



Ryker

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Category: Romance, Mc

Description: Doesn't matter that Laken is Flicker's sister, and a virgin. I always get what I want, and Laken is mine!

Ryker: After 20 years in the military, I find myself doing my dad's dirty work. But as the "prince" of the Hades Abyss MC, it's expected of me. Doing a little recon in a small Alabama town should have been boring as shit, until the hot little minx I met at a bar turned my life upside down. Women always fall at my feet, but this one's different. If I'd known she was a virgin, I might have backed away, but now that I've had a taste I want to keep coming back for more. Little did I realize that I'd just fucked the sister of a Dixie Reaper, and my life's about to become all kinds of complicated. I have to wonder... had she fucked me because she wanted me? Or is it all some kind of setup?

Laken: My big brother Flicker is always ruining my fun, keeping the guys away from me, so when I finally get a chance for a hot guy to get rid of my V-card, I'm all for it. Ryker's hot and has that alpha vibe, and the fact he's ex-military just makes me wetter. It never occurred to me that he was a biker, or that I might have just screwed up a big deal for the Dixie Reapers. It seems my sexy Ryker isn't just some hot military guy. No, he's the son of the President of the Hades Abyss MC. So I hide like big brother asks me to. Just one problem... Ryker doesn't leave, and now I'm late. How am I supposed to tell Ryker that I'm carrying his child? When life fucks me over, it does it royally.

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Chapter One

Ryker

I threw back another shot of whiskey, and slammed the glass down on the bar top. It was my tenth. Or was it twelfth? I'd lost count somewhere along the way, but I wasn't even remotely drunk. There was a slight warmth spreading through me, but I was one hundred percent in charge of my actions. So when I slid my hand up the back of the thigh of the hottie standing next to me, yeah, that was all me. What can I say? That sweet, curvy ass of hers was calling to me.

She slowly turned her head to look at me over her shoulder as my hand slipped up farther, sliding under the hem of her too short dress. Mmm. No panties. I gave her ass cheek a squeeze and watched as heat flared in her eyes. Whatever schmuck she'd been talking to was forgotten as she turned to face me. Oh yeah. The front matched the back. Nice, luscious breasts that were barely contained by the stretchy top of her dress, and damn if her nipples weren't poking through.

"Normally a guy buys me a drink before he grabs my ass," she said.

"Guess I'm not a normal guy."

She reached out and fingered the dog tags that I still wore, despite the fact I'd been out of the service for a month. "No, soldier, you certainly aren't."

"Marine," I said.

She bit her lip and moved in a little closer. "Guess that makes you something of a badass, doesn't it?"

I smirked and squeezed her ass again. "Something like that."

She reached out and rubbed a hand down my chest, her fingers trailing across my abs and stopping at my belt buckle. I could tell she liked what she saw, and I damn sure liked the way she filled out her dress. It would look even better bunched around her waist while I fucked her.

"You're so big and strong," she said with a purr.

"Oh, baby. You have no idea."

I slid my fingers farther down the curve of her ass until they teased her pussy. She was already wet and so damn slick, and she looked like just the type of girl who would let me fuck her in the bathroom. I knew the type, and those hard nipples and wet little pussy told me that she wanted me bad enough to let me do whatever I wanted. Women tended to fall at my feet, always had, and this one wasn't going to be an exception. Kneeling was a good place for them, easier access for sucking my cock.

"Bigger doesn't mean better," she said. "It's all in how you use it."

"I know how to use it. I can make you scream my name all night long."

She shrugged. "Maybe you can and maybe you can't."

Oh, I could. It was a proven fact. Women always screamed in ecstasy whenever I was pounding into their pussies, or anywhere else I pleased. They begged me for it.

"What's your name, sugar?"

“Laken.”

“I’m Ryker. What do you say we get to know one another a little better?” I stroked her pussy again, letting my fingers dip inside. She bit her lip, and a flush started creeping up her chest. I’d be willing to bet I could get her off right here and now.

“Maybe I’m not that kind of girl,” she said, her voice dropping as I stroked her some more.

“Honey, my fingers are coated in your cream, right here in front of everyone. I bet I could get you so turned-on, you’d let me fuck you anywhere I pleased. Just bend you over the bar and take what I wanted.” I smirked. “In any hole I wanted.”

She gasped, but her eyes dilated, and I knew she’d liked the idea. Naughty girl.

I rubbed her a little more, getting her even wetter. Yeah, this sexy woman was a wild one. I knew the type. A tremor raked her body, and I knew she was close to coming. I thrust a finger inside her and nearly groaned at how damn tight she was. Fuck, but she’d squeeze my cock so damn good. I played with her pussy until she was a quivering mess, barely hanging on. Then I slipped my hand free from her dress, wrapped my fingers around hers, and dragged her off to the nearest bathroom. If the stickiness on my fingers bothered her, she didn’t complain.

I pushed open the bathroom door, hauled her in behind me, then snapped the lock into place. She gave me a coy smile as she leaned back against the counter. I prowled closer, thinking of all the filthy things I wanted to do to her. Our options were limited in this bathroom, though. Maybe I’d take her back to the motel with me. She looked like a screamer, and I’d love her my name on her lips all fucking night and into the morning. When I was done with her, she’d be feeling me for a week.

I traced the top of her dress, my finger lightly trailing along the curve of her

breasts. She licked her lips, and I knew she was going to give me what I wanted. They always did. I eased the straps of her dress down her arms and pulled the top half down under her breasts. So damn perky! They were a little more than a handful, but the minx had gone without a bra. Her nipples were hard and the prettiest pink I'd ever seen.

Leaning forward, I traced my tongue around first one then the other before sucking one into my mouth. Her fingers slid into my hair, holding me to her as I lavished attention on her luscious tits. My cock was hard as a fucking steel post, and the cute little sounds she was making just made me even harder. I couldn't wait to get balls-deep inside her. Something told me once wouldn't be enough.

I pulled away and turned her to face the mirror.

"Hands on the counter, baby, and stick that gorgeous ass out for me."

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She leaned over and wiggled her ass at me. I gave her a playful slap, then pulled up the hem of her dress until the material bunched around her waist. A tattoo caught my attention, a delicate feather that curled around her hip. It wouldn't be all that remarkable, but the ink looked almost metallic. My finger stroked over it before my cock demanded attention.

I used my foot to kick her feet farther apart, admiring the way her pussy parted, as if it were begging to be fucked. I didn't waste any time and started unbuckling my belt, then undoing my pants. I pulled my cock out, giving it a few strokes as I stared at the sexy woman in front of me. Our gazes locked in the mirror, hers pleading for me to touch her, to fuck her.

I pulled out my wallet, going for the condom I always kept there, but her voice stopped me.

"I'm clean," she said. "You don't have to use that. Unless..."

"Unless?" I prompted.

"Unless you're not clean," she said, her cheeks flushing.

"Honey, I never go in unwrapped. Not since I was fifteen and fucking my first girl. But, yes. I'm clean." No way I was getting trapped by some slut who wanted a baby daddy to pay all her bills. I'd seen too many of my Marine buddies get stuck in that trap, and I'd sworn it would never happen to me.

"You could pull out," she said.

I knew that wasn't foolproof, but that pretty pussy of hers was awfully tempting. All wet and slick, the dewy lips a nice pink. I'd bet it would feel like wet silk wrapped around my cock. I could feel my resolve wavering, even though I knew better. A little voice in my head whispered that there was always the morning-after pill. That pretty much decided it for me. Sometime tonight we'd have that talk, or I'd go pick it up for her myself in the morning.

I stuffed my wallet back into my pocket and rubbed my cock along her slit. Fuck but she felt incredible! She moaned and thrust back. Yeah, she was an eager one. I smacked her ass, leaving a handprint, but it only seemed to turn her on more, so I slapped the other side too.

"So good," she murmured.

Damn. She might just be fucking perfect.

"You like that, baby? Want me to spank that ass?"

"Please," she begged. "I've been such a bad girl."

I chuckled and swatted her ass again, three times on each cheek. She had to be feeling the burn as her ass turned red, but fuck if she didn't get even wetter. I couldn't wait any longer. I gripped her hips and thrust deep and hard. When Laken tensed and cried out, I looked in the mirror to see a sheen of tears in her eyes. What the hell? I eased out of her, thinking maybe she didn't really want this, but the pink tinge along my shaft froze me in place.

"You're a fucking virgin?" I asked. Shock hit me for a moment. I hadn't ever had a virgin before, but I'd heard they bled the first time.

"Don't stop," she said. "Please. I want this. I want you."

I was torn. Part of me wanted to fuck her until neither of us could stand anymore; some caveman part of me thrilled over the fact that I was the first to get inside her. The other part wanted to run for the damn hills. I'd always heard that virgins spelled trouble, which is why I'd steered clear of them for so long. And now here I was, fucking one in the bathroom of a bar, her tits and ass on display. She was good, I'd give her that. I hadn't had a clue that she wasn't experienced. She'd come off as being a siren, some sex kitten who picked up men in bars all the time.

My cock twitched, begging me to fuck her. I wanted to, even though she'd lied by omission. I didn't know why she'd done it, and my dick didn't care. The primitive side of me wanted to pound that tight virgin pussy, claim her as mine.

"Ryker. Please," she said in a soft voice, her eyes pleading with me.

"Why do you want this?" I asked.

"Because no one will touch me. I don't care if it hurts. I want you to fuck me, and don't stop. You can take me however you want."

Maybe it made me an asshole, but what guy could ever walk away from an offer like that? This sexy little virgin was begging for my cock, telling me to do whatever I wanted to her. Yeah, I was likely going to hell, but I was going to have fun on the way there.

"Hold on tight, sugar," I said.

I gripped her hips again and began thrusting into her. I watched as her breasts bounced with every stroke, and soon the pinched look on her face turned to pleasure. Her pussy opened up even more, welcoming me in. I fucked her hard and deep, wanting to own every inch of her. She felt really damn good. Too good. My belt buckle jangled as I pounded her pussy, and soon she was crying out, begging me for more. I knew what

she needed, what she wanted.

My cock swelled, and I knew I was going to come at any minute. Reaching around her, I pressed my fingers against her clit and started rubbing in fast little circles until she was bucking against me, her release coating my dick. With a growl, I thrust faster until my balls drew up, and I shot load after load of cum into her tight little pussy. Fuck! Too late, I remembered I was supposed to pull out, but fuck if I really wanted to. I hadn't come inside a girl bare since that first time, and it felt like fucking heaven.

I plunged deep once last time, and held still as both of us panted for breath. She looked beautiful as I stared at her in the mirror, her breasts heaving and her nipples even harder than before. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were bright. My cock throbbed inside her, still just as hard as it was before we'd started. Yeah, one time wasn't going to be enough with this one. No fucking way.

I pulled out and watched as my cum slid down her thighs. Some of it coated her pussy, and I had this urge to shove it back inside her. Knowing I'd been her first, I felt like I wanted to brand her, mark her with my scent and let everyone asshole out there know I'd been here first, that she was mine. She started to straighten, but I pushed her down again. Her startled gaze met mine as I thrust into her again. The bathroom might not be the best place for this, but we weren't leaving just yet.

"One more time," I said. "Then you're coming with me because I'm nowhere near done with you, sugar. We're going to the motel, and then I'm going to fuck this gorgeous ass, come down your throat, and fuck your pussy again. All night long."

She moaned, and her eyes slid halfway closed. "If it all feels this good, you can do whatever you want to me."

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“Oh, baby, it gets even better. Just wait and see.”

I fucked her hard and deep, not stopping until we'd both come again. Then I helped her straighten her dress, and I led her out to the parking lot. She came to a halt when she saw my Harley Davidson and looked uncertain for a moment. There was something in her eyes, something I couldn't figure out. Did the bike scare her?

“I swear it's completely safe,” I told her. “Come on, kitten. I'll protect you.”

Something shifted in her gaze, and a soft smile curved her lips. Within seconds, she was climbing onto the back of my bike, wrapping her arms around my waist, and we were off, the wind blowing our hair. I had no doubt I'd have cum on my seat from her pussy, but it would be so worth it. Yeah, that pussy was mine. For tonight at least. And I was going to make sure she enjoyed every second of it.

Chapter Two

Laken

Sunlight nearly blinded me as I squinted at the room around me. The shower was going in the connecting bathroom, and I wondered if I should sneak out while Ryker was busy. I remembered everything we'd done the night before, and well into the morning. My body ached in the best of ways. Staying wasn't an option, though. If I wasn't home soon, my big brother would send out a search party. I was twenty-one, but he acted like I was twelve. I quickly pulled my dress over my head, ran my fingers through my hair, and slipped on my shoes. Then I crept out of the motel room as quietly as I could, not ready to face Ryker. We'd had fun, but I'd known going in that

was all it would be. He wasn't looking for forever, and I didn't want to deal with the awkward morning after stuff I'd heard about from my friends.

When I'd seen he rode a bike, I'd frozen, wondering if it was some sort of trap. He hadn't been wearing colors, but that hadn't meant anything. Everyone around here knew my brother was an officer with the Dixie Reapers, and several had tried to use me to get to him over the years, or as an in to the club. But Ryker had been too damn tempting to pass up. I'd been wanting a guy to fuck me since I'd turned seventeen and accidentally walked in on my best friend at a party going at it with two guys. Flicker had made sure I was untouchable, though, and I'd reached the age of twenty-one with my virginity intact.

I smiled. Not anymore. Ryker had thoroughly deflowered me last night. My thighs were still sticky from all the fun we'd had. If I hadn't had my Depo-Provera shot two months ago, I might have worried about pregnancy. When I'd first started thinking about having sex, I'd gotten on the shot. But then Flicker had made certain no guy would ever touch me. Asshole. I'd watched him whore his way through the club pussy, and yet I wasn't allowed to have any fun. Not that Flicker condoned me being in the clubhouse except on family days, but I don't always listen to my brother.

Well, the double standard was at an end because now I'd lost my V-card. Now that I knew just how incredible sex was, there was no way I was going back to being celibate. I'd just have to find ways around big brother. The closer I got to the compound, the more I started to feel a little antsy. Had I been wrong for walking out on Ryker like that? We hadn't shared more than first names with each other, and I doubted he'd stick around for long. Guys like him usually didn't.

The Prospect manning the gate gave me the once over before letting me inside. He shook his head, and I had to wonder what the hell that was supposed to mean. I'd taken all of four steps into the compound when Flicker appeared on the steps of the clubhouse, his arms folded and his gaze disapproving. He met me halfway across the

parking lot, his hand gripping my upper arm as he looked me over.

“Jesus, Laken. You look like you’ve been fucked three ways to Sunday.”

I smirked. “Probably because I have.”

Flicker scowled, and I could hear his teeth grinding together. “Who the fuck touched you?”

“No one you know. Just some guy passing through town. Guess you don’t tell quite everyone what to do around here.”

“It was for your own good, Laken. Did you even use a fucking condom? What if he gave you something?”

I squeezed my thighs together. No, we hadn’t used condoms, and that had been my choice. I’d wanted to feel everything, and not have any barriers between us. But when Flicker put it that way, maybe I’d been a little too hasty to tell Ryker to put the condom away. I’d just have to make sure I got tested, just to be safe. And until then, I’d avoid men. It wasn’t like they didn’t give me a wide berth anyway, thanks to big brother here.

“I’m fine, Flicker. I just want to go home and shower.”

“Christ, are you telling me that you’re walking around with his cum still all over you?” Flicker’s scowl deepened. “You want to know why I treat you like a child? It’s because you do stupid shit like this, Laken.”

His words hurt, but I’d never let him know that. Flicker was all I had left in the world, and his opinion mattered to me. For the most part. His obsession with keeping me chaste had gotten out of control, though. I’d been waiting to find out that he was going

to trade me to some biker to sweeten a deal or something, not that the Dixie Reapers had ever done something like that, but I'd heard rumors of other clubs doing similar crazy shit.

