



The Crime of Intensity

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Category: Romance, Western

Description: Lives cross and gazes collide, causing an intense and delicious rush to overtake your mind and body. The extraordinary, one-of-a-kind connection which others may refer to as “love at first sight” will kick off the ride of your life to set a path for the future.

Kathleen – No one needs to tell me how to do my job, certainly not a Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen who comes into my town. We go head-to-head at every turn unless we’re discussing case files because we’re both dedicated to solving these murders.

Marvin – Meeting a woman who is fierce, sassy, and is the sheriff of the small town awakens a primal instinct to claim, along with a protective streak flaring inside of me. A serial killer returning to town forces us to work closely together, especially when her life is at stake, along with our hopes and dreams.

The Crime of Intensity is a standalone novella in the second-generation Cowboy Bikers MC series. Each story features a new couple and can be read together or separately.

Total Pages (Source): 29

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

CHAPTER ONE

– KATHLEEN –

“Dammit,” I mutter and give some pressure with my legs to urge Ten, my Quarter horse, on.

Up ahead I see old Mr. Hemwig stomp across the road with a shotgun in his hand.

I finally reach the ranch across the road from the old man and lean back to bring Ten to a stop as I jump off. Wrench, my Australian Cattle dog, starts to bark at Hemwig. Wrench is a trained cadaver dog who’s also my deputy from time to time; he has my back no matter what.

“Okay, Mr. Hemwig, put the gun down,” I calmly tell the old man.

He narrows his eyes and aims the shotgun at my chest. “Why are you here? How did you get here so fast? He called you, didn’t he? Fucking chicken.”

A sigh rips from me and I grab the barrel and angle the aim up and away from all of us as Hemwig pulls the damn trigger.

“Motherfucker,” I snap.

A jolt of adrenaline mixes with my blood. Wrench barks while my horse doesn’t so much as twitch. Ten is the mellowest horse on the planet until I’m in the saddle, then he’s lightning on hooves.

Hemwig's eyes pop wide open. "Oh, shit. I didn't pull the trigger."

I know the old fart uses shells filled with rock salt. He's harmless...most times.

"Sure you didn't," I grumble and unload the shotgun.

From the corner of my eye, I catch movement and throw the shotgun to the ground to palm my own gun while Wrench is running forward. My anger skyrockets when I see who is stalking our way; Marvin Wolffield.

He's law enforcement, like me, but also unlike me. I'm the town sheriff while Marvin is a Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen. It's a special division of the government. They are basically above the law, but uphold it to bring down criminals in their own way.

Ever since I requested the Lawmen's help a few months ago, and Marvin being the one who showed up, he's been nothing but a pain in my ass. Okay, Marvin did help solve a case. With his help we were able to bring down a gang along with other men who hurt members and old ladies of the Iron Hot Blood, the motorcycle club my father's a member of.

Though, Marvin has been randomly showing up since that day, and tries to meddle in crime cases in my town for no good reason other than to annoy me.

Ignoring Marvin—like I've been doing ever since he entered my life—I focus on Hemwig as I put my gun back into the holster strapped to my leg. "Go home, Hemwig. You can come pick up your shotgun when you're sober."

Which I know won't be any time soon with the old man drinking around the clock. Annoyance spikes when I notice Wrench getting his ear scratched by Marvin. Cheating, asshole dog.

Hemwig shoves a bony finger in the direction of the ranch behind me. “He stole my moonshine.”

It’s too damn early for this shit. “Right. You’re talking about the moonshine he made and gave to you? Which I’m sure you either drank already or spilled ’cause you’re too drunk to hold a cup steady.”

Hemwig’s shoulders sag. “I’m not drunk. It happened to fall when I wanted to grab the jar. But it’s his fault for putting it in a stupid jar. If he’d put it in a bottle, I would still have it.”

“Enough. Go home,” I tell the old man with a stern voice.

He bobs his head and starts to turn but stops to tell me, “My Daisy was as stern as you. I miss her.”

My heart squeezes painfully for the old man who lost his wife four years ago. “I know, Hemwig. She was your sunshine that could give your ass sunburn if you didn’t butter it up.”

The old man shoots me a grin when I give him the words he’s told me over a hundred times. This isn’t our first encounter and I made it a standard thing to swing by his ranch during my morning ride.

“That she was. Shame my sunshine isn’t here anymore...all I’ve got left is moonshine and the memories of my lovely wife,” Hemwig murmurs and has a sad smile on his face. “Sorry, Kathleen. I didn’t mean—”

“I know,” I tell him, cutting him off because excuses always follow this old man’s spur of the moment actions. “Sleep it off and we’ll call it even.”

He waves at me and wanders back to his house. I pick up the shotgun and shove it between the straps of my western saddle.

“What the fuck, Kathleen? You could have gotten your head blown off,” Marvin snarls.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I don't bother to glance in his direction and grab the horn of my saddle, put my foot in the stirrup, and push off with my other leg to get my ass on the horse. It's better to stare down at the asshole than to be on the same level. Taking the reins I try to keep Ten steady when he shifts in place, itching to get moving.

"Firstly, Hemwig wasn't pointing the damn thing at my head. Secondly? The old fart uses rock salt. Besides, it's none of your damn business how I handle shit in my own damn town, Marvin. Why are you even here?" Shit. I shouldn't have asked that. "Never mind. Not my business and I couldn't care less. Stay out of the way I do my job or I'll lock you up again. Only this time I'll throw away the damn key."

I give Ten some freedom of reins and he takes full advantage and pretty much starts galloping as soon as he can. Curling my tongue, I give a sharp whistle and Wrench follows us down the road. About twenty minutes later we arrive at the Iron Hot Blood ranch.

Swinging my leg off my horse, I jump to the ground and lift my chin in greeting when I notice Rourke, the president of the Iron Hot Blood motorcycle club. I grew up with him, along with all the other members of this MC.

He's talking to Luke who is leaving today and I give him a wave too. Luke is moving to Figor's ranch. They're basically an MC like the one I grew up in, but they breed massive dogs as well. With them connected to our parents, some of them came to barbecues every now and then, and that's when Luke fell hard for Figor's daughter.

They've been fighting their attraction for a while now, especially with them living far away and different lives, but I guess Luke finally decided there's only one thing he

needs in his future...and that's Mabel.

"Don't be a stranger," I quip in Luke's direction and he shoots me a grin in return.

I should stay at my own place, but the apartment above the sheriff's office doesn't give me much space to harbor my horse. Hence the reason why I still have a room here and bounce around whatever suits me. Most times I crash at the apartment, other times I need a complete break and rather stay at the ranch where it feels homey with my family.

Though, work has been crazy the past few weeks. We need at least another deputy, and an undersheriff since the last one retired. It's why I've been pulling double shifts and am tired as hell all day, every freaking day.

"Nice ride?" Rourke questions.

Wrench plunks down in the pasture and Rourke falls in step beside me as I guide Ten into the stables.

Ignoring his question, I decide to throw him one in return, because as the president of an MC he would be aware of another MC president in town. "Did you know Marvin is back?"

Rourke releases a deep sigh. "Yeah, that's why I was waiting for you. I'm guessing you already ran into the fucker, eh?"

"Oh, yeah," I grumble and grab the halter to remove Ten's bridle.

Rourke is leaning against one of the stable's support beams. "Did Marvin mention why he's here?"

“Nope.” I loosen the cinch and remove the saddle.

“Let me guess, the fucker put his foot in his mouth again before he got a chance to tell you.”

“Yep,” I quip and let my hand glide down Ten’s leg to take his hoof and start to pick it clean.

“They still haven’t caught the serial killer.”

I move to the other leg. “I know, Rourke. I get updates because the serial killer left two dead bodies in this town before he moved on to the next town. Well, one is still questionable since she was killed six years ago.”

“The killer might be circling back here,” Rourke states.

I let go of Ten’s hoof to place my forearms on his back and stare at Rourke. “Are you shitting me?”

“Sadly, no. I don’t have all the details. Marvin mentioned he wanted eyes on you at all times and that he’d explain once he got here.”

Chuckling, I get to work on picking Ten’s hind legs when I sincerely tell Rourke, “Thanks for not following that asshole’s orders. You know I can damn well take care of myself.”

I place Ten’s hoof back on the ground and let my hand travel over his ass when I walk behind him.

“Like I said, I was waiting for you to get back.” Rourke shoves away from the support beam. “I know the guy is a pain in the ass to you, but every damn time his

actions are founded by a protective streak. We're talking about a serial killer here, Kathleen, it's not petty crime."

Anger flares up inside me. Why the hell is Rourke taking Marvin's side? I've been fighting for what feels like all my life for my own place in a man's world to get the career I have now. I deserve to be the damn sheriff without being questioned if my having a vagina would complicate shit.

We wouldn't be talking right now if I had a cock between my legs. Dammit. I work hard and stay sharp by always adding more certificates. My father knows I pursue a variety to build knowledge and skills, it's valuable to specialize in more than one area. I don't get why one guy walks into town and suddenly everyone questions my abilities.

I'm glad I'm done with Ten and ignore Rourke as I lead my horse into the stall.

Rourke sighs as if he's the one with all the issues. "Just hear him out, Kat. The man is only doing his job."

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I grit my teeth to keep myself from snarling, “And what am I doing? Twiddling my fucking thumbs ’cause I’m a girl and can’t do shit?”

“Uh huh, you have a great day now, Rourke,” I grit and give a short whistle to make Wrench follow me.

In the distance I see a motorcycle approaching. Rourke is calling my name and I continue to ignore him as I open my patrol car and let Wrench jump inside before I get behind the wheel. I steer my car onto the road and keep my gaze straight forward as I pass Marvin, even if I notice he’s signaling me to stop.

I call my father through the hands-free system in my car, and when he picks up I tell him, “If Marvin or his father calls you again, tell them you don’t have any contact with me.”

My father’s chuckle flows through the car. “The kid’s in town?”

“The kid is an asshole who thinks I can’t do my damn job,” I grumble.

“If that were the case he would have taken the job from you the day he walked into town, Kat,” my father states. “He’s concerned. I know Marvin can be a little overbearing, believe me, I know the type ’cause I’ve been in his shoes, but hear him out this time.”

I fall silent and let my father’s words wash over me. It’s then I realize, “He already called you, didn’t he?”

“He didn’t, his father did,” my dad confesses.

I groan. “Atticus? Seriously? Why does he have you on speed dial? Makes me wonder if Marvin can do his damn job if his father is meddling in his business.”

“Atticus is merely concerned since the last time Marvin came to town, he disappeared for a few days because you locked him up in jail.” My father’s tone holds disapproval.

I flip my blinker and park in front of the station. “He should have learned his lesson and stayed out of my town.”

“Catching a serial killer has priority, it overrules any grudge you two have toward one another.”

Turning off the car, I remain seated to finish my talk with my father first.

“I don’t hold a grudge, I just don’t like people who kick worthy officers to the side just because their ego needs the extra room.” Reaching out, I scratch Wrench behind his ear and add, “You taught me how to do my damn job long before I ever set foot inside the academy.”

“You’re too good to be a sheriff in this town, kid. Any agency would hire you in the blink of an eye.”

My father doesn’t say this to give me a mood boost. I have been approached by the FBI and turned them down more than once. My father and I even founded a research facility here, a body farm. The research is valuable, and it also allows for training programs like when I trained Wrench as a cadaver dog.

“I’m needed here,” I simply say, not willing to leave my hometown.

Though, a certain annoying Cowboy Biker Lawmen does make it difficult not to say “fuck it” and move to a different state, country, continent...whatever, just as long as I get to do my damn job without his interference.

“You’re irreplaceable, Kat,” my father states with affection.

The corner of my mouth twitches. “You’re just saying that because you would need to step up as sheriff if I ran off.”

A laugh rumbles through the line. “I retired completely and won’t even do any FBI favors anymore. But you’re probably right. Your mother wouldn’t like it, though. So, keep your ass where it is.”

I’m getting ready to start a long shift so I switch topics and ask, “Can you look after Ten for me tomorrow? I don’t know if I’m gonna be able to go for my morning ride.”

“Call me when your shift ends, I’ll handle everything else.”

I open the car door and rumble, “Thanks, Dad.”

“Anytime, Tough Leen, anytime.” My father ends the call while I stare in the eyes of my nemesis.

The way he’s smirking makes me aware he just heard the nickname my father gives me on special occasions. It’s a slight twist of my name if you say it quick enough. Though, those two words are more of a contradiction. Tough; strong. Leen; delicate. I was a delicate girl growing up but tough as nails when it came to solving puzzles, mysteries, and whatever assignment or task my father gave me.

“Save it,” I snap and let Wrench jump out of the car before I close the door and stomp toward the station.

This is going to be a long day and I'm only functioning on one cup of coffee. I wonder if Marvin will fall for the trick I used last time to get him into a cell. It would give me two days of rest to lock him up. With the warnings I just received, I guess that's out of the question.

"Kat," Marvin starts as he steps inside.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“It’s Kathleen,” I snap.

Only my friends occasionally call me Kat.

“Put a cork in your food channel and don’t unplug until I’ve had my coffee,” I warn and head straight for the coffee machine to get something to brighten my mood.

’Cause murdering Marvin isn’t worth ruining my career.

CHAPTER TWO

– MARVIN –

I watch the feisty woman’s ass walk away from me and mentally groan. Damn. I’ve wanted nothing more than to bury my cock in any hole that woman possesses ever since I laid eyes on her a few months ago.

Our line of work made our paths cross and has kept us on the same road ever since. However, she keeps pushing me off said road, or wants to run me over for that matter. I know I’m partly to blame and have never cared much about what women think or feel when it comes to my words or actions.

Except when it comes to the dark-haired beauty with her stormy gray eyes that can punch me right in the soul when she shoots a glare. Giving me a deadly glare is all I’ve ever gotten from the woman ever since I opened my mouth in her presence.

It’s why my lips stay sealed as I follow her to the coffee machine. I could certainly

use the caffeine. I've been riding for hours to get here after one of the agents of the most recent dead body we found fucked up. The female agent got too cocky and now she's missing along with her colleague.

I could have called Kathleen's father and explained my concerns, but the woman has been occupying my brain for far too long. It's time I put an end to it. Not only do I want her under me, I want that smart-as-a-whip head of hers working on this case. I've already put things in motion and talked things through with my father who handled the rest for me.

"You can fix your own if you want some," Kathleen mutters and saunters into her office.

Grabbing a mug, I pour myself some coffee and add creamer before I follow her.

Plunking my tired ass in one of the chairs near her desk I state, "One of the agents who found the last body the serial killer left for us to find fucked up and now she and her colleague are missing."

Kathleen's head whips up, a glimpse of eagerness for more details overtakes her eyes. "What did she do to fuck up?"

I can't help but wince. "She got too cocky and gave an interview in front of the dead body. It all happened before I got there and she didn't mention anything until I saw it on the damn news."

Kathleen frowns. "I haven't seen it, what did she say?"

Pulling my phone from my pocket, I tap the screen and find what I'm looking for. Turning the thing in her direction, I place my phone in front of her and let the video play. Her lips purse and she starts to shake her head while she watches the interview

the agent gave.

After a few minutes, she slides the phone back in my direction. “She’s the one who did a stupid, brainless action. I can’t believe she called him that and added how he’ll be apprehended by a woman. It’s as if she’s deliberately provoking him and now he proved her wrong by taking her, and the other agent.”

