



# Axel (Riders of Retribution #1)

**Author:** *Natasha Sterling*

**Category:** Romance

**Description:** Hazel

I'm at the end of my rope. Thanks to my father's gambling problem, I owe favors to a local motorcycle gang, The Apex Runners. At first, all they wanted was for me to patch them up after fights, but now that they've asked me to move into their clubhouse, I know that they're after more than my nursing skills. When two of the members show up in my front yard and start harassing me, I know I'm done for. That is, until Axel, a member of their rival gang, not to mention the handsomest man I've ever seen, shows up to rescue me.

Axel

When I'm riding with my motorcycle club, Riders of Retribution, nothing else matters. Except today when I happen to catch a glimpse of two members of The Apex Runners harassing a woman in broad daylight on her own front lawn. The confrontation turns violent, but it's worth it when I find myself being nursed back to health by a gorgeous blonde. She keeps saying she can take care of herself, but I know it's my duty to keep her safe from now on. With the help of my club, we're going to make sure The Apex Runners don't mess with her ever again.

**Total Pages (Source):** 11

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Axel

Wind whips around me, and the open road stretches in front of me.

I have eyes on all the members of Riders of Retribution, my motorcycle club.

My position as tail gunner on these rides is something that I take very seriously.

I make sure that no one gets left behind – not that we usually have stragglers, but we do ride fast. Sometimes our prospects have trouble keeping up.

We're on the outskirts of Rio Lunas, heading back to our clubhouse.

It's been hours since we left, and a few of these guys have families to get back to.

Most of us would happily ride all through the night, and it wouldn't surprise me if at least half of us don't go out on solo rides later, families or not. It's a fuckin' beautiful evening.

The New Mexico desert surrounds us, and houses are far and few between.

So, when we approach one with a few people on the front lawn, I pay attention the best I can.

It's not like I can get a good look considering how fast we're going, but there's a part of me that's always alert, and quick glance is often all I need to size up a situation.

I catch sight of two bikes parked in the driveway behind a sedan.

The owners of those bikes are standing in front of a woman half their size.

On the backs of their leather jackets are green patches, branding them as members of the Apex Runners, our rival MC.

Something about their presence, the way they're lording over this woman, and the way she seems to be backing away from them doesn't sit right with me.

For the rest of the ride, my mind is on the scene that unfolded. What do those members of the Apex Runners want from that girl? I know that I didn't get a good look at what was going on, but my gut tells me that there's something funny going on there.

And my gut is rarely wrong.

The feeling only gets heavier, so when we get back to the clubhouse a few minutes later, and we're dismissed with a reminder of our meeting on Wednesday, I head straight back.

I go faster than I should, considering that I don't have any evidence that there's anything wrong.

I should know better than anyone that belonging to a motorcycle club doesn't mean a man is automatically bad news.

Still, my bike roars as I push her to go faster, a sense of impending danger settling in my chest with each mile that I eat up.

I was right to be concerned, because when the house comes into view, I can see the

men are closer to her. I push my Harley harder, a flash of anger striking me. One of them has his hands on the woman, and as I get closer, I realize that she's struggling.

I don't hesitate to jump off my bike and pull my gun from its holster the second I come screeching into the driveway. The man holding onto the woman shifts to face me, but the other keeps his back to me. Big fuckin' mistake.

A bullet flies from the barrel of my gun, lodging itself in the man's shoulder.

He screams, crumpling to the ground as he grabs at the wound.

The surprise on both of their faces is evident, and I use that to my advantage.

I put my boot on the bastard's good shoulder before shoving him down, giving him a face full of dirt.

"I don't know what the hell you're doing, but you need to let her go," I say, turning my gun on other man.

"This doesn't fucking concern you," he spits before grabbing the girl hard enough to make her squeak in pain.

I grit my teeth, resisting the urge to just fire at him. I'm here to protect the woman that he's holding onto. Despite the way my brain is screaming at me to shoot this motherfucker, he's essentially using her as a shield.

"It doesn't matter if it concerns me," I reply with a growl, taking a step toward the pair.

My eyes flick to the woman's face, and I notice that despite how fear-stricken she looks, she's gorgeous.

Her big brown eyes are focused on me, as though she's begging me to make the right decision when it comes to her safety.