"Go home," Flicker said with a bit of a growl to his voice. "We have some new blood coming in today, some big shot who wants to make a deal, and I want you to make yourself scarce. From what I've heard, the guy's a real ladies' man, and if he sets his sights on you, he might not take no for an answer."

"Fine."

I brushed past my brother and continued down the road that wound through the compound, until I reached the house I'd been sharing with him. My mom had died when I was sixteen, and Flicker, being a lot older, had taken me in. No one had any idea what had happened to our dad, and while we had different moms, he'd never looked at me differently. To him, I was just his baby sister, Laken.

Flicker never locked the house so the door swung open when I turned the knob. When it shut, I leaned against it a moment and closed my eyes. I had this sinking suspicion that instead of gaining my freedom by losing my virginity, I'd just locked my cage up even tighter. Now he'd be even more vigilant, and I had only myself to blame. I kicked off my shoes, leaving them by the door, and made my way to my bedroom. I didn't have my own bathroom like Flicker did, but I knew he wouldn't be home anytime soon. After pulling my dress over my head and letting it fall to the floor, I walked across the hall to the bathroom and started the shower.

The hot water felt good, easing my aches. Not that I regretted what I'd done. Ryker had been amazing, and despite the hint of caveman I saw in him, he'd been surprisingly tender at times. It was almost a shame I wouldn't see him again. I certainly wouldn't have minded spending more time with him, especially in bed. I smiled as I washed my hair and thought about how incredible it had been. There

hadn't been much I hadn't let him do to me, and I'd loved every minute of it. In some ways, giving complete control over to him had been freeing, which was funny since Flicker tried to control my every move and I just felt stifled when he did it.

I finished my shower and pulled on a tank top and shorts before heading to the kitchen to find something to eat. I'd skipped dinner last night, wanting to sneak out when Flicker wasn't looking, and I hadn't had breakfast today. My stomach was ready to stage a revolt if I didn't eat something soon. It looked like one of us would have to make a trip to the store soon, as the cupboards were almost bare, and the fridge contained bottled water, beer, expired milk, and some juice that I didn't even remember buying. I wrinkled my nose at the offering.

I settled for dry cereal and toast with some water, then carried everything to the kitchen table. Flicker's house was pretty awesome all things considered. There was a large bay window in the kitchen that overlooked the backyard. He'd let me plant some rose bushes outside the window, and I always enjoyed looking at them while I ate. Truthfully, he'd tried to make this place a home for me, had never made me feel like I wasn't welcome. I knew that having his kid sister here had to be a bit trying at times, especially when I'd been younger. It was no secret that any hook-ups he'd had, he'd kept to the clubhouse, but now the Pres had moved the Prospects into the rooms in the clubhouse to free up the duplexes for patched members. I didn't know where Flicker was going now for a good time, and I wasn't going to ask. He still came home smelling of cheap perfume and sex, so I knew he wasn't abstaining, but there were just some things I didn't need to know about my brother.

I finished my meal and decided to see what was on TV. I wasn't up to socializing at the clubhouse, and Flicker had said to stay away. Not that I could care less about some guy who wanted to set up some sort of deal with my brother's club. All the guys were nice to me, but they could be real assholes when they wanted to be, and I was sure the new guy would be no exception. Just what I needed. More testosterone in my life. Having Flicker watching my every move was bad enough, but add in all the Dixie

Reapers? Yeah, my life could be hell sometimes. It was like having an infinite number of big brothers. Even the Prospects felt like they needed to keep an eye on me, and I was older than some of them.

Why did men always think having a dick made them superior to women? I'd never understand it. We were the ones who carried a human around inside us then gave birth to something the size of a watermelon, but being able to pee standing up gave them some sort of superpowers? I snorted. Yeah right. They were delusional, every last one of them.

I was just closing my eyes, my long night having caught up with me, when the front door slammed open, and Flicker roared out my name. I sighed, wondering what the hell I'd done now. Prying myself off the couch, I padded to the front entry and stared at him, trying to figure out why he looked both furious and ready to sneak me out of the country. What the hell was going on? Big brother looked almost panicked.

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“You slept with fucking Ryker Storme?” Flicker said.

“We didn’t exactly exchange last names,” I said, flipping my hair over my shoulder. “But yeah, the guy I spent the night with was named Ryker. How did you even find out? More of your crew spying on me?”

“He’s here,” Flicker said, his voice dropping. “And had he not been talking about the hot piece of ass with a swan feather on her hip in metallic ink, I’d have never known it was you. But no one else in this fucking town has that tattoo. Hell, Zipper is the only one within a hundred miles who will mess with those inks.”

“I’ll bite. Who is Ryker Storme? Must be someone important for you to damn near have a coronary because I spent the night in his bed.”

“Ever heard of Trent Storme?” Flicker asked.

I shrugged. The name was familiar. I thought about it a minute before the name clicked into place. “The President of the Hades Abyss MC?”

“Yeah. Ryker Storme is Trent’s son. You just fucked the prince of the Hades Abyss MC. Do you know how much shit this could bring to our door?” Flicker asked. “Every guy in that meeting knew exactly who Ryker was talking about. It’s no secret that you have that silver feather on your hip. Who the hell else but you would get something like that around here? Zipper inks more butterflies and panthers than anything. Not to mention I really didn’t need to hear about how tight my sister’s pussy is.”

I winced and commiserated with him. Yeah, just like I didn’t like hearing about how

big his dick was when the club sluts started talking.

“It’s a little late to change things now. I don’t have a time machine,” I said. I honestly didn’t know what he wanted me to do about it. Even if I could change things, I wouldn’t. Being with Ryker had been beyond amazing.

“He’s only here for a week, checking things out. Torch wants to reach an agreement with Trent Storme. We can always use more allies. The club talked things over after Ryker left, and we want you to lay low until Ryker leaves. Maybe you should stay somewhere else.”

I rolled my eyes. Yeah, because I had so many options. If I’d ever had somewhere to go, did he honestly think I’d have moved in with him indefinitely? He wouldn’t let me work, so I had no income for my own place, and the only friends I had were here at the compound. I’d ditched my high school friends when it became apparent they were only hanging out with me to drool over the bikers in my life.

“I’ll just stick close to home. But you’re going to have to restock the kitchen if you don’t want me leaving the house. I’d starve to death before morning.”

“Fine,” Flicker said. “I’m hoping no one opens their damn mouth about who you really are. With some luck, Ryker will lose himself in alcohol and club pussy. Maybe he won’t even remember you in a few days.”

That hurt. A lot. And for some reason, I didn’t like the thought of him spending time with the club sluts. I had no claim on him, and I knew it, but I’d felt special when I was with him last night. Then again, if he was bragging about me to my brother and the other Dixie Reapers, I was likely just another piece of ass to him. That’s probably all I’d ever be to anyone. Who would want to settle down with Flicker’s sister? He was the treasurer for the Dixie Reapers, and if anything ever happened to me, he’d wreak havoc and start kicking ass. Most of the time when a guy paid attention to me, I had to

wonder if he was trying to find an in with Flicker and the club. It's why Ryker had been perfect. I'd figured a complete stranger was a safe bet for some no strings fun.

"I'll stay here," I promised my brother. "He'll never know I'm here."

"See that it stays that way."

Flicker shook his head and disappeared out the front door.

It suddenly felt like the weight of the world had settled on my shoulders. I had the most incredible night of my life and still managed to fuck things up. Sometimes I wondered if Flicker would be better off if I did take off, just vanished one day for parts unknown. He was always bailing me out of trouble, usually brought on by too much drinking. I'd been detained more than once for drunk and disorderly, and there was the time I spray-painted the high school, or the time I TP'd the principal's house my senior year. Yeah, I hadn't been an angel. There were times I wondered why he even let me stay here.

Feeling sorry for myself, I went back to the living room and flopped onto the couch. So much for going to the doctor. I figured something like this would be time sensitive, not that I've ever had to research STDs before. I'd just wait out Ryker and hope he hadn't given me anything that couldn't be easily cured. On the plus side, I could make a dent in my to-be-read pile. I probably had over two hundred books on my Kindle I hadn't had a chance to read yet.

See, silver lining. I'd just find me an awesome book boyfriend, and then I'd be like, Ryker who?

Chapter Three

Ryker

The gorgeous girl I'd taken back to my motel about a week before still haunted me. The Dixie Reapers had been more than welcoming, and I'd had more club pussy shoved at me than I knew what to do with, but they just didn't interest me. I couldn't bring myself to fuck someone so thoroughly used after having my very own virgin for an entire night. Not to mention they all looked worn around the edges and wore so much makeup it looked like a mask. I wondered where my little ex-virgin was and what she was doing now.

Hell, I wondered who she was doing now. Someone that sensual, that sexy, wouldn't exactly be lounging around her house on a Friday night. I might have been her first, but now that I'd popped that cherry, I had no doubt she'd be looking for her next hook-up. Maybe I should have made sure she had my number before she ran off. I didn't know how long I would be in town, but we could have had some fun. And maybe I could have talked her into going home with me, if I ever went back home.

Being the son of the President of a club just wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Everyone had assumed I'd follow in Dad's footsteps and take over one day. And hell, maybe I would. I never wore my cut, but I had one. I was wearing it now just because I was hanging with another MC, but it generally stayed buried in my bag when I was on the road. There was a sense of freedom in just being an average guy and not Trent Storme's kid. I'd joined the Marines and served twenty years in an attempt to distance myself from that life, but the minute my dad had heard I was coming home, he'd enlisted my help.

I could have been an asshole and turned him away, but he'd seldom asked me for anything. So I'd agreed to check out the Dixie Reapers and see if they were the kind of club Dad might be interested in. So far, everything seemed fine. There didn't seem to be any drugs in the clubhouse, and even though they did have club sluts like every other MC I'd seen over the years, they weren't into selling women. From what Torch and his VP had told me, they made a good bit of their money off arms deals, and while I'd speculated that they might be running drugs, the members seemed clean. I'd

found that clubs who dealt in drugs had a tendency to sample the product, and that wasn't happening here. Couldn't fault them for the arms deals, though. There was good money in guns. A lot of clubs were into a lot worse.

I sipped my beer and winced when I realized it had gotten warm. Pushing it away, I decided to step out for some fresh air. A few guys were smoking on the porch so I kept walking. The Dixie Reapers were welcoming enough, but I preferred spending my nights with a woman in my bed, not running my mouth with a bunch of bikers. If I went back home, I'd have to get used to it. No way my dad wouldn't demand my presence at the clubhouse on a regular basis. I'd avoided his life for so long, but I didn't know how much longer I could keep running.

It was nearly pitch-black outside, the moon and stars hiding behind the clouds that had rolled in over the last hour. I was so busy staring up at the sky, I didn't see the other person slinking along in the dark, until soft curves plowed into me. Instinctively, my arms went around her and held her against my chest. Had to be a woman with those perky breasts and rounded hips. Maybe my night was looking up. I didn't think a club slut would be prowling around out here, but the luscious body pressed against me was mighty damn tempting.

"Sorry," she said, trying to free herself from me.

Wait. I knew that voice. My arms tightened, not wanting to let her go. "Laken?"

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Startled eyes met mine. “Ryker.”

I didn’t know what she was doing in the compound, or why she was sneaking around, and I didn’t much care. I was going to consider it a miracle that I’d found her again. And she felt damn good in my arms. The white tank, booty shorts, and flip-flops were a contrast to what she’d been wearing the last time I’d seen her, but she was still sexy as fuck. If anything, I think I liked this look on her even better. Not that either compared to having her naked in my bed.

“I shouldn’t be here,” she murmured, pushing against my chest.

I refused to let go, though. No way was she slipping through my fingers again.

“I think you’re right where you’re supposed to be.”

“I can’t be caught here,” she said, trying to twist away from me again.

I didn’t understand why she couldn’t be here. Had she snuck into the compound? And if so, who had she been looking for? If she wanted to get down and dirty with a biker, I was more than happy to oblige. The way she’d screamed my name last time I didn’t think she’d have any objections to another round. It wasn’t unheard of for a woman to come back begging for more. My fellow Marines had called me the pied piper of pussy, and for good reason. Once the ladies knew what I was packing, they followed me around just waiting for another taste. Sometimes I was nice enough to indulge them, especially the ones with talented tongues.

My cock was already hard and pressing against my zipper, just thinking about getting

inside her again. From the way her nipples were poking against me, it was safe to say the attraction wasn't one-sided. But I didn't have a place on the compound where I could take her. They'd offered me a room inside the clubhouse, but I didn't want to parade her through there, especially if she wasn't supposed to be here. I could put her on the back of my bike and go back to the motel, but the Prospect at the gate would still see her. For whatever reason, she wanted to hide.

"Come on," I said, taking her hand and leading her around the back of the clubhouse. It was even darker back there, and I found a spot where no one would be able to see us. The music was pulsing inside, and we could hear the sounds of everyone partying. And then some. From the pounding and cries of pleasure on the other side of the wall, it sounded like someone else was getting their dick wet.

I pressed her back against the building and before she could utter a protest, I claimed her lips in a kiss that was sure to melt her panties. Or better yet, make them come off. Assuming she was wearing any. I slid my hand down and cupped her ass, giving it a squeeze. Nope. No panty lines. It seemed my sexy ex-virgin had something against undergarments, and I fucking loved it. Just gave me easier access whenever I wanted to fuck her. Maybe we could make this a regular thing for however long I was here, even if it meant meeting in the dark away from prying eyes.

I eased her shorts over her hips, and she gasped as they fell down around her ankles. Pulling up her tank top, I leaned down to lick and tease her pretty nipples, until she was fisting my hair and begging for more. I felt her tremble and knew she wanted me. She might be inexperienced, but Laken was a wildcat when it came to sex. Like she was made for fucking.

I unfastened my belt and pants, eager to get inside her again.

"Step out of your shorts," I told her.

She did as I commanded, her blue gaze fastened on mine, shining even in the darkness with complete trust in her eyes. I wasn't sure I'd earned that trust, or deserved it, but it did something to me. I reached for her, gripping her thighs and lifting her. I urged her legs around my waist, wanting inside her so damn bad. That sweet pussy of hers opened, and I couldn't wait another moment. I sank into her, groaning at how perfect she felt. I cupped her ass with my hands as I thrust into her, each stroke going deeper and harder. Her nails bit into my shoulders as I fucked her, not holding back even a little. I knew she could take it, could take me. Her pussy welcomed my cock, getting wetter by the minute.

"Fucking missed this," I murmured, kissing the side of her neck.

"Ryker," she said, my name a sigh on her lips.

"You been with anyone else?" I asked, stopping for a moment. Maybe I should have wrapped my dick, but this was Laken. And after taking her bare the first time, I didn't want to have her any other way. We hadn't discussed the morning-after pill before, but I'd be sure to say something this time.

"No. Just you."

I kissed her, our tongues tangling. "Good."

"Wh-what about you?" she asked, looking uncertain.

"No one but you, sugar."

She smiled, and the happiness shining in her eyes told me I was fucked, but it was too late now. I started thrusting again, and I didn't stop until she'd come twice, her juices soaking the both of us. My dick was still hard, and my balls were full, but I was wishing we had a bed. There were things I wanted to do to her, things I couldn't make

happen out here in the open, pressed up against a building.I'd fucked her ass twice the other night, and I wanted to do it again.Her pussy was tight, but fuck!Her ass was even tighter, and I'd damn near come the second I'd gotten inside her.

"Don't stop," she pleaded.

I drove into her until I finally let loose, my cum filling her.My cock twitched inside her, and as her pussy squeezed me, I knew that once again I would need her more than the one time.I didn't know what it was about Laken, but she bewitched me.Whenever my cock got anywhere near her, I just wanted to fuck her until we both passed out.

My time here was coming to a close, but I didn't like the thought of leaving her behind.What would she think if I asked her to go with me?I needed to report back to my dad, but then we could go anywhere we wanted.We could stay with the Hades Abyss, or we could move on.Make our home anywhere in the world.I had connections in several states here, and a few in other countries.