“Agreed. Also, why I reached out to Rourke and your father when I couldn’t reach you. If that fucker is pissed he could go after all law enforcement women who are involved in this case,” I state.

The part where I mentioned I couldn’t reach her is bullshit because I’m fairly sure the woman has been deliberately dodging my calls.

“So, you want me off the case I’m not even on? Better yet, you’d like me to stay home and twiddle my thumbs.” Her voice has a frosty edge to it.

Fuck. Why am I always stepping on landmines when it comes to this woman?

Kathleen gets to her feet. “Thanks for your concern, but I’m not on this case and I’ve let you handle everything when the killer left a body in my town, and we stumbled onto the buried one the same day.”

She grabs a file and throws it in my direction, letting it slide over her desk so I can grab it.

“I had a hunch and did some digging, do what you want with it, I don’t care.” She points at something over my shoulder. “There’s the door, close it when you get your overbearing ass out of my office.”

Ignoring her ramblings, I thumb through the file she gave me. A slow smile slides

across my face.

“You’re thinking the ranch is some kind of connection because a body was buried years ago on the edge of that property and one was recently dumped there?” I muse, completely blown away by the new lead and angle she gave me.

“Eastlynne recently bought that ranch. I remember who lived there and my mind jumped to an idea. You should run names and see if one fits the profile.”

An idea strikes and it would allow me to keep an eye on her, and have her brilliant mind on this case.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

Throwing the file back at her I state, “Your hunch, you run the names and let me know what you find out.”

She stares at me before her eyes narrow. “Why?”

“Truth?”

She rolls her eyes. “No, lies, please because that would be the most helpful thing you can do.”

A chuckle slips over my lips. “I could use your help.”

Suspicion fills her gaze and she sinks into her chair. “Right. Thanks for your honesty, you can leave now.”

Her phone indicates she’s receiving a message. When she’s thumbed through her phone she gets to her feet and rounds the desk.

“Thanks for the heads-up about the serial killer. Good luck catching him,” she states and walks out of her office.

Releasing a curse, I jump up and follow her out the door. “Hang on, boss lady, I’m coming with.”

Kathleen whirls around to face me. “No, you’re not. Get the hell out of my town and go catch yourself a serial killer instead of bugging me.”

“Can’t,” I quip.

The deputy sitting behind his desk watches our banter with interest while he tries to look busy.

“What do you mean, you can’t? It’s real fucking easy to get back in your vehicle and drive until you can’t see my town in your rearview mirror.”

I slowly shake my head. “As of this morning, I’m the new undersheriff.”

“Get the fuck out,” she mutters under her breath and firms her voice to snarl, “Tell me you fucking didn’t.”

I shrug. “Then I won’t tell you.” Turning to face the deputy I tell him instead, “You guys are shorthanded with one deputy moving out of state, and the undersheriff just retired. The time I spent in this town was enough for me to decide to move here indefinitely. With the job of undersheriff available, I made a few calls.” I glance back at Kathleen. “Everything is set and done, boss lady. I’m all yours.”

“You’re insane,” she snaps and steps closer, jabbing a finger against my leather cut. “How the hell can you move here, take a job without my knowledge, and leave your duty of catching killers and being the president of Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen? That shit doesn’t make sense, asshole. So, try a-fucking-gain and this time make me believe the truth instead of rattling out lies.”

I wrap my fingers around her wrist and give a gentle squeeze. “Check the patch you’re pressing your finger against.”

She rips her hand away from me and glances at my chest where the patch “nomad” is. For now, because I have more plans that need to be thrown into action.

“Motherfucker,” she mutters.

With a satisfied smile in my voice I tell her, “I’m still a part of Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen, which will give us the added resources when we take on extra cases. For now, I’m still in charge of the serial killer case and would like your help to solve it. I do have to be at the Iron Hot Blood ranch later today to make sure my stuff arrives safely. Rourke offered to house my two horses until I’ve found my own place.”

Through clenched teeth, she grits, “Why didn’t I hear anything about this until now?”

I shrug. “If you would have answered any one of my calls, I would have talked it through with you first. Ignoring me didn’t leave me any other choice than to follow my gut and make the switch.”

“Follow your gut? You’re unbelievable.” She checks her watch. “I don’t have time for this bullshit, I have to go.”

Whirling around, she strides out the door, leaving me to follow. I open the door on the passenger side of her patrol car while Kathleen gets behind the wheel.

“Get out and in the back, Wrench,” I order and open the other door, her dog instantly listens to me.

“Suck-up,” Kathleen mutters as I get into the front and she starts the car.

The corner of my mouth twitches. “He likes me, you should try it some time.”

“I’d rather eat dirt and shit sandcastles,” she states, making my laughter flow through the car as we hit the road.

Best decision I ever made was to transfer here. My parents weren’t overly joyed

when I talked it through with them yesterday morning. Especially my mother. While my father hoped I would continue to follow in his footsteps, he also understood and respected me to go and follow my gut.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

He, like many others in our MC, experienced firsthand what it's like to find a woman who intrigues, challenges, and creates a havoc of chemistry inside the body. I've tried to ignore my body and mind when it comes to Kathleen. Yet, every damn time life finds a way to make our paths cross.

Then those agents went missing and the thought of Kathleen being at risk entered my brain and it made everything crystal fucking clear. Within a day I had everything set. Well, not everything. There's one crucial part I still need to get done...which involves claiming the woman sitting next to me.

Easier said than done when she's trying to get me out of her town as soon as she sees me. This time I came prepared and rooted myself in place. I'm going nowhere and she'll realize soon enough that she's mine. If only we could have a moment to communicate on a normal level since this woman brings out the best and worst in me all at the same time.

The first indication which made me realize she was damn special? I've never met a woman who instantly made a deeply rooted protective streak flare up inside me the second I laid eyes on her. I remember my first time in town all too vividly because of a gang we needed to take out.

A gang who liked to use women as punching bags and had a main business in dogfights. I stepped foot inside the Iron Hot Blood ranch to see Kathleen standing there, looking gorgeous as fuck, and Wrench glued to her leg.

The visual was like serving the perfect picture to the gang we were trying to bring down. I might have overreacted by going over her head to steer her away from

danger, taking the case from her hands. But I needed to do it for my own sanity. We've been going head-to-head ever since.

"Where are we going?" I question.

Kathleen doesn't take her eyes off the road when she states, "Body farm."

My head whips her way. "You guys have a body farm?"

A smile tugs at her lips and she graces me with a glimpse of her stormy gray eyes. "Yes. A friend of mine is a forensic anthropologist and he's the one we founded the research facility with about three years ago. He trains students, making the main purpose study material, but there's also a law enforcement forensic science to exploit. My dad and I helped with the funding, which also allows us to be involved in some of the projects, conduct experiments, and gain valuable perspectives in the process."

"How come I've never heard of this one? I know of a handful all over the states—"

She cuts me off when she says, "Private funding and it's a very small one. We receive donated bodies for scientific research purposes from the hospital nearby. There are three cadavers on-site. Well, there should be. Elena just texted me that she found a fourth body on-site and no paperwork indicating a new experiment."

"Body dump?" I question.

Her stormy gray eyes hit mine again as she parks in front of a small ranch. "Yes, a female body dump."

Fuck. That's too much of a coincidence with my suspicions of the serial killer returning to this town. Thank fuck I followed my instincts and moved here.

CHAPTER THREE

– KATHLEEN –

Elena is standing in front of the office, nervously wringing her hands. I walk toward her with Marvin falling in step beside me. It annoys the fuck out of me that he went over my head to give himself a job. Not just any job either; my second in command.

He could have taken my job and strangely enough, I find it irritating that he gracefully took a step back and even calls me boss lady. Then there's the infuriating part of him being right. The first, second, and now the third time he shows up in my town predicting shit about a case.

I do have to admit, the case he's working on hasn't left my mind. It's why I kept digging into it myself and the reason I handed the information I found over to Marvin. He might be an asshole, but he's an asshole who is very good at his job.

That little fact is also the reason why I haven't said anything about him becoming the undersheriff. It means I'm going home after my shift and won't be working a double. Hell, he can work when I'm off, so I don't have to see him; perfect solution all around when we're short-staffed.

"No need to be nervous, Elena," I gently tell the student who rotates shifts with her co-worker, Wendell.

She releases a deep sigh. "The body cross-contaminated the bloating experiment."

"Which means we have multiple angles of the scene," I muse. "Elena, would you be so kind as to show the body to the undersheriff? I'm going to check the feed real quick and will join you guys soon."

I walk into the office and get behind the computer. A few keystrokes later I'm looking at a person, dressed in black with a hood over his head who is dumping the body. I forward the digital feed to myself and jog out of the office. Marvin is squatting next to the body and turns his head my way when he hears me approach.

“Anything?” Marvin rumbles.

“I've secured the feed. We'll go through it when we're done here. Have you called in your team to process the scene?”

He gives me a tight nod. “They should arrive within twenty minutes. Elena is waiting near the parking lot to guide them here.”

“It's one of the agents,” I state. “Not the one who gave the interview, but her colleague.”

“Yes,” Marvin confirms.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I stare down at the naked body and notice the same injuries as all the others and muse, “There’s no specific link between victims, no similarities, different jobs, hair, features, height...he always follows a torture routine, carving them up with a knife, removing the lips, and the labia majora...wait.”

Marvin slowly gets to his feet. “What? What are you thinking about?”

I let my gaze collide with Marvin’s dark eyes. “We know these two agents were picked because the agent had a big mouth. He might have picked all his victims that way. It would at least make sense why he cuts off the lips, top and bottom...degrading them, taking away the ability to mouth off, and maybe even have a sexual aspect...issues rooted in his past? A female figure denigrating him for years? What did the profiler write in his or her report about this serial killer?”

“Nothing you just mentioned. Though, I have a gut feeling you’re spot on,” Marvin rumbles. “We need to dig into the other stuff you mentioned.”

“About the previous owner of Eastlynne’s ranch? Yeah. There were rumors about the couple when the wife was still alive, and every child they fostered left town as soon as they were legally able to. Social services never intervened so I don’t think there are any records of anything. My dad might know more, but if it was something crucial as neglect or any type of abuse? The Iron Hot Blood would have intervened.”

“We’ll run the names of all the kids they fostered first, dig in before we swing by the club and have a chat with the older generation,” Marvin states. “At least now we have a solid theory, maybe even some possible suspects, especially with the fucker returning to this town, it definitely makes sense.”

“Or it could all be a coincidence.” I shrug and add on a grumble, “You have been on this case for weeks and I’m just throwing shit together from the first idea that hit me.”

“Bullshit,” Marvin grunts and takes a step into my personal space. “You have skills, boss lady. Not just the experience or training, but your upbringing, legacy, law enforcement running in your blood. It’s the updates you keep adding to your brain. Definitely admirable.” He jabs a finger into the air and whirls it around. “This body farm right here also shows the challenge of revealing the truth. Research is vital. A theory is just as important since it’s intended to make sense of facts or pieces of a puzzle. You enjoy solving puzzles and not the crossword kind. Hey, now it makes perfect sense why you have a trained cadaver dog.”

I give the man my first genuine smile. Damn. If he’s not being a major asshole he’s actually not so annoying. The compliments he threw at me helped lessen my annoyance, but still.

“Wrench has a knack for it. The others from that litter are trained search and rescue dogs.” The sound of voices spurs me to glance over my shoulder. “Looks like your team is here to process the scene.”

I gasp when I feel Marvin’s hot breath right next to my ear. “Stay away from Dean, no matter what that smooth suck-up fucker says or does.”

I take a step back to frown at Marvin, but I hardly get a chance when I hear the rumble of a voice. “Damn, now I understand why you’re moving here, brother.”

The man lets his gaze slide over me, lingering on my breasts. He takes a step to the side to...oh, come the fuck on.

Narrowing my eyes, I snap, “Really? Checking out my ass when you were called out here to—”

The man who looks like Marvin, but is somewhat younger, cuts me off. “Assist my brother because he has the hots for a stunner of a sheriff he’d like to get under him so he becomes the undersheriff to move things along? Yeah, sugar tits, really. Your ass needs to be checked firsthand to see why my brother would hand over the president patch without a second thought.”

I give a slight turn and smack my own ass. “There, you’ve seen it. Now get to fucking work, asshole.”

There’s no way I’m waiting around with these idiots. My job here is done. Well, after I’ve written out a report it will be, but Marvin and his team will handle everything from here on out. I ignore everyone and make my way toward my car.

“Hang on,” I hear Marvin rumble behind me. “Kathleen, wait up, dammit.”

Opening the door, I wait for Wrench to jump in before I get behind the wheel. The passenger door opens and I turn to glare at Marvin.

“Where are you going?” Marvin questions.

“Back to the office. We’re understaffed, remember? You and your lovely brother have it under control here. So, run along, undersheriff.” I start the car and wait for him to close the door.

I should have known the asshole would get inside my car because the annoying man never acts the way I think he will. Ignoring the man has become a normality whenever he’s around so that’s exactly what I do until I park in front of the office. Wrench jumps out behind me and from the corner of my eye I notice Marvin thumbing the screen of his phone.

He glances up and rumbles, “I have to head to the Iron Hot Blood ranch. My horses

will arrive within half an hour.”

“Here,” I quip and throw the keys to the patrol car in his direction.

He effortlessly snatches them out of the air. “Don’t you need it?”

I jab a thumb over my shoulder. “We have another patrol car parked out back if I need to head out so for now you can take mine. You can have the one parked out back when you return mine. I’ll have the new work schedule ready when you return to the station.”

Without waiting for a reply, I walk inside and head for the deputy’s desk. “Hey Seth, let the new undersheriff know he’s on duty when he returns.”

“It’s official? He’s the new undersheriff?” Seth questions.

I shrug. “That man and the motorcycle club he’s a part of are above either one of our paygrades. If he says he’s the new undersheriff you better believe it. On the other hand, he’s overqualified for the position. The fucker could just as easily have my job, instead he picked a position that’s currently available.”

Seth bobs his head. “At least you don’t have to pull a double.”

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I snap my fingers. “Right as rain.”

Seth chuckles as I head into my office to finish up some paperwork. Wrench plunks down at my feet and I only have thirty minutes in my office before I have to go out and smooth over a fight at the diner.

A couple of hours later I’m finally able to enter the apartment above the sheriff’s office and kick off my shoes. Wrench jumps onto the couch next to me. I’m so bone-tired. Unable to keep my eyes open long enough to find the bedroom, I simply close my eyes and fall asleep on the couch.

I’m dreaming of coffee, or at least I think so ’cause the smell is teasing my nose and activating my body to fill the craving that’s arising inside me. Groaning, I drag my upper body forward and move my head left and right to stretch out the kinks of falling asleep in a sitting position.

“Are you always dead to the world, sleeping in uncomfortable-as-fuck positions?” Marvin grunts, making my head whip in the direction of the chair across from the couch.

“What the hell are you doing inside my home?” I growl and glare at my dog who is plastered against Marvin’s leg, and grumble, “Traitor.”

Marvin smirks and pets my freaking dog while taking a sip of his coffee. “I can get into anything.”

Except for my pussy, my dirty mind quips. Where the hell did that thought come

from? The resolute denial now makes me wonder what it would be like to have sex with Marvin. The way we always go head-to-head could mean fireworks between the sheets...kinda like angry, make up sex.