"You shouldn't be touching a woman like that. "

"And you shouldn't be sticking your fucking nose into other peoples' business," he retorts. When the woman starts to struggle, he digs his elbow into her side harshly. "Stay still. Let me get rid of this bastard, and then we'll continue our chat, okay?"

"Let go of her," I growl, grinding my teeth and taking another step toward him. "Right fuckin' now."

The man scoffs before pushing her to the ground and reaching for something on his hip. I don't give him the chance to pull his gun on me, though. With the woman out of the way, I aim for his chest, hitting him dead on.

He falls to the ground, making a gurgling noise that tells me he's not getting up ever again.

I rush forward, intent on checking on the woman.

I assume she's mixed up with these guys somehow—bikers still have enough of a bad reputation that most women don't hang around their front lawns when they hear us approaching—but that's secondary.

I'll ask about that once I make sure she isn't hurt.

Regardless of if she started working with them voluntarily, from the look on her pretty face and the way she was being manhandled, I doubt she still wants to deal with them.

I'm halfway to her when something jolts me forward.

I smell gunpowder, and there's a burning, stinging sensation in my thigh.

I can barely stay on my feet, but I manage to turn toward the other man, the one I had stupidly assumed wouldn't be a problem.

He's standing, his gun aimed at me, his face hard.

When I try to move toward him, my leg gives out.

Fuck. This bastard shot me.

"You're going to regret this," the man says, sneering at me. "You should have just minded your fucking business."

"Fuck you," I spit, reaching for my gun that clattered to the ground at the same time that I did.

The man doesn't say anything else. Instead, he decides against finishing me off and runs to his bike, blood soaking through his jacket and shining in the sunlight.

The fact that he didn't call for help works well in my favor, but it's only a matter of time before the Apex Runners are alerted of my meddling.

They're not going to take kindly to the fact that I killed one of their men and interrupted whatever business they had with this girl.

I'm vaguely aware of the fact that she's moving. I hear the gravel crunching beneath her feet as she surveys the area. I'll check on her in just a minute. Right now, I need to give my brothers a heads up. Who knows what the hell the man that got away is up

to.

Grunting as I dig into my pocket, I fish out my phone. There's a red sheen over the screen, and I realize that I'm losing a lot of blood. One look at the ground below me confirms that. I curse as I unlock my device.

The display on the screen is a little blurry, but I chalk it up to the blood I'm too lazy to wipe from the screen.

I click on Saber's contact information. He's the club's Sergeant at Arms, the first person we're supposed to get in touch with in moments like these.

My hand tightens on the phone as the dial tone plays.

I pray to a god I don't quite believe in that he didn't head out with the guys who wanted more time on the road.

Finally, as the woman starts approaching me, there's a click on the other end and Saber's voice, annoyed, filters through, "What the fuck do you need that you couldn't stick around for a few minutes to ask? You left the clubhouse like a bat out of hell."

"Had a run-in with the Apex Runners," I say, my vision getting dim around the edges as the ground beneath me soaks up my blood.

"You're hurt," the woman says, her fingers grazing the top of my thigh. She sounds as dazed as I feel, the difference is I need to focus in order to convey the information to Saber so he can keep the other guys safe.

"Not right now, angel," I say, gritting my teeth as she prods at the same area.

"Who are you talking to?" Saber demands. "Axel, what the hell is going on?"

“I need a cleanup crew,” I say, the pain in my thigh starting to radiate down my whole leg. “I– Angel, what’s the address?”

The woman snatches my phone, giving me a strange look. It’s almost like I’m speaking gibberish, but then she says, “No, he’s lost a lot of blood... He needs a hospital... Are you serious? I mean, whatever. I’ll do my best with what I have.”

The rest of her words get garbled as an intense rush to my head fills my ears with the sound of the ocean.

All I can hear is my own labored breathing, and it’s becoming difficult to hold myself upright.

Maybe I just need to rest my head for a minute, then I can help get this whole situation sorted out.

I’m not sure how long I’m lying back with my eyes closed, but the woman’s face appears in front of me once more. Her long blonde hair hangs down in my face, and those brown eyes search my face, and it dawns on me that she’s trying to take care of me.

How cute. Doesn’t she know that that’s why I’m here – to take care of her?

She’s saying something, but I don’t hear her. I’m busy trying to memorize her face and fight off the inexplicable sleepy feeling that’s threatening to drag me under. Was I this fuckin’ tired when I got here? Maybe it’s the adrenaline crash.

