra. Keep those thoughts in that pretty little head and I'll make good on them."

I watch as Matt saunters off down the hallway, watching his ass in those jeans. God, he gets my blood pumping. The things he does to me makes me want to hang onto him a little bit tighter. The way he makes me feel, makes me fall for him a little more each time. I was an idiot last night, thinking he would cheat on me and I have a lot of making up to do. I think of ways to show Matt my appreciation for him when I find the room Exleigh and Syvannah are in.

I shake my head and knock. When one of them answers, I turn the doorknob, letting myself in. Exleigh is curled up in a recliner in the corner of the room, with a blanket wrapped around her and a book in her lap. She stretches, giving me a warm smile. Syvannah is curled up on a bed, nestled under a pile of blankets, asleep. It doesn't look good with the way she keeps tossing and turning.

"How are you doing?" I ask quietly, trying not to disturb Syvannah. I sit on the edge of the small couch across from Exleigh.

Exleigh shrugs her shoulders and lowers her head. "Taking it hour by hour. Sometimes it gets really bad and other times it's like nothing ever happened."

"Have you talked to anyone?"

Exleigh shakes her head, tears forming in her eyes. "I don't know if I can." She looks over at Syvannah and sadness crosses her face. "Syvannah has had it worse. This is the first time since we got here that she is sleeping. It might not be for long, but she's finally found some peace."

"What do you need, Ex? How can I help?" I ask, holding her hand.

“I don’t know.” Tears roll down her cheeks and my heart breaks for these two ladies. They have been through so much these last few months, I don’t know how to help them.

Syvannah starts whimpering in her sleep, tossing and turning until the blankets are wrapped around her and she’s trapped. Then she starts screaming, causing me to jump and Exleigh to throw off her blanket, moving quickly to Syvannah’s side. Exleigh untangles her from the blankets and moves Syvannah’s sweat-soaked hair away from her face. “Shh...Anna, it’s ok. You’re safe, we’re all safe.” She soothes. Syvannah stops struggling and opens her eyes. When they land on me, she starts sobbing uncontrollably.

I sit on the bed and pull her against my chest. “It’s ok, sweet girl. I’m ok, you’re ok. Ex is ok. We’re all ok.” I hold back the tears threatening to fall and continue to rock Syvannah back and forth. Exleigh has her hand resting on Syvannah’s back, rubbing soothing motions up and down.

“What about the baby?” Syvannah whispers through a sore throat.

A smile lights up my face and my hand not holding onto Syvannah drops to the bump. “The baby is doing good too. Doc Emma will be here in a little while to do an ultrasound. Do you two want to come with me?” They both nod their heads.

“Are you sure it’s ok?” Syvannah asks.

“Of course, it’s ok, why wouldn’t it be?” I ask frowning.

“The father of the baby. Does he know?” Syvannah questions.

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A pure smile radiates from my lips and I can't help it. Syvannah and Exleigh look at me like I've lost my mind and maybe I have but who cares? "Ladies, Matt knows about the baby and he is ecstatic about it. He will be in the room too so don't be frightened. He won't hurt you and neither will any of the guys here. They will protect you."

"Thank you, Nadia," Syvannah says sitting up. "Can I feel him?" I nod my head and she tentatively holds a shaky hand against my growing belly. "Hi, little baby. I'm your Auntie Anna. I'm going to spoil you, take care of you, and teach you how to treat a woman. To never do those things to her that happened to us." Tears roll down my cheeks listening to Syvannah.

Exleigh is next, holding my belly with wonder on her face and tears in her vibrant eyes. "So, we did it? We helped save the baby?"

I nod my head, "Yes you both did and I can never repay you for it either. What you both sacrificed to keep us safe is a debt I will owe you for the rest of my life. You two are sisters to me and I hope I can help you two get past all this and live life as normal as can be. You deserve it and so much more." I hug them both tightly. "Thank you, both, for doing what you did."

The girls jump when there is a commotion outside their door. I release them and stand up. Making my way to the door, I open it a crack to see who's on the other side. It's Doc Emma and Matt. He has a scowl on his face and she looks annoyed. They are in a heated conversation and don't see me right away. I remember the last time when I overreacted to something that wasn't what it seemed.

“What’s going on?” I ask with a raised brow.

“Nothing,” Matt growls glaring at the doc. “Doc Emma here had to be set straight over something that didn’t happen years ago.”

Emma snorts, “You all up in my business back then didn’t happen?”

Matt scowls. “We were in a foreign country. You were treating my brother’s Ol’ Lady and my prospect and I didn’t know shit about you. So, yes I researched you to protect my club. It’s what I do. Now, you’re all in a tizzy about it instead of focusing on my Ol’ Lady and unborn child.”

My jaw drops open in shock, “Matt.” He stops his tirade and looks at me, apparently not knowing what he said. “You called me your Ol’ Lady.”

“Yeah, I did.” A smile graces his handsome face with a blush on his cheeks.

“Don’t you think you should ask me?” I’m teasing him but it’s fun watching him blush from his hairline down his neck.

“Nadia Louise Ryan, yes I ran a background search on you when I found out who you were because you were missing. No, I won’t apologize for doing it to bring you back safely. Yes, I do care a lot about you and we are still getting to know each other but will you be my Ol’ Lady?” Matt rambles the blush on his face turns a deeper shade of red.

“I would love to be your Ol’ Lady, Matthew Red Phillips.” I smile through the tears and Matt picks me up, swinging me around before kissing me speechless.

“Now that’s out of the way, I’m going to check on the girls and meet you in your room.” Doc Emma says, shutting the door on us.

“Shit. The girls wanted to see the ultrasound too and I didn’t get a chance to tell Emma to bring them with her.” I try to open the door but it’s locked.

“Then we will wait right here until they’re done. That way I can help them if they’re frightened.” Matt answers. I rest my head on his shoulder and breathe a deep sigh of relief.

“You’re too good to me, Matt.”

“You’re the best thing for me, Nadia.”

We wait for thirty minutes outside the girls’ door before Emma appears. “Holy shit, you scared me.”

“Sorry, I promised Exleigh and Syvannah they could come with us for the ultrasound.” I apologize to Doc Emma.

“Ok, go ahead and get them and I’ll meet you back by your room.”

“Thanks, Doc, for everything.”

Emma looks behind her at the closed door, “Those two have been through a lot and you already know this, just keep in mind, they’re going to have a long, bumpy road ahead of them.”

“I know, thanks again, Doc Emma.” I hug her and she hugs me back.

I get the girls and we make our way down the hallway toward mine and Red’s room. He stays behind us while I lead them, protecting them from any unwanted attention. Once we get inside, they stay by the door, waiting for the doctor and I sit on the edge of the bed.

Sharp pain shoots through my abdomen and I double over in pain. “Matt, something is wrong.” I cry out when another sharp pain penetrates my stomach and I feel like I’m going to be sick.

Matt is next to me in an instant and he pulls out his phone. “Aftermath, get the doc in here quick. Something is wrong.” He hangs up the phone and helps me onto the bed.

Another sharp pain radiates through my body and now I’m panicking. “Is there something wrong? What is happening?”

“I don’t know but the doc should be here any second.” Matt soothes. The door bursts open and the doctor comes in with Aftermath on her heels carting the ultrasound machine and Kensi behind him. Exleigh and Syvannah jump but I can’t worry about that right now, something is wrong with my baby. Another sharp pain stabs me and I let out a whimper.



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“Help me, please, Doc.” I plead with tears in my eyes.

“I’m going to need you all to leave for a few minutes, please.” Doc Emma demands.

“I’m not going anywhere.” Matt bellows.

“Please, Matt. Just wait outside the door.” I plead with him while gritting my teeth.

“Red, what I’m going to do will be invasive and I don’t want you or anyone else to see it. I’d appreciate it if you’d wait outside for a moment.” Doc Emma demands.

“Fine.” Matt kisses me on the forehead. “I will be right outside the door. You scream and I will barge in.”

I nod through the pain, hoping and praying everything is ok. That my baby is going to be ok.

## Chapter Twelve

### Red

Waiting fucking sucks. This helpless feeling in the pit of my stomach is making me sick. What if Nadia is in there losing our baby and I’m out here pacing like a stuck pig? What if I lose both of them? Is God playing a cruel joke on me? I’d never forgive myself if something happened to either Nadia or our unborn child. I will burn every corner of every state to find Lattimer if something happens to either of them. My cold, dead heart finally started beating again and now there is a chance I will lose

the two people who make me feel alive. I don't want to be numb anymore. I want to live. I want to feel. I want to love.

"Red," Kensi asks quietly from the comfort of Aftermath's arms. "What is going on with Nadia? Why was she in so much pain?"

I stop pacing and turn to look at my best friend's Ol' Lady. She has tears welling up in her hypnotic eyes and I release a deep sigh. "We need to wait for the Doc to tell us what's going on." It's not my place to tell Kensi about the baby. If Nadia does lose it, the last thing she'll need is pity. This will be her choice to tell Kensi or not.

Exleigh and Syvannah are next to the door, holding onto each other and crying. I owe these two my life for protecting Nadia and the baby for the last few months. I bend down so I'm level with them when Exleigh looks up at me. My throat clogs and I can't find the words I want to say to these two. She offers me a small, timid smile and a nod of her head. I rest my hand on her shoulder and Exleigh doesn't flinch. Syvannah stops crying long enough to look at the two of us through red-rimmed eyes. She grabs my hand and gives me a gentle squeeze. I hug them both, telling them with my actions how much their sacrifice means to me.

Watching these two, I swear by everything I am, I will protect them with my life. Not only did they save my woman and baby, but they also saved me in the process. For that, they will always have my protection and the protection of the Royal Bastards.

"Exleigh and Syvannah, I want to tell you thank you. With everything the two of you have done, you will always have my protection and the protection of the Royal Bastards. Whatever the two of you need, just ask and it's yours." I clear my throat to hold back the tears.

"Thank you, Red." Exleigh acknowledges. Syvannah nods her head while tears stream down her face.

I stand up and continue to pace, waiting for someone to tell me what is going on. I haven't heard any screams or sobs. Nothing is coming from the other side of the door and that worries me.

Capone and Danyella come down the hallway a little while later followed by Dagger, Torch, Daisy, Blayze, Monica, Derange and Jezebelle. It's like a Royal Bastard reunion here and this hallway isn't big enough for all of us. I've lost track of how long it's been but I hope Capone doesn't tell me he needs me to take a walk. Each time I did, something bad has happened and I'll be damned if I do it again.

"Anything yet?" Capone asks.

I shake my head and lean against the wall. "Nothing yet, Prez. This waiting is killing me." I prop a boot behind me and hang my head. "I just got her back, Capone. I can't lose her."

Capone rests his hand on my shoulder. "Doc Emma is the best at what she does. Keep the faith that everything will be OK. Are you claiming her?"

"Fuck yeah, I am," I answer with no hesitation. Nadia is my Ol' Lady. My forever.

Dagger pushes his way through everyone and rests his hand on my shoulder, "Pray with me." Everyone bows their heads while he leads us in prayer. "Heavenly Father, we are asking you today to look upon Nadia. Please heal her, help her and guide her. Give her strength in you and through you during this time and every time in the future. Also, please give your strength to Exleigh and Syvannah and help them heal. In Jesus Christ we name. Amen."

"Amen." We all answer in unison. I dry my eyes and stare at the door to my bedroom. They should have come out here already. What is taking so long?

I start counting the what ifs and putting the blame back on me when the door opens. Emma sticks her head out, not letting me see past her. “She’s going to be fine. Red, if you will please?”

I push off the hallway and follow Emma into my room. Nadia is lying in the middle of my bed. No, our bed. There is a big band around her belly and a machine set up to the left of her that is printing out something like waves. Another machine with a screen, a weird wand of some sort and another flat looking thing is placed in front of Doc Emma and she is typing away. Nadia looks so small compared to all the machines in here. She lifts her tired eyes and smiles when she spots me standing at the door.

“What’s going on?” I quietly ask.

Nadia holds her slender hand out and I hurry to her side and take it. Her fingers are ice cold in my grasp. “Everything is going to be fine. I must have overdone it earlier today and with not eating as much, my body didn’t want to cooperate.”

I release a harsh breath, “So you and the baby are going to be ok?” I look from Nadia to Doc Emma.

“Yes, they both are healthy and thriving. But Nadia does need to take it easy for the next few weeks. Her body has been under so much pressure and stress, that it’s still in fight mode.” Doc Emma informs me.

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“What was it then? What caused her pain?”

Emma looks at Nadia and Nadia nods her head before answering me. “Since Nadia isn’t spotting, bleeding or having an abnormal discharge, I’m almost certain it’s Round Ligament Pain. RLP happens when pregnant people start showing. Since Nadia has lost a lot of weight but still managed to keep sustenance down for the baby, her belly is growing bigger, even though she isn’t. Once she starts putting weight on to grow with the baby, RLP will be less and less. She just needs to limit what she does and how often she does it until her body adjusts.”

“What do you mean you’re almost certain?” This chick has a medical degree and can’t give me a straight answer, what the fuck! “You better be certain, Doc.”

“Matt,” Nadia groans in frustration. “Listen to the Doc, she does know what she’s doing.”

Emma doesn’t bat an eye at my outburst. “That is why I have a monitor hooked up to Nadia, to check the baby’s heartbeat, which is strong and healthy and we’re going to do an ultrasound now.” She turns to the machine and fires it up.

“Wait.” Nadia stops Emma from continuing. “Can Exleigh and Syvannah come in?”

I know why she is asking and I agree with her. Those two sacrificed themselves for this baby and Nadia. Emma nods her head. I get off the bed and open the door. “Exleigh, Syvannah, can you two come in here?” The duo rise from the floor, still clutching onto each other, scared out of their minds. Everyone else is looking at me with worry in their eyes. “She’s going to be ok. Give us a few minutes and then you

can see her.”

I close the door before anyone can ask questions or say anything. Exleigh and Syvannah are sitting on the edge of the bed, their eyes are stained red from crying. “Is the baby ok?” Exleigh asks.

Nadia nods her head, “Yes, everything is fine, girl. Doc Emma is going to do the ultrasound and Matt and I wanted you in here with us for it.” I approach the bed and sit next to Nadia, taking her hand in mine again.

“OK, Nadia, lay down and lift your shirt,” Emma instructs. Nadia does what she asks while Emma picks up a bottle that has jelly in it. “This will be cold at first, but then it’ll warm up.” She shakes the bottle and turns it upside down putting a blob on Nadia’s lower stomach.

Nadia releases a hiss. “Shit, you weren’t kidding. That is cold.” Exleigh giggles and Syvannah is watching in awe.

“Ok, now I’m going to take this wand and place it on your belly. I’ll get a few measurements and pictures. Are you ready?” Emma asks.

“Yes,” Nadia answers and I nod my head.

Emma places the wand on the area where she put the jelly and moves it around. She’s clicking away at the keyboard, while still moving the wand thingy. We all watch the screen as a little thing comes on. I’m shocked, Nadia squeezes my hand hard, but I can’t tear my eyes away from the screen.

My heart swells inside my chest as our baby comes to life on the screen. “Is that... I’m going... holy shit...” I rub my palm against my chest, trying to calm it down. My face turns bright red but I’m not embarrassed, I’m in awe.

“Yeah, Matt. That’s our baby.” Nadia’s throat clogs with emotion as we watch the screen together.

“Do you want to know if it’s a boy or girl?” Doc Emma asks.

“Yes.” I say at the exact moment Nadia says “No.”

Nadia frowns and looks at me, “You want to know?”

“You don’t?” I ask.

“I don’t... I don’t know if I do. What if something happens to them? My heart is already full, I don’t know if I can take it if I have a name picked out, clothes, all that crap and they’re ripped away from me?” Nadia’s bottom lip trembles with worry.

I kiss her on the forehead and look deep into her eyes. “I will help you through whatever heartache you have and together, you and I will burn this world down together if something were to happen to him or her.”