Damn. Somehow it sounds enticing. Yeah, never going to happen, especially with him moving into town and becoming undersheriff. I shake my head to clear it of my twisted train of thoughts and get to my feet. I need coffee if I need to handle him this early in the freaking morning.

Marvin follows me into the kitchen. "It was a quiet night, leaving me with all the time I needed to run the names of all the kids fostered by Arthur and Beth Bronson, who used to live on the property Eastlynne bought. Eight foster kids in total and three of them fit the profile."

Suddenly wide awake I turn and gape at him. "Three? What the hell? Are you telling me the Bronson family created a cesspool of crazy?" I grab a mug and fill it up while I mutter, "Though, not all serial killers are crazy psychopaths and being a psychopath doesn't make a person a serial killer. Fostering children means they are not connected by DNA, the brain of a serial killer simply functions differently than a normal human brain, but something must have happened during their time at that farm. Do you have the files here?"

The corner of his mouth twitches. "You can have them after you've had some coffee. Let me fix you some breakfast."

He takes a step in the direction of the fridge and I mutter under my breath, "Good luck with that," knowing there's nothing in there.

I'm a workaholic and most times swing by the clubhouse or the diner to get something to eat. It saves time and throwing out groceries because they always go bad with me not taking the time to relax and fix myself something to eat. Damn, but

I'm hungry and wouldn't mind seeing that annoying man making me breakfast.

My eyes practically bulge out of my head when I notice the fridge is stocked to the brim. "You went out to get me groceries?"

He doesn't turn around and grabs eggs, bacon, sweet peppers, and other stuff. "Not just you, boss lady. I'm taking the guest bedroom so this will be my apartment, and my fridge as well. And I happen to like eating and having the cabinets stocked."

What. The. Actual. Freaking. Fuck?

CHAPTER FOUR

– MARVIN –

She's fuming, I can tell by the death glare she's giving me. If she knew how my cock hardens every damn time she throws her sass and glare around? She'd probably make a run for it or shoot me in the balls, whatever crosses her mind first.

Yesterday I'd learned that we communicate in a civilized matter whenever we discuss leads and crucial case matters.

It's for this reason I start to explain, "The three foster kids were never on the ranch at the same time. Murphy Rambeau, Thorn Kendrick, and Robin Almond. Robin is a woman by the way."

Kathleen steps closer to the counter and leans a hip against it as I start to chop up the sweet pepper.

"A female serial killer? No. That doesn't add up." She snatches a piece of sweet pepper and pops it into her mouth.

I keep slicing and dicing. “I agree, but like I said, she fits the profile and we need to be thorough.”

“I’ll call my father later today and ask for a meeting with Weston, Roper, and a few of the others. They all might have some information about some of the foster kids, or at least about the Bronsons.”

“Breakfast first, work later,” I tell her and whisk the eggs, adding a bit of milk.

“Who taught you how to cook?” she questions.

I shoot her a grin. “My parents and some of the old ladies at the clubhouse.”

Kathleen settles with some coffee at the kitchen table.

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

When I place a plate filled with food in front of her, she asks, “Any updates from your brother? The coroner? Anything?”

I should remind her we should have breakfast before discussing work, but on the other hand, we communicate nicely while discussing case related details.

It’s for this reason I tell her, “Two out of three I mentioned have a criminal record, the other one was hospitalized after a mental breakdown. Robin Almond has several restraining orders filed against her, all ex-girlfriends. She spent a few years in jail for aggravated assault with a knife.”

Kathleen points her fork in my direction and swallows some of her eggs before stating, “That’s why you added her to the suspect list.”

“Thanks to you we have a suspect list,” I compliment her.

She spears a piece of egg on her fork. “It would have been a matter of time until he fucks up. He, or she, might feel invincible to stay one step ahead of the law, but no one’s perfect. Something else that bugs me is the whole missing crime scene thing. I mean, we only find the bodies and they are not found at the kill site. No DNA, particulates, or anything to tie a suspect. It’s almost as if—”

“The killer has knowledge of forensic science,” I finish for her.

“These days you can learn a lot through the internet, TV series, books, whatever. The killer doesn’t have to work in law enforcement or in a lab to have that kind of knowledge. Though, it definitely raises questions as to why there still hasn’t been any

fingerprints, blood, fibers, or anything found that will lead to the kill site. Even the vehicle used to dump the body in front of Eastlynne's ranch was found squeaky clean three miles down the road." Shoving her empty plate away from her she adds, "That was the only time there were any witnesses to a body dump."

I bob my head. "It's why you started digging into the ranch's background, along with the other body found the same day, except that one was killed and buried long ago. The lab has been backed up, causing delays in shit. We've brought in a forensic anthropologist to study the bones because we haven't been able to identify the body yet."

"Yeah. Smart thinking, bringing in an expert. Hopefully, we'll have an ID and more info soon." Kathleen gets to her feet. "Thanks for breakfast. I'm gonna take a shower and get ready for my shift."

Kathleen tries to pick up her plate, but I take it from her and place it into the sink. "I'll do the dishes, once you're ready we can swing by the Iron Hot Blood. I hope you're right, and questioning some of the brothers who were around when the family was still living at that ranch will lead to additional information."

She nods and checks her watch. "Maybe you should head there while I catch up on some work. We're still understaffed."

I shoot her a grin over my shoulder. "I also took care of that yesterday. Victor, a former brother and buddy of mine, arrived early this morning. We've hired him as the new deputy. I've left his credentials on your desk."

She gapes at me and I watch as flames practically bounce around in her gaze. Yeah, she's back to fuming again, all while I've solved the understaffed issue for her. Without a word or a curse, she spins around and stalks into the hallway.

I quickly rinse the plates and give a short whistle to get Wrench's attention. At least her dog is best buddies with me without any effort. I take my time to walk her dog and when we stroll back into the apartment, she's braiding her hair and is dressed in a fresh uniform.

Once she's finished, she grabs the keys lying on the table, along with her phone, and snaps her fingers to catch Wrench's attention. She completely ignores me as she walks out of the apartment. Grinding my teeth, I open the door and follow her.

The woman is quick and drives off in her patrol car. Good thing I've parked the other patrol car out front and am in pursuit within a few heartbeats. To my surprise, she's heading to the same ranch where I saw her yesterday when the old man Hemwig almost shot her in the chest with rock salt.

This time it's not Hemwig who is causing a scene in the middle of the road, but the neighbor across from him instead.

"Calm down, Ronald," I hear Kathleen tell the man in a soothing tone. "He's just looking for attention. Hemwig is harmless and his threats are empty, you know that as well as I do."

"Harmless? He fucking pissed in my mailbox," Ronald seethes.

I can feel the corners of my mouth twitch. Hemwig is a drunk, a lonely one, but it sounds like the fucker likes to torment his neighbor from across the street.

"I've had it up to here with that asshole. If you're still interested in buying my ranch, Sheriff, then you should head to my real estate guy because I put it up for sale about an hour ago. The first offer I get I'm going to accept and move out of state to live near my only daughter. The ranch is too big for me anyway, but I can't stand to live across from that asshole one day longer," Ronald seethes.

My interest is spiked and I turn to take a closer look at the man's ranch. Taking my phone out of my pocket, I search for the information and with a few thumb strokes I have what I need. Knowing Kathleen has a handle on this situation, I get into my patrol car and head for the real estate guy.

Rearranging my life is easier to do than catching a serial killer. Some of the brothers of Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen declared me an idiot for moving to this small town, and certainly for giving up the president patch along with it.

I knew what I wanted in my future the second I met Kathleen. The fire between us is as vibrant as the back-and-forth banter. My father knew my mother was it for him and kept moving forward, solving a case together in the process, to get what he wanted. Forced proximity worked for them, being on a serial killer case just like me and Kathleen.

It's why the plan for what to do took root inside my head. Things just started falling into place when I made my decision. First, it was the job availability, the perks of crashing at the apartment along with it. Now it's a ranch becoming available.

I know the owner mentioned the ranch being on sale to Kathleen, but my end goal is to have her as my old lady. Which means what's mine is hers. So, in the end, it'll be her ranch as well. I know I'm not a Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen nomad anymore, but Kathleen doesn't know I switched patches yesterday.

I was voted in as a full member of the Iron Hot Blood unanimously. Decker might not know the depths of my intentions toward Kathleen, but he'll know soon enough. For now, I've obtained another chess piece and once Ronald has moved I can bring my horses home. The ranch will need some work inside and out, based on the pictures I just saw at the real estate office.

Plus, I have to handle my new neighbor so the fucker doesn't piss in...well anything

except for his own fucking toilet. I'm going over some details Dean sent me while sitting behind Kathleen's desk when she barges into her office.

"It was you, wasn't it?" she snarls.

Page 10

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

Leaning back, I place my hand on my belt buckle and rumble, “I do a lot of things, babe. You have to be more specific for me to answer that question correctly.”

“The ranch. I saw you there when Ronald mentioned it was for sale. You were the only one there and now it’s sold. You bought it, didn’t you? What’s next? Taking my fucking job? Why are you even here? You’re not the one who was born in this town. Do you like to piss me off? Does it get your dick hard? Well, I hope it shrivels up spending your lonely life living here because I’ve had enough. I’m leaving.”

She whirls around to stomp out the door and I’m on my feet within my next breath. “I bought it for us.”

Snorting she growls, “Bullshit. Unless ‘us’ means you and your ego. You’re worming your way into this town by flashing your badge and forcing other’s hands to get what you want.”

Okay, I can hardly deny that one ’cause she’s mostly right.

“Is it so hard to believe I want you?” I ask, deciding to come clean instead of defending myself which would lead to a useless discussion.

She crosses her arms under her tits and pins me with a hard stare. “You want to fuck me? Is that why you’re moving into town, took a lower job than your expertise requires, and bought a home you don’t want to live in, all because you want inside my pussy?”

A smirk slides across my face. I should be aware of the fact that she’s laying a trap,

but hearing her talking about fucking her, wanting inside her pussy? The lust is overriding my brain with the visuals she just planted inside my head.

“Fine,” she huffs. “Get naked, bend me over my desk, fuck me hard, and then leave. Then there will be no other reason for you to stay.”

Okay, this is not what I was expecting. The dilemma thrown my way is a hard one. My cock is harder, that’s for sure, but man do I want to jump on the chance to get inside her. I can either call her bluff and see if it is all bluff...or we end up fucking. She might think it’ll be over and done with one time, but I’ve never felt like I needed a reminder to breathe whenever I look at her.

No other woman takes my breath away. Kathleen is the one who has made me aware of the fact that breathing is vital for living just by merely looking at her. That’s what this woman does to me.

“We can fuck now, tomorrow, or any day of the week. Especially when we’re living together on Ronald’s ranch. I wasn’t lying and I’m not bullshitting you, boss lady. I don’t want your job, or this town if you’re not right there with me. Because if I did, I would have taken the position instead of taking one underneath you.”

It’s time to lay out all the cards. “I’m here because of you. I want you as my old lady and I’m man enough to work underneath you because I know we’re equal in knowledge and strength. I don’t fucking care where I live as long as I have what I need and this job as underboss fills the crime-solving part my brain needs.”

“Old lady?” She narrows her eyes. “Didn’t you turn in your president patch and leave Cowboy Bikers MC Lawmen? You became a Nomad. That doesn’t make sense to rattle how you want to settle.”

Out of everything I threw at her that’s what she questions?

I shoot her a wink and declare, “Didn’t you hear, babe? I’m a full member of Iron Hot Blood now.”

Her eyes go wide and she whispers, “No.”

CHAPTER FIVE

– KATHLEEN –

“My town, workplace, and personal space weren’t enough?” I grit. “You have to take my MC, my fucking family as your own as well?”

He slowly inches closer and I wait for him to be close enough to punch his fucking lights out.

The arrogant man slowly shakes his head. “I’m not taking anything from you, in fact, I’m dedicated to giving you everything you’ll ever need.”

I stare him down—thinking the man has definitely taken a side road and hit the freaking twilight zone—when I become aware of the intensity of his stare. The way he’s holding his body? Legs slightly spread, arms crossed in front of his chest...it’s as if he’s bracing for a fight. A fight to...to...to prove him wrong?

“You’re serious,” I grit, realizing the fact that in some twisted way, he’s telling me he wants me.

Me. As his old lady. And he won’t take no for an answer from anyone, including me.

All I get is a tight nod. Holy fucking crap. I grew up in an MC filled with overbearing Neanderthals. My father, just like all his club brothers, claimed their old lady practically at first glance. Of course, they took their time claiming them

officially, because no sane person would throw themselves head-over-heels into a relationship.

Hell, I've seen it happen recently with both Rourke and Parker. Both of them showed patience and determination to get their old lady. They were both all in before Eastlynne and Cosima were ready to accept. Eastlynne due to her issues, and Cosima was dealing with the loss of her eyesight after an attack.

I rub my temples and mutter, "You're crazy."

I swear the fucker murmurs, "Crazy about you."

Dropping my hands I grit, "You don't even like me. The first time we met you dismissed me and my fucking abilities, preventing me from doing my job and there hasn't been a change whenever you pop in and out of my town. So, why don't you pop back out and leave me the hell alone?"

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“I haven’t dismissed you or your abilities. The only thing I did was divide tasks for what was best for the case we were working on that first time we met. Which happened to be a gang that hurt women and was active in dogfights. Yes, I protected you because Wrench was plastered to your leg and the image of both of you was exactly what that gang would have shredded to pieces. That’s why we put you inside the house to protect Cosima and Eastlynne, still doing your job because you’re damn good at it. You’re a workaholic like me. Hell, better than me ’cause why the fuck would I pick a job to work under someone? Especially when my previous job was miles up the fucking ladder of law enforcement employment? I don’t have a hidden agenda, except when it comes to you and making you mine.”

I gape at the idiot. Well, not so much an idiot, more of a man who lost his fucking mind. I should feel all warm and fuzzy from his confession, and deep down I’m swooning just a bit, but why me?

“Fuck it,” he snaps and before I know what’s happening I find myself plastered against the wall with his body caging me in and his mouth covering mine.

His masculine scent assaults my senses, sensual lips expertly move over mine and demand entrance. I gasp at the feel of his hard length pressing against me and he takes advantage by sliding his tongue into my mouth. There are no other thoughts entering my brain except for surrendering to the pleasure this man instantly releases inside me.

I’ve been kissed in the past, but this man’s lips taste like a promise of an orgasm. My hands dig into the fabric covering his shoulders. I want to tug and rip the buttons apart to feel his skin under my palms. His lips leave mine and skim down my jaw

until he sucks a sliver of the skin of my neck.

Such a sensual spot it shoots sparks of pleasure straight to my clit. My mind is filled with lust when I'm faintly aware of my belt being unbuckled, my pants opened, until Marvin's skilled fingers slide through my drenched folds.

He groans and says with a voice filled with the promise of sex, "Wet for my cock, aren't you, babe. Can't have it yet, not until you're begging for it."

My mind isn't capable of forming a reply, and it should because there's no way I'd beg for anything. Though, when he parts my pussy lips and uses some of my wetness to coat his finger and starts to tease my clit? I'm completely incoherent and ready to beg this man to make me come.