My heart hammered in my chest.Was I seriously thinking of keeping her?Sure, I liked to get my dick wet, but I hadn't had a girlfriend since high school.Was that what I wanted from Laken?Or was she just a really good fuck that I wasn't ready to let go of just yet?

"I need to go," she said."You can't tell anyone you saw me here."

"Laken, I..."

She squirmed until I pulled out of her and set her back down on her feet.She jerked her shorts up and straightened her top before running off into the night.I didn't know what the fuck to think and ran a hand through my hair.It only took a moment before I decided to follow her.Just to make sure she was all right, or so I told myself.Truth

was, I needed to know why she was here. Had she come looking for me? Did she somehow know who I was? Fuck! I'd forgotten again to tell her to take the morning-after pill. I was so fucked if she didn't take one without any prodding. Or was that her game plan?

Maybe it had been a play to get into bed with me. Had I fallen into her hands? I'd tried to keep it quiet, that I was Trent Storme's son, but there were club sluts everywhere and groupies outside of the club who just wanted to get it on with a biker. I didn't think in the darkness she'd been able to read my cut, and even if she had, she likely wouldn't have recognized my road name. I hadn't pegged Laken as being a club slut, but what if I was wrong? I paused and decided to let her go. No, I wasn't going to play into her hands. If she came back, if she found me again, then I'd question her.

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And maybe I would stick around a while longer. If for no other reason than to find out what her endgame was. Would just any biker do, or did she want me specifically? Fuck, women could be so damn complicated. And they were damn sneaky and conniving too. I'd thought Laken was different, but what if she wasn't?

I'd had enough for the night. Walking back to my bike, I climbed on and decided to just ride until my mind cleared. Nothing was better for the soul than a ride at night, the wind blowing in my hair, the thrum of my bike between my legs. And if that didn't sort me out, then I was well and truly fucked.

Chapter Four

Laken

It had been more than three weeks since my first encounter with Ryker, three miserable weeks. And almost two weeks since I'd run into him here on Dixie Reapers' territory. Knowing he was here, so close, and yet I couldn't touch him? It was pure torture. The only thing that made me feel better was Flicker's confusion over why Ryker wasn't fucking every female who wandered by. It seemed he was abstaining from club pussy, and my stupid heart hoped it was because of me. Was he thinking about me as much as I'd thought about him? Did he stroke his cock at night as often as I played with my pussy, wishing it was him getting me off?

I'd wanted to sneak out again, see if I could find Ryker without anyone being the wiser, but Flicker had almost caught me last time, and I hadn't wanted to chance it. If he thought for one minute that I'd been with Ryker again, he might kick me out. I'd defied a direct order, and they might even see it as a betrayal. So I'd confined myself

to the house, but as I stared at the calendar on my phone, I realized that I couldn't hide anymore.

And I couldn't talk to Flicker.

Pulling up my contacts, I rang Isabella, hoping she'd be sympathetic. She was the President's wife, but I didn't think she'd tell Torch my secret. At least, I hoped she wouldn't. I had a feeling this entire thing was about to blow up in my face, and I didn't know how to stop it.

"Everything all right, Laken?" Isabella asked as she answered.

"I need a ride to the doctor, and you know the Prospects won't let me leave. Everyone is afraid Ryker will see me."

"Why do you need a doctor?" Isabella asked.

"Just... please, Isabella. I need to see Dr. Myron."

Isabella was quiet, and I knew she was probably putting two and two together, but finally she agreed. While I waited for her, I changed my clothes and brushed my hair and teeth, then I went onto the front porch to sit. I didn't think it was likely Ryker would wander this far. Her SUV pulled up a few minutes later, and I ran down the steps and climbed inside, hoping no one had seen me and knew I was escaping my prison. If anyone told Flicker I was getting into Isabella's car, someone would stop us. And I really needed to see Dr. Myron. I didn't have an appointment, but I hoped that wouldn't matter.

Thankfully, Isabella's windows were tinted enough that the Prospect at the gate could only tell two people were in her car, and since everyone knew what Isabella drove, they didn't even stop her. The gates opened, and she pulled through. As the Dixie

Reapers compound got smaller and smaller behind us, I began to breathe a little easier. We'd made it! Of course, I still had to sneak back in, and hope Flicker hadn't noticed I was missing. This hiding out thing was getting to be a pain in my ass. And boring as hell.

"Are you going to tell me what's going on?" Isabella asked.

"I'm late."

"You couldn't reschedule your appointment?" Isabella asked.

"No. I'm late."

Her eyes widened, and she stared at me a moment before jerking her gaze back to the road. Okay, so maybe she hadn't figured out why I'd wanted to see the doctor. She didn't say anything for a few minutes, and I wasn't sure if it was because of shock, or if she was just trying to find a way to tactfully ask me whatever was on her mind. When she pulled into Dr. Myron's and still hadn't said anything, I began to worry that she would call Torch and tell him where I was. Even worse, that she'd tell my brother.

"What are you going to do?" Isabella asked softly. "If you're pregnant, and it's Ryker's..."

"It can't be anyone else's. He's the only one I've been with."

"You were a virgin?" she asked.

I nodded, my cheeks flaming.

"This isn't good, Laken. Ryker's been in a bad mood the last few weeks, and the way

he's been avoiding the club sluts, your brother has been concerned that it has something to do with you. Are you sure you didn't say something to him when you were together?"

"He didn't know who I was. Still doesn't. But he did see me at the compound a few weeks ago."

Isabella mumbled under her breath.

"I didn't plan it!" I said. "I was tired of being stuck in the house. It was so dark I didn't think anyone would see me. And Ryker probably wouldn't have, except I hadn't seen him either, and I literally ran into him." I conveniently left out what happened after that. I didn't think it would help my case any.

"Come on," Isabella said. "Let's get this over with. Maybe you just missed your period from all the stress of Ryker being here."

I nodded, part of me hoping she was right. But the other part? I couldn't lie. The thought of having a part of Ryker with me always was rather appealing. I had no doubt he wouldn't want anything to do with me, or the baby. He didn't seem like the daddy type. I didn't know how all this would play out, and I was a little scared to find out. But sitting in the car all day wasn't going to help anything.

I got out, and when we got inside, my stomach started knotting. The receptionist smiled but looked a little confused.

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“I don’t have an appointment for either of you,” Janie said.

“I really need to see Dr.Myron,” I said.“I don’t know when I can make it back here, so it has to be now.”

Janie winced.“Dr.Myron is at the hospital delivering a baby.He had someone call and tell me there were complications, so all we have on staff right now is a Nurse Practitioner.Dr.Myron likely won’t be back until tomorrow.”

My cheeks flushed.“I need to take a pregnancy test.”

Janie’s eyebrows shot up.“I see.Have a seat, and I’ll let Nurse Owens know that you’re here.”

I sat and Isabella claimed the seat next to me.My hands were shaking, and I felt like I might throw up at any moment.I didn’t think it was because I was pregnant, though.I figured it was more nerves than anything else.I was terrified about the results of the pregnancy test, and even more scared to tell my brother.Oh, God.I’d have to tell Torch and the other Dixie Reapers!This really wasn’t going to go well.

Nurse Owens popped her head out into the waiting room.“Laken, why don’t you come on back?”

I stood and took a deep breath before I followed her down the hall.She handed me a plastic cup and nodded to the bathroom.I knew the drill after having a series of UTIs last year, and filled the cup, then stepped back into the hall where she was waiting.Nurse Owens led me to an exam room, and I climbed onto the table, the

paper crinkling underneath me.

“Now, why do you think you might be pregnant?” Nurse Owens asked.

“Well, my period is late by four days. And I’m never late. If anything, it comes a day or two early every month.”

Nurse Owens nodded. “I checked your file, and the last time you were here, you told Dr. Myron that you’re a virgin. I take it that has changed.”

Did she think it was an immaculate conception? How else would I think I was pregnant?

“Yeah. I had sex for the first time about three weeks ago, and then again about a week later.”

“You’re on the Depo-Provera shot, but it’s not one hundred percent foolproof. You’d actually be surprised how many women get pregnant while they’re on the shot. We’ll see what your urine shows, but we may do a blood test too, just to be sure. It sounds like you aren’t very far along if you are pregnant, so blood would be more accurate.”

“Can we go ahead and do that?” I asked.

“I’ll send someone in to draw your blood. Once I have the results from both tests, I’ll come back and let you know what we’ve found.”

“Thank you,” I murmured as she stepped out of the room.

It didn’t take long for someone to draw my blood, then I was stuck waiting. My phone vibrated in my pocket and I pulled it out, wincing when I saw Flicker’s face. I swiped the screen, ignoring the call, and knew he’d just keep calling until I answered. But I

didn't want to talk to him, not yet anyway. Hell, maybe not ever depending on what the test results revealed. I didn't know how I could go home if I was pregnant. Flicker would be pissed, and likely all of the Dixie Reapers would be too. And I could only imagine how Ryker would react.

When Nurse Owens stepped back into the room, the expression on her face said it all. My shoulders slumped as she came closer and patted my hand.

"You're pregnant, honey, but it's not the end of the world. I'm going to give you a prescription for prenatal vitamins, and I'll have Janie set up an appointment with Dr. Myron in a few weeks. But if you have any questions in the meantime, you just call us night or day. You still use the pharmacy on Main Street?"

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Nurse Owens."

The older woman smiled and opened the door, waiting for me to get off the table and walk out. When we reached the front, Nurse Owens asked Janie to set up my next appointment, and then I walked out with a silent Isabella by my side. She unlocked her SUV, but I just stood on the sidewalk staring at it. I couldn't go back to the compound, not right now anyway. I needed some time to think. I knew I couldn't keep this a secret, but I didn't know how to tell everyone either.

I got into Isabella's SUV and asked her to take me to the pharmacy.

"Are you pregnant?" she asked.

"Yeah. But don't tell anyone. Not yet, please. I just need some time to figure everything out."

"If they called in prenatal vitamins, they likely aren't ready yet. I love our pharmacist, but he's kind of slow. Why don't we go get something to eat, and then we'll stop by

there, okay?”

“Sure, but I’m running low on money. Flicker usually gives me some every week, but since I’ve been housebound, he hasn’t given me any.”

“My treat,” Isabella said.

“Great. It can be my last meal, like the ones they give people on death row.”

She snorted. “You’re pregnant, not dying.”

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“Same difference. Have you met my brother?”

“Torch won’t let Flicker do anything stupid,” Isabella said.

I was glad she had that much faith in her man, but I didn’t think anyone would keep Flicker from murdering me when he found out. And the compound had lots of land where he could hide my body. I suppose it could have been worse. At least we didn’t raise pigs. Maybe he’d at least break a sweat digging a six-foot-deep hole to bury me in.

Isabella stopped at a little café down the street from the pharmacy. We decided to sit on the patio since it was nice outside. The way my stomach was flipping around, I didn’t know how I was going to manage to eat anything. But if I was pregnant, then I needed to make sure the baby got the nourishment it needed. Oh God. I was going to be a mom! I broke out in a sweat, and my hands started shaking again. Could I do this? Raise a kid? Where would we live? I didn’t even have a job, much less a way to afford diapers and shit.

“Take a breath,” Isabella said softly. “Everything will be fine, Laken.”

I nodded and looked over the menu. We ordered our food and drinks, then Isabella did her best to take my mind off things. By the time we’d finished our lunch, Isabella thought my prenatal vitamins might be ready. The pharmacy was close enough that I walked while Isabella waited in the car.

The pharmacist had it ready for me, and agreed to add the fee to my brother’s tab. Flicker was going to love that, I was sure, once he found out what I’d picked

up. When I stepped out onto the sidewalk, I walked into a hard body and nearly fell on my ass. Strong hands gripped me and as I looked up, my heart nearly stopped.

Ryker smirked at me. "You seem to like running into me. If you want my attention, there are other ways to do it."

"Sorry," I said, my cheeks flushing.

His gaze dropped and he saw the bag with my prescription, and he quickly frowned. Maybe I should have asked for a regular sack to hide the small paper bag.

"Are you sick?" he asked.

"N-no. These are just vitamins." Not a total lie.

"Vitamins don't come in a prescription sack," Ryker said. "What the hell is going on, Laken? Why are you lying to me?"

"It's nothing, Ryker," I said, twisting out of his grasp.

"I haven't seen you lately. I kind of thought maybe we'd spend some more time together before I leave," he said. "I'd hoped you'd come find me again."

"Ryker, my life is complicated, and my brother is overprotective. Seeing you isn't a great idea."

"I see." He took a step back. "Guess you got what you wanted then."

Seriously? He was going to play that card? The guy was a man-whore from what my brother said, and I'd had no doubt I was just easy pussy for him. So what did Ryker care if I wanted to spend more time with him? It wasn't like he'd fallen in love with

me. And now that I was carrying his child... he couldn't find out. He'd think I was trying to trap him, and that's the last thing I wanted.

"Ryker, I..."

"Laken, are you coming?" Isabella yelled through the window she'd rolled down.

Ryker glanced at Isabella, then back at Laken, his gaze questioning. "You know Torch's wife? Are you two friends or something?"

"Something like that," I said.

"So have you been blowing me off for personal reasons or because of the Dixie Reapers?"

"They asked me to stay away from you," I said, and then wished I'd kept my mouth shut. Now he would pry and likely find out who I was. Not what I needed!

"They asked you to stay away from me?" he asked, his voice low and far too calm. I had a feeling I'd just made a huge mistake.

"It's fine, Ryker. I mean, you're leaving soon anyway, right? We had fun, but it was never going to be more than that. I knew that the first time we were together. I never expected more from you."

"Laken, I --"

His words were cut off as a motorcycle rumbled down the street. When I saw my brother heading our way, I wished I could hide, but it was too late. I clutched my prescription sack tighter and sent a panicked look toward Isabella, but she lifted her hands, and I knew I was on my own. Flicker came to a stop in a parking spot just a

few feet from me, and he slid his sunglasses down his nose. His blue eyes were icy as he glared from me to Ryker, then back to me.

“Laken, get on the bike,” Flicker said.

I took a step in his direction, but Ryker reached out and gripped my arm.

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“Just let me go, Ryker,” I said softly. “Please.”

“No. What the fuck is he to you?”

“Ryker, I...”

“Laken,” Flicker said, his voice a deep growl. “Get. On. The. Fucking. Bike.”

My heart hammered in my chest as Ryker tightened his grip on me, and I knew things were about to get really bad. I had no idea how to defuse the situation. I frantically looked at Isabella again, and saw that she was on her phone, no doubt calling her husband. Peachy. And I’d thought things were complicated now? Once Torch got here, I was beyond fucked. I’d been told to stay home, and here was I parading around town. Even worse, I’d run into Ryker. Again.

“She’s not going anywhere with you, asshole,” Ryker said. “I don’t know what you think you have going on with her, but Laken is staying here with me.”

I closed my eyes and mentally groaned. That so wasn’t going to go over well.

I heard Flicker’s bike turn off, and I opened my eyes in time to see him swing his leg over the seat and head toward us. Ryker pulled me back and stepped in front of me. I thought it was a little sweet, and really stupid. He had no idea who Flicker was to me, but he’d just waved a red flag in front of a bull. I needed to de-escalate the situation, and fast.

I tried to step around Ryker, but he wouldn’t let me.

“Flicker, it’s not what you think.”

Ryker growled and glared at me. “It’s exactly what he fucking thinks. You’re mine until I say otherwise, Laken. I claimed your virginity, and that makes your pussy mine. Got it?”

I narrowed my eyes. That macho bullshit wasn’t going to work. “Um, no. Last time I checked, it was attached to my body, and therefore it belongs to me. I just let you borrow it for a night.”

He arched a brow.

“All right. Two nights.” My cheeks flushed.

“Laken, what the fuck is going on?” Flicker asked. “I told you to keep your ass at home. If I’d thought you were going to run off, I’d have left a Prospect guarding the damn door.”

“She lives with you?” Ryker asked.