“What are you saying, Matt?” Nadia asks.

What am I saying? What am I trying to tell her? Do I love her? Will I sacrifice everything for her? Will I put anyone who harms her again to the ground? Yes, to it all. As I stare into Nadia’s eyes I know I can’t hold back any longer.

“I’m saying that I love you, Nadia. From the moment your fingernails ran across my chest, to the moment you gave yourself to me and only me, I fell for you. You are my world and I will kill anyone who harms you or our baby. You are mine. ”

Tears fall from Nadia’s eyes and roll down her cheeks. “I love you, too, Matt.”

“So does this mean you want to know if it’s a boy or girl?” Emma asks with a smile on her face.

“Yes.” We both say in unison.

A few more clicks and moves from the wand, Emma prints out a few pictures and hands them to us. After she wipes the jelly stuff off Nadia’s belly, she pulls her shirt back down. Nadia sits up in the bed and carefully swings her legs over the edge. I wrap my arms around her shoulders while we look at the ultrasound pictures. I’m not sure what I’m seeing but I’m not going to tell these women that. One photo has a small circle, which could be the head I’m guessing, a bigger circle attached to it and sticks coming from the big circle. I’m confused as hell but I keep my mouth shut.

Emma gives me mercy and points to the smaller circle. “This is the head.” Then she points to the other circle and sticks. “This is the body, arms and legs.” Then she points to what looks like a worm. “Congrats Mom and Dad, this means you’re having a boy. And by your measurements, Nadia, you have five months left. Which is right on target to what you told me earlier. I have a 3-D image machine in my office and I can set up an appointment so you can see what he looks like in a real image.”



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Nadia nods her head, “That will be great. Thank you, Doc.”

“Anytime. I will check my schedule and give you a ring.” She puts her stuff away and goes into the attached bathroom to wash her hands.

Nadia hands Syvannah and Exleigh their own photos and they squeal in delight. “Ex, Anna, our little guy needs his Aunties to be strong for him. Can you do that?”

“Yes, Nadia.” They both nod their heads.

“I owe you two everything, so if you need anything, please find me,” Nadia tells them.

“Red has already promised us the protection of the Club and him,” Exleigh speaks up.

Nadia turns in my direction, a thankful look on her face. “You did?”

“Damn right I did. I owe these two my life for what they did for our son.” I nod my head, not taking my eyes off Nadia and her sexy body.

Nadia leans into me and plants her lips on mine. “You’re the best, Matt. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

I hope I can keep my promise to bring retribution and vengeance to my woman and unborn son. I will do everything I can to find these motherfuckers and make them pay for touching what’s mine.

When I do find them, they'll wish their faces never came through their mother's crotch because I'm their judge, jury and executioner and I will not stop until I find them and end their terror.

## Chapter Thirteen

Nadia

Watching Exleigh and Syvannah coo over the baby's ultrasound photo makes my heart full. I am praying this little guy will help these two heal. I was scared to death when those sharp pains hit my stomach and the worst-case scenarios went through my head. Luckily, Emma was already here and she calmed me down long enough to figure out what was wrong. What she said made sense and a wave of relief lifted off my shoulders.

Then the tears in Matt's eyes when we watched our baby come alive on the screen shattered any doubts I had about him. His confession made my heart swell and I knew then and there, no matter what, Matt is here for me, that he loves me and he will do everything in his power to protect our growing family.

"Nadia," Matt's voice snaps me out of my reminiscing. "The rest of the club is outside the hallway waiting. Are you ready to tell them? I know Kensi is going out of her mind with worry."

"Yes. Where do we want to do this at? In here would be kind of crowded." I look around the room and know there is no way all of those big, burly men and their women will fit in here.

"Here's an idea. I have Church in twenty minutes. I can tell my brothers and you can tell the women. Unless you want me with you? If you want us to tell them together, I can get Church postponed."

I think about this for a few moments, while Emma gathers all of her things and quietly leaves the room. “Let’s do this together.”

“Ok, I’ll be right back.” Matt kisses me on the head before exiting the room.

“What do you want us to do?” Exleigh asks, looking uncomfortable.

“I want the two of you there too. Listen, I know this is weird, but some of the girls here have been through the same thing the two of you did. Maybe they can help you from their experience.”

Syvannah’s eyes grow wide with hope. “You think they’ll talk to us about it?”

“Let me ask them, but I’m sure they will if you’re willing to accept their help.”

“I would do anything to make this feeling go away. I hate being scared and weak.” Exleigh responds with tears in her eyes.

“You’re not weak. Either of you.” I gather both of them in my arms. “If anything, you two are the strongest women I know. It will take time, but some day you will see what I see.”

“Ok,” Syvannah nods her head. “I’ll try anything to make the nightmares stop.”

“Great. Will you two meet me out in the common room in twenty?” Matt comes back into the room when I ask them.

“We’ve got to start somewhere.” Exleigh gives me a strong hug and then Syvannah. They both leave the room, promising to meet us in the common room.

“What did they say?”

“They’re all on pins and needles and I told them twenty minutes and they’ll know everything.” There’s a sexy smirk on Matt’s face that makes me hunger for him.

“And what are we going to do in twenty minutes?” I ask, wrapping my arms around Matt’s neck.

“Well, for what I have in mind, twenty minutes won’t be enough, but I can give you a warmup.” The devilish grin that graces Matt’s face makes me want to say screw it to all of them.

“Hmm...” I purr. “I could use more than a warmup, Matt.”

“Woman, you’re going to be the death of me.” Matt lifts me up and I wrap my legs around his waist. He shifts his hips forward and the hardness behind his jeans presses into my core making me moan.

Matt lays me down on the bed and settles between my open legs. He kisses me hard. We’re a mess of tongues, teeth and greedy moans. He presses his hips into my core, hitting the right spot that drives me wild.

“Fuck, you are driving me wild.” Matt groans against my lips. He trails kisses down my chest and stops to talk to the baby for a moment before going further. He removes my yoga pants and panties and his lips are on me in an instant. Matt nips and sucks at my core until I’m a withering mess underneath him. After a few swipes of his talented tongue, I detonate and cry out his name. Once I come back down, Matt

crawls his way up my satiated body and kisses me on the lips.

He's still rock hard against me and I flip us over and return the favor. After a few swipes of my mouth on him, Matt's body convulses and he shatters, my name rolling off his lips.

"Fuck, Nadia," Matt growls when I rest my head on his beating heart.

"Remember, that's a warmup," I say kissing him on the chest before getting up to use the bathroom.

Once I'm done, I wash my hands and look at myself in the mirror. I can tell something is changing inside of me. My eyes are brighter, the smile I've been missing for years has come back and there's a glow on my skin. Happiness is radiating out of every pore in my body and I'll be damned if I let anyone take it away from me.

Matt and I leave the safety of his bedroom. I mean, our bedroom as he has told me repeatedly. We walk hand in hand down the hallway and into the common room. Everyone is gathered around the bar and tables waiting for us.

"Ready?" Matt asks, squeezing my hand.

"Ready." I squeeze back.

Matt steps forward, not letting go of my hand, his face burning red from embarrassment. "Nadia and I have something to tell you." The Clubhouse is so quiet, you can hear a pin drop. Even the babies aren't making a sound. "First, I'd like to properly introduce you to my Ol' Lady, Nadia."

Fists pound on the tables and bar tops and catcalls ring out through the room. Capone

approaches us with something in his hand, which he hands off to Matt after slapping him on his back and whispering something to him.

“Nadia, since you’ve already agreed to by my Ol’ Lady, this makes it a formality and once we can, you’re getting my ink on your sexy body.” Matt holds out a leather cut with my name on the left breast. On the right, the patch reads, Property of Red, with the Royal Bastards Los Angeles, CA rocker on the back.

I take it from him with shaking fingers and tears in my eyes. “Thank you, Red. This means a lot to me.” He kisses me hard and then helps slide it on my shoulders. I button it up in the front but it’s getting kind of tight. “Uh, we might have an issue in a month or so,” I say pointing at the buttons.

“Why would you have an issue?” Kensi asks. She’s sitting on Aftermath’s lap and his big burly arms are wrapped around her waist.

“Well...” I look up to Matt and he nods his head, telling me it’s my turn to drop a bomb on them. I take out the ultrasound picture and hold it in front of me. “Red and I are going to have a baby in five months.” The room grows silent, you can hear a pin drop and my nerves get the best of me. All eyes turn to Kensi, waiting for her reaction.

“What?!?” Kensi stands up and heads right for me. She has tears in her eyes and a smile on her face. “I’m so happy for you.” She engulfs me in a big hug, almost cutting off my air supply.

“Holy shit!” Torch shouts from his seat, waking up his little girl. “Our baby definitely isn’t a baby anymore!”

“You’re such an ass.” Daisy elbows him in his stomach. She takes the little girl out of Torch’s arms and comes over to me. She gives me a hug. “Congratulations. They’re

going to be giving Red shit for a while now.”

Catcalls, fists pounding on the table and shouts of celebration ring out through the Clubhouse. “We need drinks!” Trigger shouts. Bones, who I’ve learned is Red’s prospect, is behind the bar pouring drinks as fast as he can.

The music is cranked up, drinks are flowing and everyone, including the club bunnies, are dancing and having a great time celebrating our news.

Matt and I are wrapped in each other’s arms, dancing when Capone and Blayze approach us. Capone’s dark eyes still scare the crap out of me, but I try not to show it. “Red, we need you for a moment.” Red’s eyes narrow on Capone and he nods his head, huffing out an irritated breath. “Sorry to do this, brother, but. Club business calls.”

I look up at Matt with worry in my eyes. “Is everything OK?” I ask. This is supposed to be a celebration damn it.

He kisses me on the forehead. “Yes, everything is fine. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

Matt leaves me on the dance floor and worry and doubt come filtering into my mind. I’m heading down a dark and lonely rabbit hole when several pairs of arms wrap around me. Kensi, Danyella, Monica, Daisy and Jezebelle are engulfing me in hugs and love I’ve never had before. We dance, laugh, and eat while the guys are away doing Club business. They welcomed me into their folds and haven’t looked back.

### Chapter Fourteen

#### Red

It's been three and a half months since Nadia's pregnancy scare and the same amount of time with no sign of Lattimer or Josiah. I'm growing frustrated with every passing day. These fuckers are dumb. I should be able to track them down.

Nadia and I are getting closer and closer every day while these sick fucks are getting further and further away. She even teased me one day about not knowing my last name, which of course, I told her.

I had to come in my tech room to see if I can dig up anything on these sick fucks while everyone is setting up for Torch and Daisy's twins, Jaxon and Mara Jean or MJ for short, birthday party. Jax, Torch's twin brother and his woman, who used to hide out here in the Club while a power struggle was happening in her family, Rose, are outside with everyone else. They came up for a surprise visit and to celebrate the twins' birthday. It's still creepy as fuck how much Torch and Jax look alike. I'm sure it still throws Rose off every time they are together. I mean, she did fuck both of them at one point, just not at the same time.

I lean back in my computer chair and stare at the 3-D ultrasound Doc Emma did a couple of months ago. Now I see a baby instead of an alien and my heart skips a beat. My baby boy, growing rapidly inside of my woman's belly. I got to feel him kick a few nights after the 3-D ultrasound when I was balls deep inside Nadia and it freaked me out at first. She laughed and then threatened my manhood if I stopped. Now, either she's on top of me, or on her hands and knees. No way am I doing that again.



I would give anything to be able to take her in my domain, but every time we got a chance to be alone, someone always came barging in and ruined the mood. The first time was Torch. Nadia was perched on my desk, legs spread wide, my fingers strumming her needy core when he unlocked the door and came bursting into the room. The fucker knew exactly what was going on and laughed before taking a seat in the available chair and demanding I pull up a video of his twins doing something.

The second one to interrupt us was Kensi. Nadia was sitting on my lap, facing me, grinding on top of me, showing me her dance moves while my lips were sucking her chest. She was about to sink down onto my throbbing erection when Kensi came bursting into the room looking for Nadia. Her face turned as red as mine while she slowly backed out, apologizing over and over again.

The third and final time we tried to mess around in here, Nina caught us. That one was my fault. I forgot to lock the door. Good thing the princess didn't wait a few minutes later or I'd be eating out of a straw while nursing my balls. After that, we swore no more sex in the communications room.

I turn my head to a soft knock on the door. Nadia sticks her head inside before entering, "Do you want some company?"

I smile at my woman. "Of course, come in." Nadia is wearing a blue sundress, which shows off her baby belly, with black sandals and her long blonde hair is pulled up in a messy bun. She has a plate of food in her hand and I pull out a chair for her to sit down in. I kiss her on the head and then kiss our baby on her growing belly. "Why do I have the pleasure of my woman's company today? I thought you were going to set up some baby stuff with Kensi and then help set up for the party?"

"Yeah," Nadia scrunches her nose. "I kind of lost it a little bit when we were putting away baby clothes and it freaked Kensi out."

Now she has my full attention. I know hormones can be a bitch to pregnant women, but Nadia has been really good about controlling them. “What happened?” I rest my palm on her exposed knee. The heat from her skin travels south and I want to ravish her body. But now is not the time.

“We were putting baby clothes away when we ran out of room in the dresser. I kind of freaked out about not having enough space for the three of us in your room and had a little temper about it.” Nadia scrunches her nose while holding her fingers half an inch apart. “Let’s just say Kensi will not sit near me if I have any sharp objects within reach for a while.” Nadia shrugs her shoulders like it’s no big deal.

“You didn’t stab her or anything, did you?” My eyes grow wide when Nadia gives me a sheepish look.

“Not exactly. But we will need to buy more baby clothes.”

“Do you have a solution for this problem we have?” I’ve helped Nadia come up with solutions to problems we come across instead of hiding in the shadows, hoping it goes away. If there is one thing I know from being a tech expert is finding a solution to issues when they arise. Except for finding these pieces of shit.

“I do, but I don’t know how you’ll handle it.”

“Hit me with it.”

“We use my apartment. It’s two bedrooms and in a safe neighborhood.”

“Is this what you want?” I ask. I’m taken aback that she still has her apartment, but I didn’t pressure her into giving it up either.

“I want to be wherever you are, but we do need more room. I don’t know how Torch

and Daisy do it with their twins, but sooner or later, they will need a place of their own too.” She pops a grape into her kissable mouth and dirty things filter through my head. I’m insatiable when it comes to Nadia. It’s like she woke a beast up inside of me and all he wants to do is take her body every second of every day. “Same with all of the brothers who have an Ol’ Lady and kids. This Clubhouse won’t be big enough to hold everyone sooner or later.”

I kiss Nadia on the head when a plan forms in my mind. “I need to talk to Capone. Give me a few days to handle this before you destroy anything else with sharp objects or decide to move into your apartment.”

“Deal.” Her eyes move to the monitors and surprise appears on her face when she spots Lattimer on the screen. It’s not fear anymore, but hatred flashing in her whiskey-colored eyes. “You still haven’t found them?”

I shake my head. I know this is Club business but sometimes I need someone other than my brothers to bounce ideas off of. I study Nadia’s expression for a minute, something is churning inside her beautiful head. “What are you thinking?”

“It’s probably nothing.” She shakes her head.

“Pulchra, come on. What are you thinking?”

“Well, it’s weird how Lattimer disappeared without a trace. He needs women to move and the best way he did it was through his strip club. Why would he stop doing something that worked? What if he is still around but has another club under a different name and he’s hiding out until the heat dies down?”

“Interesting theory.” I acknowledge. She might be onto something here. “But how would we find out what name he’s using?”

“I’m not sure.” Nadia thinks for a moment while eating. “When we were held in that room, Lattimer got a phone call one day from a man with a Russian accent. I couldn’t hear what he was saying but I do know it was Russian. What if a Russian is behind all of this and they’re hiding Lattimer while he still abducts women and teenagers for them?”

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My heart races in my chest. “And you’re sure it was Russian?”

Nadia nods her head while popping a piece of cheese in her mouth. “Positive. My piece of crap father was mixed up with Russians at one point in his miserable life. I will never forget those accents.” She shudders.