Maybe I’m dying.

What a funny thought. Truthfully, I always thought I’d be killed during MC activities. It might just be my time.



Then, I lock eyes with this girl, with this absolute angel of a woman, and think that maybe I'm already dead. Maybe I was already dead when I got here and this whole thing has been a pre-death hallucination. That would explain why the most gorgeous woman I've ever seen is tending to me.

That's the last thought I have before my whole world goes dark.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Hazel

“Hey, stay with me!” I yell, falling to my knees next to the man who rescued me.

If he’s lost consciousness, this isn’t good for him.

I might be able to patch him up with the supplies I have on hand, but I don’t have any blood for a transfusion.

As a former ER nurse living half an hour from the nearest hospital, I keep a healthy first aid kit on hand, but there’s only so much my collection of medical supplies can do.

I take a moment to assess the situation. He was only hit once, in his upper thigh. He’s losing a lot of blood, so there’s a chance the bullet nicked his femoral artery. If that’s the case, it might be a death sentence for him.

Like hell I’m going to let him die, though.

With all the strength I can muster, I shove my fingers into the blood-soaked hole in his jeans and pull, ripping the fabric to give myself better access.

I struggle slightly, but eventually the denim gives, and I’m able to get a look at his leg.

While he’s still bleeding, I don’t see the kind of gushing you’d expect from an artery being hit.

That's good. He still has a chance. I might be able to get him put back together without having to take him to a hospital. The voice of the man on the phone still rings in my ears – no hospitals unless the MC deems them necessary.

God, I can't believe I'm mixed up with another motorcycle club. Like the mess I've already found myself in isn't enough. There isn't time to think about that now, though. Now, I've got a patient in desperate need of attention right in front of me.

“Hazel, what the hell happened out here?”

I glance up momentarily as I rip my jacket from my body to shove against the wound to stop the bleeding. My dad is standing on the porch, his eyes wide as he takes in the carnage. I ignore the question because I'm pretty sure that he watched this whole thing go down from inside the house.

It's crazy to me that he can get us into this mess, but he's too scared to help me clean it up. That's something for me to dwell on later. It's a discussion that's long overdue, but one that we'll have once this stranger is stable.

“I need you to help me get him inside,” I say as I shove my jacket against the wound. “It's going to take both of us to carry him up the stairs. I need to keep pressure on this.”

My dad, for his credit, nods and rushes towards us.

The two of us get the man into the air, me supporting him with one hand while I'm pressing down on his thigh, and my dad cradling him, struggling under his weight.

We make our way inside, straight to the dining room that we rarely use.

It's the cleanest room in the house, and by some stroke of luck, I used a disinfecting

wipe on the table this morning.

“Get me my first aid kit,” I say, gripping onto the man’s wrist to find his pulse. “And the scissors. I need to get the bullet out and the hole stitched up.”

Without a word, my dad leaves the room, following my instructions. While he’s gone, I take a deep breath and focus on counting the beats of his heart. His pulse is normal, so I can only assume that he lost consciousness due to shock and an adrenaline drop.

That’s good for him, actually. That means he’ll be out while I stitch him up. The process is painful without local anesthetics, which is something I don’t have in my first aid kit.

My dad reappears with everything that I requested, then stands back to watch me work. Thankfully, he isn’t a squeamish man. He’s just not a fan of being in imminent danger, but who is?

“So, what happened?” he asks as I’m cutting the man’s jeans away from his body. The bleeding seems to have slowed down significantly since getting him inside.

“Well, your friends The Apex Runners decided to pay us a little visit,” I say through gritted teeth, pulling out the supplies to disinfect the bullet wound.

“They’re not my friends.”

“And if it weren’t for you, I wouldn’t be their on-call nurse,” I shoot back. I love this man with all of my heart. He raised me and loves me unconditionally, he just has a gambling problem that he can’t seem to get under control. “So, if they’re anyone’s friends, they’re yours.”

“Is now really the time to do this, Hazel?” he asks, crossing his arms. When I don’t respond, he sighs, clearly knowing better than to argue with me. “So, who’s this man you’re working on? Those colors don’t look familiar to me.”