“She’s my sister, asshole. Of course she fucking lives with me,” Flicker said.

Ryker tensed. He turned to face me, and his eyes had turned ice cold. I’d never seen such a hard look on his face before, and I wasn’t certain if I was facing the Marine or the biker. But he definitely wasn’t my Ryker in that moment.

“You knew who I was that night, didn’t you? Did you deliberately stick your ass in my face, hoping I’d take the bait?” he demanded, his tone harsh and unforgiving.

“What?” My eyes went wide. He thought I’d what? Set out to trap him?

“So what was your endgame, Laken? You wanted to be Hades Abyss royalty and thought you’d lure me in? Or were you trying to sweeten the deal I had with your brother’s club? Because they threw enough club sluts my way that you weren’t really necessary. Or was I supposed to be captivated by your virgin pussy?” His eyes narrowed. “Please tell me you took a fucking morning-after pill.”

My heart was hammering so hard I could hear it, and I was certain everyone else did too. I took a step back, the sack in my hand crinkling as I tightened my grip. Ryker reached for it, but I gasped and took off running. No way was I telling him about the baby now. Not if that’s what he thought of me. Tears blurred my vision as I ran, and a sob caught in my throat. I’d had no delusions of a happy ever after with him, but it hurt to know he thought I was capable of such a thing. If I’d had any idea who he was that night, I’d have avoided him like the damn plague. The last thing I needed in my life was another asshole biker.

I heard someone calling my name, but I didn’t stop. I ran until my lungs burned, and as I turned to look over my shoulder, I took a misstep and fell off the curb. The wind was knocked out of me as I crashed onto the street, and I heard the screech of tires and a horn honking. I tried to stand, tried to get out of the way, but all I did was give the driver a larger target. The car slammed into my side and sent me flying. My head cracked against the pavement when I landed, and everything fucking hurt.

“Laken!” I heard my brother roar my name, and then he was kneeling over me. “Laken, Jesus. Please tell me you’re okay.”

“Hurts,” I managed to croak.

My prescription sack had fallen to the pavement. “She dropped this,” a stranger said.

I heard sirens in the background and knew that things must be even worse than I thought. There was warmth seeping into my clothes and I didn’t understand where it

was coming from. Before I could figure anything out, everything went black.

Chapter Five

Ryker

I was in a foul mood when I got back to the Dixie Reapers compound. As Laken had stormed off, I'd gotten on my bike and taken off. The last thing I'd wanted was to stick around. My bike roared to a stop outside the clubhouse, as I decided what the hell I was going to do. I didn't know if Laken had acted on her own or if someone had put her up to it, but I was damn sure going to find out. I slammed into the clubhouse and came to a halt, when I saw the devastated looks on the faces at the bar.

“Who the fuck died?” I asked.

One guy winced, and the VP shot me a glare. “You’d better fucking hope no one dies.”

What the hell? How was this shit my fault?

A small hand gripped my arm, and I looked down at the VP’s wife. I couldn’t remember her name, but I’d met her briefly shortly after I got here. She’d seemed nice, and not quite who I would have pictured paired with the older man. Then again, I’d noticed all of the old ladies seemed to be quite bit younger than the bikers they were paired with.

“It’s Laken,” she said.

“What about that lying bitch?” I asked, my anger flaring all over again.

Tears gathered in the woman’s eyes and she bit her trembling lip. “There’s been an accident. Laken was...”

Laken was what? What kind of accident?

The VP came over and wrapped his arms around his wife. He spoke to me over the top of her head, his look unforgiving and accusing.

“Laken was hit by a car when she ran from you. She’s at the hospital, and that’s all we know right now. Flicker called and said there was blood everywhere.”

My breath froze in my lungs. Laken was hurt? Yeah, I'd lashed out at her, and I was pissed that she'd used me. But part of me still wanted her, still cared on some level. I'd thought she was special, might even be someone I wanted around for a while. I didn't like the idea of her in a hospital bed. And blood everywhere? Just how fucking badly had she been hurt? There was this squeezing sensation in my chest, and it hurt to breathe for a minute. Had I caused this? If I hadn't lashed out at her...

The VP's wife whispered something in his ear, and he shook his head.

"He needs to know," the woman said.

"No, Ridley. That's not for us to decide. We should have never ordered Laken to keep away from Ryker. It was her decision to make, and so is this. When she wakes up..."

"If," Ridley said.

"No, when she wakes up, if she wants to tell him, then that's up to her," Venom said. "If we hadn't tried to keep her away, then maybe none of this would have happened. It's our fault he didn't know who she was."

I had a feeling I was missing something huge, and I wasn't going to get answers by sitting around here. There was only one hospital in town that I knew of, at least only one that I had seen, so I went back out to my bike and decided I'd go see Laken. Maybe I'd been too harsh, and I should have let her explain. I was used to women trying to use me to get my dad's club, they'd done it since I turned sixteen and bulked up. Yeah, I'd been mostly gone the last twenty years, but every time I was home the same shit happened. But if I'd been wrong... If it really was my fault that she'd been hurt, I'd never forgive myself. I'd killed people, beat the shit out of them, even killed females in Afghanistan who posed a threat to my team, but I'd never been responsible for hurting an innocent woman before. And that it was Laken made my gut churn.

At the hospital, there was a line of bikes near the ER. I parked alongside them and went in to check things out. Flicker, Torch, Bull, and several others were in the waiting area. All of them looked like they'd been beaten, and I figured that meant the news wasn't good. There was a heaviness in my chest as I tried not to think about what would happen if Laken died. Was it that serious? Could I lose her before I ever really had her?

I approached Flicker, and he surged out of his seat, his hands clenched at his sides. If this really was my fault, then I wouldn't stop him from beating the hell out of me, if that's what he wanted to do. He'd have every right.

"You don't deserve to be here," Flicker said.

"Just tell me she's all right."

He looked away and refused to talk to me. Bull pulled him down into a chair again, and I found an empty spot to sit and wait. The minutes ticked by, and then an hour had passed. The longer we waited, the more the tension grew in the small room. By the time a harried-looking doctor appeared, I'd lost track of time and was starting to get really damn worried. The doctor pulled a mask down under his chin and looked around the room.

"Laken Beaumont's family?" the doctor asked.

"That's us," Flicker said, standing along with the other Dixie Reapers. I got to my feet and stood on the outer edge, wanting to hear that the man had to say, and yet feeling like I was an outsider. I guess I really was, even though I knew a part of Laken they didn't.

"We were able to stop the bleeding. She has two cracked ribs, and there was some internal damage from the impact. She has a gash on her head that took twelve staples

to close, and some bruising on her side from where the car hit her. We had to induce a coma in hopes the swelling in her brain will go down, but the baby is fine,” the doctor said.

At the word “baby” the Dixie Reapers turned to glare at me, and I felt like the world was beginning to tilt. Laken was pregnant? So, she hadn’t taken the morning-after pill. Had that been her plan all along, or was it just an accident? I didn’t hear anything else the doctor had to say, but as he walked off, Flicker approached me.

“You got my sister pregnant, dickhead. And you nearly got her killed.”

“I didn’t mean for her to get hurt. And I’d thought she’d take the morning-after pill so she wouldn’t get pregnant. I should have made sure she took it.” Not that she would have if her goal had been getting pregnant from the beginning. She’d not seemed to pay me any attention in that bar until I’d run my hand up her leg, but what if she’d been baiting me. Wouldn’t be the first time. But it was the first time anyone had actually caught me. I’d always been super cautious and wrapped my dick... until Laken.

“Laken was on the Depo-Provera shot,” a soft voice said behind me. I turned and saw Isabella, the President’s wife. “She probably didn’t think she could get pregnant. I went with her when she had it done, and I don’t think she was scheduled to go back for another one until next week or week after.”

“She was on birth control?” I asked.

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“You mean you fucked her and didn’t even ask?” Flicker asked. “What the fuck, man?”

“She told me to just pull out, but then...” I closed my mouth. No way I was going to tell her brother that her pussy had felt so damn good I’d lost my head. I’d already said too much before, not knowing she was related to a Dixie Reaper. Fuck, the way I’d gone on about her, I’m surprised Flicker hadn’t strung me up by my balls that first day. No guy wanted to hear about some guy fucking his sister.

“I’m going to go see my sister. And you,” Flicker said, pointing at me, “had better not fucking be here when I get back.”

“I’m not leaving,” I told him. “I need to talk to Laken.”

“No one’s talking to her thanks to you. Didn’t you hear the doctor? She’s in a coma.” Flicker turned on his booted heel and stormed off.

Isabella patted my arm. “Let him cool down, and he’ll eventually come around. Laken means a lot to him, and not just because she’s his sister. She came to live with him when she was a teenager because her mom died. Flicker took her in, and she’s lived with him ever since. No one’s allowed to touch her, she’s not allowed to work... I don’t think she’s been on a date since she came to stay with him. He’s a little obsessed with keeping her safe.”

Torch studied me with his arms folded over his chest. “You need to decide how you’re going to handle this. You have something of a reputation with the ladies, and it’s not a good one. When Flicker found out you’d slept with his sister, he nearly came

unglued.I thought he was going to pound your ass into the pavement.”

“Why didn’t he?”I asked.

“Because I told him to get his shit together and cool the fuck off.Laken’s a grown-ass woman, but Flicker’s never going to see her that way.He’s twenty-one years older than Laken, and I sometimes think she’s more like a daughter to him than a sister.Not because of the age difference but because he raised her the last five years,” Torch said.“Other than the Dixie Reapers, she’s also the only family he has.They have a dad out there somewhere, and possibly more half-siblings, but no one has heard their old man in a long-ass time.”

“She’s carrying my kid,” I said.

Torch shrugged.“Is that all that matters to you?Because the kid will be taken care of.He or she is a Dixie Reaper, and Laken will have all the help she could ever need.We take care of our own.Any man in my club would lay down their lives for her and that kid.”

Was that all that mattered to me?No.I’d come here to check on her before I knew about the baby.Hell, before I’d thought she’d been screwing me over, I’d wanted to take her with me when I left this place.But I didn’t know if anyone here would listen or would care.I needed to see Laken, to talk to her and make her understand.If she really hadn’t set out to trap me... yeah, I was feeling like an asshole right now.Maybe the women I’d known had made me a little jaded, possibly a lot jaded.A lot of my military buddies had been screwed over by girlfriends, or women wanting to be their girlfriends.I’d seen too many trapped over the years.Or maybe if I hadn’t fucked Laken before I got to really know her, then all of this could have been avoided.Not that I’d planned on more than one night with her, not at first.That’s all I’d ever wanted from anyone... until now.Until her.

“I need to see her,” I said. “I won’t leave until that happens.”

Torch shrugged. “Suit yourself. I doubt they’ll let anyone but family see her until she’s awake. And father of her baby or not, you’re not family. If Flicker has anything to say about it, you never will be.”

I might not be family to Laken, but I was family to the baby in her belly. That might not mean shit to the men glaring at me right now, and maybe it didn’t mean shit to Laken either, but I’d be damned if anyone was going to keep me from seeing her. Flicker glared at me as I approached the nurse’s station, obviously not having any luck in getting back to see Laken, but I did my best to ignore him. The nurse looked up at me, her eyes lighting up as I gave her the smile guaranteed to drop panties. I leaned in a little closer and prepared to give her the sexy growl that made panties wet every damn time.

“May I help you?” she asked, a little breathless, and the pulse in her neck fluttering. Oh yeah, I had her.

“My pregnant girlfriend just came out of surgery. I was wondering when I might be able to see her,” I said, lying a teensy bit. Pregnant, yes. Girlfriend? Eh, it was a gray area. I hadn’t asked her to be mine, but now that I knew we were having a kid together, no way in hell I was walking away without her.

“Oh.” The nurse blinked up at me, some of her excitement fading. Maybe I shouldn’t have called Laken my girlfriend? “Name?”

“Her name’s Laken Beaumont,” I said. “The doctor was just out here, but I didn’t get a chance to ask when I could see her.”

The nurse tapped on her keyboard, then frowned. “She’s in a coma according to the doctor’s notes. I’m not sure when she’ll be awake.”

“But I can check on her? Maybe she can hear me, and I can at least let her know she isn’t alone,” I said. I turned my smile up a notch and leaned in a little closer. My muscles flexed, drawing her attention to my biceps. When she licked her lips, I knew she’d give me whatever I wanted, even a little consoling in the nearest bathroom if that was my wish.

“I’m sure a short visit can be arranged. She’s in recovery right now, but they’ll be placing her in ICU once a bed is available. The elevators are around the corner and at the end of the hall. Go to the fourth floor and follow the signs to ICU. They’ll have visiting hours posted.”

“Thank you,” I said, giving her a little wink that had her sighing.

I pushed away from the counter and made my way to the elevator. The stomp of boots behind me told me I wasn’t alone, and it was likely Flicker. I had no doubt he’d want to keep an eye on me, but fuck if I was leaving this place until I’d seen Laken. Even if she couldn’t talk to me, I needed to see that she was okay.

The elevator opened, and Flicker stepped inside with me. The glare he was giving me would have made a weaker man cower, but I just lifted my eyebrows and stared back. I was Trent Storme’s son. He didn’t really think I was going to crumble, did he? Even if I hadn’t had Storme blood in my veins, I was a motherfucking Marine. I’d faced insurgents, been tortured, had more bullet holes put in me than I’d like to admit... one pissy biker wasn’t going to keep me away from Laken, even if he was her brother.

We got off on the fourth floor, and I followed the signs to ICU. The hours were posted just like the nurse had said, and it looked like we had a while until they’d let us see her. If she even made it into a room by then. I knew hospitals could move really fucking slow unless someone was literally dying. And even then I didn’t have the utmost faith in them. Anyone who worked as many hours as medical staff, usually

without much of a break or sleep, was bound to make a mistake here and there. It was just part of being human. We needed rest, and doctors and nurses didn't seem to get a lot of it.

I claimed a seat in the ICU waiting area and watched the TV mounted in the corner of the room. Flicker sat beside me, his presence dark and menacing. Or at least, it was to anyone else in the room. My lips twitched in a smile as two people got up and moved quite a ways off from us. The leather cuts would have been enough to do it, but Flicker's current scowl was sure to make people run. He looked rather ferocious, and I could almost picture him scaring off any men who had looked Laken's way. No wonder she'd still been a damn virgin. I was grateful, though. It meant she was mine and mine alone.

Fuck. I ran a hand through my hair. Yeah, I was seriously thinking about keeping her. Even if there wasn't a baby, I'd still want her. There was just something about her, something different. She was a wildcat in the bedroom, but there was an innocence to her, and a sweetness that I didn't often experience.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Flicker asked.

"Waiting to see Laken."

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“What do you care? It’s your fault she’s here to begin with. The way you turned on her, accused her of using you? That was fucked-up.”

I winced. Yeah, it hadn’t been one of my finer moments. “In my experience women fall into two categories. Easy, fun pussy. Or manipulative bitches. She wouldn’t have been the first woman to try to sleep her way into a high-ranking spot with my dad’s club. Women have been trying it since I turned sixteen.”

“How could you have spent any time with Laken and have thought she’d be like that? She was sweet, innocent... until you got your filthy hands on her. Laken is the kindest person I’ve ever known.” Flicker narrowed his eyes at me. “You should be damn thankful she even gave you the time of day. Instead of bitching about how she tried to trap you, you should have been kissing the ground she fucking walks on.”

I rubbed the back of my neck. “Look, I know I didn’t handle things well, and I’m sorry. But what would you think if you were in my position? If some woman you’d hooked up with a few times, one who had insisted you not use a condom, had said she was pregnant, wouldn’t you wonder if she’d done it on purpose? Not to mention she never, not once, mentioned that she was connected to the Dixie Reapers. I’d have backed the fuck off if she’d said something.” Well, maybe. She’d been so fucking hot, I might not have been able to resist even knowing her brother was an officer in the club I was checking out.