I spin in my chair and begin searching for Russian owned businesses in the greater Los Angeles area and expand into regions up and down the coast. “Ok, this could take a while. Thank you, Nadia. I was stumped trying to find these assholes.”

“I hope it works.” She rubs her belly. “He’s pretty active today. Want to feel him?”

A smile graces my lips when our son’s tiny kick hits my palm that rests on her belly. I’m mesmerized by how active he is today. He moves from one spot in her belly to the next, while kicking me. “Wow. How are you feeling?”

Nadia snorts, “Like a fat balloon, ready to pop. I don’t know if I can do this much longer. Thank God we only have six weeks left.” She groans with a sigh.

“You’re not fat, Nadia. You’re glowing beautifully and our baby is growing. You’re doing everything right and no matter what, you didn’t fail him in those first few months. You did what you had to do to protect him. That makes you a great mom.” I rise from my seat and kiss the palm of her hand, working my way up her arm until I’m at her lips. I kiss them gently, then more heated when Nadia whimpers.

I cup the back of her neck and pull her from the chair until she is pressed against me. God, I can’t get enough of this woman. Our kiss grows heated and Nadia whimpers

from the back of her throat. I've been imagining taking her in my communications room for months, not with a lack of trying and it appears my dreams are coming true.

"Where is everyone?" Nadia asks against my lips.

I quickly check the monitors and GPS locations on my brothers and their Ol' Lady's phones. Most of them are outside, gathering around for the twins' birthday. "Outside. I'd say we have about thirty minutes until someone comes looking for us." I turn to lock the door. Remembering all the fuckers have a key and use it anytime they want, while I'm in here, I push a heavy filing cabinet in front of the door. There, now they have to be like Superman to get through it. I turn back to Nadia and lift her until she's perched on my desk. She lifts her dress, revealing her silky thighs and tiny thong and my mouth goes dry. "Fuck. You are the most perfect woman in the world."

I press myself against her core while kissing Nadia's mouth. She opens for me and I plunge my tongue inside. Nadia unbuckles my belt, letting my jeans fall to the ground while I rip the flimsy material of her panties off. I yank Nadia's dress over her head and toss it behind me. I remove my cut and place it on the chair. Then, I yank my shirt over my head and toss it behind me, adding it to our growing pile of clothes. Nadia grabs the waistband of my boxers and pulls me against her, spreading her legs wide for my body. Her fingers brush against the head of my erection and I release a low hiss.

"Fuck your hand feels good, but it's not what I want right now," I growl. Nadia releases me and leans back against the screens.

"Then take what you want, Red." A devilish smile crosses Nadia's face when she calls me by my road name. She knows it's a fast way to make me take what I want and not hold back.

“Oh, I will, Pulchra. Until you cry my name because that’s all you can think of.” I trail my fingers down Nadia’s body until each palm of my hands are at her thighs, spreading her legs wider. I kiss and tease and suck on Nadia’s body until she is a withering mess, pulling my hair and trying to squeeze her legs closed.

I kiss my way back up Nadia’s beautiful body before she finds her release and Nadia growls. “Shit, Matt. Why’d you stop?”

I smirk before lifting Nadia up and sitting down in my favorite chair. She straddles my waist, her heated core pressing against my erection. “Because I want to finish where we left off when Kensi came barging in.”

I kiss Nadia as she grinds on top of me. Inch by inch she sinks down until I’m fully seated in her core. We both release a groan of approval as Nadia starts shifting her hips.

“Fuck, Pulchra. You are perfect for me.” Nadia bounces up and down, her nails digging into my back and my hair but I don’t care. She can claw me, bite me, do whatever she wants as long as it’s with me.

“You are mine,” I growl as Nadia tightens around me and shouts my name. We come together hard and strong, panting against each other’s mouths. Nadia rests her forehead against mine until she comes back down from that powerful orgasm. A shudder rips through her body, causing her to tighten around me and I release a low groan. “Keep that up and we will miss the birthday party.” I swat Nadia’s ass, leaving a small red palm print.

“Promises, promises.” Nadia leans back and then plants a kiss on my lips. “We really should get out there before people ask where we are and come looking for us.”

“Too late.” I point to the monitors. Aftermath and Kensi are coming into the back

door of the Clubhouse and heading right for this room. Shit. I grab my phone, not letting Nadia off my lap and send a text to Aftermath, asking him to occupy Kensi for at least ten minutes. I watch on the screen as Aftermath pulls his phone out, reads it and a smirk appears on his rugged face. Hescoops Kensi up, throws her over his shoulder and slaps her ass before walking down the hallway.

“Oh my God, Matt!” Nadia is laughing so hard she snorts which gets me laughing.

“A guy’s got to do what a guy’s got to do to keep his woman happy.” I shrug my shoulders with a grin.

Nadia presses her naked body against mine. “You do know that you do right?” She kisses one cheek, then another. “You make me very happy.”

Nadia shifts her hips and I rise to the occasion again. “Pulchra, if I didn’t make you happy, then I’d be a shitty man.” I lift my hips, pressing myself into Nadia’s core again. We go at it quickly before someone else wants to try and find us.

Once we’re both sated for the time being, we get dressed to head out to the birthday party. Aftermath and Kensi come outside a few minutes after us. He has a satisfied look on his face and Kensi snuggles into his side. Aftermath gives me a wink and Kensi rolls her eyes.

“Jesus, I can’t do anything with you fuckers.” Torch grumbles. His eyes are ping-ponging between me and Nadia and Aftermath and Kensi.

“Torch, watch your damn mouth.” Daisy scolds. One of the twins shouts “fuckers” while the other shouts “damn!” It’s the funniest thing I’ve seen all day. “Look at what we’ve done. We’ve failed them, Torch.”

Daisy’s twin brother Knight is here and he comforts a crying Daisy. “No sis, you



didn't fail them. So, what if they swear? Who doesn't." He does a decent job keeping his sister calm and from the background check Capone had me run on him, it's a possibility he might be prospecting for us in the future.

Knight's eyes track Doc Emma who is here with another doctor friend Krimson and Nolan know. I think she has a thing going on with Krimson's right-hand man, Rush, but I'm not digging into their background unless it affects our club. Doc Emma ignores Knight's stalker tendencies while she talks to Jezebelle and Rose.

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Calypso, Iris and Allure, from our sister chapter Royal Harlots, are present today too. There is something niggling in the back of my mind about Iris when she narrows her eyes at Derange. I push it away for now to explore later.

Tiny is even out here and has the patch bunnies swooning all over him as he soaks up their attention. I roll my eyes. He was shot, yes, but he will use it for as long as he can. The only ones missing from the group are Exleigh and Syvannah. It might be too much too fast for them, but I'm sure they'll come around.

A little while later, the twins, Jaxon and MJ, have all their presents opened and scattered all over the backyard. The prospects, Seth and Bones, have the hot dogs and hamburgers all cooked, the sides are set out and everyone is enjoying each other's company. I'm nursing a beer and Nadia is curled into my side on one of the Adirondack chairs placed haphazardly around the backyard.

Looking around the open land surrounding us, I spot Capone, Danyella and Nina sitting on one of the picnic tables. It's the first time in a long time I've seen him relaxed. Nina is getting a lot older now and I know, even though she loves all of us like Uncles, she is going to need her own space soon too.

"Pulchra," I kiss Nadia on the head and she releases a deep sigh. "I need to speak with Capone for a hot minute. Will you be OK here?"

Nadia almost rolls her eyes. "Why wouldn't I be?" I raise an eyebrow. She knows I'm asking because the last thing I want is for her to feel rejected after the way her father treated her. "Yes, Red, I'll be fine. Do you biker thing and I'll take a nap from the good sex and great food coma I find myself in."

Nadia smirks and I narrow my eyes. “Good sex and great food? Woman, you have that backward.”

Nadia turns in the seat and whispers in my ear, making my jeans tighten and a shiver runs down my spine. “Then prove me wrong, later.”

“Oh, I plan on proving you wrong for the rest of your life, Pulchra.” I kiss Nadia hard and deeply, leaving her breathless and me uncomfortable. That plan backfired on me a little bit. Nadia stands up with my help and I follow. I help her sit back down and place a chair cushion under her head.

Nadia looks up at me with tired eyes and a bright smile. “Love you.”

I lean down and kiss her softly on her plump lips. “Love you, too. I’ll be back in a little while.”

I make my way over to Capone and kick my head to the side, telling him I need to speak with him privately. Capone kisses Nina on the head and Danyella on the lips before strolling my way.

“What’s on your mind, Red?”

“I was thinking about something and wanted to run it by you first.” I exhale through my mouth and look at the land surrounding the Clubhouse. “Have you ever thought about expanding this land and putting houses on it?”

Capone follows my gaze. “Yeah, I have.” Then we look around the backyard. All of our brothers and their Ol’ Lady’s, siblings, kids, prospects and friends of the club are laughing, having a good time and enjoying life. “We’re expanding faster than I thought possible. Let’s take it to the table for a vote on buying the land around us and building on it.”

A genuine smile graces my face. "I'll throw some numbers together for Trigger and have them ready at our next meeting."

"Sounds good." Capone nods his head. "Any luck on Lattimer?"

I shake my head, "No, but I'm running a search right now on any Russian ties to strip clubs up and down the West Coast. It's too quiet Prez and I'm not liking it."

"Agreed. Does Nadia know about your past yet?"

I frown, "No. I haven't mentioned it to her in a while. Why?"

Capone sighs before resting his hand on my shoulder. "You need to tell her about Tanya and your time in prison before she finds out on her own."

"I will. I just need to find the right time."

"Better do it sooner than later."

We part ways and I make my way over to my woman with worry on my mind. Capone must know something he's not telling me. Nadia is chatting with Kensi, Rose and the patch bunny, Pearl. Pearl's face turns a dark shade of red when I approach. She opens her mouth but I hold my hand up.

"Don't apologize, Pearl. My woman set you straight so as long as you work on that, I have no beef with you." I respond to her unspoken apology.

"Thank you, Red." Pearl looks away with a hint of sorrow in her eyes. When her gaze lands on Tiny soaking up all the other patch bunnies attentions, she quickly looks away. That's interesting.

Nadia lifts herself out of the chair, smiling brightly. I wrap my arms around her shoulders and pull her into me. I kiss her on the lips and she sighs. “I’m exhausted. Did everything go OK with Capone?”

“It’s all good. Let’s get out of here and get a nap.” I wiggle my eyebrows and Nadia smirks.

“And that’s my cue to leave.” Rose stands up, looking for Jax.

“How long will you two be here for this time Rose?” I ask.

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“I’m not sure. My father is stable and Jax and I were talking about finding a place up here to be closer to Torch and the twins.” Rose spots Jax and Torch messing around and a smile graces her lips.

“I’m sure Torch would love having you two here.”

Rose blushes. “I would love to stay here and get to know our niece and nephew.” She shrugs. “But it all depends on what the club thinks too.”

“Have Jax and Torch talk it over, work out the details and then Torch can bring it to the table at our next meeting.” I offer.

“Thanks, Red. And thank you for always having my back when no one else did. I appreciate it.” Rose walks off heading in Jax and Torch’s direction. I watch as she approaches them with her head held high. Rose deserves the best after everything she’s been through and I hope she gets it.

Nadia releases a deep yawn and I scoop her up into my arms, carrying her bridal style into the Clubhouse and toward our room. Nadia rests her arms around my neck and her lips are teasing my neck, driving me wild. I fumble a few times to open the bedroom door and then finally get it unlocked.

“Woman,” I growl, kicking our door closed behind me.

Nadia giggles and I set her down on the bed. I still haven’t told her about Tanya and my past and I know I need to do it, I just don’t know how. Capone’s words from earlier ring in my head and a scowl appears on my face.”You need to tell her about

Tanya and your time in prison before she finds out on her own.”

I would give anything not to do this, but I know I need to. We only have six weeks left until our son comes into this world and I want no more secrets between us.

“What’s wrong, Matt?” Nadia’s finger smooths the wrinkle on my forehead.

“We need to talk.”

## Chapter Fifteen

Nadia

“We need to talk,” Matt says and those four little words have my heart sinking into my stomach. Nothing good ever comes from someone saying this. The worst possible scenarios play in my head. My insecurities, which I’ve been working on, come rearing their nasty little voices at me.

You’re not good enough.

You’re worthless.

You’ll never amount to anything.

My worthless father’s voice rings in my head and I shake it away. I can be strong through this. I will be strong through this. I pull up my big girl panties, sit up on the bed and nod my head. I refuse to shed any tears over these four little words. Even though it’s hard with all these emotions.

“What?” I ask with a small but strong voice. I wait for Matt to speak before I completely lose my mind and blow a gasket at him. Matt has told me over and over

again that he loved me and he's proven that love every single day. Which is why it feels like my heart is breaking in two.

The blush I've grown to love and cherish forms on Matt's face, starting at his hairline and creeping all the way down his neck. "I need to tell you something." He starts pacing the room back and forth, running his hands through his red hair. I grip the blankets tight, waiting for him to continue. "When I was a teenager, I was dating this girl named Tanya. I thought we would be together forever. One night we went to a party and that's when my world changed."

Red – 15 years ago

"Matt, are you ready to go?" Tanya asks, running her fingers through my hair. My face burns bright red and she giggles. "You know I love this blush."

We're at a friend's party from school and people are getting carried away with drinking and fucking. Tanya disappeared with a few of her friends a couple of times through the night and each time she came back with a beer in her hand and a glossy look in her eyes. I stayed with water or soda knowing one of us had to remain sober. She's getting a little tipsy and her hands keep roaming over my jeans cupping my length in her palm. I've had to stop her from unbuttoning my jeans a few times through the night. If this were any other girl and I was a different guy I would have let her stroke me until I exploded. We made a deal a few months ago that neither one of us were ready to take this next step until the other was, no matter how long it took. Even though I've been rock solid the moment Tanya comes into my vision, I hold back and do this for her. She deserves this much respect and more. I won't go this far if she isn't fully capable of herself. It's my job to watch out for her and her safety.

I clear my throat and gaze down into her dark eyes. "Yes, I'm ready to go." It's getting late and I don't want to have Tanya home past her curfew. My parents don't care what time I get home, but Tanya's does.



We say our goodbyes to everyone and climb into my pickup. The crisp night air feels good against my heated skin. I start the engine and Tanya slides next to me, resting her palm on my upper thigh. The heat from her touch races through my jeans straight to my aching erection. I shift uncomfortably, wondering what has caused her to be this brash. This isn't how Tanya acts.

“Matt,” Tanya’s hot breath nips at my ear and my blood rushes south. “Touch me.”

My lips are on hers in a matter of an instant and my heart is beating hard in my chest. Tanya straddles me, grinding herself against my erection. She moans, opening her mouth to mine. I can taste beer and a hint of something else which stops me dead in my tracks. Tanya whimpers while still rubbing her hips back and forth.

“Why’d you stop?” She asks slurring her words slightly.

I hold her hips tight in my grip, stopping her from moving them and making me blow my load. I gaze into her dark eyes and a bucket of ice water dumps on my head. “What are you on?”

She looks at me with confusion in her dark eyes. “What?”

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“What. Are. You. On?” I grit out through clenched teeth.

She sighs and climbs off my lap, throwing herself to the passenger side. Crossing her arms over her plump chest, Tanya glares at me. “Nothing.”

“Why are you lying to me?” I growl and start my truck.

“I’m not.” She pouts.

“You are. I can smell it on you. What are you on?” I demand.

“Fine. The girls gave me something to take the edge off and make me loosen up. Geez, I didn’t realize it was a big deal.” Tanya finally admits.

“What was it?”

“I don’t know it was a white powder I put on my teeth. They didn’t say and I didn’t ask. I’m tired of being the only virgin besides you, in school. I figured if I loosened up and not be so scared, we could go to the next level.” Tanya is sobbing in the passenger seat. “I’m so sorry, Matt. I didn’t think you’d act like this.”