He grazes his teeth along my neck and moves up to place his mouth next to my ear. "You gonna strangle my fingers if I feed them to your greedy pussy?"

"Yes," I whimper.

He croons and without hesitation buries two fingers inside me. Instant pleasure washes over me. Wave after wave of euphoria crashing through my veins and all I can do is ride out the orgasm of a lifetime.

I'm still gasping for my breath when he slowly pumps his fingers in and out of me. It turns into soft petting until he removes his fingers. Pulling back, he licks his fingers clean while he keeps his gaze locked on me.

"A little taste won't be enough." He leans in and brushes his lips against mine to murmur, "Gonna need to put my mouth on you soon, lick your pussy clean and suck an orgasm right from the source."

I swallow hard. My pussy clenches in anticipation and I'm woman enough to admit that I want him to go down on me.

My lips part to dare him to put his mouth on me right freaking now, or put his dick inside me, whatever gives me another orgasm like I just experienced. Damn. That was intense and I need a repeat to make sure my mind and body imagined the heightened feeling I experienced.

He's not my first sexual experience, but definitely the first mind-blowing orgasm supplier. It's a small taste of possibilities. I mean, if the guy did that shit with just his hand? How good would it be when his dick comes out to play? Except, I don't get to dare him or so much as voice one single word before I hear a knock on the door.

Marvin moves to the door and opens it just a crack. "Talk to me, Victor."

I quickly zip up my pants and buckle my belt to step closer and catch a hint of the conversation.

Too late because Marvin closes the door and rumbles, "We need to head out. A body was found in the trunk of a car."

"Crap. How come every time you're in town there's a truckload of bodies? We normally don't have dead bodies, murders, or anything high profile. I know there's a serial killer at work here, but damn...are they escalating with the load of bodies?"

Marvin shrugs. "It might be the agent, the killer already dumped the other one."

I take a step in the direction of the door, but Marvin sidesteps and is blocking me.

"Just so we're clear?" He enters my personal space and places his mouth right next to my ear. "I will put my mouth on your pussy and fill you full of my cock very soon."

My breathing picks up and I'm completely speechless while my mind goes into overdrive imagining him doing exactly what he just said.

Pulling back, he brings us almost nose to nose when he states, "Oh, and I might have acquired the property, but I'll make sure it is in both our names once we start living there. Like I said, boss lady, I don't have a hidden agenda, except when it comes to you and making you mine."

His hand covers the back of my neck to keep me steady as he slams his mouth over mine to give me a scorching kiss which ends just as abruptly.

Stalking to the door he holds it open and rumbles, "After you, babe."

"Don't call me babe if we're working," I hiss as I move past him.

"10-4, boss lady," he huskily states as he falls in step behind me.

Ignoring him, I snap my fingers and make Wrench follow me to the patrol car. I wait till Marvin is seated before firing it up and heading into the direction Marvin tells me when he explains where the car was found. A few minutes later we arrive at a backroad on the edge of town. Dean, along with a few others, is already there examining the scene.

Page 12

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“I texted my brother before we stepped into the patrol car,” Marvin states. “With you mentioning it’s not a routine thing with the bodies piling up, I assumed it was linked to the case we’re working on.”

Strangely enough his reasoning makes sense, and I don’t feel like he’s stepping on any toes, especially not mine. It has nothing to do with the orgasm he just gave me. Though, I have to admit, it did brighten my mood. Who knew an orgasm would mellow me out?

“Good. Let’s hear what your brother has to say,” I state.

I’m about to step out of the car when Marvin blows my mood to smithereens when he says, “Why don’t I find out while you stay in the car?”

Glaring at the idiot I growl, “Why don’t you give your asshole a time-out by keeping it in the front seat since your mouth is farting bullshit.”

Ignoring him I quickly jump out of the car and stomp in Dean’s direction. “Dean, what do we have here?”

“Sexy sheriff,” Dean croons. “Why don’t you step closer so I can show you?”

My fingers curl into fists and I snarl, “Do all of you Cowboy Bikers Lawmen think with your brainless head between your legs? Or does it simply run in the Wolffield family?”

Marvin snorts while Dean chuckles. I’m back to ignoring the idiots as I make my way

to the car. The trunk is open and there's a guy in a biohazard suit taking swabs. And securing whatever he can find.

I get close enough to throw a glance inside and recognize the female agent who gave the interview. Dammit. Looks like she suffered more torture than the other female bodies we found until now. Taking a glove from my pocket, I slide it on and walk to the driver's side of the vehicle. Leaning in the first thing I notice is the scent.

Marvin is leaning into the car on the passenger side, and I ask, "Smell that?"

"Bleach and peroxide. This car has been wiped clean," Marvin states what I'm thinking.

Anger hits me. "We're missing something here. The killer is taunting us, leaving the body and car for us to find because he or she knows there's nothing that's going to link back to the killer. He's a fucking crime scene cleaning expert, destroying everything and leaving us standing with our damn dicks in hand."

The corner of Marvin's mouth twitches.

"Don't say it," I grit. "I know I don't have a dick, I meant it as a metaphorical statement."

The humor slides right off his face when he suddenly states, "You're right."

"Duh," I grumble. "You had your hands in my pants and slit your fingers up my pussy instead of finding a dick and balls."

"Does that mean I don't stand a chance?" Dean whispers from right behind me, making me jump and lash out by jabbing my elbow into his ribs.

Dean grunts and stumbles back. Before I can say or do anything else, Marvin is suddenly in front of me and throws a punch in Dean's face.

I grab Marvin's arm and snap, "Stop."

Marvin whirls around to face me, eyes blazing. "That's why I tried to keep you in the car 'cause I knew that fucker would flirt with you just to piss me off."

"Point taken, but you know I can handle myself," I grit.

Marvin takes off his Stetson and stabs his fingers through his hair before placing it back onto his head. "I know, but he always pisses me off."

"Ah, the true reason why you wanted to move here and stop working with him, eh? I get it now," I whisper in an effort to lighten the mood. "He's a bigger asshole than you."

He shakes his head and I can see some of his anger and frustration slipping. "Glad you noticed."

"I'm perceptive," I simply state.

"You are," he firmly states. "Which is why I think you're right. The killer's profession might just be a crime scene cleaner."

CHAPTER SIX

– MARVIN –

"How did you get this list so damn fast?" Kathleen asks and practically rips the stack of papers from my hands.

Page 13

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I glance over her shoulder to study the information along with her when I simply say, “I still have valuable contacts.”

“How are we going to narrow down this list to a mere few? Check alibies? We don’t know exact timeframes of some of the victims...maybe places? Though, this list is all the people who are, or have been, employed as a crime scene cleaner, right?”

“Right.” I release a sigh. “It’s a lead we need to check out. We might get lucky or it will result in nothing.”

“It beats twiddling our thumbs,” Kathleen murmurs. “Did your contact crosscheck the names of the foster kids from Arthur and Beth Bronson?”

I wince and rub the back of my neck. “I forgot to ask, we should skim over the list and make sure first.”

“They’re in alphabetic order and I already checked, that’s why I asked.” Kathleen sighs. “This sucks. How would we even know if any of them makes a viable suspect?”

Pulling the laptop closer, I take a seat next to her and glance at the first name on the list. “We crosscheck and work our way through the list.”

Kathleen gets behind her desk and hands over some of the names to divide the task when she fires up her own computer. Hours pass and it’s way past dinnertime when I notice Kathleen yawn for the third time.

The woman has a work drive that puts everything second place, including her well-being. Checking the time, I shove the laptop shut and snag the papers away from her.

“Come on, we’re going upstairs. I’m going to fix us some food, we’ll discuss the case some more, and then you need sleep for a couple of hours. I don’t mean the kind where you fall asleep wherever you’re sitting, I mean in a bed, got it?”

She doesn’t take her eyes off the computer screen and waves me off. “Go upstairs and cook. I can work until you’re done.”

Stalking around the desk, I gently wrap my fingers around her upper arm and nudge her to move. “Let’s go. I’ll let you borrow my laptop so you can work upstairs. I’m not going to leave you in your office because you would just keep on working even if dinner is ready.”

She glares at me while muttering a few curses under her breath. At least she turns off her computer and follows me out of the office. Once upstairs I place the laptop on the kitchen table along with the papers and Kathleen dives right back in.

Kathleen sinks her teeth in anything that crosses her path, and I’m basically the same workaholic. Except, I also like to take some distance every now and then. My brain needs a breather to look at things with fresh eyes. It’s why I offered to make dinner. The bonus is feeding the woman I’m completely enthralled with ’cause she for damn sure doesn’t take care of herself with the basic necessities of food and sleep.

I layer some fresh mozzarella slices over the chicken breasts, add some parmesan, and put the dish into the oven. Kathleen is balancing her head in her hands and by the way her eyes keep falling shut? I’d say she’s completely fried. Closing the laptop, I reach out to take the papers and place them on top and carry it all into the living room.

When I stroll back into the kitchen Kathleen is stretching her arms above her head and yawns once again. “Dean found anything yet?”

I take my phone out of my pocket and place it on the kitchen table. “Nope, nothing.”

“Crazy how this case doesn’t even have the time to run cold with the dead bodies piling up, all while we have no freaking clue who the killer is.” Kathleen lets out a little growl. “I hate how the killer is three or four steps ahead of us every damn time.”

“That’s why we’re taking the rest of the night off and will get a good night’s sleep to dive back in with fresh eyes tomorrow morning.”

“I hate wasting time,” she grumbles.

Chuckling, I place my hands on her shoulders and gently rub at the tight knots in her muscles. “Recharging your body and mind isn’t wasting time, boss lady. It’s a valuable way to hit reset and go back at it with your full attention.”

“Less talk, more rubbing,” she groans. “Damn, that feels good.”

My cock hardens at the sound of those sexy as fuck moans falling from her lips. I want nothing more than to strip her naked and fuck her long and hard, but the woman is exhausted and never puts herself first. So, I’ll make damn sure I take care of her needs before my own.

I keep massaging her until the dish I made in the oven is ready. A groan of protest rips from her when my hands fall away.

“I’m all yours whenever you need a massage,” I promise her as I step away to get the oven mitts.

“Smells delicious,” she murmurs and jumps up to grab us some plates.

I made enough for both of us and we fall silent while we polish off all the parmesan chicken. Kathleen groans and leans back to rub her belly. Getting to my feet, I grab her empty plate and mine so I can rinse them.

“You cooked, I’m gonna do the dishes,” she states and bumps my hip as she takes the plates from me.

Liking her playful change in attitude I remark, “Remind me to massage and feed you on a regular basis.”

Snorting, she mutters something under her breath and it takes my brain a few seconds to catch up.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

Laughter rips from me and I quip, “Including orgasms, got it.”

Her cheeks flush and before she can swing a remark at my head, I slink away to check the messages on my phone.

“Dean has finally been able to ID the body that was found buried at the edge of Eastlynne’s property,” I muse.

Kathleen grabs the dishtowel and starts to dry off our plates. “He did?”

“The woman went missing years before all the other bodies were dumped and found,” I muse as I thumb through Dean’s info. “It might not be connected with the serial killer.”

I feel her coming up behind me to get a glimpse of the info as I scroll through it.

“Iris Riggs,” Kathleen muses. “Riggs, why does that name sound familiar?”

I scroll back and show her the info as well as voice it, “Iris was the daughter of Lucian Riggs, Arthur Bronson’s ranch hand. He reported his daughter missing six years ago. The forensic anthropologist who examined the bones concluded that she was killed and buried six years ago. So, it’s safe to say Iris was buried there the whole time.”

“Cause of death was stabbing,” Kathleen states. “Stab wounds were deep enough to slice through the ribs. They listed what size and type of knife was used by the killer by measuring the V-nicks on the second and third ribs, along with the distance

between the ribs that gives the width of the blade. Combined with the striation on the thoracic vertebrae gives the length of the blade. Stabbings are personal. Wait...it's the same size and type used in the recent killings, right?"

Kathleen takes her phone and checks her notes. "Yes, look."

She turns the screen to me and I glance over the coroner report that mentioned the size and type of the knife that caused the wounds of the most recent victim.

"Fuck. Maybe it is connected and she was the first victim," I grunt.

"It would explain why the killer made a point of dumping a body in front of the ranch. Maybe the killer wanted this body to be found as well. We need to find out exactly what happened to this woman. Come on, let's go." Kathleen grabs her keys from the table and shoves her phone back into her pocket.

"Now hang on, where are we going?" I ask and quickly fall in step behind her.

Wrench trots out the door along with us when Kathleen states, "To the Iron Hot Blood ranch. We still need to talk to the first generation and with this information landing in our lap? We shouldn't wait any longer."

I'd like nothing more than to make sure Kathleen gets a good night's sleep, but she's right. With the information we just obtained it might give us more insight in Iris's life, and maybe her death along with it.

"I sent my father a text. Most members will be waiting for us in church," Kathleen says once we're on our way.

"I could have done that," I mutter.

She turns her head to glance at me for a breath or two before focusing back on the road. “You can take lead in the discussion once we’re in church. This time it’s not just me who is law enforcement working with the MC. You are now a member and the undersheriff. Which means you belong in there and I don’t ’cause technically I’m not a member.”

I shouldn’t say this when she’s driving, but I can’t keep my mouth shut. “You’re the daughter of a member, and as of today, you’re my old lady. You definitely belong in there.”

Her knuckles turn white from holding the steering wheel in a death grip. “It’s a good thing you just—”

“Made dinner, gave you a massage, and am excellent in giving orgasms? Yeah, your old man has more qualities, and you’ll get acquainted with them very soon.”

A muscle jumps in her jaw as if she’s grinding her teeth. “I’ve recently told Cosima and Eastlynne that there’s no way I’ll accept a man to take charge of my life.”

Her words put me on edge and now I’m the one grinding my teeth.

Kathleen brings the patrol car to a stop in front of the Iron Hot Blood ranch and turns to face me. “You take charge, but every action is done with my safety and wellbeing in mind. You’re very, very annoying and make it damn hard not to fall for you.”

“I’ve been feeling uneasy since the first time I laid eyes on you,” I confess. “I had no clue why until it hit me full force while I was away from you. It was easy to entrust and swear my heart to you and the moment I did I felt calm within the havoc surrounding me. You belong to me, boss lady. Which is why I don’t want to take control of your life. It’s a partner I crave who will stand strong beside me. One who shares the same law enforcement passion, who doesn’t back down, and can handle

anything in life including my asshole self.”

“You’re definitely an asshole,” Kathleen murmurs as she turns to face me.

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Thanks for noticing.”

I gently reach out to let her get out of the car if she wants to. She stays rooted as I place my hand against the back of her neck to pull her close. My mouth covers hers in a soft and sensual kiss. I intended to keep it light and fast, but her taste is like adding fuel to a fire. My tongue dances with hers and when she groans into my mouth I’m ready to pull her close and make her straddle me.

Instead, our kiss is rudely interrupted when someone knocks on the passenger side window. We turn our heads to see Decker glaring at us. Fuck.

CHAPTER SEVEN

– KATHLEEN –

“This is embarrassing,” I mutter and want nothing more than to bury my face into Marvin’s chest.

Hiding has never been my strong point and it’s why I move to get out of the car and come face-to-face with my mother who is standing on the driver’s side. While my father was glaring at us, my mom was sporting a grin from ear to ear.

“Nice,” she whispers while I wait for Wrench to jump out of the car.