I could see some of the tension ease from Flicker and he sighed as he looked away. When his gaze swung back toward me, I could see that he understood exactly what I’d been thinking and feeling.

“Yeah, I guess I might have wondered,” Flicker said. “She really did that?”

“I shouldn’t have listened to her, but...” I shrugged.

I wasn’t going to tell him I couldn’t walk away from the temptation of his sister’s wet pussy. That wouldn’t go over well. He’d heard enough from my first day at the clubhouse, and now that I knew I’d been running my mouth not only about his sister, but the mother of my baby... I felt really damn small. Talking shit about women had never been a problem before, but this one wasn’t just some random fuck. Not that I’d realized that at the time. I should have, though. From the very beginning, Laken had been different from the others. Well, maybe not the very beginning, but once I realized I was her first... That had changed things. Maybe it had even changed me a little.

“Are you going to take my sister away?” Flicker asked.

Was I? I’d thought about taking her with me, but what if she didn’t want to go? She had family here. Not just Flicker, but all of the Dixie Reapers. Could I ask her to walk away from that? I didn’t owe my dad shit, so it wasn’t like I had to return to the Hades Abyss. Yeah, I’d done him this favor, but only because he’d seldom asked for one. I was patched in, but I hadn’t spent much time there over the last twenty years. Going Nomad wouldn’t really be an issue, not for me anyway. I didn’t think it would really matter if I ever returned. It wasn’t like my dad didn’t have a VP who could take over if the unstoppable Trent Storme ever decided to step down. Not fucking likely unless a bullet stopped him, but stranger things had happened. Like me being a fucking dad. I was still wrapping my head around that one.

“I don’t know,” I answered honestly. “I’d thought about it, but I don’t know what she wants.”

Flicker smiled a little. “As long as you’re thinking about her and not you, then we

aren't going to have any problems.I have to admit, you taking her back to Hades Abyss sucks, though.She's been part of my life for so long now.I don't want her to go anywhere."

"I kind of figured that part out when she told me that her big brother chased everyone off."

Flicker chuckled."Yeah, I'd have kept her a virgin until she was thirty if I had my way.Guess I wasn't ready for her to grow up.And my baby sister is having a baby.Not sure how I feel about that yet."

I snorted."You'll be Uncle Flicker.If we stay here, I hope you plan to babysit at least once a week."

"You treat my sister right, and I'll make sure you have time to romance her.She deserves all that shit, you know?Flowers, nice dinners, all that crap women seem to like in the movies."

"I can do that."At least, I thought I could.I'd honestly never tried to romance a woman before.But Flicker was right.Laken deserved all that shit, and more.

"I won't stop you from seeing my sister," Flicker said."But when visiting hours are over, maybe you need to go figure out a few things.She'll want answers you may not have.I don't want her stressed out more than she needs to be."

He wasn't wrong.I did need to figure some shit out.First, I'd check on Laken.Then I'd call my old man and see what he thought about all this.I had a feeling he was going to be thrilled about being a grandpa.The man turned into a teddy bear whenever a kid was nearby, and he'd probably figured I'd never claim a woman for more than a night.I had no doubt I'd first get a safe sex lecture, because even at thirty-eight there were times my dad thought I was some smartass teen, and then he'd grill me about

Laken.

That wasn't a call I was looking forward to. At all.

Chapter Six

Laken

Two weeks later

My eyes felt like they were weighed down by sandbags. I struggled to open them and wondered how long I'd been asleep. My fingers twitched, but the rest of my body wouldn't respond. Everything ached, especially my head and my ribs. I tried to shift and wanted to scream at the agony that shot through me, but what came out sounded more like a moan.

"Laken?"

That voice. I knew that voice. Didn't I? I struggled harder, trying to wake up, to move. Things slowly came to me. Like the scent of antiseptic and the hard bed underneath me. My fingers twitched again, and I fought harder to open my eyes. To do something. Anything. Why wouldn't my body listen to me? Had something happened? Was I paralyzed? Panic filled me.

"Laken, sugar. Can you open your eyes for me?"

Sugar? I calmed a little. Only one person had ever called me that. I tried to smile and failed. Ryker.

"Come on, babe. Show me those pretty eyes."

I felt his rough hand take mine, his thumb brushing over my fingers. As if I needed more encouragement to open my eyes than just knowing he was here. A warmth filled me, just hearing his voice, but there was something that didn't feel right. A voice in the back of my mind was pushing me, trying to get me to remember something. But what? And where the hell was I?

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It took more energy than I had to finally open my eyes, and I quickly closed them again as the bright light pierced them. Wherever I was, that had been as painful as looking at the sun.

“Shit,” Ryker muttered. He released my hand and I heard him walk across the room, then I heard the flick of a switch. “Try again, sugar. I turned off the lights for you.”

I struggled but managed to open my eyes once more. It took me a minute to focus, then I realized I was in the hospital. Why was I here? And why did I hurt so much? My head throbbed as I fought to remember what had happened to me, my brain almost feeling like it had spikes being driven into it. How could I remember Ryker, but not remember why I was here? What the hell was wrong with me?

“Easy, baby,” he murmured, taking my hand once more. “You’ve been in a coma for the last two weeks. Take your time and don’t force yourself to do too much too soon.”

I licked my lips, my mouth dry as cotton, and he picked up a cup from a nearby table. He held a piece of ice up to my lips and I gratefully took it. It soothed my throat, and I moaned a little at how good it felt. When it had melted, I opened my mouth for another. After I’d had three, Ryker set the cup back down.

“Not too much, sugar,” he said. “I need to let someone know you’re awake.”

He pushed the call button on my bed, and a few minutes later a nurse bustled into the room. She smiled widely when she saw I was awake and came closer.

“It’s good to see you up,” the nurse said. “This guy has been so worried about you,

and so has that hunky brother of yours.”

The way her eyes lit up when she mentioned my brother, I could tell she was smitten with Flicker, but then, most women were. He’d been compared to a Viking more times than I could count, and every female he spoke to nearly fell at his feet, just hoping he’d take her home. It had always amused me to watch them make fools of themselves over Flicker. Maybe if they knew he left the seat up, had dirty clothes piled all over his room, and barely knew how to boil water, they might not be so impressed. Not that I’d rat him out.

“She hasn’t spoken yet,” Ryker said, sounding a little worried.

“She will,” the nurse said. “Just give her a little time. I’m going to check your vital signs, Laken, and then I’ll page your doctor to let him know you’re awake.”

I barely paid any attention to the nurse as she did her thing, my gaze focused on Ryker. He was tense and watched the nurse like a hawk. How long had he been here? He’d said I’d been in a coma for two weeks, but why? I still didn’t remember anything that had led up to me being here, and it worried me. Was there something wrong with my brain? Was that why I’d been in a coma? What if it wasn’t reversible? Would I always have pieces missing of my memories? What if I couldn’t speak because of some sort of brain damage?

The nurse squeezed my hand. “Your blood pressure is a little high. Try to calm down, sweetie. You’re in good hands here, and I’ll let your doctor explain everything to you.”

I took a deep breath and tried to do as she said. When she left the room, Ryker sat in the chair by my bed again, and took my hand once more. His touch comforted me, and I slowly started to calm down again. I tried to squeeze his hand, but I felt so damn weak.

“You have a lot of people scared and worried about you,” he said. “They tried to kick me out, but I refused to leave. Security came, took one look at me, and turned right back around.”

I smiled a little at that. I could imagine that happening. Ryker was well over six feet of pure muscle, and I doubted any security guards were going to scare him into leaving. I wasn't even sure the police could get him to budge unless a small army of them came in and took him by force.

“Were you going to tell me?” he asked softly. “About the baby?”

My vision darkened for a minute as my brain throbbed. The word baby triggered something, something I wasn't sure I wanted to remember. Pain, sharp and unrelenting, hit me, and had I been standing, I'd have collapsed. It was suddenly like a dam broke, and I was flooded with memories, ones that I didn't want. Ryker yelling at me, accusing me of getting pregnant on purpose, then me running. I gasped as I remembered the car hitting me, and then everything going dark as Flicker leaned over me.

I stared at him, not sure how I felt. He was here, and that had to mean something, but he'd been so angry, so accusatory. My hand trembled in his, and I felt my eyes tear up. He hadn't wanted me, hadn't even let me explain anything. He'd been furious, had lashed out at me. That he'd thought for one moment I'd gotten close to him for any reason other than I had found him attractive proved that he knew nothing about me, and had likely never cared at me at all. I'd figured I was just a one-night stand to him, with an encore, but the way he'd spoken to me only proved that was true. No one who cared about me could have said those things, could have thought for one minute I was underhanded and sneaky enough to try something like that.

“Hey,” he said, his voice softening. “It's okay, Laken. You're okay.”

“Baby,” I said, my voice scratchy and sounding like it hadn’t been used in forever.

“Yeah, we’re going to have a baby.I’m so sorry, Laken.I’m sorry I yelled at you, that I didn’t let you explain.I know you’re different from anyone I’ve ever met before, but in that moment, all I could think about were the women who wanted to trap me, those who just wanted to be connected to someone of consequence with Hades Abyss, or had wanted a military husband.I should have never compared you to them, but I did.When I realized you were part of the Dixie Reapers, even lived there with them, I guess something inside me snapped.”

I didn’t know what to think of what he was saying.He looked contrite, like he meant the words he was saying now, but could I believe him?My heart ached as I remember the look in his eyes as he’d spoken to me on the sidewalk, the look he’d had when he realized Flicker was my brother, that I was related to a Dixie Reaper.He’d looked betrayed, and I never would have done that to him.Even though we hadn’t spent much time together, I’d given him a piece of my heart during those encounters, and I’d wanted more from him.

“Laken, I didn’t mean any of those things,” he said.“That day, on the sidewalk... I wasn’t thinking clearly, and I can never say I’m sorry enough times.Before any of that happened, I’d thought of taking you with me when I leave.I wanted you.Still want you.And I want this baby.”

Pain spiked in my head, and I whimpered as my eyes slid shut.The pain went on and on, and I heard the machines start going nuts.There was shouting, but I couldn’t focus on any of it.Agony rolled over me in waves, making it hard to breathe.I gasped, and my body jerked as I fought against everything I was feeling.The voices grew louder and after a few minutes, the pain began to dull, and I felt sleep pulling me under again.I succumbed to the darkness, welcoming it and the relief it brought to me.The next time I opened my eyes, it was darker outside my window, and it wasn’t Ryker sitting with me but my brother.

Flicker smiled, looking tired and haggard.

“Hey, baby girl.”

“Ryker,” I croaked.

“They asked him to leave.Said it wasn’t good for you or the baby if he was going to upset you.”He bit his lip.“Actually, they kind of threw him out.It took three security guys and some off-duty cops who were here visiting someone to manhandle him out of her room and escort him from the hospital.He’s no longer allowed in the ICU, not even the waiting room.”

Was that what had happened?I must have looked confused because Flicker moved a little closer.

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“They said that Ryker was pushing you too much too soon. Your body and your mind couldn’t handle it. They gave you something to make you sleep and to numb the pain in your head. You suffered a brain trauma, and you’re not going to be one hundred percent for a little while. The doctor came by and said you may experience headaches off and on for a while, and that pushing yourself too hard can trigger intense pain. Once you’re released, if you black out, I’m supposed to call an ambulance.”

“Home?” I asked, wanting to leave the hospital as soon as possible.

“They want to keep you here a little while longer. Make sure everything is okay. When they’re convinced you can stand, walk, and take care of yourself, they’ll release you. They also want to run some more tests, make sure everything looks okay. But I’m going to be with you every step of the way. Torch said he won’t call me in for anything except emergencies until you’re back on your feet, and the Prospects are all ready to help any way they can.”

“Ryker,” I said again, wondering where he was. He’d left the hospital, but had he left town too?

“We’ll talk about Ryker when you’re feeling better. Right now, you focus on getting better. I don’t think talking about him is going to help your brain any right now. He’s obviously a trigger for you, and the more upset you get, the longer you’ll likely have to stay here. And I know how much you hate hospitals.”

Flicker brushed a kiss against my forehead. I could see the care and concern in his eyes, and I hated that I’d worried him. He’d always been there for me, ever since I landed on his doorstep, homeless and without family. He hadn’t so much as hesitated

to take me into his home, into his life, and I would be forever grateful to him for that. I loved him, and I was so glad he was here with me.

“When you’re better, the others will come see you,” Flicker said. “Isabella and Ridley have asked nonstop how you’re doing. Everyone at the compound misses you.”

“Miss them,” I said. And I did. The Dixie Reapers had become my family, and I knew they would always be there for me. It was like having a bunch of big brothers, and while that drove me nuts when it came to dating, I knew I could count on every single one of them.

“Get some rest, Laken. I’m not going anywhere. Anything you need, I’ll get it. Just get better, because I hate seeing you in this hospital bed with all these wires attached to you. Love you, baby sis.”

“Love you,” I murmured as my eyes started to close again.

I briefly wondered if I was going to spend the next few weeks sleeping nonstop, or if I’d ever stay awake for any length of time ever again. I hated being here, hated that I’d been injured. And it was even worse that everyone was worried about me. My brother was right. I needed to focus on getting better, and getting out of this place. I didn’t like being here any more than he liked it. I’d do whatever they told me to, and soon enough I could deal with Ryker. Just as soon as I figured out what exactly he meant to me, or if I meant anything at all to him. Other than being an incubator for his offspring, a baby he hadn’t even wanted.

But I could think about all of that later. Right now I needed to sleep, to heal. And to take care of the little one growing inside me. I was no longer only responsible for myself. All of my actions, and the consequences, would now impact a little baby. A son or daughter who would rely on me for everything. Someone I could love, who would love me in return.

I placed a hand over my belly, vowing to do everything I could to give them a happy and healthy life. Even if that meant it was a life without Ryker.

* * *

One Month Later

I glared at my brother as he handed me a plate with apple slices and cheese, then he set a glass of milk on the table next to me. He'd thrown out all my favorite junk foods and soda before I'd gotten home from the hospital, and had given everyone strict instructions that I was to have healthy foods and drinks only. I knew he meant well, but he was killing me.

"You know cookies aren't good for the baby," he said, urging me to take a bite of the snack he'd provided.

I angrily bit into a chunk of apple and chewed, my gaze casting daggers at him the entire time. He didn't even look a little bit remorseful. He was mothering and smothering me. I'd only been home from the hospital for a few weeks, after they'd made sure all the swelling was gone in my brain and had checked me over thoroughly. My ribs were no longer sore, but I still got headaches periodically. They weren't as bad as they were when I first came home, though, so that was an improvement. I'd honestly take any small victory I could at this point.

I hadn't seen Ryker since the first time I'd woken at the hospital. At first, I figured he was keeping away because the hospital had banned him from ICU. Then I'd moved to a regular room, and he still hadn't come to see me. When I came home the following week, I'd looked for him, and waited. A day had passed. Then two. Then three. When Ryker still didn't show up, I'd asked him about him, and been informed that he was no longer here.

It hurt. So damn much. I shouldn't have been surprised, though. He probably had time to think about the daddy thing and decided it wasn't for him. It wasn't like he'd loved me. He didn't seem like the type who would ever fall in love and settle down, but that didn't stop my heart from aching at the thought of never seeing him again. One day, my baby would ask about their daddy, and I wasn't yet certain what I'd say. The truth, or some degree of it, but only enough that it wouldn't hurt my son or daughter until they were old enough to better understand what had happened. The last thing I wanted was for my baby to think their daddy didn't want them.

"Are you sure you want me to go with you to your appointment?" Flicker asked.

I set the plate down and twisted to face him. "Do you not want to go? You can always stay in the waiting room."

"It's not that. I just thought you might prefer having a woman back there with you, like Isabella or Ridley."

"You're my family, Danny," I said, using his real name, or the version of it I liked to use. His real name was Daniel, which he hated. "There's no one I'd rather have hold my hand through all this than you."

He smiled softly. "Love you, Laken."

"Love you too."