I pull my pickup over and turn on my four-ways. We’re on a dark and secluded farm road in the middle of nowhere Virginia. Only the beam from my pickup illuminates the area in front of us. I put my pickup in Park and unbuckle my seatbelt. I slide over the bench seat and pull her into my arms.

“Tanya, I’m not in any hurry to move forward. As we agreed, I will wait until you are

ready. It doesn't matter if we're the only couple who doesn't have sex. What we have is so much more than that." I run my palm over her smooth dark hair.

Tanya snuffles before clinging onto my shirt. "You promise you'll wait?"

"I promise. I will wait until the end of time, if you need me to, Tanya. You're too important to me." I kiss her softly on the lips.

"Thank you, Matt. You're too good for me." One last kiss and I release Tanya and slide behind the wheel bucking my seatbelt.

Bright lights shine inside the cab behind me growing closer and closer at a rapid speed. Before I can put my pickup in drive, the approaching vehicle slams into ours from behind, shoving us off the road. My seatbelt locks me in place and my head hits the steering wheel. I shake off the impact and watch helplessly as Tanya's skull shatters the windshield and she's flung out of the vehicle. Before I can scream Tanya's name, the airbags deploy, smacking me hard in the face, bringing tears to my eyes and making my ears ring. The sounds of breaking glass, crunching metal, blaring horns and Tanya's screams penetrate through the fog. Just as quickly as the screaming started, it stopped.

Blood rushes down my face as I try to unbuckle my seatbelt.

"No, no, no!" I scream, frantically trying to unhook the stupid thing.

"Tanya!" I scream into the silent night. "Tanya!"

When she doesn't answer, panic settles deep into my bones and I fight with everything I have to stay conscious. My hands are shaking relentlessly as I finally get my seatbelt unhooked. I try to open my door but it's not budging. I throw myself into it over and over again until it finally gives way and I fall out.

I'm dizzy from the impact of repeatedly throwing myself into the door and fall on my ass but I get up and stumble my way to the front of my truck. "Tanya!" I shout into the quiet night. The glow from my headlights land on a small lump in the middle of the ditch. I hurry over to it. "No, no, no!"

I turn Tanya's body over and tears flow freely down my face. Her head is at a weird angle and she isn't breathing. I cradle her limp body against my chest, rocking back and forth, crying and screaming for anyone to help us.

After several minutes, my voice turns hoarse but I don't stop clutching her. My life, the one girl I thought I'd get forever with is gone and I can't bring her back.

I look up to the clear night sky with tears on my face. "Tanya, if you're listening, I will keep my promise to you. I will wait forever if I have to."

Matt stops talking and we sit in silence for a while. He is lost in his memories and I'm trying to digest what he's told me. "What happened after that?" I ask, swallowing my grief. He needs me to be strong right now. Matt doesn't answer right away. I move to the edge of the bed where he is sitting and rub circles on his back. Now, I understand more than what I did before and I will cherish every moment he gives me.

Matt wipes away the tears in his eyes and turns his gaze toward me. "The cops came and said the guy who hit us was drunk. He died on impact that night too, but it didn't make sense. Nothing that night made sense and it wasn't until years later I figured out why." Matt swallows hard and continues. "I spiraled, Nadia. I went down a dark path seeking answers for Tanya's death that ended with me in a six by eight room with bars for doors."

I swallow hard. Matt doesn't need my judgment. I was a stripper at one point for Christ's sake! "How long were you in for?"

“Five years.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“I don’t want to, but I need to so you understand the danger that comes with being a part of my life.”

“Isn’t being in a one percent biker club dangerous?” I tease.

Matt snorts, “I wish. The reason I’m mentioning this is because of what you said earlier about a Russian connection. I was mixed up with a Russian mafia and did tech stuff for them. Only I didn’t know it was the Russians until I was arrested and the FBI’s foreign counterintelligence showed me proof. I was highly skilled with computers and hacking since I was about fourteen and I honed that skill until I was the best hacker on the West Coast. A man named Lance Obolensky approached me with a job I couldn’t refuse. He made me believe I could use their resources to find Tanya’s killer. So, I took the job at a security firm in San Francisco. For a few years, I’d hack people’s accounts, move money from accounts, and all that bullshit. Then shit got real. I was getting closer to finding out who killed Tanya when I received a phone call from Lance. His boss needed me to hack into a system and send him the information. So, easy, breezy, I did it. A few days later, the FBI’s counterintelligence was knocking on my door and I ended up in prison for hacking into a government website and selling information to the Russian mob.

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“That’s when I really shut off all emotions and feelings. I was sentenced to five years in prison since I had no priors and had no idea I was working for the Russian Mafia. I spent five long years in maximum security, fighting off the worst of the worst in there every day, including the guards, until one day a man took me under his wing. I was so tired of fighting for my life, I was at the end of my rope when he offered me protection and told me about the Royal Bastards. His name was Crawl, whose brother is Rage from our Georgia Chapter.”

“Did you find answers to her death?” I ask, worried this is going to make him spiral again.

Matt shakes his head. “Not yet, but I believe the reason you were taken was because of me.”

“How can that be, Matt? I didn’t know who you were when we met.”

“Because of my ties to the Russians. I received an email from Valdimer, the head boss of the Russian mafia, while I was scouring the web looking for you. He told me to back off or he was going to kill you. I was not going to let that happen so, I made a truce with Nolan and together we found you.” Matt holds out his hand and I slip mine in his. I don’t care if he’s been to prison or that his hands are bloody. All I care about is that, after all the tragedy he went through, he loves me. Even after he promised Tanya all those years ago and shutting off his heart, he opened it up for me.

I pull Matt’s hand to my lips and kiss his fingers. “Matt?”

He turns to me and his pale blue eyes are shining with love and worry. “Yeah?”

“I want to tell you something.” He raises an eyebrow waiting. I cup the side of his face in my hand not holding his and kiss his cheek. His face turns red and I smile, loving his blush. “Thank you for opening up about your past. I know it was hard to do, but I’m glad you did. I understand where you are coming from and how difficult this has been for you.”

Sooner or later, I need to tell him about my father and growing up. It’s not something I want to do, but like Matt said, I need to do it so we can grow from here. And I need to talk to my brother Nolan. “One more thing. Can we get Nolan? It’s time I tell you about my past.”

Matt pulls out his phone and sends off a text. A few seconds later his phone vibrates in his pocket. He pulls it out and reads the message. “Nolan and Krimson left but he said he’d meet us wherever we want at any time.” Matt shoots off another text and seconds later his phone pings again. “We’re going to meet him at a diner in Marina Del Ray in an hour.”

“Ok, I guess we need to get going then.”

An hour later we’re sitting at a quaint little mom-and-pop diner in Marina Del Ray right on the harbor. The outside looks like a log cabin decorated with white string lights. We sit in a corner booth that looks like a turquoise sofa. There is a dark oak table in front of us with two wire chairs on the other side. Wall-to-wall windows surround the back side of the restaurant to overlook the Marina.

Matt has been on high alert since we left the Clubhouse. He refused to let me ride on his Harley so we took one of the SUV’s. This is the first time I’ve left the safety of the Clubhouse, besides doctor appointments since the attack and I’m on edge. Matt keeps checking everything around us and now I’m jumpy and paranoid. Every time someone walks into the restaurant, my defenses go up. Matt does the same but he is on edge for a different reason, which I don’t know why. I’m on edge because he is on

edge.

My belly growls and Matt orders us one of their famous pizzas to split. Nolan and Krimson showed up right after we did and ordered a couple of burgers and fries. Nolan is on edge too and doing what Matt has been doing since we left the Clubhouse.

“Will you two relax, please? You’re making me nervous.” I ask, resting my hand on Matt’s arm. He relaxes slightly to my touch but not much. The waitress brings over our food and sets it down while blatantly staring at both Nolan and Matt. Anger starts bubbling to the surface at the audacity of this woman until Krimson opens her mouth.

Krimson turns her honey gaze onto the waitress and grabs her wrist before she can walk away. Keeping her voice low, she speaks. “Keep staring at our men and you’ll have more than you can handle to worry about. I know where you live, when you sleep and how you like to fuck. I will do unthinkable things to you if you keep it up.” The waitress gasps and tries pulling her wrist away, but Krimson doesn’t let go. “Let me teach you a lesson, Sabrina. Next time you want to check out a guy, do it to one without an Ol’ Lady or they’ll do worse than I will.” Sabrina yanks her hand and Krimson lets it go. She scurries off and doesn’t come back.

“That was eventful,” I say between bites of delicious pizza. Krimson laughs and bites into her burger giving me a wink.

“I’m glad you decided to talk to me, Nadia,” Nolan says between bites of his food. His whiskey eyes, which match mine watch me. “I’m really sorry things happened the way they did.”

I brush him off, “Our father is a piece of shit. Honestly, I am a little terrified. After what that asshole did to me, I was scared you were the same way.” Nolan opens his mouth to rebuttal but I hold my hand up. “I know now you’re not. Which is why I



asked you here.”

Not hungry anymore, I sit back and take a drink of the Sprite I ordered. “No one knows the hell I went through growing up. For a while, my family was good. We were happy or so I thought. I remember one time when I was sixteen, our father left for a couple of months saying it was a business trip. When he came back, my whole world shattered and his true colors came out.”

Nadia – 16 years old

“Nadia, your dad will be home in a couple of hours, please make sure your room is cleaned and you’re wearing that pretty dress he likes.” My mom shouts from the kitchen. I’m in the living room finishing up my homework. Dad hasn’t been home in almost two months and I’m leery to see him. Even though he’s never raised a hand to me, his words cut deeper. He’s always telling me I’m not good enough. Even when I got straight A’s in school and never got into any trouble, it was never good enough for him. Every time he left on business, I breathed a sigh of relief.

“Ok, mama. As soon as I finish this assignment, I’ll get changed.” Dread burns through me and I roll my eyes. I don’t understand why I have to dress up when my dad comes home but to keep the peace, I do what she asks.

My mom was born into a deeply religious family in Mexico but she’s lived here in Venice Beach almost her whole life. She met my dad when they were young. She tells me it was love at first sight but neither of them acted on it right away and then lost contact with each other. After a few years, they ran into each other again and he swept her off her feet. Nine months later, I was born. My mom and dad never married, but that didn’t mean we weren’t a family.

My dad was always going away on business trips and the older I got, the more I questioned it. He didn’t like it at all and it caused many arguments between them

which I can hear through the thin walls of this house. I don't even know what he does for a job and my mama always tells me to drop it and stop instigating. Out of respect for her, I usually do, but sometimes my curiosity wins out.

The front door opens and I fly up the stairs of our little two-story house to change. I put on the white, knee length dress that clings to my curves, brush my long blond hair and apply a little mascara. I toss on a pair of black flats and head down the stairs. Before I can reach the bottom of the stairs, I can hear my parents arguing in the kitchen. I can't hear what they're saying but my mama is crying. I quietly tiptoe into the dining room that separates the kitchen from the rest of the house and listen.

"Andrew, why are you doing this?" My mama pleads. Her voice chokes with a sob.

"It's time you learn your place, woman. Who I do anything with and why isn't your concern." My dad's angry voice overpowers her sobs. It's the voice he uses when he belittles me and I clench my fists at my sides wanting to punch him for speaking to my mama that way.

"Fucking another woman is my concern, Andrew." The venom in my mama's voice surprises me. "Is that why you won't marry me and make us an official family? Because you've got another one on the side? I'm forced to live in shame and disgrace because you lied to me?"

Another family? What is my mama talking about? Has my dad been cheating on my mom? Have our whole lives been a big lie? Who is this other family? Do I have brothers or sisters I didn't know about? Do they know about me and despise me or are they in the dark too? All these questions flit through my brain and the comfortable life I thought we had shatters around me.

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A slap rings out and my mama sobs. “Go to hell, Andrew. Leave and never come back!”

I wait a moment before the heavy footsteps stomp across the hardwood floor. The front door slams shut, rattling the pictures on the wall. One falls to the floor, breaking into a million pieces, just like my life.

It’s been a couple of months since my dad walked out on my mom. She refuses to see him but she does make me go to his new apartment every other weekend. Since I’m not old enough in the state of California to choose not to go, I have no choice until I’m eighteen. Then I can cut all ties to this asshole. My father doesn’t speak about his other family and anger burns through my veins. I dread every other weekend when I have to go there. Every time it’s pure hell. I’m forced to stay in my room, not make a peep and only come down when he tells me to. Usually, it’s to make him food and eat. He even tells me I’m worthless in the kitchen and the only thing I will probably be good at is spreading my legs like my whore mother. That sends a shiver down my spine every time. After a while of listening to this, I start to believe it. Who wouldn’t when that is all you hear from a man who is supposed to protect you and love you unconditionally?

My mom has been acting strange lately, making me go to my father’s more and more. It’s like she is blind to his abuse and doesn’t want to see it. She’s so caught up in her own shame and humility that she is pushing me further and further away. She’s lost weight and has been drinking more.

One Sunday night about eight months after my mom and dad split, I had a feeling deep in my gut to go back to my mom’s house. I pull into the driveway and there is a

strange car in the driveway. I climb out of my car and cautiously make my way to the front porch. There is music coming from inside but no voices. I use my key to unlock the door and step inside. The first thing that hits me is the stench. Rotting food, body odor, garbage and something metallic invade my nose making me sick.

It's so dark in here with the curtains closed, not like it used to be. I round the corner and stop dead in my tracks. My mom is lying back on the couch, her head lulled to one side, a vacant look on her unnaturally pale face. Her arms are covered with bruises and there is a needle resting in her unclenched hand. A man is face down on the living room floor, not moving.

I hurry to my mom's side, trying to wake her up. "Mama? Mama?" I tap her face a few times with no response. I grab her hand and it's cold to the touch. Tears form in my eyes while I try to look for a pulse, even though I have no idea what I'm looking for. Her brown eyes once full of life stare at me vacant and lifeless.

"No, no, no! This cannot be happening. Mama! Mama! Please wake up!" Tears are rolling down my cheeks and I don't do anything to stop them. I call nine-one-one and keep trying to wake her up. "Mama! You can't leave me. Not with him, please!"

I'm sobbing and cradling my mom's body when the police arrive. That night I lost the one person I cared about most in the world and was forced to live with a man who made my life a living nightmare.

Nadia – Present

I sit back lost in the memories of the damage my father did to me after my mom died. There is no simple way to do this except to rip the band-aid off. Matt has his palm resting gently on my growing belly, his other arm is wrapped around my shoulder offering me comfort when I need it the most. I rest my head on his shoulder and shake the memories of that night away. Nolan is staring at me with a murderous

intent in his eyes. I know it's not aimed at me but at the low-life sperm donor.

I look Nolan in the eyes, knowing this part will probably make him lose control. "Our father's verbal abuse turned physical. He beat me until I blacked out from the pain, all while spitting on me and blaming me for my mom's death. He was the one at fault. He was the one to blame. He was the one who couldn't keep his dick in his pants.

"All I knew at the time was I had a brother named Nolan. Once I healed from his last beating, I took off with only a small bag and a pocket full of money to find you. I traced you all the way to Michigan and it turns out you weren't the hidden family, I was."

"How did you track me down?" Nolan asks confusion etched on his face.

"Well.." I trail off, wondering if I should tell them. Fuck it, no more secrets. "I learned a few things from some kids at school. Not even Matt knows about this. They taught me how to hack into certain databases. I wasn't the best at it, but it got the job done."

"Wait, you're a hacker?" Matt asks shocked.

"Not as skilled as you, but yes I can hack into a few places I'm not supposed to be at. I'm not just a pretty face." I bat my eyelashes at him and grin. Matt smiles wide and I can swear I see pride shining in his pale blue eyes.

"Anyways, back to what I was telling you. I was devastated about the news, so I went back to L.A. without talking to you, Nolan, or telling you who I was. You had a happy life, a great racing career and the last thing I wanted to do was destroy it."