“A word, Marvin,” my father clips and strides into the clubhouse without looking back.

“Dad,” I snap in an effort to call him back but it’s useless.

Marvin wanders my way as if the man doesn’t have a care in the world.

He leans in and brushes his lips against mine. “I’ll handle it. Like I said, you’re meant to be mine. Nothing and no one in this fucked-up world will tell me otherwise.”

“Okay,” I find myself whispering in return.

I could fight him head-on, but I’d be lying to myself. He annoys the hell out of me and yet the man is also caring, thoughtful, respectful, loyal, and very direct.

He raises one of his eyebrows in challenge when he asks, “You accepting my claim, old lady?”

I jab a finger against his chest and grunt, “I’m still your boss.” Smoothing my voice to a whisper, I add, “Besides being your old lady.”

The corner of his mouth twitches. “Got it, boss lady.”

He spins on his heels and jogs in the direction of the clubhouse.

“That boy has it bad for you,” my mother states and hooks her arm around mine as we follow in Marvin’s direction. “Now, tell me all about how you made that asshole drop to his knees and give you that look of utter worship.”

“Mom,” I groan. “Can’t we discuss something else? Marvin and I came here to talk about a case.”

She pulls me in the direction of the couches where the old ladies of the older generation are sitting, along with Eastlynne and Cosima.

“Later. First, we need to discuss that boy.” Pulling me down next to me she adds, “Let the men talk in church while we get caught up here.”

“She totally means sucking all the spicy details right out of you,” Cosima states.

“Definitely,” Harlene quips. “And we’re all here for it so you might as well spill.”

“Come on, Kathleen, humor us oldies. You managed to snag a lawman who willingly took some steps back law-wise to work under you, moved to your hometown, and switched MCs. The man practically threw his life around just to be with you. Romantic as fuck for sure,” Cassidy croons and sits on the edge of her seat.

A deep sigh rips from me and I grumble, “I’m starting to understand that. At first, he was a major asshole who kept interfering with my shit even when he wasn’t in town.”

“And now he’s still a major asshole, but one who soothes out the annoyance by giving you orgasms.” Cosima chuckles. “Parker was just as annoying and persistent.”

“His father too,” Cassidy grumbles. “A woman can only take so much before she caves and lets the dude eat her pussy.”

“Oh. My. Freaking. Insanity cesspool,” I groan and bury my head in my hands while everyone around me laughs.

My mother bumps my shoulder. “Nothing to be embarrassed about, sweetie. Everyone has sex.”

“Yeah, and if they don’t? That’s just sad ’cause the release of endorphins lightens your mood, even if you just use your fingers instead of riding a Cowboy Biker.” Kadence shrugs. “It’s important for the brain chemicals so you owe it to your mind and body...you know for the sake of your own health and sanity and all.”

“I came here to talk about a case we’re working on, not about sex, jeez,” I huff and stare at all the old ladies surrounding me.

“Oh, shush.” Greta waves her hand. “We might tease you a bit, but we’re all happy as hell for you. Now, why did you come here to talk about the case? It’s the serial killer one, right?”

Page 16

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I instantly bob my head, liking the way Greta shifts the discussion back to the reason Marvin and I came here. She used to be an undercover DEA agent. That's actually the reason why she stepped into the life of this MC when she posed as Alfie's nurse. Greta has two old men instead of just one. The three of them have been in a loving relationship for decades and have raised several children together.

I clear my throat and tell them, "We have an ID for the body that was buried on the edge of Eastlynne's property. It's Iris Riggs. She went missing six years ago...she's been dead all that time."

Harlene places a hand over her mouth and mumbles, "Oh no."

"I remember when she went missing," Cassidy says with sadness tinging her voice.

"She didn't have an easy life," Harlene whispers and her eyes find mine. "I reckon you want to know a bit about her when she was alive?"

I bob my head. "Anything you might remember."

"I didn't know her personally, though I did hear the rumors and saw her around town. She was Lucian Riggs's daughter, the Bronson's ranch hand. His wife died giving birth to her so she never had a mother and grew up at that ranch because they lived in a tiny house on the property. I remember how the whole town talked about Iris because she had a kid when she was fifteen. The gossip was bad enough for her father to send her to live with his brother in another state. Iris came back when the kid was three years old. By then the gossip had died down some."

“Did anyone know who the father was?” I question. “The forensic anthropologist said there was evidence that she gave birth, but there isn’t a record of it.”

“No one knew. The gossip went from Lucian knocking his own kid up to Arthur Bronson because he and his wife had a falling-out in their marriage around the time Iris gave birth.”

A rush of adrenaline hits me, feeling the pieces of a puzzle fall in place. If Arthur had taken advantage of Iris at that young age, it would explain the falling-out of his marriage and why there was no record of the child being born.

“The kid, it was a boy wasn’t it?” I question.

Harlene frowns. “How did you know?”

“A hunch,” I mutter and glance over my shoulder at the closed door to church.

“Do you think Weston has the same information you just told me?” I wonder.

Harlene nods. “Yeah, I think so. I mean, those rumors I told you went all over town.”

“Uh huh, those and about all those foster kids they took in for the money and spare hands to work around the ranch,” Cassidy snarls.

My mother sighs beside me. “Everyone knew they didn’t spend one dime of the money on those kids. They had dirty clothes which were donated by church and some of the town folks who took pity on them. Everyone knew about their fucked-up situation, but no one did anything about it. Your father did report them but somehow they always passed the visits and checks with flying colors. They weren’t mistreating them, and they had an excuse for everything. Like how they could get a bath but skipped some days because they liked to get dirty and play on the ranch. Decker

always used to say they drilled those kids into playing along when they needed to keep up appearances. Beth was a hard woman, no one liked her except her husband. Decker never trusted the Bronsons, but there was nothing to be done about it. Things got less tense on that ranch after his wife's accident six years ago."

Harlene leans forward. "That wife of his was a tyrant, and everyone gossiped how it might not have been an accident she was trampled by bulls."

"Iris was killed around that time as well," I quip, making all eyes land on me.

"No shit?" Greta gasps.

"No shit," I confirm.

"Needless to say, you're definitely onto something," Greta states.

"Yeah. Thanks, ladies. All of you have been a big help," I tell them with a thankful smile in my voice.

The door of church opens behind me and I turn to see Marvin stalking out. "Can we talk somewhere or do you want to head home to discuss the case?"

My mother leans in. "It's already late, the both of you could crash in the room here at the clubhouse."

I nod and tell Marvin as I get to my feet, "Let's go to my room."

"Take mental notes because we will want details," Cosima whispers as I stalk past her.

I flip her off and hear the women's laughter fill the room behind me. Talk about a

gossip mill. On the other hand, it did provide me with crucial information. I wonder if Marvin got the same intel from Weston and the rest of the older generation who were around when everything happened with Iris.

As soon as we're in my room and the door closes behind me, I state, "We need to get DNA from Arthur Bronson."

A sly grin spreads across Marvin's face. "You got the same background story I did I reckon? And I think you're right. Even if we don't have anything to compare it with now, the killer might fuck-up at some point and leave something behind. Everything I heard all adds up perfectly that Iris's son is the serial killer we're looking for. It's one hell of a motive with Iris being the first kill."

Page 17

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“Maybe Beth was the first kill,” I muse. “If Arthur knocked up a kid, creating a scandal and with it a falling-out of their marriage...Iris being sent away and returning after years. Beth might have resented the kid for being the walking, talking reminder.”

Marvin points a finger at me. “Yes. It explains the hatred toward the women and the mutilation. The mouthing off and belittling, it’s why he killed those two agents and took a huge risk.”

“He’s probably been degraded his whole upbringing, living in shame, not even in the system. Fucking hell, it’s him Marvin, there’s no doubt about it,” I state.

“Gonna be a bitch to catch him if we don’t have a name or record of this fucker. We don’t even have a clue what the fucker looks like,” Marvin grumbles.

An idea comes to mind. “Maybe we should lure him out, set a trap he wouldn’t be able to resist.”

Instantly Marvin starts to shake his head and growls, “No way. No fucking way, Kathleen. I know what you have in mind and it’s not going to happen. I won’t ever put you in danger or let you willingly put yourself at risk like that. Because that’s what you’re thinking about, right? Doing the same stupid shit that agent did and got herself killed for it.”

I wince, clearly I haven’t thought it through. “I know it sounds bad, but you said it yourself, it’s going to be damn hard to catch this fucker.”

“I don’t care,” Marvin growls and takes a menacing step forward.

Narrowing my eyes I get annoyed and snap, “Agents all over the world put their lives in jeopardy by going undercover. Why not me?”

“Because none of those are mine and you are,” he snarls, throwing his arms up as if that’s a logical explanation.

Not wanting to deny it, I fire back, “That might be, but it doesn’t mean we shouldn’t think about me challenging him as a way to catch him.” Closing the distance I add, “I know you’ll never let anything happen to me.”

The muscle in his jaw jumps, and I can tell by the angry look still plastered on his face that he’s not going to budge.

“Fine,” I mutter with a sigh. “But we’re going to make it a backup plan for now.”

He doesn’t say anything and keeps standing in front of me, muscles tight as if he’s balancing on the edge of flipping the fuck out.

“Marvin?” I whisper, not knowing what to say or do.

“I won’t lose you now that you’re finally mine,” he states with a tormented voice.

Reaching out, I let my fingers slide to the back of his neck and press my body against his.

“You won’t lose me,” I murmur against his mouth and let my tongue slide over his bottom lip.

Finally, I feel his muscles slightly relax. A growl rumbles through his chest and then

he's kissing me hard while his hands grip my hips as he grinds his hard cock against me.

"Need to fuck you," he snarls.

I sink my teeth into his bottom lip and taunt, "What's stopping you?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

– MARVIN –

What's stopping you? Those very words seal her fate and I start to rip away her clothes to strip her naked. I take a step back and let my gaze feast on her lush tits, broad hips, and slick pussy as I discard my clothes.

Grabbing her by the waist, I throw her onto the bed and bury my face between her legs before her ass bounces off the mattress. Her hands fly into my hair, curling her fingers to yank on the strands caught by her fists to keep my head in place.

I eat her pussy like a starved man, relishing in the tangy taste of my old lady. Until it grounds me enough to slow down to explore every inch of her pussy. I tease her enough to drive her crazy before I dip my tongue inside her.

"Marvinnnnn," she pleads and grinds herself against me to seek more friction.

Digging my fingers into her hips, I continue to torment her clit and finally let her come. Her taste explodes into my mouth, turning the tables on me 'cause it takes everything inside me not to blow my load right here and now.

She's moaning and swearing softly under her breath as her body shakes with the force of the orgasm I just gave her. I keep licking and sucking to prolong her pleasure and

slowly let her come down from the waves of bliss.

When her body falls slack against the mattress, I crawl up her body, placing a hand right next to her head. I reach down to palm my cock and slap her clit with the tip where I have a thick ring going through the slit. I hiss at the contact, enjoying the added friction the piercing gives.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I've had the Prince Albert piercing for a few years, and I have to admit, I never thought about the woman's perspective 'cause I couldn't care less. Now, though? Taking in the wide eyes of my old lady as they fill with lust? She's completely intrigued as I slowly pump my cock in my hand and let the piercing tease her clit as I spread my precum all over her slick pussy.

My voice is guttural, even to my own ears, when I ask, "This pussy ever had a pierced cock fuck it hard?"

She only shakes her head and gasps when I smack her clit hard with my cock, making sure the piercing hits the bundle of nerves.

"Good girl, answering my question with what I like to hear. Now, answer me this...are you going to let me fuck you bare?" I feed her greedy pussy an inch or two before sliding over her clit again. "I'm clean and ready to fill you to the brim with my cum."

Kathleen raises her hips, moving to seek out my cock to impale herself. She's caught up in the lust and desire drenching the room, and so am I. Though, I need her to answer the damn question.

Moving my head close to her tit, I snag her nipple between my teeth and give her a sweet bite. She gasps as I free her nipple and stare down at her to see the sting of pain morphing into pleasure.

"Give me an answer, Kathleen. If you don't, I'll fuck you bare. I already know you're mine no matter what and any kid we'll conceive will be welcomed with open arms.

Yet, you might want to focus on us and your career before taking a couple of months off to pop out our kid so you can go back to working again.”

Her body stops moving and the lust in her eyes dims slightly to give her some focus.

The corner of my mouth twitches. “I knew that would get your attention.”

“A couple of months off,” she muses and slightly tilts her head. “You wouldn’t force me to stop?”

The hand I had wrapped around my cock is now cupping the side of her face. “Pinning down a force as powerful as a tornado when it comes to law enforcement would be an insane effort. The town would take a hit and so would I because there’s no way you would respect me if I don’t respect you. If the tables were turned, would you demand I stopped working for any reason whatsoever?”

“Hell no,” she instantly states. “Solving crime is a part of you, just like riding your motorcycle, or a horse for that matter.”

I smile proudly. “That right there, boss lady, is why I would never hesitate to return the respect and loyalty engraved in your bones.”

“I never stood a chance the day we met, did I?” she murmurs.

Reaching down, I fist my cock and line up. I slam my hips forward and bury myself to the hilt inside her when I growl, “Mine.”

Her nails are digging into my shoulders and she’s completely rigid underneath me. Her eyes are squeezed shut and I stare down at her when the realization hits as hard as her tight as hell pussy squeezing the life out of my cock.

I let my head fall in the crook of her neck, tenderly brushing my nose up and down to try and smooth out some of the tension in her body.

“Such a good girl, taking my cock to the hilt and trying to strangle my length in retaliation. Tell me, are you so fucking tight because you have been saving this sweet pussy just for my cock?” I croak.

“I’m not a virgin,” she clips and adds in a mere whisper, “I’ve used toys.”

I could laugh, but she wouldn’t like it. Fucking hell, used toys. That doesn’t compare to my pierced cock.

Not to mention, “You’ve only been teasing yourself with those toys, haven’t you? Experimenting without satisfaction I reckon.”

Because if she did fuck herself with a fake dick, she would have reacted differently to me filling her up in one stroke. I mean, I’m big, but I don’t have a monstrosity of a cock.

She glares at me. “Are we going to have sex or do you need to keep talking so you’ll get off by the sound of your voice?”

Motherfucker.

I shift on top of her and let my dick slide a few inches out of her tight pussy before surging back in. She gasps and I smirk down at her. Wrapping my fingers around her throat, I place my thumb on her chin to make sure she keeps her eyes locked with mine as I lean in.

Our mouths are a breath apart when I grunt, “I will only get off when your pussy strangles my cock during the orgasm I’ll be giving you.”

“Shut up and kiss me, asshole,” she hisses and I chuckle as I slam my mouth over hers.

Slamming my hips back and forth, I keep fucking her while our mouths fight for dominance. I can feel her pulse underneath my hand. The experience is exhilarating. Everything about this woman heightens the sense of my being.

Having her close, our bodies slick and warm against one another as I keep burying myself inside her, flaming up an orgasm we both crave shows how extremely compatible we are. Moving as one force entwined in bliss is a first for me, and I know it’s the same for her.

Her pussy tightens, hips slamming back as she fucks herself on and off my cock while I move my hips in a punishing rhythm. Rough. Carnal. Erratic breathing. Flesh hitting flesh. Yet, it’s the most beautiful experience between a man and a woman. To be able to merge and become one with pleasure two people create and relish in together.