“Honestly, I have no idea who he is,” I admit as I wipe away blood and gunpowder residue from his leg. The bullet is still lodged in his thigh. “He just showed up, guns blazing. Seemed to take it as a personal offense that I was being roughed up by the two guys that showed up earlier.”

“So he—” my dad cuts himself off with a shiver. Once he gets himself under control, he continues, “Is that the reason there’s a man bleeding out on our front lawn?”

“Pretty sure the guy was dead as soon as he hit the ground,” I admit, moving in close as I hold the tweezers, ready to dig the lead from his leg. It’s too dark, though. “Dad, can you bring a light?”

Dutifully, he pulls out his phone with the flashlight illuminated. As I pull the bullet out, he says, “So, what are we going to do with the body out front?”

“I’m pretty sure he took care of it before he lost consciousness,” I say, setting my tweezers aside and grabbing my sutures. They’re not the best quality, but they’ll have to do. “He called one of his friends to ask for a cleanup crew. I gave them the location.”

I decide against telling my dad that they’re with another MC. He’ll find out eventually. For now, I’d prefer I didn’t have to talk him down from whatever ledge that’ll put him on. My focus needs to remain on the patient in front of me.

“So is he a professional hitman or something?” my dad asks, working himself up anyway. Typical Dad. “We can’t have someone like him in the house. We need to—we need to call the police or something!”

“Absolutely not,” I say, neatly sewing the stranger up. “We’re messed up with way too much shit to call the police.

“But, what if–”

By some stroke of luck, someone – probably the cleanup crew – knocks on the door. My dad looks like he’s going to jump out of his skin. He stares at me, eyes wide, mouth firmly shut like if he’s quiet enough whoever’s there will just leave.

“We can’t ignore that, Dad,” I say, turning away from him as I tie off the last stitch. “It’s either the people this man called or the police. It’s probably his people, though. Do you really think they’re the kind of men who like to be kept waiting?”

That’s enough to kick my dad into action.

He rushes from the room, straight to the front door where our visitors are pounding on the wood again.

I’m aware that as soon as they’re inside, I’ll have to recount the events of the afternoon for them.

I’m fairly certain I can count on them being a little more level-headed about this than my father, at least. Becoming an ER nurse made me desensitized the sight of blood, so I’d imagine that the kind of person who disposes of bodies with no questions asked is not going to freak out on me the way my father is.

I mean, if they’re the kind of people that can be called to dispose of a body and show up with no questions asked, I imagine they’re not going to freak out.

“Where the hell is Axel?”

Or not.

The man repeats his question. I recognize his voice, though it sounds much more intimidating when it's not filtered through a phone speaker. That must be Saber. There are other voices that I don't recognize, and all at once the gravity of this situation hits me.

Not only are we involved with the Apex Runners thanks to my father's stupidity, but now their rivals are involved, too.

Sure, they don't have any problems with my dad and me; It's not like we asked the man lying on our kitchen table to step in, but I can't imagine they'll be happy about this.

We're the easiest scapegoats for what transpired.

If it hadn't been for the shakedown that happened in my front yard, Axel here wouldn't have stopped.

He wouldn't have felt the need to jump in.

My chest tightens as Saber rounds the corner like a bat out of hell.

I steel myself, pulling on all of my experience from when I was working in the emergency department.

I might have moved to the oncology unit last year, but that doesn't mean I don't still work well under pressure or with irrationally angry family members.

"What the fuck happened?" Saber demands.

“He showed up and started a firefight,” I say, highlighting the fact that this was Axel’s idea. If he hadn’t shown up here, I would have been fine. Maybe I’d be sporting a few bruises, but I can handle my shit. “He killed one guy and took a bullet in his thigh. He’s stable now. And stitched up.”

“Fuckin’ impulsive idiot,” Saber says as he scrubs a hand over his face. “We’ll clean up his mess. How long until he wakes up?”

“Could be any time now,” I say, glancing at Axel’s stupid, handsome sleeping face.

His hair that looked black under the dying sunlight takes on a brown hue under the artificial lighting of the kitchen.

His eyelashes fan over his cheeks, an unfairly beautiful feature for someone so rugged.

“I didn’t give him anything, and I don’t think he lost enough blood to be out for long.”

Saber nods and says, “Then if he’s not up when we get back, we’ll wait.”

Before I can respond, he leaves the kitchen and starts barking orders at the men he brought along.

My body relaxes a bit now that we’re not sharing the same space.