"I wish you would have come to me. I would have protected you." Nolan swallows

hard and sadness shines in his eyes. “I would have strangled the asshole with my bare hands and enjoyed watching the life drain from his eyes. Will you ever forgive me?”

“Of course I forgive you. You’re nothing like him.” I cover Nolan’s hand with my own, our complexion matching each other. “I didn’t know that at the time though. I thought you were just like him and I was scared.” I answer, trying to ease his guilt. “I stayed under the radar when I got back to Los Angeles to keep away from the asshole and found a home with the racing circuit. I had natural ability behind the wheel and I gave that credit to you, Nolan. I watched and studied the way you raced when I was in Michigan. Being at the racetrack brought me a sense of peace. Something I didn’t want to give up.”

I turn my attention to Krimson since this is about her too. “A couple of years after I found Nolan, he came to L.A. with you. I was deep in the racing circuit and knew nothing goes on without you knowing it and it was a little intimidating, but I managed to stay away from your crew’s attention. I saw Nolan at almost every race, only he didn’t see me hiding in the shadows. Your crew was more worried about finding out who killed your parents and little brother, they didn’t notice me. Not until the last day before you guys left for a while. There was a race Rush put together and the payout was something I desperately needed so I went. I blew the gaskets off the other drivers and that’s when Rush asked me to join his crew but I had to decline. If I entered your folds, I knew Nolan would find out and I couldn’t risk it.”

“Damn it.” Nolan thumps his fists on the table making our drinks shake. His icy glare turns to Matt. “Red, did you know the beatings?”

Matt swallows hard before looking at me. His pale blue eyes are pleading with me to understand.

I cover his hand with my own. “It’s ok, Matt. You can tell us. If you didn’t run a background check on me, I’d think you were the worst hacker around, not the best on

the West Coast.”

Matt nods his head. “I knew most of it, but not all. I was furious you’d let that happen to your little sister and not protect her. I jumped the gun and accused you before I heard your side of the story. I thought you were a liar and didn’t deserve to have someone so precious in your life. It’s why I went off the rails and attacked you. All I could think about was the abuse Nadia endured while you lived the high life and I lost it.”

Nolan nods his head in understanding. “Truce?” He holds out his scarred hand and Matt takes it.

“Truce.”

Matt’s phone vibrates in his cut and it makes me jump. He pulls it out and looks at the screen. “Shit. Nadia, we’ve got to go.”

“What’s wrong?” I ask, panic settling in my stomach.

“Prez wants me back at the Clubhouse. Bones was watching my programs while we were gone and something went off. He won’t say what it is but he said we need to get there A.S.A.P. Nolan and Krimson, you’re welcome to come. This might have something to do with you, too.” Matt throws money on the table and helps me stand up. A dull pain hits my lower stomach but I ignore it.

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

Nolan and Krimson follow us out of the restaurant and climb into Krimson's dark grey Supra while Matt and I climb into the SUV. He peels out of the parking lot with Krimson hot on his ass. I don't know what we're heading into but a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders telling both Nolan and Matt my story. I hope it means I'm healing and we will get through this together.

Another dull pain vibrates through my stomach but I shrug it off, thinking it's just gas. Not knowing any better, I don't say a word when we pull into the Clubhouse. As I climb out of the SUV with Matt's help, the hair on the back of my neck stands on end, like someone is watching me. I shake it off and enter the Clubhouse. All of the Royal Bastards are gathered around the common room waiting for us to arrive.

Capone stands and everyone follows suit heading into Church. Tiny is the last one in and he shuts the door with a scowl on his face. I don't know what is going on but something tells me this won't be good.

### Chapter Sixteen

Red

Tiny slightly limps inside Church and shuts the doors behind him. He's doing a lot better since the accident but with as much skin as he was missing, I'm not surprised he has a tough time walking. The asphalt ripped half his right leg off and the bullet wound barely missed an artery. The big fucker is lucky he was able to walk away.

Capone slams the gavel onto the table, "First order of business. Red has brought to my attention how fast our club is growing and came up with an idea to counteract it."



Shit! With everything going on with Nadia, I forgot to get the figures for Capone. I can feel the blush creep up my neck and Capone offers me a smirk before continuing. “Our tech guy has been a little bit busy with a new baby on the way and all so I had Trigger do his own work. Trigger what’d you find?”

“Well, Prez. According to my figures, if we purchase the land surrounding us and build everyone new homes, we could have them all done within three years and it will only cost the club around three hundred K. The land around us is around ninety K and the rest would be for the homes. We do all the construction ourselves and only hire outside help for the big shit we can’t do like electricity, water and septic.”

“We’d still use the Clubhouse for parties, meetings and everything else, but those with families need more privacy. I think this is a great idea and it’ll give us a chance to expand and keep everyone close.” Capone states holding up his gavel. “All in favor, say Aye.”

Each brother takes a vote and Capone slams his gavel on the table, “It’s unanimous. Trigger, get to work on purchasing the land and getting contractors set up.”

“Next order of business. Bones and Pretty Boy.” Capone grins from ear to ear. “They’ve been busting their ass for this club for close to a year. Bones sacrificed his life to keep Daisy safe and Pretty Boy did the same for Jezebelle. Does anyone have any objections to patching them in?”

I look around the room with a grin on my face. No one objects and it’s final. It’s about fucking time those two are patched in. “Good. Red, Trigger, get your prospects. We’ll need them for this next order of business.”

Trigger and I school our faces and leave to search for Bones and Pretty Boy. He finds Pretty Boy sitting at a table with a patch bunny on his lap. I find Bones by the pool table with his face buried in Pearl’s chest. I stomp my way toward them. Pearl

stiffens when she sees me, which gets Bones' attention. He pulls his face away from her chest with a cheesy grin on his face which drops the moment he sees the scowl on mine.

"Let's go, now." I don't give him any room for argument. Bones releases Pearl and I give her a slight wink without him seeing it, so she knows she isn't in trouble. That girl has already stuck her foot in her mouth once, I don't want to see her do it again. Pearl steps aside and saunters to the bar in her high heels, short tight skirt and a mesh top that does little for the imagination. Bones watches her until she is sitting at the bar. She looks behind her at us and watches as Bones and I leave followed by Trigger and Pretty Boy. There is something weird about Pearl but I push it aside for now.

Once we shove Pretty Boy and Bones into the Chapel and close the doors behind them, Trigger and I take our seats. Every patched member is scowling at the two prospects standing at the end of the table. Sweat beads on Bones' forehead and I notice a slight tremble in his hands, but he doesn't wipe the sweat away or shake off the fear. On the other hand, Pretty Boy is relaxed and passive standing there. Capone is going to fuck with him big time.

"Do you two know why you're in here?" Capone growls from the head of the table glaring at the two prospects. They both shake their heads.

"Fuck, they're idiots." Trigger remarks, making Pretty Boy stand a little taller.

"Maybe I should kick his ass." Derange rumbles from his seat, cracking his knuckles while staring at Pretty Boy. "I mean it's the least I should do for not protecting my Ol' Lady."

Pretty Boy's face pales and he opens his mouth to speak only to be interrupted by Capone. "Don't even say a fucking word, Boy. You don't have a right to speak inside this room. You haven't earned it." Fuck, he is laying it on thick with Pretty Boy. I do

my best not to crack a smile at the way Pretty Boy is shaking now.

Capone and Blayze stand, walking over to the two prospects. This is my favorite part. Capone circles Bones, while Blayze circles Pretty Boy. “Why do you two think you should become members of the Royal Bastards?” Capone’s voice is low and deadly. Bones wants to say something but keeps his lips sealed shut. Pretty Boy is standing tall now with his eyes focusing on the wall in front of him.

Blayze steps in front of Pretty Boy, making him look him in the eyes. “Did I say you can look at me, Prospect?” Pretty Boy opens his mouth and then quickly snaps it shut. He looks off to the side of Blayze and every time Blayze steps in his sight, Pretty Boy looks away. “That’s better.”

Capone and Blayze switch. Now it’s Bones’ turn to look away each time Blayze steps into his line of sight. Capone’s lips are next to Pretty Boy’s ear, making him lose the passive stance. “Why do you think you should become a member of the Royal Bastards, Pretty Boy? Do you think you have what it takes to make it in this club?”

Bones stands tall and looks into Blayze’s icy-cold stare. “I do. I’ve sacrificed my body and my sanity for this club. I have what it takes to become a Bastard.” He stands tall and proud, which makes me sit a little taller in my chair.

Blayze’s lips twitch, trying to hold back a grin. He then focuses on Pretty Boy. “Do you feel the same way?”

Pretty Boy swallows hard, nodding his head. “Yes, V.P.”

Capone and Blayze step away from the duo and head back to their respective seats. “Drop your cuts on the table, now!” Capone growls.

Bones and Pretty Boy slide their cuts off and carefully place them on the table.

Trigger and I stand up and snatch them off the table with an evil glare. “Bones, I’m ashamed to tell you this, but you do not have the balls to wear this cut.” I toss it on the ground and stomp on it. Bones clenches his jaw, glaring at me like he wants to rip my head off and spit down my throat.

“Neither do you, Pretty Boy.” Trigger does the same, only he takes it a step further and spits on Pretty Boy’s cut. Pretty Boy balls up his fist like he wants to throttle Trigger. Both prospects’ faces are dark red with anger and they’re barely holding back everything they want to say or do.

“You’re right, they don’t deserve those colors,” Capone says and stands up. He takes his time walking to the closet next to the sofa behind the prospects. My foot is still grinding into Bones’ prospect cut and he hasn’t taken his eyes off me. If he could shoot flames out of his eyes, he’d disintegrate me right in this very spot. Pretty Boy is glaring at Trigger. Neither one of them is paying any attention to Capone.

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Capone grabs their new cuts out of the closet and hands one to each of us. “You don’t deserve the prospect colors because,” I hold out Bones’ new cut and Trigger holds out Pretty Boy’s.

Trigger continues, “Because you deserve to wear these.”

We’re both grinning ear to ear when Bones and Pretty Boy take them out of our hands. They slide on their new cuts and grin from ear to ear. Bones looks like he is going to pass out before he wraps his arm around my neck, pulling me in for a bro hug. “I thought I was going to kill you.”

Hoots, hollers and fists slamming on the table fill the room and I’m grinning from ear to ear. Capone slaps both of them on the back. “You deserve them, fuckers. Now take a seat and be ready. You can party after we’re done.”

“Fuck, I remember my patch party,” Derange says running a hand down his face. “You’re going to get so much bunny and beer, you’ll swear they multiply.”

“So much ass, you’ll go cross-eyed.” Trigger chimes in.

Capone slams his gavel on the table, ending the chattering. “OK, we have one more order of business to discuss. Bones, the floor is yours.” Bones clears his throat and goes to stand up but Capone stops him. “You don’t have to stand, we can hear you just fine while sitting.”

Bones’ face burns red from embarrassment but he sits back down. “I was monitoring Red’s computers while he was out with Nadia meeting Nolan and Krimson when I

got an alert.” He levels his gaze in my direction. “Josiah is back and he’s stalking your woman. He was never caught before because we didn’t look each time she went to the doctors. So, I did some searching and found him in every single camera that picked up Nadia everytime she was outside this Clubhouse. Even when she went for a ride with Kensi and Aftermath. You were all oblivious to him because he stayed in the background and shadows, hiding like he knew what he was doing.”

“What!” I roar slamming my fist down onto the table. “The motherfucker has been here this whole time and we didn’t know!? I didn’t know!?” I’m pissed. I’m beyond pissed, I swear steam is coming out of my ears. “This is absolutely unacceptable. I will run surveillance twenty-four, seven on all of us. There is absolutely no way will I let Josiah near my woman again. I will end him. I will slit his throat and watch him bleed.”

“There’s more.” Bones swallows hard interrupting my manically tirade. “He was inside her apartment moments before she got there. Then went back in after she left with Aftermath and Kensi.”

“Holy shit.” Aftermath lets out a long exhale. “How did the motherfucker find us?”

“I have a theory.” Bones speaks up. “If I can show you with Red’s laptop.”

I shove it Bones’ way and he begins typing on the screen. His fingers are flying over the keyboard. He turns it around so we can all see it. “Watch what he does in Nadia’s apartment. This is the only clear shot I can get of him.” Bones hits play and the screen comes alive.

Josiah comes out of Nadia’s apartment. He stops, pulls his phone out and checks something. He looks to the left then goes right just as Aftermath, Kensi and Nadia walk up the stairs. My blood boils realizing how close he got to her. What if Aftermath didn’t go up with her? What if she left on her own? How the fuck did he

find her and know exactly when she'd be coming?

"Holy shit." My stomach drops into my toes. "He implanted a tracker on her." Anger brews deep in my gut. That slimy motherfucker planted a fucking tracker in my Ol' Lady. I'm going to rip him to shreds and spit down his throat for violating Nadia.

"What are we going to do about this?" Capone asks.

I smirk with an idea forming in my head. "I know just the thing, Prez. One way to get the motherfucker out of our lives and end him once and for all."

## Chapter Seventeen

Nadia

I'm sitting in the common room with Nolan, Krimson, Danyella, Jezebell, Daisy and Kensi. Nina has the twins at the pool table, teaching them how to play. Neither MJ nor Jaxson can reach the table, but she's a natural at keeping them entertained. Jezeabelle is bouncing her baby girl on her knees while Naomi laughs.

Knight, Daisy's twin brother and future prospect, and Seth, Jezeabelle's son are behind the bar, cleaning. I've been uncomfortable since we came back from our dinner with Nolan and Krimson but I'm not saying anything yet. If it gets worse, then I will.

"Hey, sis. How are you doing?" Nolan asks, sitting next to me on the couch.

"I'm doing good." I turn to face him. "Listen, Nolan. I'm really sorry for everything."

Nolan holds his hand up to stop me. "Don't apologize, Nadia. I'm the one who should be apologizing, not you. I get why you were so scared and didn't want to see me." He gently takes my hand in his scarred ones. "When you found me, I was going through

some shit of my own and wasn't in the right headspace." His eyes trail to Krimson sitting at the bar with Danyella and Daisy. "If it weren't for Ashley, I would still be struggling with the darkness inside of me. Neither one of us had the best upbringing, but together we can give this little one all the love neither one of us had. That is if you'll let me."

Tears form in my eyes, "Of course I want you to be a part of our baby's life. You're going to be the best Uncle to our little boy." I shift and try to get comfortable but it's not helping. "I need to go for a walk."

Nolan is watching me with worry in his eyes. "Are you OK?"

"Yeah, just a little uncomfortable at the moment. Nothing a long walk can't fix." I stand up with the help of Nolan and walk through the garage until I get outside. Red and the rest of the Royal Bastards are still in their meeting and will probably be there for a while. The night air is crisp in my lungs and I'm feeling better already. I walk the perimeter of the fence and look across the deserted land. Lights from Los Angeles are twinkling in the distance and the four-oh-five is filled with headlights and taillights. A slight breeze coming behind me ruffles my hair and I turn in its direction, letting it cool my face down. A snap of a twig on the other side of the fence has me spinning around to look but I'm not seeing anything. An eerie feeling settles deep in my stomach.

"Who's there?" I shout into the night. I know I'm well protected here and no one can get in or out unless they come through the gates, but that doesn't stop the hair on the back of my neck from rising. It's too dark to see anything on the other side of the fence, but I have a sudden feeling I'm not alone out here.

As I slowly back away from the fence another breeze picks up and with it a scent I will never forget. It's buried deep into my subconscious and will haunt me for the rest of my life. He's here and he's watching me. Fear and panic bubble to the surface and



the uncomfortable feeling I've been having doubles. Wetness pools between my legs and I turn to run back into the Clubhouse. I make it to the door when a cramp has me doubling over. I cry out, clutching my lower belly.