Page 19

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

Like fireworks, my body feels the spark and explodes from the inside out. Her pussy spasms around my cock as it thickens and pulses inside her, spraying a load of cum inside her to make sure every inch of her womb is decorated with it.

At least, that's what it feels like because my cock keeps pulsing and my legs are twitching with tremors. I'm unable to keep myself upright, causing my body to press Kathleen deeper into the mattress. I'm completely spent, my energy drained, out of breath, and my heart feels like it's ready to leap out of my damn chest.

"Fuck. That was brilliant," I mutter between puffs of breath.

Kathleen pats my back. Weird reaction.

With great effort, I barely manage to lift myself slightly to glance at her face. "What's with the 'atta boy' back pat?"

Kathleen snorts a laugh and keeps her eyes shut. The sated look on her face is what soothes my ego and conscience. I gently pull out of her and roll my weight off her as I take her with me. Settling her body against mine, I release a deep content breath and stare at the ceiling.

How fucked-up the world is with all the pain, loss, trauma, and everything that's happening...how fucking perfect this moment right here is where we hit pause and let the world revolve around just the two of us.

Decisions in life can be right or wrong and no one knows beforehand. Said decisions made by following your gut instinct are a bit less of a gamble and yet it also doesn't

give you the certainty you aim for when you follow it through. Life is filled with lessons and experience, and I knew there were variables of uncertainties when I made the decision to move here.

Deep down I knew she was worth it. From the moment I saw her, when I researched everything about her, when we worked side-by-side, even though her sass and going head-to-head it was a validation we belonged together.

It has been a long damn time since I've felt this relaxed. I'm almost dozing off when I feel Kathleen shift beside me. Her hand lingers on my chest when she stares down at me.

“Yes, you are the first man I had sex with. Not so weird when you know I was born into a motorcycle club and had a lot of overly protective idiots surrounding me. Dating or fooling around was out of the question, and once I started my career it was not something I could afford. Especially once I became the sheriff.”

“Banging the sheriff gives leverage, or so some fuckers might think,” I growl low, anger and realization hit me full force.

No wonder she never let any man in her bed.

Her voice is soft with a grateful undertone when she states, “While you went above and beyond to show me nothing stood in our way, making me come first before anything else. No ulterior motive.”

I squeeze her lush ass. “Other than claiming this ass and branding your pussy as mine, and mine alone.”

A glimpse of her rolling her eyes is all I get before she snuggles close and places her head on my chest. The world feels right with my woman in my arms. We fall into a

comfortable silence and I can feel myself drift off.

We should talk some more about life, how we go from here, and especially about my cum sitting warm and comfortable inside her. She never did answer my question about birth control. Though, she was aware I was ready for any consequences and would relish completing our lives with the shared future ahead of us.

Somewhere in the distance, I hear her murmur, but I'm too tired to answer and start to dream of what our future might entail.

CHAPTER NINE

– KATHLEEN –

“We should text Dean the information we found out,” I muse with my eyes closed.

I rub my cheek against Marvin's chest, loving the way his powerful body feels underneath me. He doesn't give a reply of any sort and I lift my head to see he's sleeping. I feel a smile tug at my face. I should be completely spent as well and yet I feel completely recharged.

Shifting my body, I try to slide out of bed and wince at the sore feeling between my legs. Okay, my body might not be completely recharged, but my mind surely is. Tiptoeing into the bathroom, I take a quick shower and let my mind wander over the moment Marvin and I just shared.

It's not like I saved myself for marriage or for the right person to come along. It simply never felt like the right moment. Besides the reasons I gave Marvin of course. Growing up in an MC filled with overly protective men doesn't make it easy to find a moment alone with a guy.

I guess it's all in the past now. What Marvin and I shared, the kind of person he is, I can only attest that it's meant to be. My steps falter when I realize this little fact and swallow hard. I live for the evidence instead of believing in fate.

Shaking my head, I throw the towel in the hamper and throw on a large shirt. Snagging Marvin's phone from his pocket, I send Dean a quick message to make sure he knows the crucial details.

He instantly messages back that he'll handle the DNA request and that he might have something to compare with. My interest is spiked, but sadly his message also states he'll explain everything tomorrow morning over breakfast.

I glance at Marvin who is still sound asleep. My body is tired but my brain is running overtime. I stalk to the tiny desk in the corner and take out my laptop. At least I can do a little research through my backup laptop.

Starting with the list of names Marvin had of all the people with a connection or background of a crime scene cleaner, I dig through everything again but this time I focus on the ranch hand. If he was the grandfather of the killer, he might have different connections and family who may know who we're looking for.

Lucian Riggs sent Iris and his grandkid to his brother. It seems Lucian's mother remarried at a young age and had another kid with someone else. Which means Lucian's brother is actually a half-brother who has a different last name.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

The guy is married to a woman and they both work at a crime scene cleaning company registered under the wife's name. Damn. No wonder nothing popped up because no name or anything ties them to the farm or any other lead for that matter.

“Bingo,” I muse and write down the details.

Fatigue hits me hard and I close the laptop and crawl into bed with Marvin. We've made a lot of headway with the case and I could definitely use a couple of hours of sleep. Besides that? I'm allowed to take some personal time and let me feel like a woman for once.

The workaholic in me never takes the time to enjoy myself for very long. Except the rides with my horse, but even then, I make sure to ride through town and check on some things to save myself some work.

For now, I scoot closer to Marvin. Even in his sleep he reaches for me and pulls me close. I nuzzle his neck and close my eyes before I breathe him in. Instantly I feel the shift inside me. The changes in my life due to the man lying beside me.

I've seen the members of this MC fall for the right woman and treat them like a queen. My parents were the prime example I had while growing up. The past few days Marvin showed me the kind of man he is. While I didn't want to see, or denied it, he held fast and managed to break through the invisible wall I put between us.

Finding the right man who fits into your life, who values your priorities as their own and shares the same interest and work drive is unique. Then add the way he makes me feel between the sheets? Yeah, I'd be an idiot to pass a once in a lifetime deal up.

I don't want to end up a lonely old woman filled with regrets.

The time is now and everything I want is within reach. It's this thought that lets me dream away until I'm rudely ripped from a peaceful sleep due to the sun hitting my face.

Groaning, I turn my head into the pillow and grumble, "Someone should get up and close the curtains. That someone is you, Marvin."

I hear his chuckle from somewhere in the room and I slap my arm out to check...he's definitely not lying beside me in the bed. Prying one eye open, I glance through my lashes and notice the man sitting at the tiny desk, laptop open and a cup of coffee in his hand.

"What time is it?" I croak while slowly sitting up.

"Almost ten. I let you sleep for a bit while I was catching up on all the research you did last night along with the messages Dean sent. Want some coffee? We're meeting my brother in about an hour."

"You opened the curtains, didn't you?" I accuse and grab the blankets to jerk them over my head as I turn and bury myself underneath.

More chuckling.

"I strongly dislike you," I grumble.

Footsteps ring out and I hear the door opening and closing.

Ignoring everything I start to doze off when the blanket is rudely ripped away from me and I hear Marvin's voice stating, "Coffee for the boss lady. 'Cause my woman

doesn't function before her morning dose of caffeine."

Smart man. Not that I would tell him, of course. I glare while I sit up and accept the coffee.

A thought comes to mind. "If you did manage to knock me up...are you going to make me stop drinking coffee?"

I keep glaring at the man while I wait for him to answer. A look slides over his face as if I'm insane to ask him this question. Doubts hit me that he might not be in the same state of mind he was yesterday.

Then the man clears it up by stating, "Are you insane? I like my balls where they are and would prefer not to have them shot off if you don't get your morning fix. Besides, one or two cups isn't bad, my mom did the same thing when she was pregnant with me and I turned out just fine. My brother on the other hand." He shrugs.

I shoot him a grin and this time I do voice the words, "Smart man."

He leans in and brushes his mouth against mine. "A man is as smart as the woman he picked to stand strong beside him. Losing love throws the strongest of men off their game while never finding love leaves them guessing what others have. I'm grounded and fully focused because I managed to get what I want in life to work together toward a shared future. No changing you or clipping your wings, boss lady. We are who we are and fit together perfectly because of it."

Yes, I definitely made the right decision. "Okay, the caffeine is working so get me up to speed about any developments that happened while I was sleeping."

I swing my legs off the mattress and stroll in the direction of the bathroom while

Marvin stays silent. Shooting a glance over my shoulder, I notice his predatory gaze on my bare ass. A surge of desire shoots through my veins.

“We have a meeting scheduled,” I remind him, and myself.

Marvin shrugs off his leather cut with the new patches of the Iron Hot Blood ranch and throws it on the bed. He kicks off his boots and keeps undressing until he’s standing behind me, pulling up the shirt I’m wearing. Without thinking I raise my arms and let the fabric leave my body. His hands land on my hips and he moves us into the bathroom.

“A quick shower is all we need to get a little dirty and clean up all in one place,” he murmurs and turns on the shower.

My body still feels a little sore after what we did last night, but the feel of his calloused hands roaming my body fires up waves of desire to feel him inside me. Turning around, I slide my arms around his neck to pull him close.

Our mouths merge and I press my breasts against his chest, feeling his hard dick locked between our bodies. His hands are on my ass, kneading and gripping me firmly to hoist me up, allowing me to wrap my legs around his lean waist.

Page 21

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

The water crashes down on both our bodies, steam fills the space while Marvin slowly enters me. There is no urgency to ravish one another. This feels different as if we're both savoring our connection. The feel of his hard length slowly filling me up, leaving me half empty, and then repeating it over and over is a slow burn with a promise to detonate at full force.

My breathing becomes erratic. I'm clawing at his back and have to end the kiss to release a deep moan. I'm already close to coming and I'm doing everything I can to hold back my orgasm. This feels too good to be over so soon.

"You feel so good clenching around my cock," Marvin rumbles and I clench my inner walls.

I sink my teeth into his neck, not being able to give him any words. He curses and grips my ass harder as he starts to thrust harder inside me. My eyes are closed and all I can do is hold on for the ride. Bliss hits me full force out of nowhere and I'm faintly aware of the hot pulses of cum filling me up.

My heart feels ready to explode and I don't even care about the cold tiles hitting my back when Marvin leans me against the wall to take some of the weight. Another blissful moment between us, when life hits pause and we create a world that only consists of the two of us.

Sadly enough, reality crashes back in when the thick ropes of cum slide out of my pussy along with Marvin's half-erect dick.

"I'll end up pregnant sooner rather than later if you keep filling me up," I mutter

when Marvin gently places me back on my feet.

Marvin grins and reaches for the soap. “Good. If we start early, we’ll have enough time in our future to add more, raise them, and have all the time for just the two of us before our hair turns gray.”

I can only gape at the man. “Do you have a solution to everything?”

He starts to soap up his dick and I can’t help but stare.

“Keep looking at me like that and you’ll receive another load inside your sweet pussy. If you want to wait before we have kids you could always get some birth control. Until then I can fuck you in the ass while rubbing your clit, the orgasms will be the same either way.”

We just had sex, I can still feel his cum sliding out of me, and yet hearing him say those crude words while watching his hand pulling his dick to wash off the soap suds is turning me on. Damn. Until yesterday I’d never felt a real cock inside me and now this man has me wondering what it would feel like if he...dammit. He’s definitely turned my world upside down.

And I absolutely adore him for it.

CHAPTER TEN

– MARVIN –

I lean back in the booth while I let Kathleen talk with Dean. She’s giving him all the details we found out and even if she already messaged him the headlines, it’s good to talk things through.

There's no need for me to take lead, besides I like watching Kathleen work. She's fierce in everything she does and there's enough space to divide the workload. Fighting crime is a joint effort, it's never a one-man action.

Leaning forward, I grab my coffee and take a sip while I quickly glance over the diner we're sitting in. Only two other people are sitting on the other side of the room. It's still early and I guess rush hour will come in about thirty minutes or so...the silence before the storm so to say. Good enough for us to take advantage of the quiet moment to have enough privacy to talk in hushed voices about the case.

"I agree," Dean states. "After I received your message yesterday, I had someone swing by Lucian Riggs' half-brother's place."

"That someone being our father?" I guess. "What did he find out?"

"Our person of interest uses the name Davey Carville. He's been using Riggs his half-brother's last name for the past six years," Dean states. "According to Carville, Davey never returned to the ranch where his grandfather worked."

Placing my empty cup on the table I ask, "He ran off to Carville and his wife's place after Davey's mother went missing?"

"Yeah. Davey kept visiting the Carville's without his mother while he grew up. Six years ago he came to live with them permanently until about eight months ago. They haven't seen him since." Dean turns to Kathleen. "Your hunch was correct on all fronts. Davey was trained to work as a crime scene cleaner, and the fucker didn't allow any woman to give him any lip about shit. Carville said it was because of the way his mother treated him."

Kathleen frowns. "If Carville was looking after his half-brother's grandson, why the hell would he share details instead of protecting his family?"

“Good question,” I murmur.

Strange how someone would spill these details freely about a relative who he took into his own home, and even uses his last name on top of it. Dean chuckles when Kathleen shoots me a glare.

Smirking, my brother asks, “She doesn’t take compliments well on the job?”

He’s now receiving Kathleen’s glare, but it switches to horror and is aimed at me when I tell him, “The only time I praise her as a good girl is when I fuck her.”

Fire burns my skin when Kathleen smacks her flat hand against my chest.

“What the hell, Marvin?” she hisses.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“Shame your old lady doesn’t have a sister. I’d like a feisty woman with a great brain and a smart mouth for myself.”

“Could we focus?” Kathleen growls. “Why did Carville mention Davey was a certain way because of Iris?”

Dean instantly starts to rattle off details. “Eight months ago, a woman by the name of Anne Rose went missing. She was employed by Carville’s wife and Davey’s supervisor to be precise. I ran the name and—”

“She was murdered,” I state.

Dean starts to give her the details. “Her body was found three months ago. The case was closed. She was stabbed to death, they assumed it was a robbery gone wrong with the neighborhood she was found in and all. She was reported missing first, and found months later because the body was dropped in the sewer. Carville didn’t believe she was robbed. Anne and Davey were working on cleaning a house that night and had a huge fight. He was there when it happened. Davey left angry and Carville and Anne finished the job. Anne’s car was at the shop, so he dropped her off at her house. The robbery happened across town, not somewhere she would go. And for real, crappy police work. There was evidence that some of the injuries were post-mortem. Who would stab a dead person during a robbery? That’s a lot of anger right there.”

“So, Carville suspected Davey?” I question.

“A bit when she went missing, more when our father showed up at his doorstep.

Especially when our father showed up telling him about Iris's body being found after six years and asking questions about her son who's now a person of interest in a serial killer case."

"Was there any other information Atticus managed to get from Carville?" Kathleen asks.

"Oh yeah." He pats the file in front of him. "Carville had no issues hanging out the family's dirty laundry for all to see."

"What the hell does that mean?" Kathleen's eyebrows scrunch.

I know my brother's idiotic sentences and tell her, "It means the fucker was a fountain of information."

"Then why not say that instead?" Kathleen grumbles.

The corner of his mouth twitches just before Dean continues to explain. "Carville knew Beth Bronson's death wasn't an accident when she was trampled. The reason Davey came to live with Carville six years ago was because Davey witnessed his mother kill Beth."