"I know living with me hasn't always been easy. I know you've felt like I'm too controlling, and maybe I have been, but I've only wanted to keep you safe. I can't help but think if I'd done something differently, then none of this would have happened."

"Danny, I know things didn't work out with Ryker, but I can't regret being with

him. This baby may not have been planned, but I'm going to be an awesome mom, and I'm going to love him or her with all my heart. I could never wish my baby away, even to avoid the heartache Ryker caused."

Flicker sighed. "You've grown up so much. I'm proud of you, Laken. Really damn proud."

"I'm a little scared, though. I don't have a job, and it's not right to ask you to pay for everything. Babies are expensive."

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Flicker waved a hand. “Don’t worry about any of that. I checked with our health insurance, and they’re going to cover your pregnancy. It seems when you turned eighteen, Torch had a maternity rider added to your policy just in case. Guess he saw this coming sooner or later, and it’s a really damn good thing he signed the club up for a health plan back when you came to live with me.”

“It’s not right, though. You’re going to end up paying for everything. Diapers. A baby bed. Clothes.”

“And I will gladly pay every penny for the things my niece or nephew needs. Stop worrying, Laken. It’s not good for you or the baby. We’ll just take things one day at a time, okay?”

“All right.”

“Go take your shower and get dressed. Your appointment is in an hour.”

I stood up and kissed his cheek before hurrying to my room to get ready. Coming to live with Flicker was one of the best things to ever happen to me. He’d been an amazing big brother, and I knew he’d be an even better uncle. But my heart still ached for the one person I couldn’t have. Ryker.

Maybe one day it wouldn’t hurt so much. But that day wasn’t today.

Chapter Seven

Ryker

“Son, what the hell are you doing?”my dad asked as he leaned against the bar in the Hades Abyss clubhouse.“Anyone with working eyes can tell you don’t want to be here.”

I could have played dumb and acted like I didn’t know what he was talking about, but we both knew better.I was physically here, but that was it.Laken still consumed my every thought, and I missed her so fucking much.It had taken me leaving to realize just how much she meant to me.Once I’d heard we were having a baby, I’d known I’d make a life with her.But now... now I knew I didn’t just want a life with her.I wanted her heart, because she’d sure as fuck taken mine.

“I’m no good for Laken,” I said, taking another swallow of my beer.“She’s better off without me.”

“Are you sure about that?You know, I’ve never taken you for a coward.I know the Marines sent you into some hellish situations, and since you’ve been home, you’ve taken on club tasks I never would have asked you to do.I used to think you had balls of steel, but the way you’re hiding from a woman, I’m starting to think they’re more like marbles.”

I scowled at him.

Bear, the sergeant-at-arms, snickered.“More like shriveled peas.No, no... Wait.What’s smaller than a pea?I know!Mouse balls.He has a really tiny mouse balls.”

I growled at him, wanting to put my fist through his face.

“Don’t go insulting mice,” Marauder said as he walked up and joined the conversation.“Those bastards are bold as fuck.”

Bear fingered the patch on my cut. Diablo. I'd hated that fucking name ever since they'd given it to me, which is why I never used it unless I was around the club. Everywhere else I was just Ryker. I'd done some fucked up shit in my lifetime, and I might have earned the name on my cut, but it didn't mean I was necessarily proud of everything I'd done.

"Maybe we need to change this out. I'm thinking Princess would be a better name for him these days," Bear said.

"Nah," Marauder said. "A princess has to be tough. He's more like... Fuck. I got nothing."

"Chickenshit," Bear said. "That would be a good one."

"Are you assholes done?" I asked, glaring at them. "I'm not a fucking chicken. You didn't see what happened when I was at the hospital. I could have fucking killed her."

My dad patted my shoulder. "But you didn't. And now she's home, she's doing fine, and I'm betting that she misses you."

"Do you have a crystal ball now?" I asked.

"No, he asked me," said a voice behind me.

I turned and saw Torch, the President of the Dixie Reapers MC, standing behind me. No one had said a word about him coming here, and I wondered if they'd planned it that way. If I'd known he would be there, that anyone tied to Laken would be here, I'd have made myself scarce. I didn't need a reminder that I was here and she was there, not when I was pretty fucking certain I'd left my heart back there with her.

"And in case you're wondering, she's asked about you. When she found out you'd left

and hadn't even said goodbye, I watched as her heart shattered into pieces. She's putting up a good front, acting like nothing's wrong, but we all know different," Torch said. "And from what I hear, you aren't doing so great either."

"He doesn't even look at the club sluts," Marauder said with disdain. "Who the fuck gives up free pussy? I think your girl broke him."

Bear smirked. "Or maybe her pussy's just..."

Bear didn't get to finish his sentence before I stood and put my fist through his face, just like I'd been dying to do. Blood trickled from his mouth and covered his teeth as he grinned at me. Asshole. He'd baited me on purpose, and I'd fallen for it. He wiggled his teeth and spat some blood onto the floor.

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“You’re lucky you didn’t knock any out,” Bear said.

I snorted. “Yeah, because all those are really yours.”

“Boy, do I have to take you back home the hard way or are you going to come easy?” Torch asked. “Because I didn’t come here on vacation. One of mine is hurting, and you’re the cause. So you’re going to man up and fix it.”

“You’re here for me?” I asked, then glanced at my dad who suddenly seemed very interested in the wall across the room. Yeah, the fucker had set me up. I should be pissed, but part of me was glad he cared enough to interfere. We might not have the typical father/son relationship, but he was there for me when I needed him, and he’d understood when I’d left and joined the Marines.

Torch scratched his beard. “The club and I have talked, and as much as we don’t like the way you handled things with Laken, the truth is that she wants you there. It’s obvious to any of us that she misses you, and I think she’s a little scared having to face this pregnancy alone.”

“Alone?” I asked. “She has all the Dixie Reapers there with her.”

“Yeah, but none of us is the daddy to her baby. You’re the one she wants,” Torch said. “Flicker would be content if you never showed your face again, but even he agreed that something isn’t quite right with Laken. She’s healed up just fine. Still gets headaches here and there, but the doctor said everything looks good. Baby is doing good too.”

“Then it sounds like she’s just perfect without me,” I said.

“Then why does she look so fucking sad when she thinks no one is watching her?” Torch asked. “I’ve seen her get this melancholy look on her face and put her hand over her belly, and I know she’s not sad about the baby. She’s excited even though she’s worried about her brother having to pay for everything.”

Wait. Flicker was buying my kid the things they needed? That was my job. If anyone should be providing for my son or daughter, it was me.

“He’s been good about taking Laken to her appointments, asking the doctor questions to make sure he takes care of her properly,” Torch said.

There was a look in his eyes that I couldn’t quite decipher, but I knew he was telling me all this for a reason. Maybe he knew I wouldn’t like the idea of someone else taking care of my kid, taking care of my woman. And fuck, but that’s what Laken was. Mine. I think I’d known it as soon as that first night. I should have tied her ass to the bed so she couldn’t leave. Maybe things would have turned out differently if she hadn’t snuck out that next morning, or if I’d asked more questions the second time I saw her.

“What’s it going to be?” Torch asked. “You coming willingly, or do I have to do this the hard way?”

“And what’s the hard way?” I asked.

My dad cleared his throat. “That would be me, as your President, ordering your ass to go with Torch. As of this moment, you’re the liaison between the clubs. We reached an agreement, but he’s sending one man here, and I’m sending you to the Dixie Reapers. You’ll still be Hades Abyss, but you’ll follow Torch’s rules while you’re there.”

“And if I don’t want to go?” I asked.

“Didn’t realize I was asking,” my dad said.

I could read between the lines. Either I did as I was told, or I was out of the club. The Hades Abyss had never meant much to me, not after I was old enough to leave and start my own life, but being back here... I’d realized that maybe they meant more to me than I’d ever admitted to myself. They were family, and you didn’t turn your back on family.

“If Laken wants to move here with you,” Torch said. “None of us would stop her, or you, from leaving. Your dad would just send someone else to our club. But Laken is family to us, and we’re hoping the two of you decide to stick around.”

“Looks like my future is all decided for me. And here I got out of the Marines so I’d be allowed to think for myself.”

My dad snorted. “Son, you were born into this club. You’ve never been allowed to think for yourself, so don’t go acting like that’s anything new. You’ve either followed my rules or the government’s, and I think between the two, you’d prefer mine.”

He wasn’t wrong. I sipped my beer and studied the two men over my mug. Assholes. They both looked like they knew I was going with Torch whether I wanted to or not, and really, they hadn’t given me any choice. I wasn’t about to give them the satisfaction of thinking I actually wanted to go, though. The thought of seeing Laken again both thrilled me and terrified me. I didn’t know what kind of reaction I’d get when she saw me. But fuck if I didn’t want to hold her again, to breathe in her scent, and run my hands through that silky blonde hair that hung nearly down to her ass.

“Fine. When do we leave?” I asked.

“Now,” Torch said.

“Your stuff is already boxed and ready to go,” my dad said. “Had it done while you were down here moping in your beer. A Prospect will drive the truck down with your shit. As a courtesy to me, and in hopes you decide to stay there with Laken, Torch is letting you use a house on the compound. Mostly furnished.”

“If I’m not here to work, how the hell am I going to earn money to take care of my family?” I asked.

“You’re working, just not doing what you normally would. Torch needs help on any jobs, he’ll let you know and pay you accordingly. But I’ll have funds transferred to your account every month, for as long as you’re there. Don’t think being a liaison is going to mean you sit around on your ass all day. We’re going to work you. Hard,” my dad said.

I shrugged and finished my beer. I’d never been afraid of hard work. As long as I didn’t bring shit home to Laken and my kid, I’d do what I was told without question. But the second that shit came to my door, then everyone would remember why I was called Diablo.

“Guess we’d better hit the road, then,” I said.

“I’m only stopping for gas,” Torch said. “So if you need to piss, do it now.”

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“Just how long have you been here?” I asked. I’d thought I’d have a night or two while he hashed things out with my dad. No way he drove straight here and was ready to turn around and go right back. That was a long-ass haul, and no offense to Torch, but he wasn’t exactly young.

Torch smirked. “Two days. Ironed everything out with your old man, and now I want to get home to my wife and daughter. So move your ass.”

I pulled my keys from my pocket and followed him out to the parking lot. He walked around the corner of the building while I went to my bike, and a moment later, I heard his engine rumble from the backside of the clubhouse. No wonder I hadn’t known the fucker was here. They’d made sure I wouldn’t see him. Fuckers. If this came back to bite me in the ass, if Laken didn’t want me, I was going to be fucking pissed.

Torch pulled through the gates and stopped at the street, waiting for me most likely. I started my bike and looked at the Hades Abyss clubhouse, wondering if it would be for the last time. Yeah, my dad might have said I was a liaison, but I knew he was really just trying to get me back together with Laken, and likely didn’t think I’d ever return. I had mixed feelings about it. I’d always thought that I could put this place in my rearview and never look back. Now I wasn’t so certain. I’d made a home here the last month, or as much of a home as I could have without Laken.

What the fuck would I do if she didn’t want me? What if she was pissed when she saw me? She had every right to be. I’d taken off without so much as saying goodbye, even if I had thought I was doing the right thing at the time. But what if Torch was right? What if she did miss me? Had I made a huge mistake by leaving her behind? I didn’t know if she would forgive me, wasn’t certain I deserved forgiveness, but it

looked like I would find out soon enough.

True to his word, Torch only made stops to refill his tank, and we drove straight through to Alabama. By the time we pulled into the Dixie Reapers compound, I was more than ready to get off my damn bike. My ass hurt, among other places. He bypassed the clubhouse, and I stayed with him, not sure where we were going. When he pulled to a stop in the driveway of a small home, I figured this was the place I was supposed to claim as my own. For now anyway.

Torch didn't even shut off his bike, just tossed me a set of keys, then pulled back onto the road that wove through the compound. The Prospect from Hades Abyss, who was driving a truck of my things, pulled in a minute later, with two Dixie Reapers Prospects right behind him. I leaned against the porch rail while they unloaded everything into the house, not giving a shit where they put things, and once they were gone, I decided to check the place out. They'd dumped my boxes in the middle of the living room, not that I had a ton of shit anyway. Being in the military for so long, I'd never accumulated much.

The house was bigger inside than I'd thought it would be. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large kitchen, and decent living room. There was even a screened-in porch on the back of the house that was probably a nice place to sit in the cooler months. There was a brown leather couch and a coffee table in the living room, with a modest size flat-screen TV on a three-shelf stand in the living room. The kitchen had a round table with four chairs in a little breakfast nook that looked out over the front yard. The appliances seemed to function, as I twisted the knobs on the stove and opened the fridge to check things out. No coffeemaker or microwave, but I could fix that easily enough.

It wasn't much, but I could work with it. It wasn't like my bank account was hurting. I probably had more saved than most people made in several years. Some of it was from the military, and the rest was my share of profits from Hades Abyss. When I

stayed at Hades Abyss, I had a room over the clubhouse that had the basics. The rest of the time, I lived out of cheap motels. Not because I couldn't afford better but because after being in the middle of the fucking desert, eating sand and sleeping with one eye open, even a cheap-ass mattress in a pit of a motel was a step up.

I hauled my box of clothes into the master bedroom, the only one that actually had furniture in it, and threw my stuff into the dresser drawers. The bedroom actually had the most furniture in it. A queen-size bed, dresser, two nightstands with drawers, and a tall five-drawer chest. I didn't have enough shit to use all of it, but if I convinced Laken to live with me, I'd be grateful for the extra storage. I'd always heard that women had a lot of shit that came with them when they moved in.

The furniture was in decent shape and would more than suit my needs. I'd lived a pretty simple life so far, only splurging when it came to my bike and electronics. Honestly, this stuff was better than anything I'd had before. I'd mostly been raised by my dad and his club, and no one there gave a shit about furniture or matching dishes. Hell, I hadn't even checked to see if there were dishes. I'd have to look and make a list of things I'd need.

As much as I wanted to see Laken, I knew now wasn't the right time. My head was all over the place, even though I'd done nothing but think on the way here. I needed to sort things out before I went to see her. I knew she'd likely have questions for me, and I wasn't entirely sure I had all the answers. I knew that if she'd give me a chance, I wanted to try to make things work with her. And I definitely wanted a place in my son's or daughter's life.

Despite my exhaustion, I found a place for all my shit and finished unpacking, then I showered and planted face-first onto the bed. I didn't even bother to cover my naked ass with a blanket before I closed my eyes. Not that I thought I'd fall asleep anytime soon, not until I'd seen Laken. I rolled onto my back and stared up at the ceiling.

I'd spent a lot of sleepless nights wondering what she was doing, wondering if she was glad I'd left. If what Torch said was true, maybe she'd been missing me as much as I missed her. Then again, she could take one look at me, slap my face, and tell me to get the fuck out of the compound. After the way things had ended between us, I wouldn't blame her. Anyone with as much passion as Laken had, probably had a volatile temper when she was angered. I hadn't seen that side of her yet, but it didn't mean she didn't have one. Everyone had a temper, it was just a matter of pushing the right buttons. And I was excellent at pushing buttons.

Any other woman, I'd have walked away and never given her a second thought. Women had only ever been good for one thing. Fucking. And once I was done, I moved on to the next one. I'd fucked my way across the US and several other countries, always having my choice of pussy everywhere I went. I'd thought it would be the same here, but then I'd grabbed Laken's ass and my world had changed, even if I hadn't realized it right then. In some ways, I owed her brother big-time. If he hadn't kept her on such a tight leash, she might not have even looked at me twice. But she'd been so desperate to lose her virginity that a stranger had seemed like the perfect choice.

I couldn't blame her. She'd just wanted to experience the same pleasure everyone else was getting. And I'd been more than happy to help her scratch that itch. Hell, after one taste, I'd been addicted to her. I'd spent my entire time here hoping I'd see her again, just waiting for a chance to fuck her. Even now, my dick was hard as a steel post just thinking about her.