"Fuck." I breathe through the pain and wait for it to subside. Once it does, I take another careful step. I control my breathing so I don't have another cramp. I open the garage door and slowly make my way down the garage attached to the Clubhouse. I've had to stop a few times and breathe through the cramping. I reach the common room and breathe a sigh of relief. Now I just need to get someone's attention. I open my mouth to shout for help when a sharp pain stabs me in the stomach, taking my breath away. I collapse on the floor moaning and clutching my stomach. Something is happening and I don't know what. I'm all alone and no one knows what is happening to me or my baby. It's the story of my life. No matter how hard I try, I'm always left alone.

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

I close my eyes and tears are rolling down my cheeks as I fight through the pain. “Shit, Nadia.” I hear someone shout my name. I don’t know who it is but someone sees me. I’m not alone anymore. “Someone get Red.”

Warm hands grip my shoulders, forcing me to sit up. I open my eyes and Jezebelle is in front of me, trying to get my attention. “Nadia, what’s wrong?” I open my mouth to answer when another sharp pain stabs through my stomach and I clutch it tighter. “Shit, she’s going into labor! Where the fuck is Red?!”

“I’m right here, what happened?” I can feel Matt’s touch around my shoulders and it calms me down.

I breathe through the pain and open my eyes to see Matt staring back at me. “Went for a walk. Felt wetness between my legs. Now I’m in pain.” I grit out through clenched teeth.

“Ok, Pulchra, we’re going to get you to the hospital.” Matt pushes the hair out of my face. “Where’s Derange?”

“I’m right here. I need everyone to step back and give Nadia some room, please.” Derange demands. He bends down so he is at eye level with me on the floor. “Hey, Nadia. I’m going to check you over and make sure the baby isn’t already on its way here. How long have you been having these pains?”

“Just started.” I shift so Derange can look me over. My back is to Matt’s front and I’m settled between his legs. “I have been feeling uncomfortable for a few hours but figured it was gas. But when I went for a walk outside, I felt a rush of water and then

the cramping started.”

Derange pushes on my stomach. He looks at me and then at Matt behind me. “We need to get her to the hospital ASAP.” Derange’s eyes move back to mine. “You’re in labor, Nadia. The baby is coming whether you’re ready or not.”

“I can’t be. I still have another six weeks.” I clutch Matt’s hand when another contraction hits me. “Uh!” I groan through the pain.

Matt gently picks me up and carries me through the Clubhouse and into an awaiting SUV. He carefully settles me into the backseat and follows. Before Matt can close the door, Derange sticks his head inside. “Get her there as quickly as possible. I will call ahead and let them know she’s coming. One other thing, time her contractions. If they come any quicker than two minutes apart, you’re going to have to deliver that baby. We’ll be right behind you, brother.”

Aftermath and Kensi are in the front and as soon as the door is closed, Aftermath slams the gas pedal, shooting out of the Club’s parking lot like hell was on his heels.

Matt wipes the sweat away from my forehead. “How are you doing?”

“This shit hurts, Matt. Are you sure he’s going to be ok?” I question. I’m scared something is going to happen and we’re going to lose our baby.

“Everything will be fine, Nadia. We’re getting you to the hospital as quickly as we can.” Matt’s lips linger on my forehead and I breathe him in.

There is no one I’d rather have here at my side during this than Matt. He’s been my rock and my salvation. I’ve opened my heart and my soul up to him, leaving my jaded past behind. What we feel for each other is something I never thought I’d have.

“We’re about ten minutes out, how are you doing back there?” Aftermath asks. He glances at Matt in the rearview mirror before turning his eyes back to the road. Something passes between the two of them.

“What was that about?” I ask.

“What was what about?” Matt questions my question.

“That look between you and Aftermath.”

“Nothing for you to worry about. Just trust we have this.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive. If you need to know, I’ll let you know. As of right now, you need to focus on the baby, nothing else.” I rest my head on Matt’s shoulder and close my eyes. I’m suddenly exhausted and can’t keep my eyes open. “Rest, Pulchra. We’ll get you there safe.”

“I know you will. I trust you, Matt.” I answer in a whisper. A sharp contraction hits me and I double over in pain.

“Breathe, Nadia. In through your nose, out through your mouth.” Matt inhales through his nose and out through his mouth and I follow suit until the pain goes away.

“Pulling in now,” Aftermath states. He throws the SUV in park and hurries to open my door. He helps me out of the vehicle with Matt right behind me. A nurse is waiting with a wheelchair to take me inside. I sit on it and breathe a sigh of relief. We made it and hopefully, my baby will be ok.

“How far apart are her contractions?” the nurse asks in a hurried, clipped voice.

“They’re around six minutes apart lasting for less than a minute,” Matt informs her.  
“She is six weeks early.”

The nurse nods her head and pushes me inside. I still have ahold of Matt’s hand and I’m not letting go. “We need to get this woman to OB stat.” A doctor with long brown hair pulled up into a tight bun comes from around the corner and shock is the last thing I need right now.

“Nadia?” The female doctor asks.

“Doctor Amber? What are you doing here?” I ask, shocked.

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“I work here part-time when I’m not running my father’s practice.” Her eyes travel down to my belly I’m running a soothing hand over. Maybe if I can calm the baby down, he won’t come yet. “Oh, you’re the one Derange called in to warn us about. Let’s get you upstairs and as comfortable as can be.”

Amber takes over pushing my chair from the nurse and wheels me into the elevator with a confused Matt, Aftermath and Kensi following.

“How do you know each other?” Matt growls, not moving from out of my grasp.

“Let’s say we have mutual acquaintances.” Amber winks at me but Matt isn’t having any of it.

He slams his palm on the emergency button of the elevator making it come to a screeching halt. “I don’t give a fuck if you’re the Queen of England. I don’t know you, so you tell me who the mutual acquaintances are or I’ll call Capone and you won’t be around to help us deliver my son.” Matt threatens with fury in his voice. I’ve never heard this tone from him before.

Amber crosses her arms over her chest and gives Matt a no bullshit attitude. She doesn’t answer, but instead looks down at me. My eyes are ping-ponging between the two of them, trying to hide a smirk. “She is a friend of Rush’s.”

Amber’s face turns a deep shade of red that rivals Matt’s and he raises an eyebrow. “So, you know she’s?” Matt asks, leaving the answer in the air, and giving Amber an opening.

“Nolan’s sister? Yes, I know. Rush filled me in on what’s been going on just in case Nadia’s doctor couldn’t make it.” Amber states.

“And how do you know Rush?”

“That’s really none of your business,” Amber pauses long enough to check Matt’s road name on his cut. “Red.”

“Actually, it is if you’re treating my Ol’ Lady.”

Amber’s eyes grow wide and she looks down at me. “Ol’ Lady? Did you snag yourself a biker? And a protective one at that.”

I grin at Amber, “Just tell him so we can get out of this damn elevator.”

“Fine.” Amber looks back at Matt. “Rush and I have been seeing each other since he was attacked a few years ago.”

“Fine.” Matt releases the emergency button and the elevator lurches up. “But I will be running a background check on you as soon as we know how my boy is doing.”

“Check away, Red. I don’t have anything to hide.” Amber challenges.

The elevator doors open in a whoosh and I feel another contraction starting. I reach for Matt’s hand and he gives it to me. He kneels next to me, “Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth.” Matt does it and I follow. “That’s good, Pulchra. You’re doing good. Keep going.” I synch my breathing to Matt’s until the contraction passes.

“Jesus. It’s getting worse.” I groan.

Matt wipes the sweat away from my forehead and kisses it. “It’ll be over soon and when it is, our little boy will be here.” A blush creeps up Matt’s face I haven’t seen for a while and it makes me smile.

“Thank you,” I wrap my arms around Matt’s neck and hug him. He hugs me back, kissing the side of my head.

Amber grabs the back of the wheelchair and steers me out of the elevator. Matt, Kensi and Aftermath follow. “We’re going to Labor and delivery. You two need to stay out here until I give you the all clear.”

“Wait, Doctor Amber.” I hold up my hands halting her movements. “I want Kensi in the room with Matt and me.”

“You do?” Kensi asks wide-eyed.

“I do. You’re my best friend, Kensi. Even if I am dangerous with a pair of scissors.” We laugh remembering my crazy side earlier.

“Ok, Kensi, let me get Nadia settled and then you can come in. But we can’t have any more in the room with us. Hospital policy.” Amber states.

“Thank you, Amber,” Kensi responds, hugging Aftermath.

Amber wheels us off into the room where she hooks me up to a couple of monitors. One is for my blood pressure and the other is attached to a band wrapped around my belly. Then she starts an IV for fluids. “Rest when you can, Nadia. I’m going to check your cervix and see how dilated you are.”

My stomach growls, “Can I eat?”



“Unfortunately, you can’t. You can chew on ice chips, but that is it.” She hands me a hospital gown. “Here, put this on please.” Amber steps into the bathroom while I change. I slide my shirt and fat pants off along with my bra and underwear and Matt helps me put the gown on.

“We might need to take one of these home with us,” Matt whispers in my ear, sending a shot of lust through my body.

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“I never want to see one of these again, for as long as I live. Who thinks having your ass hanging out is a good idea? Not me.” I grumble.

“But it’s a sexy ass that I don’t mind seeing hanging out.” Matt kisses me on the lips.

“I love you,” I say after we break apart.

“I love you, too, Pulchra,” Matt answers, his face turning a light shade of red. Hmm... I think when his heart races, his face burns. I’ll have to store that away for later.

Amber comes back out of the bathroom carrying a large sheet and slides a pair of latex gloves on. “Ok, Nadia, lean back and put your feet in the stirrups.” I do as she asks as she drapes a sheet over my lower half. “Now, you’re going to feel slight pressure. I’m checking the cervix and seeing how the baby is doing. Did your water break?”

“Yes, that’s what started the contractions,” I answer. Amber presses her fingers inside of me and pushes on my lower abdomen. “Slight pressure my ass. I feel like I’m on fire down there.”

“Your cervix is almost fully dilated. We’re past the point for pain meds.” Amber checks a few other things on the monitors hooked up to me. “It won’t be long now. Do you want to hear the baby’s heartbeat?”

I nod my head and Amber pushes a button. A slow and steadywhoosh, whoosh, whooshfills the room. “Wow.”

“Wow is right,” Matt repeats.

“Don’t freak out, but each time you have a contraction, his heart rate will slow down dramatically and the readings on the sheet will increase. This will give us a more accurate idea of where you are to deliver. Then when it’s over, it’ll speed up and then settle back to normal. When it doesn’t go back to normal or the heartbeat increases during a contraction, that’s when we have a problem.”

“Thank you, Amber.” I praise the doctor.

“Don’t thank me yet. The hard part hasn’t started yet. Would you like me to get Kensi now?”

“Yes, please.”

“Ok, I’ll be right back.” Amber discards her gloves, washes her hands, and then leaves the room.

“Crap, Matt. We don’t have anything ready for him. No names were picked out, and no nursery was set up. Nothing is ready.” I cry.

“Shh...” Matt smooths my hair back. “The prospects are being bossed around right now by a few Ol’ Lady’s making sure everything is ready for us.”

“Thank you.” I lean back and close my eyes. I’m exhausted as hell.

“Want to hear something else?”

I pop an eye open and turn my head. “What?”

“Capone has agreed to purchase the land around the Clubhouse and we’re all going to

build houses on it. That way we're still safe and have more room for our expanding families."

"Wow. That's what you got out of our conversation earlier?"

"Yup. I want my woman and child or children to have the absolute best, while still being protected by the Club. What do you think? Want to pick out floor plans with me later?"

I think about it for a moment, "Hmm... maybe?"

"What do you mean maybe?" Matt places his hands on his hips giving me a pointed look. The blush creeps up his neck.

Yup, when I get him riled, that blush I love comes back with a vengeance. I try to hide my giggle but fail. I pull Matt to me and make him sit on the bed. He wraps his arms around my shoulders, pulling me into his chest. "Of course, I'll pick out floor plans with you. But first, we need to have a baby."

Matt leans down and kisses me hard on the lips. We're a mess of tongue, teeth and moans when another contraction hits. "Shit." I pull away from his lips and after several minutes of breathing through the pain it stops. We listen intently as the baby's heart rate speeds up and then slows back down. "Wow, that one was intense."

Kensi and Doctor Amber knock on the door before coming in. "Hey, are you ready to meet your little guy?" Kensi asks.

"I'm more than ready," I respond smiling.

"Not to freak you out, Nadia but you need to understand that this baby will be in NICU for a while until he can feed and maybe breathe on his own, depending on how

his lungs are developed. He's premature and while he might be healthy, he will need to be monitored. I'd rather you know now, than after he's born and taken right up to NICU." Amber looks uncomfortable with this news but I can't blame her. No one wants to tell a soon-to-be mother and father, that they can't hold their baby right after it's born.

"Thanks, Doc," Matt responds. He squeezes my shoulders. "It'll all work out, Pulchra. We have to trust it. With everything you went through to bring him here, now it's the doctor's job to keep him here." He kisses my head. "Besides, he's a Phillips. They're too stubborn to give up."

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“Ain’t that the truth.” I tease.

A few hours later and several small contractions, I’m wiped out when a sharp contraction takes my breath away. “Doc, it feels like I have to push,” I say through gritted teeth.

Amber throws on a pair of gloves and lifts the sheet. “Yup. Ok, Nadia. It’s time. On the next contraction, I want you to push with everything you have.”

When the pain starts again, I push with everything I have in me. When it stops, I sit back trying to catch my breath. “Good. Good. Do it again.” I push on the next one and pressure builds up below my waist. “Keep going, Nadia. Don’t quit. He’s almost here.”

I sit up and squeeze Matt and Kensi’s hands while I bare down and push. I’m beyond exhausted and ready to throw in the towel when the pressure releases and I collapse back onto the bed. A nurse takes the baby out of the doctor’s arms and takes him over to an incubator. I watch as she cleans his mouth and nose.

“He’s not crying. Why isn’t he crying?” I ask panic bubbling to the surface. Just then a loud wail pierces through the hospital room and I lay back, relief filling my body. “Thank goodness.”

“Ok, Nadia, I need you to push one more time and then we’ll be done.” Doctor Amber says from her spot between my knees. I push hard again and more pressure releases from my abdomen. “Good. Ok, we’re done.”

My body starts to tremble and spots fill my vision. I reach for Matt, but my hand barely grazes his. He's watching the nurses and doctors clean up our baby. I open my mouth to say something but nothing comes out. The monitors hooked up to my heart and blood pressure start beeping wildly and I'm paralyzed. I can't move before blackness pulls me under.

## Chapter Eighteen

Red

"Matt." I hear a slight whisper of my name and I pull my eyes from our son to Nadia. The beeping of the monitors screeches out as Nadia's hand goes limp in mine.

"Doc, somethings wrong!" I shout, trying to shake Nadia.

"Move!" Amber shoves me out of the way and drops Nadia's bed. "She's going into shock. Get these two out of here!"

Kensi and I are shoved out of the room and the door slams shut before we even know what's happening. Bells and whistles are loud and nurses are running toward us. I step aside and pull Kensi with me before someone runs her over.

"What's happening, Red?" Kensi asks. Aftermath, Capone and Blayze come charging down the hallway, trying to figure out what's happening.

"I don't know, Kensi." I run my hands through my hair and I do something I haven't done in a long time. I drop to my knees and I pray to God he doesn't take Nadia or my son away from me. I don't get up off the floor even after Aftermath pulls Kensi away. I don't take my eyes off the door my Ol' Lady and son are behind. I don't stop praying and hope they'll be ok.

Doctor Amber comes out of the room a little while later, removing her mask. “Matt?”

I stand up quickly and Capone is right by my side, giving me the support I need. “How is she?”

“Her body went into shock and she started hemorrhaging. She is stable and we’re taking her upstairs to perform a D and C.”

“Can I see her?”

“For a moment. We have her sedated for surgery.”

Doctor Amber leads me into the room and I hurry to Nadia’s bedside. I grab her hand tightly and look across the room at our son. The first thing I notice is his hair. It’s not fiery red like mine, but a softer red with hints of blonde. A mixture of both of us. He’s in a big tube-like bed with a tube inserted in his nose., alert and looking around. He’s so tiny compared to all the things they have him hooked up to.