I have no idea what I’m going to do or why things have happened the way they have, but a voice in the back of my head tells me that Axel holds the key to something.

I just hope it’s the key to solving our problems and nothing more sinister.



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Axel

The world around me slowly fades into focus. There's a dull ache in my leg, reminding me that I took a bullet. Truthfully, I'd expect it to hurt a whole hell of a lot worse than it does.

I lift my head slightly, trying to take in my surroundings. I'm not sure where I was expecting to be, but it wasn't inside a strange dining room. Wracking my brain, I try to remember what the fuck happened after taking that shot, but I come up short.

Giving up on figuring out where I ended up, I glance down at my body and make a shocking discovery. I'm not wearing any pants. And, even more shocking, the angel I saw before the world went black is in a chair next to me, tending to the wound.

"There's no fuckin' way I got to heaven," I say as I lay my head back down. Apparently I did die. What a way to go out.

The woman scoffs, but there's something sweet and light in the sound. I glance down at her, pleased to see that serious expression she was wearing just a few moments ago is gone, replaced with a teasing smile. God, she's fucking beautiful.

"You're not dead," she says, deadpan despite the way the corners of her mouth tug upward. "But I agree. There's no way you'd get into Heaven if the stunt you pulled out there is anything to go by."

I roll my eyes, smirking at her. "Whatever you say, Angel."

“Close,” she murmurs, pushing a strand of blonde hair away from her face. “But my name is Hazel.”

“Axel,” I say, deciding to introduce myself properly. I start to sit up, disliking lying down while I talk to this woman, but she pushes my back down with a firm shove to my shoulder.

“Oh? You like to be in control?” I ask, raising my eyebrows

At that, her face turns bright pink. She looks even better like this, flustered because of my words. I think I could happily spend the rest of my life getting under her skin like this.

Jesus. Maybe I lost more blood than I thought. What the hell am I thinking? She’s hot, but I’m not the kind of man that lets myself be tied down by women. Relationships aren’t my thing, so why am I imagining one with her?

“You were shot,” she mumbles after a moment, going back to tending the wound on my leg. “I’m trying to take care of the injury. I don’t want you pushing yourself so soon after sustaining it.”

Because I’m a bastard and we’ve already agreed that I’m not getting into Heaven, I decide to push things a little further just to see how she reacts. With a tone that straddles the fine line between mocking and flirtatious, I say, “You’re pretty good with your hands, huh?”

She splutters for a moment before regaining her composure to say, “I’m a nurse. I’m good with medical care.”

“Shame,” I say with a click of my tongue. “I’m already halfway undressed.”

She makes an indignant noise, squirming in her seat.

She drops the cotton pad she was using to clean me up and pushes herself back from the table slightly.

I'm opening my mouth to say something else, to see if I can get that gorgeous face even redder, when I hear my best friend and fellow Riders of Retribution member, Slash, speaking in the next room.

With a hiss, I push myself onto my feet, ignoring Hazel's weak protests. As much as I'd love to lie around and tease her, there are more pressing matters to attend to. I need to know why the hell my associate is hanging around in this woman's house.

Pushing through the pain shooting through my leg, I enter the living room to find him sitting on the couch next to a man I don't recognize.

The man looks uncomfortable and maybe a little scared.

Slash either doesn't notice or doesn't care, and is in the middle of telling him a story about his latest solo ride.

I swear, Slash could make conversation with a statue. The man loves to talk. I'm surprised he was content to be alone long enough for a solo ride. He probably talks to his bike when we aren't around.

"Damn, Axel," Slash says, rising to his feet when he notices me standing in the doorway. "You look like shit."

"I still look better than you," I retort through gritted teeth. "What's going on?"

"Well, me and the guys took care of the body you dropped before you passed out," he

says with a shrug. “I was just sitting around waiting for you to come back to the land of the living.”

“How thoughtful,” I spit, shifting my weight to my good leg. I have no idea how I’m going to ride like this. That motherfucker really hit me where it hurts.

Couldn’t he have aimed for a vital organ or something?

“I’m the most thoughtful bastard you know,” Slash says with a shit-eating grin. “Anyway, we gotta get you back to the clubhouse. Prez wants to talk to you.”

I resist the urge to outwardly groan. It’s not surprising that I’m being called in. I stormed into a situation without thinking, killed a member of a rival MC, and got myself shot. Who knows what kind of shitstorm I’ve unleashed.