"What?" Kathleen and I both grunt in sync.

"Major family drama at that ranch." Dean shakes his head in disgust. "Turns out, Beth couldn't carry any children due to medical issues. They fostered kids to try and fill a void. Unsuccessfully, but they liked the new angle of money coming in. Beth treated them like shit, just like she did Iris. Then the whole Arthur, Iris thing was brought to light due to Iris getting pregnant and things changed. Tension in their marriage, Iris left for a few years, had the kid and all...then she came back and, well, Carville said Beth fell in love with Davey because he looked like her husband. With

Arthur choosing his wife, he never laid a hand on Iris again, which caused Iris to turn bitter and blame the kid.”

“Oh, that’s so freaking wrong,” Kathleen growls. “So, Davey witnessed Iris kill Beth, the one woman who treated him like a son, and he killed his own mother out of revenge?”

Dean shrugs. “Technically Iris went missing. Lucian and Arthur came running after they heard the screaming and Davey told them what went down. Iris was hysterical, screaming it was an accident and it was Davey’s word against his mother.”

“They decided to cover it up?” I grit, knowing where this is going with all the facts out in the open.

“That’s why Davey left,” Kathleen muses. “Changing his name because he had no one left at that ranch with those men ignoring his version of what happened.”

“And kill his mother before he left, let’s not forget about that little fact. He took matters into his own hands the way they handled everything after Beth’s murder,” Dean says. “Arthur and Lucian probably thought Iris ran because of what she did. They only reported her missing to cover their own asses in case someone came asking or whatever, who knows.”

We all fall silent when the waitress wanders our way to give all of us a refill then stalks across the room to a different table.

It’s then Kathleen says, “Okay, all of this explains motive and places huge arrows at Davey being our prime suspect, but do we have evidence to tie him to any of it? A headshot so we know who we’re looking for? Where the hell he is so we can bring him in?”

Finally, Dean slides the file he was keeping in place in front of him over to us. “Remember the body in the back of the trunk?”

I open the file and glance at the papers inside it when Dean continues to explain.

“Well, they had an intern making a remark about flossing the teeth of the body. According to the intern, he found a tiny piece of rubber from a glove in the victim’s throat. He wanted to check if there was any epithelial tissue caught by the teeth because the killer’s fingers were in the victim’s mouth.” Pointing at the papers he adds, “The intern was right. I had them run a check with Iris’s DNA and it shows the killer’s her kid.”

“He fucked up,” Kathleen whispers in relief.

“He fucked up,” Dean affirms. “We have the evidence to tie him to one murder.”

“The similarities in the killing of all the others will make any jury see him as the serial killer he is,” I state.

“Which still doesn’t answer my question as to where the fucker is right now.” Kathleen shoves the papers back into the file before sliding them back to Dean.

My brother nods. “Correct. Since we have a name, a face, and enough evidence to arrest him, I’ve already put an APB. Every officer will be on the lookout for a man matching his description. We might not know where the fucker is hiding, but we’re going to make sure he doesn’t have a lot of places to hide.”

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“He could already have a new victim or is searching for one. He keeps them alive to torture and when he kills and dumps them, he won’t go days without getting his next fix. Davey has been escalating ever since he killed his superior. Killing his mother out of revenge was his first kill. We might need to dig into cold cases involving stabbings. For someone like him to have killed and then six years of nothing until another woman pisses him off again?”

I know what Kathleen means by her statement. “He could have killed others, though it also makes sense that Anne triggered something that reminded him of the day Beth was killed, along with him killing his mother.”

“I agree,” Dean mutters. “Carville mentioned Anne and Davey had a huge argument the day she went missing. I will still check, though.”

Dean slides out of the booth. “With this said, I gotta get some work done now that we’ve blown this case wide open.”

“Anything we can do?” Kathleen questions.

Dean rubs two fingers against his chiseled jaw. “Just watch your back.” His gaze slides to me. “I know your old lady won’t like it, but I suggest you take point until we catch this fucker.”

“I’m the sheriff,” Kathleen snaps.

Dean holds the file up. “I’m more than aware, darlin’. I’m only trying to warn you guys of the fact that I got a heads-up that the press got wind of a serial killer in town.”

“Fuck,” I grumble.

“Dammit,” Kathleen mutters and releases a deep sigh. “I know what you mean. I even suggested to Marvin I could draw him out.”

“Not happening,” I instantly growl.

“I’m with my brother on this.” Dean pins her with a hard look. “We already lost two agents along with a few other strong women. We’re going to handle this the smart way and catch the fucker without putting anyone at risk. No undercover shit, no martyr actions, or vigilante shit.”

“Old fashioned policework?” Kathleen grins. “Good thing we excel in all fields of law enforcement.”

“Damn right.” Dean lifts his chin in my direction. “Call Dad, he was asking about the ranch you bought. And dude? Why the hell didn’t you say anything to any of us?”

I want to snap how it’s none of anyone’s business, but I take satisfaction in the way Kathleen takes it upon herself to answer, “It was a spur-of-the-moment thing. The ranch went on sale as soon as he placed the bid. It’s gorgeous. I’ve had my eye on it for years and knew it would become available soon. The man who lived there wanted to move and he finally decided it was time.”

“With both of us working non-stop we’ll keep our horses at the Iron Hot Blood ranch for now. After we’ve made a list of what work needs to be done and shit, we’ll invite you over,” I tell him. “Mind passing Dad the message? ’Cause I know you’ll be giving him an update anyway and we have to get back to the station now.”

“Sure thing,” Dean states. “But I’m going to hold you to the invitation. Also, name your first kid after me. You are trying to knock her up, right?”

“Fuck off,” I growl with a smile tugging my mouth, liking the way Kathleen’s cheeks heat.

All the shit going on around us doesn’t diminish the fact that I’m fucking happy. And I do hope I knocked her up, or she will be soon enough. Moving forward step by step. We’re together, bought a house, and the sex is off the charts. I’d say we’re skipping toward a nice and bright future together.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

– KATHLEEN –

“We are not naming any of our kids after that annoying brother of yours,” I grumble and park in front of the station.

Dammit. Dean wasn’t kidding when he mentioned the press getting wind of the serial killer. There are several news station trucks parked on the street and some journalists are interviewing people in front of the coffee shop.

“Marvin Junior has a better ring to it anyway.” Marvin shoots me a wink and gets out of the car before I can so much as smack him upside the head.

I’m about to head straight into the station, but my attention is drawn to the people across the street. One of the news crew is harassing Mrs. Johnson who clearly doesn’t want to be on TV while a drunken Mr. Hemwig is trying to get some screen time. Anger surges through me and without thinking I whirl around and cross the road.

“Hey,” I snap to catch the interviewer’s attention. “Quit harassing people in their own damn town. And you.” I point right at the camera. “Stop filming right now.”

The interviewer starts to sputter something about freedom of speech.

Ignoring everyone I give my full attention to Mrs. Johnson. “Go right in, Ma’am. I’m sure the others are waiting for you to join them.”

Mrs. Johnson gives me a thankful smile and reaches out to squeeze my hand. “You’re a doll, Kathleen.”

Behind me, Mr. Hemwig is blabbering about his cows getting slaughtered like pigs by a serial killer. Ugh, that drunk bastard is causing unnecessary drama just to get a listening ear from someone.

Page 24

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“Seth,” I bellow, catching the attention of the deputy walking my way. “Get Mr. Hemwig home before he starts to spout more nonsense no one likes to hear.”

The camera guy keeps filming.

“Didn’t I tell you to turn that thing off? You have as long as it takes me to reach for my cuffs to get your asses into your news van and get the hell out of my town. If not, I’ll throw y’all in jail and leave you there to rot all damn weekend.”

Again, with the freedom of speech nonsense.

“Try me,” I snarl and reach for my cuffs.

Finally, they jump into action and scurry their asses into their van and speed off. Muttering a few curses I stomp across the road.

I snap my fingers at Wrench who is sprawled in front of the door. “Lazy bastard, you could have helped me out by biting their asses.”

Marvin opens the door for me and when I step inside he softly says, “I thought we agreed not to draw him out.”

It’s then I realize my action could have provoked Davey. Though, it’s hard not to provoke the fucker because I’m the damn sheriff and I’m just doing my job. Probably why Marvin doesn’t look angry and simply makes an observation by the sound of his voice, along with the look on his face.

I place my palm against my forehead and sigh. “I can’t even do my job without stepping on the serial killer’s long freaking toes.”

“I would have done the same thing if you weren’t already doing it,” Marvin murmurs and pulls me close.

Letting my body sink into his only lasts a heartbeat or two when both our phones start to ring. I reach for mine while Marvin answers his.

“Dammit, Kat, what were you thinking?” my father snaps.

Gritting my teeth I fire back, “I was thinking Mrs. Johnson was having a hard time getting into the diner where her sister and other neighbors were waiting to have tea. Mr. Hemwig was spouting nonsense no one needs to hear. The whole incident shouldn’t have taken place and that’s why I put an end to it.”

My father releases a sigh. “You know what you did, right? Atticus called me with an update about the killer and his background story. You’re on the fucker’s radar now. Those news fuckers? They were live, Kathleen. The whole thing was captured on TV. Your face is out there now, how you lashed out at those men. A complete power position, stomping on men’s dicks. Let me talk to Marvin.”

I glance in Marvin’s direction. “He’s talking on his phone. Besides, Dad, you’re not on this case: we are. I was doing my damn job without thinking that it would put me on the killer’s radar because my mind was too occupied with protecting the citizens of this town. Those vultures only care about screentime minutes of entertainment, even if those folks didn’t know shit. I’m gonna hang up, there’s work I’d rather be doing other than getting scolded by my father.”

I’m about to hang up when he says, “Be careful, Kat. We don’t want to see you get hurt...or worse.”

A deep sigh rips from me as I stare at Marvin who is shoving his phone into his pocket.

“I know,” I tell my dad, and add, “Here’s Marvin.”

Handing the phone to Marvin, I stalk into my office and drop myself into the chair. What a clusterfuck. There might be a chance the killer didn’t see the live feed or has left town. On the other hand, he has been escalating by dumping bodies in his hometown. He keeps returning here and it’s as if he wants to end it or something.

“Your father is worried, as is my brother,” Marvin states as he strolls into my office.

Without looking in his direction I grumble, “Your name is on the top of that list too.”

“Yeah, well, your name on top of the serial killer’s list will do that to a man when his woman’s life is put at risk.” He lets his ass drop into one of the chairs on the other side of my desk.

I’m getting annoyed but it’s fleeting when Marvin says, “We’re closing in on the fucker on all sides. We know who he is, what he looks like, his motives, and his background. It’s only a matter of time until we catch the bastard. I won’t be leaving your side anyway, my brother has put everyone on high alert, and your father is putting other wheels in motion. Let him fucking come for you so he’ll end up dead sooner rather than later.”

“So, you’re not going to throw me in a cell to keep me safe?” I challenge.

The man smirks. “The way you threw me in a cell the last time I was in town?”

I roll my eyes. “You were annoying and instead of—”

“Hey,” Marvin interrupts. “I was still getting a grip on my damn emotions, okay. Give a guy a little leeway when a woman makes the ground shake underneath his damn feet.”

“Are you telling me I rocked your world without realizing it?” Reaching for a file Seth must have put on my desk, I add, “Back then I would have been happy if the ground opened up and swallowed you whole.”

He leans forward and places his forearms on his knees. “That’s not nice, and I hope to hell you feel differently now.”

Page 25

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I get to my feet and walk around the desk. He leans back while I move to stand between his legs.

“I might like you a bit more now,” I murmur and brush my lips against his.

“Just a bit, eh?” he growls and grabs my ass, pulling me off-balance as I tumble onto his lap.

His mouth crushes against mine and he swoops his tongue into my mouth to kiss me the way he likes to fuck me; hard, rough, and all-consuming.

Glass shatters, forcing us apart as we both hit the ground to take cover. Both of us palm our guns and I move around the desk to check out the window. Throwing a glance at Marvin, I notice he’s doing the same thing from the other side.

“Gunshot?” I whisper.

“Yeah.” Marvin plasters his back against the desk and I do the same so we’re sitting shoulder to shoulder.

“Both service weapons of the agents taken by the serial killer are still missing,” I state.

“Someone just shot through my old lady’s office window,” Marvin grits through the phone. “Probably, yes. 10-4.”

I wait till he puts his phone away to ask, “Dean?”

“Yes, he’s six minutes out. We’re gonna sit tight until he gets here.”

“I like you a lot, Marvin,” I confess. “Our ride might have started off rocky with you being an asshole and all, buying the ranch I wanted without telling me what your intentions were, but I’m rather fond of you now. I might be close to adoring you when you’re giving me those lovely orgasms, and it could possibly be a foundation for love—”

“Boss lady?” Marvin grunts.

I turn to face him. “Yes?”

“You’re not going to die any time soon, you hear me?”

I swallow hard to hopefully hide the panic and distress in my voice when I croak, “I hear you.”

He keeps his gun in one hand and offers me the other palm up. I slide my palm over his calloused hand and link our fingers together. There haven’t been many moments I’ve feared for my life, and most times run toward danger without thinking about the fact that my next breath could be my last.

Now? Maybe it’s because everyone panicked and called a mere moment ago, or the fact that my life shifted with new goals and a promise of a bright future. Whatever it is, I feel the balance of life and death.

“Fuck, you’re bleeding,” Marvin growls and unlinks our hands to grab my shoulder.

With the adrenaline rush, I didn’t feel anything, but when I stare down at the torn fabric of my uniform, I realized someone indeed took a shot at me.

“The bullet grazed you.” Marvin’s mouth is set in a tight line.

Glass crunches and Marvin’s gaze locks on mine. There are no words needed between us; the look we give one another lets us know we’re both aware that someone is in the room with us.

The panic and distress I felt a mere moment ago are washed away by the rush of adrenaline pumping through my veins. There’s no damn way I will let anything or anyone take a future from me. Especially when I barely got a taste of what my life with Marvin can be like.

I take a breath and slowly release to gain focus on what I’m about to do. The determination on my face must give Marvin all the explanation he needs because he simply gives me a tight nod.

As if we’ve been working together for years, we move fluently as we aim our weapons around the desk. The face of the man comes into view, recognition sets in and I watch him pull the trigger at the same time I fire off a round.

The air is ripped from my lungs while my body jerks with the impact of the bullet. I manage to fire off another round and hear Marvin shoot at Davey as well. My knees buckle as I watch Davey crumble to the ground. Marvin runs forward to kick the gun from Davey’s hand.

He takes out his phone and snaps, “We got him, send a damn ambulance, Kathleen is hit.”

I must have closed my eyes for a moment to try and breathe through the burning pain in my chest because I hear Marvin rumble beside me, “Give me your eyes, boss lady. Come on, stay with me.”

“I can take a damn nap ’cause we got the fucker,” I grumble.

Marvin makes a sound that’s a mix of half a sob, and half a laugh. “You can take all the naps once I know you don’t have any critical internal damage.”

Page 26

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

Ignoring his words I wonder, “Why did Davey go on a suicide mission? We weren’t close to catching him mere hours ago.”

Marvin gently brushes his fingers along my temple. “When your father called you, Dean called me. He told me one of the prospects talked to the press. Davey knew he was exposed. His name along with a picture of his face was shown on TV right before you interrupted their livestream.”