“Pulchra,” I push Nadia’s blonde hair off her forehead and lean over and kiss her on the head. “I’m here. Our son is here. Please fight with everything you have.” Tears roll down my face and I don’t care who sees. “We need you, Nadia. I can’t do this alone.” I press my lips to Nadia’s cheek. “I love you until the end of time.”

“We need to get her upstairs and into surgery, Matt.” Doctor Amber informs me.

I wipe the tears rolling down my cheeks and look at the doctor. “Can I walk with you?”

She nods her head and I stand up, not letting go of Nadia’s hand. “We will be taking the little guy to the NICU once we get Nadia out of the room. It’s right down the hallway.” The nurses come in and wheel Nadia out. I’m torn between being there to



move my son and keeping Nadia in my sight for as long as I can.

“Go with her Red. We’ve got the newest little Bastard.” Capone nods, taking the decision away from me.

“Keep a close eye on him until I can come back, please.” I plead.

“We’ll guard him like he’s our own son. He’s a Royal Bastard. Go, we’ve got this.” Capone answers.

“Thank you, Prez.” I still have a hold of Nadia’s hand as we wheel her into the elevator and it begins its ascent. I lean over and kiss her on the forehead again. “Keep fighting, Pulchra. I’m right here with you the whole time.”

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The elevator lurches to a stop and the doors whoosh open. The nurses wheel Nadia out and I follow until we reach a set of swinging doors that read NO UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS. “This is where we part, Matt. Feel free to wait in the room behind you or down in the NICU. I will find you as soon as the surgery is over.”

I release Nadia’s hand and kiss her one last time on the forehead. “I’ll be right here waiting for you, Pulchra. I love you.”

Doctor Amber and the nursing staff wheel Nadia through the swinging doors and I stand there feeling helpless and hopeless, wishing there was something I could do.

I’m not sure how long I stand here staring at the swinging doors, hoping and praying everything will be all right when there is a strong hand on my shoulder. I turn and see Aftermath standing next to me.

“Is she going to be all right?”

“I hope so. They didn’t say much, just that Nadia needed a D and C. I don’t even know what that is. How’s the baby?” Guilt eats away at me for choosing to stay with Nadia rather than check on him.

“He’s doing good. His vitals are strong and he’s responding to some tests they ran. He’s small but in very good health. Nadia did an excellent job protecting and nurturing him.” Aftermath answers.

“Good. Good.” I nod my head.

“Are you going to see him?”

“Yes. Will you stay here and guard this place? I don’t want Nadia unprotected for a minute.”

“I’m not going anywhere.” Aftermath crosses his arms over his chest and stands in front of the swinging doors. “If anyone wants in, they’ll have to show credentials.”

“Thank you, Aftermath. With everything else going on, I don’t want either of them unprotected.” I sincerely mean it too.

“Nadia and your son are our priority right now. All of us will stand guard until Josiah is taken out.” Vengeance is strong in Aftermath’s voice. “Go see your son and I’ll keep an eye out here.”

I push the button to the elevator and step inside when the doors open. Once they close, I catch myself in the reflective mirror. I don’t feel any different, but the man staring back at me is someone I wouldn’t want to cross. He’s someone who will move heaven and earth to protect his family. Someone who will kill anyone who tries to take them away.

I find the NICU and see a wall of beefed up, tattooed bikers lined up looking through the window. I smile at all these burly men protecting my little family. I step next to my brothers and they part, letting me see my son.

I rest my hand on the glass and tears form in my eyes. He has a little blue hat on, covering his reddish blonde hair, lying in the incubator wrapped in a blanket. He is sound asleep with his little fist in his mouth.

“Isn’t he precious?” Kensi asks, resting her head on my arm.

“He is,” I respond.

“Have you and Nadia thought about a name yet?” Derange asks.

I shake my head. “We never talked about names.”

“How is she doing?” Kensi asks.

“She’s in surgery right now upstairs and Aftermath is watching the door, making sure she is safe. The doctor is supposed to get me when it’s done.” I keep my eyes on my son. My baby boy. I will move heaven and earth to keep him safe.

The pediatrician comes out to tell me that the baby will be in NICU for a few days while they monitor his temperature and his feeding tube. Once he can eat on his own and can hold his own body temperature, he will be ready to go home.

About a half hour later, Doctor Amber finds me still standing at the window into the NICU staring at my son. Capone, Blayze, Danyella, Monica and Kensi are still here keeping me company even though I haven’t said anything. Capone has updated everyone in the club on what’s going on and they’ll all be here soon to protect my son and Ol’ Lady. With Josiah stalking her, we are not taking any chances.

“She’s out of surgery and in recovery. It was a success. You can go up to see her now if you want.”

“Thanks, Doc.” I look at Capone and he nods his head.

“Go, we’ll look after him,” Capone confirms.

I follow Doctor Amber up to the recovery room and Aftermath is guarding it like a Pitbull. He’s not letting anyone in or out without his approval. He nods to Amber and

opens the door like he owns the thing. I follow inside and see Nadia sleeping on the hospital bed. There are tubes and wires hooked up all over her. I don't have a clue what they're all for. Something I'm going to have to check up on when I have time. I want to know everything about what she went through. I make my way to the side of the bed and grab Nadia's hand. It's cold to the touch.

Nadia stirs a little before shifting her head to look at me. "Matt?" Nadia whispers.

"I'm right here." I squeeze her hand gently warming it back up.

*Source Creation Date: July 1, 2025, 9:55 am*

“What happened? How’s our son?” Nadia’s voice is groggy.

“He’s beautiful. I can’t wait for you to see him. He has reddish blonde hair and he has your nose.” I kiss Nadia on the side of the head. “You did great, Pulchra. You protected him and kept him safe.”

“That’s wonderful. I can’t wait to see him.” She looks around the room confused. “Why am I in here? The last thing I remember was a sharp pain and then everything went black.”

“Doctor Amber said you were hemorrhaging after delivering our son and they had to perform a D and C to get the bleeding to stop. You’re in post-surgery recovery.”

“We will be moving you to a private room as soon as you’re alert and able.” Doctor Amber comes over and checks Nadia’s vitals. “How are you feeling?”

Nadia scrunches her nose. “Tired, hungry, thirsty.”

“Any pain?” Nadia shakes her head.

“What do you want to eat? I’ll tell Aftermath to get it.” I ask.

“Why would Aftermath get it?”

“Cause he’s outside the door guarding it.”

“Why would he be outside the door?” Nadia’s brows scrunch like she’s trying to

figure something out that niggling in the back of her mind. “Who’s all here?”

“We’ll talk about it later, Nadia. Get some rest and when you’re out of here, I’ll take you down to see our son.”

“Ok, Matt.” She pats my hand covering hers with her other hand. “You always take good care of me. I love you.”

“I love you, too, Pulchra. Rest and we’ll go see our son.” I kiss her on the head and Nadia lays her head back down.

They move Nadia out of the recovery room and into her own private room. A single bed, a T.V. mounted on the wall, a couple of dressers, a few chairs and a single recliner are the only furnishings in here. Looks like me and that recliner will be getting to know each other very well. Capone sent me a text earlier and said everyone but the babies, Jezebelle, Daisy, Seth and Pretty Boy are here. The hospital is on lockdown until we either catch Josiah or go home.

Nadia’s eyes are open and she’s looking around in full alert. Once she gets settled and the nurses leave, Nadia stares at me with those whiskey eyes that make me cave to every demand she has. “OK, you can tell me the truth now. Why was Aftermath guarding the door? And no Club business bullshit, Matt.”

I exhale a deep breath and settle into the recliner. “We have a lead on where Josiah is and Aftermath was protecting you while I went to see our son. Capone has Bones posted up on the NICU wing with other brothers spread out throughout the hospital. If anyone looks or acts suspicious, we are removing them from the premises.”

Nadia’s face pales slightly. “Where’s Josiah?”

“Stalking you.” I wince when I say this, not knowing if Nadia will go bat shit crazy

or make my head spin crazy.

“That’s who was out there.” Nadia stares off in the distance and I perk up at her admission.

“That’s who was where Nadia?”

“At the Clubhouse. You were in your meeting and I needed fresh air. I walked the perimeter of the fence line and heard a twig snap, then I smelled his cologne. I ran back to the Clubhouse scared out of my mind and that’s when my water broke.”

I pull out my phone and dial Capone. He answers on the first ring. “He was there, Prez, at the Clubhouse.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive. Nadia just told me.”

“Ok, I’ll have Pretty Boy and Seth up security and I’ll send Trigger and Dagger back to search the grounds.” He hangs up before I can respond. “Capone is sending Trigger and Dagger back to search the grounds,” I inform Nadia.

I pick up my phone and dial Bones. He answers on the first ring. “Yeah, boss.”

“Do you have your laptop with you?”

“I do.”

“Give it to Kensi and have her bring it up here. I need to check a few things and need you to watch my son.”



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“Roger that, boss.” Bones hangs up the phone and I refrain from rolling my eyes. That kid is going to be the death of me I swear.

“Have you thought about names for our son yet?” Nadia asks. She struggles to sit up in bed and I help her.

“I haven’t, have you?”

“I have.” Nadia blushes, something I’ve never seen her do.

“Well, what is it?”

“I was thinking we could name him Matthew Nolan Phillips. After you and my brother.” My jaw drops and I’m speechless. “That is if you want. I don’t want to pressure you into something you don’t want to do. I know you and Nolan don’t have the best track record.”

“Nadia,” I stop her rambling with a slow kiss. “I’d be honored to share my son’s name with Nolan. He’s not a complete asshole anymore.”

Nadia lets out a giggle and then a moan when I press my lips to hers again. A knock on the door has me pulling away from her delectable lips and I adjust the hardness in my jeans before answering the door. Kensi is on the other side with Bones’ laptop.

“Come in,” I open the door a little wider to let Kensi in. She enters handing me the laptop. I sit on the recliner and let the two of them catch up. I pull up the security feeds around the Clubhouse and rewind it back to the night Nadia went into labor.

My eyes feel gritty as I watch hours of endless video feed. It's been days since I slept last and I have a feeling it'll be longer before I can sleep again. The girls are talking quietly to each other while I stare endlessly at the footage. A shadow passes through the feed and I sit up. I slowly rewind and fast forward until his face appears on the screen.

Josiah.

He's creeping around the fence, looking for a way in. I follow his movements and watch as he clips a piece of the fencing carefully. He stops what he's doing and looks around. Satisfied no one is watching him, he squeezes his big body through a small hole and enters. Son of a bitch! I check the time and date on the screen and my heart stops.

I dial Capone with shaky fingers. I don't even give him a chance to answer. "We've got a problem, Prez. He's there now! Get everyone you can to the Clubhouse. I'll call Playboy and let him know what's happening." I hang up the phone and dial Playboy.

He answers on the first ring, "What's up, Red?"

"Playboy, where are you?"

"I'm at the Clubhouse." He answers. I can hear his eyes roll through the phone.

"He's there. Put everyone on lockdown and don't let anyone in!"

"On it, Red." Playboy hangs up the phone and I pace. Kensi and Nadia stopped talking and are watching me intently.

"Everything OK?" Nadia asks.

“No. Josiah is in the Clubhouse. Fuck!” I rake my fingers through my hair and tug.

Shit! I will not lose another person to this asshole. Waiting for word from Capone is driving me insane. I pace back and forth for several hours until my phone rings.

“Capone,” I answer in a half a ring.

“He’s gone,” Capone growls into the phone. “Everyone is safe but he isn’t here.”

Shit! I hang up the phone and squeeze it hard enough that I feel it bend in my grip. I dial Bones, who’s still guarding my son, but he doesn’t answer.

I dial Torch. “We’ve got a problem. Bones isn’t answering his phone and I can’t leave the girls.”

“Aftermath is on his way to you, I’ll go check on Bones and the baby.” Torch hangs up the phone.

I hope with everything I have, this will work and Nadia’s terror will come to an end.

## Chapter Nineteen

### Nadia

I watch helplessly as Matt paces back and forth across my hospital room. He’s agitated and keeps checking his phone every few seconds. He stops long enough to do a few things on his laptop. When he’s done, he curses loudly slamming the laptop closed.

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His phone rings and he answers it, “Fuck! Are you sure?” Silence on the other side. “I’ll be right there. Don’t move.”

“Matt?” I ask. Worry settles deep in my bones. “What’s going on?”

He hurries over to the side of my bed and kisses me on the forehead. “I’ve got this all under control.” Matt hands me his laptop. “Here, I’ve rerouted the servers to come to this. Will you please watch the Clubhouse for me? I have to take care of something.”

“Sure, but is our little guy ok?” I ask taking the laptop out of his hands.

“He’s perfect, Pulchra. I promise you. Don’t open that door for anyone but me or Aftermath. I don’t give a shit if the Queen of England is on the other side demanding you to open. Do NOT open that door.” The finality in Matt’s voice makes me realize how dangerous he really is and I wouldn’t trade him for anything.

“OK, Matt. I won’t open it. Be safe, please.”

“I will and I’ll be back with our little one.” He kisses me on the lips and everything he isn’t saying is poured into it. He loves me. He loves our son and he will do everything he can to protect us from the harshness of the world.

“Do whatever you need to do to bring him to me.” My heart hurts when Matt walks out my hospital room door and Kensi locks it behind her. Then she shoves a dresser in front of it for more security. I haven’t had a chance to really see my son, now I’m worried I never will. I passed out almost immediately after he was born and all I could see was the shape of his little body and hear him cry.

Tears form in my eyes but I push them back. Now isn't the time for a breakdown. Kensi's phone rings and she pulls it out of her pocket. "Hey, Marc." She stays quiet while Aftermath is speaking. She nods her head a few times, only he can't see it. "Ok. I love you, too. Be safe."

"That was Marc. He said Rush will be here with Nolan and Krimson in a few minutes to watch our door. Something doesn't feel right, Nadia."

"I agree." I open the laptop while Kensi sits next to me on the bed and pull up the camera feeds Matt has left open. The Clubhouse comes into view and I see people moving all around. Nothing seems out of the ordinary except they're ushering the Ol' Ladies and patch bunnies inside.

An alert pops up on the bottom of the screen where the search bar is. I click on it and my heart stops beating. It's a grainy image of the hospital NICU wing. Bones is out cold on the floor and the nursery is empty. I zoom inside the room to make sure I'm seeing things correctly. The nursery is empty. My baby is gone.

"No!" I scream while tears run down my face. I might not be in any shape to help, but I'll be damned if I sit here while someone steals my child. I slam the laptop closed and throw it at the foot of the bed. I shove the covers off my legs and swing them over the side.

"Nadia, what are you doing?" Kensi asks while helping me stand.

"My son is missing, Kensi. I'm not sitting here while he's out there." I take a step and pain shoots through my abdomen, but I'm not quitting. "You can either help me or step the fuck out of my way."

"Duh. I'm helping you. But you can't go out there dressed like that." Kensi points to the back of my hospital gown.

“I hate these fucking things,” I growl while she tosses my fat pants to me. I slide them on and slowly stand back up. “Ok, let’s go.”

I carefully make my way to the door when there’s a loud bang coming from the other side and the dresser moves. Kensi and I jump.

“Nadia, Kensi, open up. It’s me.” Matt shouts from the other side of the door. Kensi hurries and shoves the dresser away from the door and unlocks it.

The door bursts open and Matt comes into the room with a nursery bed and our son inside. He’s sound asleep sucking his fist. “What? How?” I can’t seem to form any questions. “I saw...” I point to the laptop.

“I know what you saw and it wasn’t real.” Matt motions to the door and Bones comes limping in with an ice pack on his head. Aftermath, Rush, Nolan and Krimson all file in behind him. “Get back in bed and I’ll explain everything.”