Still, I’d much rather stay here with the gorgeous angel that patched me up and blushes so easily.

“Of course he does,” I say, glancing back toward the dining room where Hazel is standing and watching our interaction. There’s an expression etched on her face that I can’t read, but I don’t have the time to get to the bottom of it. “Well, let’s get out of here.”

Slash snorts and says, “You’re going to leave without pants?”

“I woke up without them on,” I say, glaring at him and daring him to make another joke about it.

“I guess it’s a good thing you aren’t riding your bike,” he laughs as he heads toward the door. “I can’t imagine that’d be a fun experience for you.”

I grunt in response, following him from the house, and feeling Hazel's eyes on me the entire time. When we get outside, the scene is clear; there are no signs of the gunfight that took place. The MC even went through the trouble of rinsing away the evidence of the bloodshed on the gravel.

Our club's truck is parked in the driveway, a trailer attached to the hitch. My bike is already loaded and secured on the back. I can tell a lot of work was done on my behalf while I was out.

"The nurse in there said you lost a lot of blood, but she doesn't think that's why you passed out," Slash says as we get into the cab. "Guess you must just be a little bitch."

"Ha, ha," I respond humorlessly. As soon as I'm seated, the pain in my leg starts to subside. "So, how long was I down?"

"Not long," he says as he starts the vehicle and expertly backs out of the driveway. "We took care of the body for you. And the guy's bike."

"I saw," I say, watching as the scenery passes us by, longing for the feel of the air against my skin. "Thanks for that, by the way."

"Don't mention it. You know we'll always clean up your messes."

I stifle a sigh. I'm not usually one to make messes.

I've devoted my life to this club, and I take care to do things by the book.

Ultimately, I'd like to be in charge of this organization one day, but I'll have to put in my time and work my way up in the ranks.

This stunt I pulled is definitely going to set me back a few paces.

“You know Axel, I didn’t take you for the kind of person to act like an idiot for a girl,” Slash says, a devious smile on his ugly face.

“I don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about,” I shoot back.

“Oh, come on,” he says, unashamed. “I have eyes, man. That nurse was hot as hell.”

“That’s not why I stepped in,” I reply, because it’s the truth. I didn’t know that those guys were roughing up the most beautiful woman on Earth. I just saw injustice and corrected it.

“Yeah, keep telling yourself that,” Slash says, clearly trying to get a rise out of me.

“Fuck off,” I say, making it clear that this conversation isn’t going to go any further.

The truth is, he’s right. Now that I’ve met Hazel and seen her up close, I’d do anything for her. Fuck. I’ll kill anyone that lays a fucking hand on her. I’ve already dropped one body to keep her safe. I have no qualms about doing it again.

As long as we’re both alive, I’m going to be her protector.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Hazel

“Hazel, this is bad,” my dad says as soon as the door closes behind Axel and his chatty friend. “What the fuck is going on? Why were the Apex Runners here? Why did those other guys show up?”

“Dad, I already told you I don’t know why they showed up,” I say, pinching the bridge of my nose.

I wish I could step away and calm myself down, but my dad has a habit of flying off the handle if left alone with big feelings for too long.

It’s the reason that we’re in this mess in the first place.

“The Apex Runners showed up because they needed me while I was at work.”

“I thought they knew your schedule,” my dad says, grabbing at his hair anxiously. “I thought...”

“They do know my schedule,” I say, sinking onto the couch next to him. “It’s just... I guess they want me at their beck and call at all hours.”

“That was never part of the deal,” he murmurs, familiar guilt seeping into his voice.

“That’s what I told them,” I sigh, resting my head against the back of the couch. “Apparently, they want more.”

“That’s the problem with these guys,” my dad says. “They always want more. They’re never satisfied with what they’ve got.”

I wonder if he hears himself. If he would have been satisfied with what he had, we wouldn’t be in this situation. I’m not going to remind him of that, though. I have enough going on without dredging up an argument we’ve had time and time again.

“I know.” With a shake of my head I lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees. “And honestly, if we didn’t need my income, I’d consider it.”

“Consider what?” he asks, attempting to catch my gaze. “What are they asking of you?”

“They want me to move into their clubhouse so I can take care of whatever issues they have at any time of day,” I admit, giving him a defeated smile.