I opened the bedside table and pulled out the bottle of lube I'd stashed there when I unpacked. Squirting some on my hand, I wrapped my fingers around my cock and stroked it. It was nowhere near as good as Laken's pussy, but it was all I had for now. I closed my eyes and remembered the sight of her bent over the bathroom sink that first night, her dress shoved around her waist, and pussy on display. She'd been so fucking wet, and so damn tight. It had felt like heaven being inside her. The only thing tighter

had been her ass when I'd claimed it in the motel room a few hours later.

Oh yeah, my Laken had been a wild one, letting me do whatever I wanted to her. She'd begged me so sweetly, asked me to fuck her ass, and I'd been helpless to say no. I'd spread those cheeks wide, gotten her nice and slick, then worked my way inside. My balls drew up just thinking about coming inside that tight ass of hers. I'd ridden her hard and deep, not stopping until I'd filled her with my cum. I'd fucked her all night, in several different ways.

I grunted as cum shot up onto my abdomen and coated my hand, my cock twitching as I came. I looked up at the ceiling again, cursing that I was lying here alone. After I cleaned myself up, I pulled on some boxer briefs and was about to figure out what the hell I was going to eat when my phone rang. I didn't recognize the number, but answered it anyway.

"How'd you get this number?" I asked, my voice more of a growl.

"You're invited to dinner, asshole. Get your ass here in the next fifteen minutes."

The line went dead, and I stared at the phone. Flicker was inviting me to dinner? Or had someone told Laken I was here and she'd invited me? Either way, I wasn't going to pass up the opportunity to see her. I pulled on some clothes, put my boots back on, and rushed outside to my bike. He'd said fifteen minutes, and I sure as fuck wasn't going to be late. Not when Laken was waiting for me.

I got to the end of my driveway before I realized I had no fucking clue which house was theirs. I pulled my phone back out and called Flicker.

"What?" he said in a biting tone.

"I don't know where your house is, dickhead."

He snarled at me, then told me how to get there before ending the call. I had no doubt that had he been using a landline with an older phone, he'd have slammed the fucker down. Pushing "End Call" just didn't pack the same punch. I smirked as I pulled onto the road that wound through the compound and went in search of his house. It wasn't as hard to find as I'd thought it would be. I could see little touches here and there that screamed a female lived here. The flowers along the front were likely not Flicker's doing, nor were the little gnomes.

I shut off my bike and went up to the door. Before I could knock, it was flung open, and Flicker glared at me. He didn't say anything, just stepped back and let me cross the threshold, but before I got farther than the front entry he stopped me.

"You hurt her again, and I will fucking end you. I don't give a shit who you are or who you're connected to," Flicker said. "She's all I got, and I'm tired of hearing her cry herself to sleep every fucking night."

That made my heart ache, knowing that I'd done that to Laken. I nodded and moved farther into the house. He shut the door and motioned for me to follow him into the kitchen. A square table was in the center of the room with three place settings, and a ton of food in the center. The kitchen was a lot larger than the one in my new home. Their entire house was bigger for that matter, but I had what I needed. The question was whether or not Laken would be content moving into someplace smaller.

"Flicker, dinner's done," Laken said, her back to us. When she turned, she dropped the spatula she had in her hand and turned deathly pale. "Ryker."

“Hi, Laken.”

“You’re here,” she said softly.

“Yeah. Thought I’d join you for dinner, if that’s okay?” I asked. If she didn’t want me here, I wouldn’t stay. As much as it would kill me to walk away, that’s what I’d do.

Her gaze shot over to Flicker, then back to me. “You can stay.”

I smiled a little and took a seat. Flicker took the spot across from me, leaving Laken between us. She finished what she was doing, then joined us. She cast nervous glances my way as she fixed our plates, loading mine with meatloaf, mashed potatoes, carrots, and rolls. There was a pitcher of lemonade in the middle of the table, and she filled all our glasses. I didn’t like her waiting on me, but she seemed to be doing it out of habit so I left her alone. If she ever came home with me, that shit would stop, though. I was quite capable of fixing my own plate and getting my own drink. She’d cooked the damn meal, so I didn’t understand why she had to serve everyone too. Had Flicker asked her to do that shit or was it something she’d just always done on her own? If she tried to wash the dishes when we were finished, I was going to put my foot down. This wasn’t 1950, and I was a little pissed that Flicker just sat there while she did all this work.

When Flicker dug into his food, I took a bite. And damn near had my eyes roll into the back of my head. It. Was. Awesome. I couldn’t remember ever tasting anything so wonderful before. The flavors just burst on my tongue, and I’d eaten three bites before I even remembered to breathe.

“This is really good, Laken. Like beyond amazing,” I told her before shoveling more food into my mouth.

Her cheeks flushed, and she smiled at me. “Thank you.”

“You cook like this all the time?” I asked.

I’d never really been around a woman who cooked. My mom, not that she’d been with us long, had never mastered anything beyond boxed meals, and this shit tasted like it was made from scratch. Even some of the nicer restaurants I’d been to couldn’t compare. If she moved in and cooked on a regular basis, I’d turn into a butterball if I didn’t work out every damn day.

She shrugged. “I know how to make a few things, but I bought a cookbook the other day. I figured now that I’m going to be a mom, I should learn to cook more things. I want my son or daughter to have nice dinners, at a table with the family. I never had that growing up.”

“Neither did I,” I said. “Mom tried for a while, and then she just didn’t care anymore. I think being with Dad kind of broke her.”

Flicker watched us but didn’t say anything. I wished that I could talk to Laken alone, but it seemed her guard dog wasn’t going anywhere. I couldn’t really blame him. I didn’t have a stellar record when it came to Laken. First I took her virginity in a bathroom and knocked her up, then I yelled at her and she was hit by a car, then I abandoned her when she was in the hospital. Yeah, I was a fuck-up, but I wanted to make things work with her. If that’s what she wanted.

I’d give her anything. All she had to was ask.

The woman already had my heart.

Chapter Eight

Laken

He was here. Ryker was really here, sitting next to me, eating a meal that I had cooked. Part of me was panicking, and the other half was just thrilled to see him again. But why had he returned? I still didn't know for certain why he'd left. Had he been called back to Hades Abyss? Or had he left because of me? I had so many questions, and I wasn't sure I was brave enough to ask. Mostly because I didn't know if I wanted to hear the answers. If I was the reason he'd left, my heart would likely break a little more, and I wasn't certain there was much left of it. When I'd found out he was gone, had left without saying goodbye, I'd felt completely shattered.

The way Flicker was watching us didn't help matters any. I wanted some alone time with Ryker. I needed answers, and I didn't think Ryker would be very forthcoming with Flicker hovering. I didn't think big brother was going to let that happen, though. He'd made it no secret that he didn't care for Ryker, and I doubted that had changed in the past month. If anything, he probably hated him even more, with the way Ryker had taken off and left me.

"I guess we don't know much about each other," Ryker said. "You're a good cook. I'm going to assume the flowers and gnomes out front were your doing. Do you enjoy gardening?"

"I do," I said, smiling. "I like mixing different colors of flowers and finding cute things to accent the garden and yard. Makes the place feel more like a home and not just a house."

"Maybe you can do something with my place," Ryker said.

I set my fork down and stared at him. "Your place?"

He nodded. "A little house down the road a bit from here. Torch is letting me use it. I'm now the liaison between Hades Abyss and the Dixie Reapers."

My mouth dropped open a little. Did that mean he was here to stay? Torch wouldn't have given him a house if this wasn't a long-term thing, right? But the question was whether or not Ryker had been forced to come, or was he here for me and the baby? Did he actually want us in his life?

"You have a house here?" I asked, not sure I'd heard him correctly.

He nodded. "It's a three-bedroom, two-bath. Not as big as this place, but I think it has potential. I'm shit when it comes to decorating and gardening, though. Think you might want to come check the place out? Give me some pointers?"

"You want me to decorate your house?" I asked softly.

"I want you to make it a home," he said. "Maybe a home you'd like to live in one day."

I swallowed hard, and my hand shook as I reached for my fork. I couldn't look at him, not without giving away all of my feelings. I wanted that, so very much. But I was afraid that if I reached for that dream, he'd change his mind. I didn't just want a father for my baby, I wanted Ryker. No one had ever made me feel the way he did, and yeah, we might not know a lot about each other, but there was a spark between us.

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Maybe that was enough.

“The last time you were alone with my sister, you nearly killed her,” Flicker said. “Why would I let her go to your house?”

I glared at my brother.

“I never meant to hurt Laken,” Ryker said. “That’s the last thing I want to do. If she’ll give me a chance, I’d like for us to start over. Get to know each other, spend some time together. When it comes to Laken, I don’t just want sex. I want to have something more with her.”

I melted a little at his words, but Flicker didn’t look pleased, if the tic in his jaw was any indication. I wasn’t certain that Ryker would ever be able to win over my big brother, but as far as I was concerned, he was saying everything right. Something bothered me, though. Ryker wouldn’t have just invited himself over. At least, I didn’t think he would have. So who had asked him to come to dinner?

“Danny,” I said softly, drawing his attention my way. He lost a little of the hard glint in his eyes as he looked at me. “Don’t chase him off. Please.”

“He’s not good enough for you, Laken. He goes through a different woman every night, sometimes more than one a night,” Flicker said.

“Not anymore,” Ryker said. “That’s the old me. Since my first night with Laken, I haven’t been with anyone else.”

“Really?” I asked, looking his way.

“I don’t want anyone but you,” Ryker said. “Whether you believe that or not, it’s the truth. All it took was one taste, and I was hooked on you. But it’s more than that. I don’t just want another night in bed. I want all of you, Laken. The good and the bad.”

Flicker shoved his plate away and stood up. “I can’t stand to listen to this shit. He’s going to hurt you, Laken, just like he did last time. I won’t keep the two of you apart, but I don’t like him being on Dixie Reapers’ territory. And I sure as fuck don’t like him being with you.”

“Danny, please try to get along with Ryker. He’s the father of your niece of nephew. Doesn’t that mean anything to you?” I asked.

Flicker shrugged. “I’ll be home late. Don’t wait up.”

He stomped out of the room, and I heard the front door slam a moment later. I winced, hating that I’d chased him out of his own home. Ryker reached over and took my hand, giving it a squeeze, and I smiled at him. My brother was always an ass, so I didn’t know why it should be any different now, but my hospital stay was still a bit of a blur. If anything had happened between them to make things worse, I didn’t remember it. Had Ryker and Flicker gotten into it?

I’d lost my appetite and stood up, gathering my plate and Flicker’s before heading over to the sink. I heard Ryker’s chair scrape as he stood. I’d expected him to leave his plate, then take off, much like my brother did most nights. But he didn’t. He hip-checked me to scoot me over, and he took my place washing dishes. I’d never seen a man wash a dish before, and if anyone had ever asked, I’d have said it was a myth that such a thing ever happened. But there was Ryker, scraping and scrubbing the dirty dishes, then handing them to me to place in the drying rack.

“You don’t have to do this,” I said.

“You cooked dinner, then you served everyone. You shouldn’t have to do the cleanup too,” Ryker said.

I was a little surprised. Danny had never thought to wash the dishes for me, and I didn’t think it was something he’d ever think to do. It made me wonder if Venom or Torch ever did the dishes for Ridley and Isabella. Did men do housework too? Maybe I should have trained Flicker better. I felt sorry for whatever woman ended up with him. He was a complete slob. My brother had a heart of gold, at least when it counted, but he definitely had a lot of rough edges.

We finished the dishes, and then Ryker took me by the hand and led me into the living room. Now that Flicker was gone, I felt a little more at ease around Ryker. As I sat down, he claimed the spot next to me, but he didn’t release my hand. It felt right, sitting here like this with him. But Ryker wasn’t the same as before. He’d always been a little arrogant, and dare I say smug, but I didn’t see that when I looked at him now.

“You seem different,” I said.

“I missed you. I never meant for things to end up the way they did, and I’m sorry I left without saying bye.”

“Why did you?” I asked.

“I thought I was doing the right thing. I never wanted to hurt you, and I was worried that if I stayed, something bad would happen. Flicker told me to leave the hospital and not come back. I guess I just figured it would be better if I left town altogether.”

“I didn’t want you to leave.”

He squeezed my hand. "I'm sorry, Laken. And I'm really damn sorry for the way I reacted before your accident."

"The accident wasn't your fault," I told him. "It was no one's fault. It's why they call it an accident."

"If you'd died... if you'd lost the baby..."

"But I didn't. I'm fine, Ryker. I have headaches sometimes, but even those will go away."

He slowly reached over and placed his hand on my belly. "You're sure the baby is okay?"

"They used a special monitor at the hospital to check on the baby. Everything is fine."

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“Can I go to your next appointment with you?”he asked.

“I’d really like that.”

“I should go, and let you get some rest.”Ryker stood, but I clung to his hand.

“Take me with you,” I said.“Flicker will be gone for hours, maybe even all night.I don’t want to be alone, Ryker.And... I just got you back.”

He pulled me to my feet and placed his hands on my waist.“I’m not going anywhere, Laken.Not as long you want me here.But I don’t want to take things too fast either.We did that already, and I made a mess of things.”

“Ryker, please.Take me home with you.I’m a big girl, and I know what I need and what I want.”

He smiled a little.“All right, but I brought the bike.I’m not sure you should be riding on one while you’re pregnant, especially after a head injury.”

“You’ll be careful, and you can go really slow,” I said.“It’s not like I’ve never been on a motorcycle before.”

His eyes narrowed a little.“You better have only ridden with Flicker.”

I bit my lip.Maybe the caveman side of him wasn’t completely gone after all.Was it wrong that I got a little thrill that he was a bit possessive of me?Maybe he really did care about me.I could hope anyway.He seemed sincere and like he’d changed.The

Ryker I'd met at the bar had been a total playboy, but the man standing with me now? He was different, and in a good way.

"Come on," he said, tugging on my hand. "I'll take you to my place, but don't expect much. I haven't even checked the kitchen to see if it's stocked with food and drinks."

"We could take one of the trucks and pick up a few things," I said. "Anyone can use them. You'd just have to take me to the clubhouse on your bike. They keep the keys behind the bar."

"Any place around here that sells furniture, towels, and food?" Ryker asked.

"There's a twenty-four hour store not too far from here. They have everything. Well, except live animals, but they have a gardening section, furniture, kitchenware, food, movies, clothes."

"Sounds like the perfect place," Ryker smiled. "All right. But if you get tired or start getting a headache, you let me know, and we'll come back."

He led me out to his bike, and I swear there were snails passing us he was driving so damn slow. It touched me, though, that he was trying to be careful with me. When we reached the clubhouse, he left me in the parking lot with a promise to wait for him. I wasn't sure if I should be amused or upset. It wasn't like I didn't have a clue what went on inside the clubhouse, but honestly, part of me was glad I didn't have to deal with the club sluts. It was sickening, watching them hang all over the bikers I considered family.

Ryker returned a few minutes later, keys in hand, a smudge of lipstick on his neck. My eyes narrowed as I stared at those lip prints. The color was rather distinct too, so I knew just who had left it there. I brushed past Ryker and stormed up the steps and into the clubhouse. After scanning the room, I found just who I was looking

for.Bambi.I still didn't think that was her real name, but it's what everyone called her.

I shoved my way through the crowd and walked up to her.She looked me over, then dismissed me, but that was a huge mistake on her part.

“Hey, bitch!”I snapped at her.“Keep your nasty ass lips off my man.”

She smirked at me.“Yourman?”

I felt a hand at my waist and a hard abdomen pressed against my back.

“She means me,” Ryker said over my head.“And I'd have to second what she said.Stay the fuck away from me.”

“Oh please, honey.Like that mousy little girl can give you what you need,” Bambi said.“When you're ready for a real woman, you know where to find me.And I promise, I will do anything you want.”

I lashed out at her, my hand cracking across her cheek, and making the room go dead silent.The footsteps of half a dozen bikers drew closer.