I slowly make my way back to the hospital bed and settle in. Matt wheels our son, Matthew, over to the side of the bed and takes him out of the bed. He hands him to me and I cry as I hold this little life for the first time. Matthew squeaks when I check over his fingers and toes. “Well, part of it was real. Josiah did break into the Clubhouse looking for you but he left when he realized where you were.”

My gaze snaps to Matt. “Are you telling me Josiah is here?”

“Not anymore. See, I set up a decoy in the NICU. I pretended Matthew was in there when in all actuality, he wasn’t. The nurses had him hiding in another room with Doctor Amber and Rush.” Matt sits on the edge of the bed, watching our son. “As it turns out little guy is stronger than what anyone thought. He didn’t need the tubes or the incubator. His lungs are healthy and strong, he can keep his own body temperature and he can eat on his own. The first few hours were a precaution but

when he was kicking ass, they took him off the feeding tube and out of the incubator. Even though he is six weeks early, he is definitely ready for this world. And he was a champ while Rush and Amber kept him safe.”

My gaze shifts to my son in my arms. His eyes are open and fixated on me. “So, is it over? Is Josiah gone?” A lonely tear rolls down my cheek onto Matthew’s tiny fingers and I wipe it away.

“He won’t be a problem anymore. When he snuck into the hospital with all intent of stealing our son, he actually came face to face with me instead. He did knock Bones on the head, but that was planned.” Matt explains.

“Well, it was planned but not for him to hit me that hard. I think I have a concussion.” Bones grumbles from the door. “But I’d do it again in a heartbeat if it means keeping these two safe.”

“Where is Josiah?” I ask.

“You don’t need to know.” Matt counters.

“Yes, I do.” I pull my gaze from Matthew to stare at the man who has captured my heart and my soul. “You don’t understand. If I don’t do something, he will continue to star in my nightmares. I want a hand in ending him. He tortured me every single day he had me. I deserve this.”

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“She’s right,” Danyella says from the doorway. “You should let her make this decision, Red. She needs this closure.”

“Well, fuck.” Matt scrubs a hand down his face. “Fine. Once you’re out of here, you can make the decision on how you want to participate. I’m not happy about this, but I guess I don’t have a choice.”

I lean closer to Matt and he puts his arm around my shoulders pulling the two of us close. “Thank you, Matt. It means a lot.” Matt kisses the top of my head and he runs a finger down Matthew’s nose. Matthew squeaks and his mouth parts like he’s hungry.

Nolan steps forward with a look of awe on his rugged face. “Can I see my nephew?”

“Of course,” I hand Matthew over to Nolan and he’s smiling and talking to our little guy. “Everyone, I’d like you to meet Matthew Nolan Phillips.”

Nolan’s eyes snap up to meet mine with a look of shock on his face. “You named him after me?”

“I did. I wanted him to have the names of the two strongest men in my world.” I smile at Nolan and he grins from ear to ear.

Krimson steps forward and whispers something to Nolan. He nods his head and looks back at me. “I want you to meet someone.” Krimson leaves the hospital room and Nolan hands Matthew back to me. A few minutes later, she comes back in holding the hand of a young boy who has sandy blonde hair, similar whiskey-colored eyes and a smile that rivals Nolan’s.



Nolan takes the young boy's hand and leads him to my bedside. He bends down so they're at eye level with each other. "Sherwood, I'd like you to meet your Aunt Nadia."

Sherwood offers me a timid wave and I smile at him unsure how to proceed. "Hi, Sherwood. How old are you?"

Sherwood is watching the baby in my arms. "I'm nine but small for my age. But Dad says we're working on it." He touches Matthew's little leg. "He's cute. Am I related to him too?" Sherwood looks up at Nolan.

"Yeah buddy, this is your cousin, Matthew."

I give Nolan a confused look and he shakes his head. Now isn't the time to get into it but from the look in Nolan's eyes when he watches his son, I'm sure it's a story that will break my heart. I promise myself that I will help protect my nephew no matter what happens. He might not be a Royal Bastard by member, but he will be a Little Bastard through me.

## Chapter Twenty

Nadia

Matt, Matthew and I came home from the hospital two days later. It took a while for us to adjust to the small Clubhouse room and the noises coming from the members, Ol' ladies and patch bunnies throughout the day and night but we did it. Exleigh and Syvanna have been with me every step of the way. They even go as far as spoiling Matthew. He lets out a little whimper and the two of them are right there, picking him up, cuddling him or feeding him. They've been a Godsend these last few weeks.

I can tell they're still struggling with what happened to them, but I have to remind

myself time will heal them. They'll never be the same as they were before, but they will become stronger after what Josiah did to them. They'll be survivors.

I'm just laying Matthew down for a nap when Kensi and Matt come into the bedroom.

"Come on, Pulchra, I have a surprise for you," Matt whispers into the quiet room. He takes my hand and pulls me out. "Kensi is going to watch Matthew for us for a little while."

Matt gives me a wink that always sets my panties on fire, but since I'm only three weeks post-partum, I know we're not going to take the edge off. According to the doctors, we have another three weeks before we can be intimate.

"Where are we going?" I ask.

"You'll see."

Matt pulls me down the hallway, through the common room, out the garage doors and into another building behind the Clubhouse that I didn't even know existed. The old rusty building has a creepy vibe to it, creating goosebumps on my arms.

"Matt, I don't like this," I say running my palms up and down my arms, trying to warm myself up.

There is an old musty smell in the dark building that invades my nose. The floors are made of concrete and the walls are made of sheet rock. There are no visible windows either. Matt keeps a hold of my hand and together we enter a room in the back. The first thing that hits my nose is the smell of piss, vomit and copper. A man is chained to the rafters in the ceiling. His arms are stretched as far as they can go and his toes are barely touching the floor. He's shirtless and blood covers ninety percent of his

exposed body. I don't recognize this man strung up like a pinata until he lifts his head.

My whole world stops when I come face to face with Josiah. The man who's haunted my dreams and has a starring role in my nightmares. He snarls and tries to get me but the chains wrapped around his wrists prevent him from going very far.

I look at Matt with confusion on my face. "Matt, what's going on?"

Matt stills Josiah's moving body with the tip of a bat. Josiah tries to kick it out of Matt's hands but he can't lift his legs. "Danyella's speech at the hospital really got to me." Josiah snarls and Matt sends the bat into his solar plexus, effectively shutting him up. "When she said you need to make the decision on this, I couldn't see why. I didn't want you to be exposed to something like this. Ending a life isn't easy and the guilt you feel afterward eats away at your soul. I wanted to protect you from that, but you were right. You need this closure." Matt hands me the bat. "If you want to do this, I will not stop you."

I carefully take the bat from Matt's hands. Shuffling feet behind me draws my attention. Trigger and Tiny come strolling into the room with Exleigh and Syvannah behind them. Both women are terrified but it's not from being around these two men, it's from leaving the safety of the Clubhouse.

The two women are visibly shaking while hanging on to each other. I was really hoping they were healing after what this scumbag did to them, but it's apparent they're not. Their eyes are pinging all over the room and neither one of them sees Josiah hanging from the rafters right away. Exleigh is the first one to see him, then her eyes fall to me holding the wooden bat.

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“Nadia, what’s going on?” Exleigh asks with a shake in her voice. “Why is he here?”

Syvannah releases a loud gasp when she spots Josiah and her fear turns to anger. “What the hell is happening?”

“Matt and the Royal Bastards are letting us get our retribution for everything Josiah did to us if we want it.” I approach the two women carefully. “Is this something you want to do?”

“I don’t know,” Exleigh whispers. “Are you?” She asks me.

I think about this for a moment. Do I need revenge against Josiah for all he did to me? I’m not broken like these two women are. He didn’t harm me more than he did them. They need this more than I do, but from the fear they’re radiating, they won’t be able to do this unless I’m with them every step of the way. Will I be able to live with myself if I have a hand in ending his life? Will the blood on my hands affect the way I raise my son or what I see when I look in the mirror? If I don’t do this, will I always cower to a man, knowing he is stronger than me? Will I live the rest of my life in fear because I didn’t fight back?

I know I won’t live my life in fear. I won’t allow this man to take over any more dreams and turn them into nightmares. “I am.”

“Then so am I,” Exleigh nods her head.

I turn to Syvannah, “You don’t have to do this.”

“Yes, I do. If I don’t I will continue to live my life in fear.” Syvannah answers while squaring her shoulders, ready to fight. Ready to take her life back. They both are. We all are.

“Then, let’s do this.” I turn around to face Josiah.

Josiah lifts his head, watching us. A devious smirk is on his bruised and bloody face. “You three won’t hurt me.” His words come out slurred like he can’t open his jaw very well. Matt punches him in the stomach.

I look at Matt in question and he shrugs his shoulders. “The fucker wouldn’t shut up so I had to dislocate his jaw.” Matt leans against the wall, propping his foot behind him. “His knees, his ankles, oh and his elbows too. Eventually, he smartened up.” Matt’s carefree attitude about inflicting pain on Josiah brings a smile to my face.

I walk over to Matt and kiss him fully on the lips. “Thank you for doing this in my honor.”

Matt’s face turns red, the blush I love appearing. “Pulchra, you are my beginning, middle and end. Everything I do is in your honor. Now finish him and take back that power all three of you are missing.”

I kiss Matt one more time before strolling over to Josiah and Exleigh and Syvannah steps closer. Josiah stirs and lifts his head. When he sees the two women coming closer he growls and tries to get to them like he did me when I first entered the room. Again, the chains stop him. So does the wooden bat I have in my hands. I swing hard, connecting with his thighs. The impact jars my hands but I keep going.

I couldn’t protect these two when we were held captive in that dingy motel, but I can protect them now. “You want to stick your dick in places it doesn’t belong, Josiah? You like raping young girls until they can’t breathe or deal with the pain?” Blow after

blow I land on Josiah's body until I can't lift my arms and my soul feels lighter. I know I can defend myself against a man. I have taken back the power this asshole stripped from me. For the first time in my life, freedom calls to me. "How you do like it, you piece of shit?" I spit on him and toss the bat away. "I'm finished with this asshole."

I walk over to Matt, still leaning against the wall. He has a smirk on his face. He pulls my back against his chest and I can feel how aroused he is watching me. "Did you enjoy that?" I ask.

"More than you know." Matt nuzzles my ear.

"I can feel how much you enjoyed it, Matt." I push my ass against his hardness and Matt releases a low moan.

"Three weeks, Pulchra. Then I won't take it easy."

"I'm counting on it."

Matt's arms tighten around me and kisses the side of my neck. "I love you."

"I love you, too. And thank you for doing this for me and the girls. We did need it."

"Anything to help you three heal."

Turning my attention back to the scene in front of me, Tiny has a knife in his big hand and he hands it to Syvannah. He hands another one to Exleigh. "Make it hurt ladies. If he passes out and you're not finished, we will wake him. "

They both approach Josiah and Exleigh slams the knife into his right thigh. "That's for taking something from me that wasn't yours." Blood pours out of his thigh when

she yanks the knife out.

Josiah screams and Syvannah slices his chest from nipple to nipple. Repeating the process until blood coats her hands. “That’s for leaving me disfigured from your teeth.”

Syvannah picks up the bat I threw down and hits Josiah in the mouth, shattering his teeth. “That’s for every time you bit and marred my skin. I might have marks on my body, but you will never take my soul.”

Exleigh and Syvannah go after Josiah for at least an hour and Tiny had to revive him twice. The two women are covered in blood but instead of fear in their eyes, they have a spark that’s been missing the entire time I’ve known them. They’re not afraid anymore. It will take time and together the three of us will heal, but this is a start.

Exleigh looks over to me and flips the knife hand out to me. “Together we end him.”

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I step away from Matt and grab the butt of the knife. “Together.”

The three of us hold onto the knife and drive it into Josiah’s heart. He lifts his head and his eyes flutter open for a brief moment before his head drops down toward his bloody chest and he takes his last breath.

“Come on, let’s get cleaned up,” I tell Exleigh and Syvannah. The three of us might have entered that room broken, but together the three of us leave it as new women. Women who will fight for everything we have in our lives. And we will not give up, ever.

### Epilogue

#### Red

It’s been eight weeks since Nadia and Matthew came home. Eight blissful, but tiring weeks. Our little guy eats, sleeps and shits all day, every day. Who knew having a baby as small as he is could create such a stink? He does and I swear every time he has a blowout, my eyes burn.

Nolan, Krimson and their son Sherwood are here almost every day visiting with Nadia and the Little Bastards. I think Sherwood has a slight crush on Nina, but that girl won’t give him the time of day unless she’s kicking his ass in pool. Someday, Nina will meet her match and I’m going to laugh my ass off when Capone goes crazy. Leave it to Nolan-fucking-Ryan to give Capone a heart attack.

Nadia, Exleigh and Syvannah exacted their revenge against Josiah. It was the most



erotic sight I've seen when my woman took back control over her life. We had Josiah tied up in a room behind the Clubhouse where we've taken plenty of traitors to meet their makers. When she entered with me by her side and the Royal Bastard members backing her up, he knew he was fucked. What the three women did to Josiah paled in comparison to what he did to them. These three women are badass when it comes to seeking revenge.

As for Exleigh and Syvannah, they're slowly starting to trust the members of the club but some days are better than others. When we came home from the hospital, they were the first ones waiting to see the little guy. When they're around, they don't let Matthew out of their sight. In a way, he's helping them heal and showing them the good in the world instead of focusing on the bad.

We broke ground on the land behind the Clubhouse and from the plans drawn up, it's going to be like our own little community. We'll have miles of barbed wire fencing surrounding the land and if it's up to Capone and Torch, there will be an electric fence attached with a high-resolution security system that no one will be able to hack. Capone and Danyella's house will be built first directly behind the Clubhouse. Then Blayze and Monica's, then Torch and Daisy's, Derange and Jezebelle's and then mine and Nadia's. Aftermath and Kensi decided to stay in the Clubhouse for now with Bones, Dagger, Trigger, Seth, Tiny, Knight and Playboy. We're recruiting more prospects but it's slow going after all the shit we've been through. Rose and Torch's brother Jase decided to move back here and Jase might be prospecting for us. It's a decision they'll have to make together.

"He's down for the night," Nadia whispers as she crawls her way between my spread legs while I'm lying down on the bed in a pair of boxer briefs. The look of lust and want is radiant in her whiskey-colored eyes that does things to my body. Her blonde hair is knotted on top of her head and wicked things I want to do to her causes my boxers to tent. Fuck, she's perfect.

"Is that so?" I ask, moving my hands behind my head.

Nadia licks her way up my torso, her chest brushing against mine. She's wearing a tiny black Royal Bastards tank top with spaghetti straps and matching boy panties that read Property of Red across her ass. She's lost most of her baby weight but her chest has stayed as big as it was when she was pregnant. Her hips are slightly wider but her slender frame is more toned than before her pregnancy. That's due to her still dancing but instead of stripping, she is opening a dance studio for females looking to learn a few new moves and girls to gain the confidence in themselves she didn't have growing up. She's going to call it Royal Dancers.

Nadia reaches my head and I do everything I can not to toss her over and have my wicked way with her. She drags her nails down my abs, toward the growing tent in my boxer briefs.

"That's so, Matt. What are we going to do about it?" Nadia's lips land on mine at the same time her hand grips my shaft. I release a low moan when she pumps her hand to the melody of her tongue. Soon, I'm pulling away from her hand and flipping her over. I slide her panties down and then remove my boxers. I surge inside of her hot core and my eyes cross.

"You're perfect for me, Pulchra. I love you with everything I am." I tell her grinding my hips.

"I love you, Matt, with everything I have," Nadia responds with a whimper. I bring her to the edge of ecstasy and we fall over together, for the rest of our lives.

Together all of our ghosts are laid to rest. My past has stopped haunting me at every turn thanks to the love Nadia has given me. Her insecurities are non-existent and the fire she has lights up my world. I'm no longer jaded and Nadia is no longer afraid. We make the perfect couple and the perfect family.

The Royal Bastards are still dealing with Lattimer and the Russians but right now, we're all at peace for a little while.