“It would mean quitting my job. And even if they paid me, I doubt it would come anywhere close to what I’m making at the hospital.

Besides, I love my job, and I’m not going to give it up because you owe these guys a favor. ”

My dad shifts uncomfortably, and I can tell he’s considering telling me to do it.

It’s infuriating. I’m the one paying a majority of our bills since he can’t be trusted to not gamble away our money.

Anger courses through me, but I try to stamp it down.

After all, I clean up the messes he makes because I love him.



He senses my unease and lets out a long breath. Changing the subject, he asks, “So... that guy, the one that killed a man and got himself shot... who is he?”

“You really didn’t figure it out?” I ask, tilting my head at him. “He and his buddy are from the Riders of Retribution.”

For a moment, his face is blank as he processes that information. Then, when he realizes that the Riders of Retribution are another MC, he goes pale. I’m actually worried that he’s going to pass out or throw up.

“This is bad, Hazel,” he says, whipping his head around the living room like he’s worried there’s someone else in here with us. “Why would you get them involved? That’s only going to make things worse for us. If the Apex Runners find out...”

“I didn’t get anyone else involved,” I say, not bothering to hide my indignation. “Your friends are the ones that were roughing me up on the front lawn for anyone to see. I didn’t ask Axel to step in. I’ve never even seen him before today.”

“And you think the Apex Runners are going to believe that?” he asks, the panic in his voice nearly reaching a fever pitch.

“Hazel, they’re not reasonable men. They’re going to see that one of their members was killed by their rivals on our property, because of you, and they won’t ask any other questions.”

I know he’s right, but I stay quiet. The last thing either of us needs is my feeding into his anxiety. It’s already bad enough as it is.

“We have to leave,” he says. “We have to get out of the state... no, the country. We have to get as far away from them as we can. I... I have some cash put back, and maybe we can get fake IDs and—”

“Dad, we are not running away,” I say putting a stop to that line of thinking before he actually has us on a plane to Norway.

“If you’d only let me leave the country when those goons first started knocking, we wouldn’t be in this mess now.”

“Do you really want to go there?” I ask, reaching my breaking point. “Because if we’re going back and trying to rewrite history, if you kept yourself out of shady gambling rings, or if you didn’t make bets with money you didn’t have, we wouldn’t be in this mess at all!”

“Point taken,” he concedes, shrinking in on himself. “But maybe it’s time to cut our losses. We need to get out of here before we get in any deeper.”

“And what if we’re already in too deep?” I challenge, rising from the couch and pacing the length of the living room. “Who’s to say they wouldn’t just track us down to settle your debt? What if they’ve already become too reliant on me and now they don’t want to lose my help?”

“They’re a motorcycle club in a little town in New Mexico,” he mumbles, talking to his lap. “I doubt they have the resources to do an international search. I think it’s worth rolling the dice.”

“I’m going to be honest, Dad. I don’t trust your judgment when it comes to gambling,” I say, stopping in my tracks. “Plus, I have a life here. I have friends, and I love my job. I don’t want to just pack up and leave.”

He’s quiet, contemplating. I wait for him to gather his thoughts.

I think my sharpness quelled his overreaction a bit.

I hate having to be the voice of reason with him, but it's been like this since my mom died.

We're both getting better at falling back into our roles as parent and child, but when tensions get high, I have to be the adult.

"If we keep dealing with them," he begins slowly, picking each of his words carefully, "wouldn't your life here change drastically?"

We're not getting out of debt. They're going to keep pushing you more and more.

You're not going to get to see your friends.

They might compromise your job at the hospital.

Wouldn't it be better to leave? They need nurses everywhere.

You could make new friends. We could live our lives without looking over our shoulders. "

I hate that he's making sense, so I keep my mouth shut as I turn that over in my mind.

The Apex Runners are ruthless. I've already gotten visits from them at work, having to tend to their wounds when I should be providing care to cancer patients.

My friend circle has gotten smaller since my involvement with them began, if only to keep my friends from getting too close to this dangerous aspect of my life.

It's hard to invite people over when I know that a wounded biker could show up at any moment.

Still, I don't want to leave Rio Lunas. I've never known another home, and I love this town. Plus, my mom is buried here. I don't want to leave her.

That's not even touching on the fact that I'm very interested in the man I stitched up on our dining room table.