“I hope he kicked the prospect out of the club,” I grumble.

“Sure as fuck did,” Dean rumbles and squats down next to me.

I blink a few times. “Where did you come from? Ouch, stop touching my breasts.”

Swatting his hand away, Dean chuckles and says, “Her Kevlar vest took the bullet, gonna hurt like a bitch.”

“Dean’s a paramedic,” Marvin grits. “It’s the only reason why he’s close to your boobs.”

Marvin hauls me into his arms and gets to his feet. “Ambulance out front?”

“Will be in a minute or two,” Dean affirms.

“Wrap up the case, I’m going to take care of my old lady.”

Dean pats Marvin on the back. “You got it, brother.”

I sink into the warmth of my old man's embrace and close my eyes. It's been a long day and I could really use a nap right about now.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Three weeks later

– MARVIN –

"Are you ready for your present?" I ask when I'm about to open the trailer.

Kathleen rubs her hands, eyes gleaming with excitement. "Get it over with already, I need to see what had you up at the crack of dawn. You've been moving your stuff into the ranch for the past week and I really thought all your stuff was already here. Hell, even your horse, Babe, is in the stables."

"I own more than one horse," I mutter, mainly to myself.

She falls silent as soon as the trailer opens. I get inside to guide out the white Quarter horse that's a carbon copy of Babe.

"Oh my gosh, you couldn't move her because of the foal?" Kathleen gushes when I unload the precious cargo.

Smiling I tell her, "Yeah, I had to wait till Baby had a...baby."

Kathleen shakes her head. "Really? This one is called Baby? With the other white one you own called Babe, I'm almost afraid to ask what you named the foal."

"Dude," I grumble.

Kathleen's head falls back. "Not a mare I assume."

"You assumed correct." I lead both Baby and the foal into the pasture and let them get settled after the long ride home.

Kathleen and I lean on the fence to watch the mare and her foal dart away in the open field.

"They're gorgeous," Kathleen gushes.

I keep my eyes pinned on her when I say, "You are, and that's the horse who was born to be yours, and hopefully the foal will be our kid's horse once we manage to knock you up."

Her gaze meets mine. "How can a horse be born to be mine? How old is she? You've only known me for a few months, most of that time I hated your guts."

"My father bred a horse for his old lady, he's the one who started the tradition. Over time he's had several. Baby, Honey, Darlin', Sugar. His favorite horse was Baby and he trained her especially for his old lady, even if he never met her when he did. When he met the woman he knew was going to be his, he let her ride Baby." Emotions warm my chest and I stare into the distance. "When I was young Baby gave birth to a mare. It was gonna be my horse and I witnessed the birth and told my folks I was gonna call her Babe and train her for my old lady, just like my dad did."

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

A hand slides over my forearm and I feel her head fall onto my shoulder.

“Babe’s seventeen and was my favorite horse until she had a foal, Baby. That mare right there I trained for you ’cause of Babe’s age and me not knowing how long it would take for me to find the right woman.”

“Was Dude your backup plan?” Kathleen chuckles.

I shake my head. “Nah. I ran across a stallion with a perfect bloodline. I want to keep breeding and training horses. Moving and passing the president patch over to Dean was always the plan. Solving cases I could never do without, but I don’t want it to consume me. When my father sent me here all those months ago? It was like he did it on purpose. Hell, maybe Decker and my Dad played matchmaker, knowing what I wanted for my future and how perfectly we’d match.”

“I always suspected my father had something to do with the undersheriff retiring,” Kathleen muses. “The undersheriff had lunch with my dad and later that day he retired.”

“Creating the perfect job for me.” I lean my forehead against hers. “We never stood a chance between our parents interfering, our jobs crossing paths, making our souls collide.”

“We did collide in more than one way.” She brushes her soft lips against mine.

I grab the nape of her neck to keep her in place as I deepen the kiss. Her hands slide to my chest, fists digging into the leather of my cut to pull me close. She groans and

pulls back.

Dazed eyes stare right at me. “I love my gift. She’s gorgeous and I can’t wait to work with her. I’m sure the little nugget growing inside me will be fierce enough to get into the saddle when Dude will be at riding age.”

I hear her words but they take a breath or two for my brain to fully process.

Grabbing her by the shoulders I croak, “You’re...we...really? We’re pregnant?”

One nod from my woman makes happiness flow hot through my veins. “While you were gone I went to the doctor. We’re pregnant.”

“Fuck yes,” I bellow and scoop her into my arms to whirl her around.

Placing her back on her feet, I take her head in my hands and give her a gentle kiss to pour every bit of emotion I’m feeling into it. I’m so fucking thankful to have this woman in my life, to build a future, start a family, and combine everything I love in life. Our jobs, this ranch, life couldn’t get more perfect than this moment right here.

“I love you,” I tell her against her sweet mouth.

I feel her lips tug into a grin before she gives me the words, “Love you more.”

“Good, let’s go celebrate.” Grabbing her ass, I hoist her up and carry her into our home.

The first two weeks there was a lot of work to be done. Her parents along with a few brothers of my new MC helped out and it also gave me a chance to get to know all the people Kathleen grew up with.

Kathleen couldn't do much and was bound to her desk to catch up on administrative work. When Davey shot her point blank, hitting her Kevlar vest, she bruised her ribs. The bullet that grazed her shoulder only needed a few stitches.

She didn't mind me and the club handling some of the redecorating. The last week we've moved in completely and even her own horses are in the stable along with mine. Being the undersheriff allows us both to work different shifts.

We could easily be around one another all the time, but dividing shifts and tasks around the house suits us just fine. Dean also sent over a file of a cold case we are working on together. It's always good to have fresh eyes on a case that's been stuck for years.

Besides, this small town doesn't have a massive amount of crimes. At least, now it's all back to the quiet town Kathleen told me about with Davey Carville handled. Hopefully, he's the first and last serial killer this town will have to deal with.

I kick the door shut with the heel of my boot and with it leave the world behind us. For now, it's just me and Kathleen, and the tiny little bundle growing in her belly. Fuck. I'm gonna be a dad. Thankfully, we still have months ahead of us to prepare for what's coming.

Nights without sleep is something we're both familiar with being the sheriff and undersheriff of this town. Though, one can hope our kid turns out to be an angel who wants long naps and has the voice of her mother.

She doesn't sing often, but when she knows no one is around? Yeah, she definitely makes my spine tingle with just the sound of her voice. Her mother is a famous country singer, and I know she's joined her on a record or two. Kathleen's ambition was never in the entertainment business. She followed in her father's footsteps, as I did.

Law enforcement runs in our blood. It's what made our paths cross and what we still do day in, and day out. My woman might be pregnant, but I'm sure she'll keep working until she's ready to give birth. Even if it's only behind her desk.

I lay her down on the bed and stare down at the strong woman beneath me. Even if the urge to protect her runs fierce through my veins, I know deep down this woman is capable of handling anything. By supporting her, standing strong together, is how we will handle anything that comes our way.

Peeling away her clothes, I get her naked and am kicking off my boots to shed my clothes as well. Her tits rise and fall when I take my cock in hand and flip the piercing.

"Spread your legs," I order, my voice filled with the lust that's boiling inside my blood.

She follows through and lets her fingers slide down her body to tease her clit.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

I bat her hand away. “What did I tell you about touching what’s mine?”

“Then you should hurry instead of just standing there with your dick in hand.” Oh, the sass of this woman drives me completely nuts.

A growl rips from me and I grab her ankle to flip her over. Bare ass in the air, I let my hand fly out and flick her ass cheek. Mag-fucking-nificent. The way her ass jingles, a red print brands her skin. Everything about her makes my cock harder than steel.

Her pussy drips with desire when I climb on the bed and let my cock slide through the drenched lips of her pussy. She moans and pushes back while at the same time, I surge forward to let her impale herself on my hard length.

I grip her hips to gain balance as I throw my head back and close my eyes. Utter bliss flows through me. I will never get used to this feeling of euphoria. No matter how many times I bury myself inside my woman, pussy, mouth, her delicate fingers wrapped around me or my lips on hers...anything that involves her makes my blood sing.

The chemistry our bodies create is a good indication that we belong together. Starting off our lives to see what we can achieve in the years ahead of us.

I barely manage to hold back my orgasm as I slowly start to fuck her. She moans and fucks me back with determination. Sliding my arm in the direction of her pussy, I feel myself pumping inside her body while I tease her bundle of nerves. She starts to clench around me, already close to the orgasm I’m about to give her.

Speeding up my rhythm I give up. There's no damn way I can hold back when she's driving me nuts. Besides, what's the fucking point if I can fuck her any time during the day? I might need a few minutes to recover but then it's on again.

It's for this reason I pluck her clit and with the other hand tug her nipples, making her go off like fireworks. Her pussy strangles my cock in rapid waves and it's then I grip her hips and tunnel a few more times in and out of her pussy before shoving deep and letting stream after stream of cum coat her insides.

"Fuuuuuuuuck," I bellow.

My heart feels like it's ready to leap out of my damn chest as I try to get oxygen into my burning lungs. My knees buckle and I let myself drop beside her. Cock slides out, cum leaking everywhere and I couldn't give a fuck.

I pull her close and murmur, "Nothing's more perfect than this moment right here."

Sliding a protective hand over her belly, I feel her sigh as a happy smile tugs her adorable lips.

"Couldn't agree more." She turns and lets her mouth find mine.

The kiss turns hot. My cock twitches and doesn't have time to go soft. I might not need a few minutes to regain my strength. This woman is all the life force I need to keep going.

EPILOGUE

Nine years later

– KATHLEEN –

“Why does she have to show off, and never ride a horse like anyone else? Would it be so bad to throw on a saddle and bridle for once?” Tomlin, Cosima and Parker’s son, grumbles from beside me.

The worry in his voice while he keeps his eyes pinned on my daughter is a good indication he’s concerned and slightly frustrated on top of it. My daughter, Francine, named after Marvin’s mother, is almost a year older than him. Doesn’t stop him from fancying her, though.

I keep my eyes on my daughter who is riding her horse, Dude, with just a rope around his neck. She isn’t even holding on and is guiding the horse with her legs, the way Eastlynne taught her. The freedom and trust between her and the horse is a tight bond everyone is jealous of.

Marvin is riding beside her on my horse, Baby. I was riding her when he got home, but the way his lips were set in a thin line? I knew he had a bad day at work and it’s why I asked if he could take over from me. Needless to say, he’s now sporting a smile.

It was my day off, which meant it was a day away from being the sheriff, but it also entailed working around the ranch. Nine years ago we moved into the house and started not only a family, but continued another legacy besides working law enforcement, and that meant breeding Quarter horses.

Marvin is the one training them while I simply groom and take care of the stables and such. I like riding horses and taking care of them. Training a horse involves a different set of skills, ones my husband and daughter clearly possess.

Yes, I said husband. I was four months pregnant with Francine when he asked me to marry him. The way he popped the question might not have been a grand gesture, pulling me out of my office chair and demanding we’d get married before I popped

out the kid. Though, he made up for it by organizing the wedding himself, inviting the two MCs to our ranch for the ceremony and a barbecue afterward.

I hear a truck and glance over my shoulder. “Your father is here to pick you and Francine up.”

Tomlin smiles. “Finally.”

He steps onto the fence and gives a sharp whistle. Wrench, the old fart he is, is lying on the porch and doesn’t even lift his head at the sound. Tool, the one-year-old dog we adopted a few months ago, jumps up and rushes toward Tomlin who bends down to scratch him behind the ears.

I’ve been trying to train him as a cadaver dog and so far he’s good. See? I do like to train animals, just not the big ones and for completely different purposes.

“Hey,” Cosima quips when she jumps out of the truck, Parker following close behind her.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:53 am

“Looking good.” I jerk my chin in the direction of her huge belly.

She places a hand on her back for support. “Shut up, this is the last time I’m letting myself get knocked-up. I swear if he wants any more kids he’s gotta squeeze them out of his pee hole.”

“Mom!” Tomlin scolds and throws his hands over his ears.

Cosima rolls her eyes. “Don’t be such a prude. You’ve helped your father birth a horse and have been there when the stallion puts—”

“Ooookay, let’s get the kids into the truck and head home so you can curl up on the couch with some ice cream.” Parker steers Cosima back in the direction of the truck.

With a smile in my voice I say, “I’ll get them for you.”

Francine guides Dude in my direction and she slides off when he reaches the fence.

I open the gate for them both and I tell my daughter, “Have fun, sweetheart. We’ll pick you up tomorrow morning.”

“You don’t have to. I’m gonna work with Eastlynne, remember?” she eagerly tells me.

I nod. “Right, I forgot. You mentioned there was a traumatized mare coming in she was going to work with.”

“Yes, and she’s gonna let me watch her work.”

I lean in and place a kiss on the top of her head. “Call when you are ready to come home.”

“Will do.” She turns to Tomlin. “Coming?”

“Yes.” He grins and straightens to gain a few inches of height as he falls in step beside her.

“She doesn’t have a clue, does she?” Marvin rumbles.

I stare up at my husband. He’s leaning his forearms on the horn of his saddle and is staring down at me with so much love it makes my breath hitch.

“None,” I breathe, knowing he’s talking about the crush Tomlin has on our daughter.

Marvin swings his leg off the horse and jumps down. Grabbing the reins, he leads Baby toward the stables and I call out to Dude to follow us. We work side by side to get the horses taken care of.

Twenty minutes later we’re walking in the direction of the house. Marvin stares out over the pastures and I know his mind is still on the car wreck that happened just before his shift ended. Two lives were lost and besides being at the scene of the accident, Marvin had to visit the next of kin to give them the bad news.

Living in a small town and being the sheriff, Marvin the undersheriff, means we know everyone. These are the hardest parts of the job, the deaths, the missing persons, the injuries, darkness is everywhere and it doesn’t simply stop when you clock out.

It’s just the two of us tonight and this is why I reach out and grab his wrist.

“Wanna go for a ride on your bike?” Glancing up at the blue sky with the warm evening sun I add, “It’s a nice night to visit your parents.”

There’s a twinkle in his eyes. “Yeah? You wanna ride for a couple of hours on the back of my bike?”

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Pretty sure I just suggested it.”

He smacks my ass. “Quit the sass, boss lady, and pack a bag. I’ll call my folks to let them know we’re heading in their direction.”

I rub my ass while I shoot him a fake glare. Some of the darkness has faded from his eyes. He knows why I suggested it, and he would have done the same for me if I had been the one on-call to that wreck. Working the same line of duty gives a firmer shoulder to lean on. Doesn’t mean we don’t fight or piss one another off, ’cause he’s still an asshole, and we can still go head-to-head on occasion.

End of the day? We sleep in the same bed with our legs tangled and our hearts beating side by side. The years that pass make our love stronger. Our passion, dreams, and goals are developing and slowly turn into the reality we crave.

Seeing him straddle the bike, letting the machine roar underneath him as he signals for me to get on? Yeah, the man still sparks a fire from an eternal flame deep inside me. He knew the second he laid eyes on me. I might have needed time to look past the asshole he is, but eventually, there was no escaping him.

I’m his and he’s mine and the road ahead of us is ours to ride off into the wide and open future. To keep on loving, keep on dreaming, and keep on going...forever and always.