“What the fuck is going on?”Zipper asked.

“This slut insulted my woman, so Laken decided to teach her a lesson,” Ryker said.

“Your woman, huh?”Zipper asked, smiling a little.“That means I'll be doing some ink soon?”

“Ink?”Ryker asked.

“Dixie Reapers ink their women,” Zipper said.“Hades Abyss doesn't do that?”

I felt Ryker shrug behind me. “Never had a woman before, and my dad never really claimed my mom. I have no fucking clue what Hades Abyss does for their old ladies. I was gone more than I was there. There are some brothers with old ladies, but I was never around when those women were claimed.”

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“Come see me when you’re ready to make it official,” Zipper said. “I’m the resident ink slinger.”

“I want her gone,” I said.

“You can’t throw me out, you whore,” Bambi said, practically spitting at me.

“I’m the whore?” I asked. “You’re the one who fucks anyone who crooks a finger at you. I’ve been with one man. And he still wants me. I wasn’t a fuck and dump like you are.”

Bambi screeched and lunged at me, but Ryker spun me out of the way. Before he could retaliate, I heard Bambi slinging curses at everyone as the Dixie Reapers dragged her out of the clubhouse. Zipper patted me on the shoulder.

“You okay, darlin’?” he asked.

“I’m fine. Thank you for taking out the trash, though.”

He chuckled. “No problem.”

“Come on, sugar. Let’s run to the store, then I’ll show you my new home. You can figure out how you want to decorate it.” Ryker kissed my cheek. “That was pretty fucking hot, seeing you go all savage on her.”

I smiled and let him take me back out to the parking lot, then we got into the truck and went shopping. And shopping with Ryker was way more fun than I’d ever had

before.

Chapter Nine

Ryker

Laken had put a dent in my checking account, but it was well worth it. She'd helped me pick out some more furniture for the living room, had picked out kitchen stuff that I'd likely seldom use, and then she'd selected everything I could possibly need or want in my bathroom. When I'd showered earlier, I'd found two towels with the tags still on them, but I'd needed more than that.

I hauled everything into the house, and while I was putting the furniture together and setting up the electronics, Laken busied herself in the kitchen and bathroom. It took us about two hours to get everything set up, but the house looked a lot better when we were finished. It almost felt like a home. Although, I didn't know how much of that was because of things we'd bought, and how much of it was due to Laken being with me. Maybe she was the one who made it feel like home.

I pulled a bottle of water out of the fridge and carried it to the bedroom. She was curled up on the bed, half asleep, and looking far too tempting. I set the bottle on the nightstand and smoothed her hair back from her face.

"I should take you home," I said.

"I am home." She smiled. "Let me stay here with you tonight."

"You didn't bring anything with you, or buy anything at the store."

"I can sleep in one of your shirts," she said. "Then I can go back to Flicker's tomorrow to change."

“All right, sugar. I’m not going to fight you, not when I really want you here.”

She gave me a sleepy smile, and I went over to the dresser to pull out a T-shirt. I helped her off the bed, and slowly removed her clothes. It felt like it had been forever since I’d seen her this way. And one of those times had been rushed. One of these days, I was going to love her all night long, like I’d done at the motel, and I was going to take my time doing it.

Even though I knew my son or daughter was growing inside her, her belly was still just as flat as before. Once I had her stripped bare, I knelt in front of her and pressed a kiss there, right where our baby was. Something wet hit my cheek, and I looked up to find Laken crying. My heart squeezed at the sight, and I stood up, pulling her into my arms.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Nothing, I just...”

“Talk to me, Laken.”

“When we first met, I never imagined this side of you existed. The guy I met that night was...”

“An asshole,” I finished for her.

“Not quite how I would have put it.” She smiled. “I like this side of you, Ryker. It just surprised me is all.”

“This is the man I want to be, for you and for our baby. The two of you deserve the best of everything, and while I don’t think that’s me, I don’t want to walk away. I’ll do it if that’s what you ask me to do, but I won’t like it.”

“I’d never send you away,” she said. She ran her fingers through my hair. “Make love to me, Ryker. It’s been so long, and I’ve missed you so damn much.”

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“I’ve missed you too, sugar, but I don’t think we should...”

She placed her fingers over my lips. “Hush. I’m perfectly fine, Ryker. Remind me that I’m yours. Show me how much you’ve missed me.”

I kissed her. Slow and deep, holding her tight against me. Laken melted against me, one hand curling behind my neck, and the other on my shoulder. I loved the way she felt in my arms, so damn sweet and perfect. I pulled away long enough to remove my clothes, then wrapped my arms around her once more. Feeling her, skin to skin, was like heaven on earth.

“Promise me this is the beginning,” Laken said. “Promise me that you won’t send me away in the morning.”

“Sugar, your brother isn’t going to be happy if you move in here the second I come back to town.”

“I don’t care what Flicker wants. I know that I owe him a lot, but this is my life, and I belong here with you, Ryker. Or do you not want me?”

I pressed my cock against her, the damn thing so fucking hard I could probably drive nails with it. “What do you think?”

She smiled softly. “I think it’s been too long since I felt you inside me.”

“Then I guess we’d better fix that,” I murmured, then took her down to the bed.

Her nipples were hard and looked so damn pretty and pink. I took my time, exploring her with my lips and hands, wanting to memorize every inch of her. She was so soft, so curvy, and so mine. Now that I had her in my bed, in my home, I didn't want her to leave. I might not deserve her, but I wanted her. Needed her. Fuck, I think I even loved her.

I parted her thighs and teased her pussy with my fingers, feeling how hot and wet she was. All for me. She whimpered as I teased her clit, circling the little bud until her body flushed with pleasure. Her body tensed, and I knew she was getting close. My cock ached to be inside her, but this wasn't about me. I wanted her screaming my name, but only because it meant she'd found her release. I lightly pinched her clit, then rubbed it slowly again.

"So good," she said in a near whisper. "Please don't stop. So much better when you do it."

That damn near froze me. "Better when I do it? Who's been touching you, sugar?"

"Me," she said. "But it didn't feel as good."

Oh, God. That was so fucking hot. "And did you think of me while you played with this sweet pussy?"

"Yesssss," she said, dragging the word out.

"Did you imagine my cock filling you? Fucking you?"

"God, yes."

"And when you came, was it my name you said?" I asked.

“Yes.Ryker, please.I need to come.”

I eased two fingers inside her, feeling how tight she was, as my thumb pressed down on her clit.I couldn't fucking wait to feel her wrapped around my cock.I fucked her with my fingers while I teased her clit, not stopping until she was arching off the bed and screaming out her release.My fingers were coated with her cream as I eased them out of her.

Laken lay panting on the bed, her legs still spread, and it was the prettiest sight I'd ever seen.I gripped her thighs and spread them a little more as I settled between them.My cock pressed against her, and I slowly entered her.It felt like fucking heaven to be inside her again.So damn tight and wet.So fucking hot.I ground my teeth together to keep from fucking her hard and deep.

“Ryker,” she cried out as I slid in a little more, not stopping until I was balls-deep.

“Mine.Say it, Laken.”

“Yours.Only yours,” she said.“I've always been yours.”

Just hearing those words nearly made me snap.I growled low as I thrust slowly, wanting to drag the moment out longer.I tried to hold back, to make it good for her, but she felt too fucking incredible.When she wrapped her legs around my waist, taking me even deeper, I couldn't hold on anymore.I fucked her like I was possessed, driving into her as if I were trying to brand her.And maybe I was.She cried out again, her pussy clamping down on my cock.My balls drew up, and then I was coming, so damn hard.I didn't stop, our hips slapping together, until every drop had been drained from me.

If I hadn't worried about crushing her, I'd have stayed inside her a while longer.But I pulled out and sat back, watching as my cum spilled out of her.Her pussy was all pink

and pretty.I reached between her legs and used my fingers to shove my cum back inside her, thrusting them in and out a few times.

“Keep that in there,” I said.

She giggled at me and closed her thighs around my hand, trapping me.Not that I was complaining.

“Maybe you can think of some other places to put it,” she said.

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My cock went hard as a steel post just thinking about fucking that ass of hers. But I wasn't about to do that tonight. She was carrying our child inside her, and while part of me wanted to fuck her in every way imaginable, I wasn't sure how I felt about getting all wild and crazy with a pregnant woman. My pregnant woman.

"Let's get cleaned up and get some rest. This isn't a one-time thing."

Her gaze went all soft and dreamy. "You really want me, don't you? Not just for tonight but for longer?"

"I want you for forever," I told her.

And I meant every damn word.

"Come on, sugar. Shower, then bed," I said.

I helped her up and got the water running in the bathroom. When it was warm, but not too hot, I helped her over the edge of the tub and pulled the curtain closed behind us. I couldn't help but explore her body as I washed her from head to toe. It almost felt like a miracle that she was here with me, that I'd been given a second chance. And I wasn't going to fuck it up this time.

Once we were both clean, I helped her dry off. She wandered back into the bedroom while I finished up, and I found her curled on her side, already asleep when I joined her a few minutes later. Guess I took more out of her than I'd realized. I shut off the light and curled around her, holding her close and just breathing her in. I almost felt at peace, getting to hold her like this. After so many sleepless nights, wishing she was

with me, I finally had what I wanted. I just hoped I could hold onto her this time.

I didn't sleep, even though I was exhausted. I spent the night watching over her, and as the sun began to rise, there was a knock at the front door. I had a feeling I was about to be put to work, so I pulled on some boxer briefs and went to see who the hell was bothering me so damn early. And I hoped like hell they didn't wake up Laken.

I threw open the door and stopped and stared at Flicker.

"What?" I asked, my voice harsher than I'd intended.

"I'm going to assume my sister is here with you."

"Yeah. She asked to stay."

He nodded. "Look, you know I don't like you. I haven't made a great secret of it. Be good to her, though, or I'll beat the shit out of you. And I'll just be at the head of a long line of Dixie Reapers anxious for a pound of your flesh."

"I never wanted to hurt her. She means everything to me," I said, hating to admit that to Flicker.

"Good. Then I'll make sure Zipper is ready for the two of you after Laken wakes up. You claim her, and you ink her. If you're serious about staying, about making her yours, then you're going to do this the right way."

I nodded. "All right."

He stared at me another moment before walking off. I shut the door and went back to Laken, holding her another few hours while she slept. When she woke up, I fixed her one of the only things I knew how to cook. Eggs and toast. Then we got ready and

headed over to the clubhouse. I wasn't entirely certain about having her inked, but if that's the way this club worked, I'd fall in line. Laken didn't seem worried about it, so maybe she'd expected something like this to happen at some point in her life.

The clubhouse was mostly empty when we got there, except for Zipper and a few others. He was nursing a beer at the bar, even though it was still morning. Too early for alcohol for me, but hey... to each his own.

"What am I inking?" Zipper asked.

"I've never seen a property tattoo before so I have no idea what to ask for," I said. "Far as I know, Hades Abyss doesn't ink their women."

He nodded. "Each old lady has a distinctive tattoo that is unique to them. If you want, we can just do a basic script that says Property of Diablo."

"Diablo?" Laken asked. "They call you the devil?"

"Misspent youth," I said. She didn't look like she believed me, but she didn't press for more information. I'd take what I could get. The last thing I wanted to do was admit to my sins. There were too damn many of them. "Guess that makes you the angel who tamed me."

She smiled at that.

"I don't need anything elaborate," Laken said. "Just the text is fine."

That didn't seem right to me, though. Laken was special, and she deserved to have a unique mark. Something that was perfect for her. The problem was that we were still learning about each other.

“What if we did something that’s a little bit of each of you?”Zipper asked.“You called her an angel, and your name is Diablo.What about a pitchfork with a halo hanging off it?Then we could do the text around it?”

“Perfect,” Laken said, smiling widely.

“Come on back.Let’s get this done.He’ll have to order your property cut from Hades Abyss,” Zipper said.

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Fuck.I hadn't even thought of that.Something else I'd have to take care of.

We followed Zipper into his studio at the back of the clubhouse, and Laken gripped my hand tight while Zipper went over everything.The ink didn't take all that long since it was pretty basic, and Laken didn't cry once.She was so damn brave, even though I could see the pain in her eyes.When it was over, I kissed her softly.

"So proud of you, sugar."

"I'm really yours now," she said.

"You always were, ever since the moment I grabbed your ass."

She giggled at me, and Zipper snorted.

"Get out of here with that shit," he said.

"Wait.If she's mine, then I'm hers.Can you do one more tattoo?"I asked.

Zipper's eyebrows went up."Sure."

I pulled off my shirt and took the seat Laken had just vacated.I placed a hand over my heart, and a bare patch of skin."I wantProperty of Lakenright here."

Zipper grinned and started getting everything set up.My tattoo took less time than hers, and I noticed she had tears in her eyes as she watched her name being inked into my skin.A permanent reminder that we belonged to each other.

When Zipper was finished, I pulled her into my arms and kissed her. “I love you, Laken. So damn much.”

“I love you too,” she said, tears in her eyes and her voice a little shaky.

“Awww. Ain’t that sweet?” Zipper said. “Now get the fuck out of here.”

I pulled my shirt back on and took Laken home.

I didn’t know what the future held for us, but I knew we’d be together. And that was all that mattered. As long as I had Laken, then I had everything I could possibly need or want.

Epilogue

Laken

Six Months Later

“Are you sure you want to know?” Ryker asked.

I bit my lip to keep from laughing. He looked ready to jump out of his skin he was so damn excited. “I’m sure.”

The technician moved the little wand over my belly. This was our third ultrasound. I’d had a few complications along the way, but so far we’d decided to wait and be surprised with the gender of our baby. But I knew Ryker really wanted to know, and he was hoping for a boy. I would be happy either way. As long as my baby arrived healthy, that was all I cared about.

“Let’s see if Baby Storme will cooperate,” the technician said.

My hand tightened on Ryker's, my wedding band likely cutting into him. He'd bought me an outrageous diamond a month after we got our property tattoos, and we were married the following week. He'd decided he wanted to do things the "right" way, and wanted me to have his name.

"Ah!" The technician smiled broadly. "See that there? Looks like Baby Storme is very well endowed."

Ryker chuckled and I smacked him with my free hand. Just like a man.

"I hope you have some boy names picked out," the technician said as she wiped the goo off my stomach.

We did. But there was one I knew was perfect.

"Gabriel Storme," I said.

"The boy has a little devil and a little angel in him," Ryker said. "Maybe if he's named after an angel, he won't make the mistakes his daddy made."

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“I’m sure baby Gabriel will live up to his name and be a complete little angel for you,” the technician said. “Congratulations, Mommy and Daddy. Dr. Myron will see you at your next scheduled appointment. And as always, call if you have any questions.”

“Thank you,” I said as I sat up.

After the technician left, Ryker helped me get dressed. I was so round that I felt like a flipped over turtle every time I lay down. It was impossible to get up on my own. Not that Ryker complained about all the extra weight. He seemed to be fascinated with my baby bump, and was always rubbing his hands over my belly, or pressing a kiss there. God, but I loved him.

“I don’t know if it was fate or what that put us together that night,” I told him. “But I’m so glad you grabbed my ass.”

Ryker laughed. “Well, it was a pretty irresistible ass. Still is,” he said, giving my ass a smack.

“Careful. You know my hormones are all over the place. You grab my ass right now, I might bend over and beg for more.”

He growled and moved in closer. “Don’t even fucking tempt me, Laken. Truck. Now.”

“And then what?” I asked.

“Then I’m taking you home, and I’m going to make you come until you pass out.”

I waddled a little faster to the truck parked at the curb, and Ryker followed behind me. I looked over my shoulder and saw his gaze was glued to my ass, and he had that sexy, arrogant smirk in place. The one I fell for that first night we were together. Whenever he wore that look, I could see a hint of the devil he'd been named after. A randy rooster. But he was my Diablo now.

Oh, he was still Hades Abyss, and likely always would be.

But he was my husband, my everything.

And now that I had him, I was never letting go.