Maybe I'm imagining it, but there was a connection between us.

I've never wanted to explore something serious with a man before, but I want to with him.

I'd hate to run away the second I find someone that I might be romantically interested in.

"If we do leave..." I say, sitting down next to my father again. I swallow hard. "If we do leave, we're not doing it immediately. I want to try and find a solution that keeps us in Rio Lunas. I know things seem really bad right now, but maybe they're not as bad as we think they are."

"Hazel..."

"I'm not saying that we'll put it off until it's too late," I say as I grab his hand. "I'm just asking you to give it some time. If we don't have any other options, we'll go. You can start making the plans now, that way if we have to pack up and leave, all we'll have to do is grab our bags."

He nods, squeezing my hand before standing and leaving the room. I collapse back against the sofa, finally allowing myself to relax since the whole mess today started. My dad's probably right. It's dangerous, and leaving is our best option. But god... I don't want to.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Axel

Cliff's office is surprisingly clean for the kind of rough and tumble man he is.

When I first met him, I had no idea that the bastard with dusty boots and cigarette burns on the hem of his t-shirt would be a total neat-freak.

Looks can be deceiving though, and our president takes pride in keeping his workspace spic and span.

"How's the leg?" Cliff asks as the silence between us stretches out uncomfortably.

"Hurts like hell," I grunt, not bothering to sugarcoat it.

"Good," he replies, leaning back in his chair and drumming his knuckles against the arm. "Maybe you'll learn a lesson about planning ahead instead of storming into a situation. That leg is what happens when you're not thinking."

I grit my teeth, swallowing down a retort. I'm already on thin ice with our president, and probably the rest of the club if I'm being honest. If he says it's good that my leg hurts like hell, then it's good.

I wait for him to continue, feeling the anger roll off of him in waves.

He's had a temper as long as I've known him, but he's measured about it.

I've always respected the way his anger is righteous and directed at the proper

people.

I've never had it directed at me, though, and my respect is turning into fear.

"So, are you going to tell me what the fuck you were thinking, or are you going to just stand there like a fucking idiot?" he says when it becomes obvious I'm not going to offer up any explanation without prompting.

"Can't say I was thinking too much," I say, knowing the best way to soften the blow of whatever punishment I'm about to be dealt is to agree with him.

"I just saw the Apex Runners roughing up some girl in front of her house while we were on our ride. I went back out to assess the situation, and one of them had their hands on her. I just acted to keep her safe."

"By killing a prominent member of our rival MC?" Cliff says, his tone dry and matter-of-fact.

"I couldn't just stand by and let that happen," I say. "They were hurting her, and if I hadn't stepped in, fuck knows what they would have done to her."

Cliff makes a dissatisfied noise in the back of his throat. That's better than I was expecting. Honestly, I figured he'd take my patch and tell me to get the hell out of Rio Lunas. Right now, I assume he's begrudgingly understanding my sense of justice.

"This isn't good, Axel," he says after a few seconds of stewing. "Actually... this is fucking awful."

"I know, Cliff."

He cuts me off with a death glare. I get his message loud and clear – I shouldn't

Speak anymore unless he asks me a direct question.

“They’re going to retaliate,” he mutters. “There’s no ifs about that. They aren’t the kind of club to let something like this go. Hell, if one of their guys killed one of our members, we’d already be on the way to their clubhouse, guns blazing.”

He’s right. This is the kind of thing that our MC wouldn’t let slide. I just wasn’t thinking about what would happen after that encounter. The only thing I cared about was making sure that Hazel was safe. I assumed that I’d just figure everything out after the fact.

That time is now. And my president is fucking pissed.

“Every single member of this club needs to be on high alert,” Cliff says, thinking out loud rather than talking to me. “We’ll need to up security around the clubhouse and club activities. And we’ll need more armed riders for any rides we take.”

He locks eyes with me and I nod in agreement. Although, at this point, even if I disagreed with him, I’d nod. I’m in deep shit, so I’m in no position to be offering criticism, constructive or otherwise.

“I’m not quite sure what I’m going to do with you yet,” he says, his voice ice cold, but his glare burning hot. “So don’t you for a fucking second think the only punishment you’re getting off with is your bum leg.”

“I assumed the gunshot would be the least of my worries,” I mutter, holding his gaze.

“Glad to hear you aren’t entirely braindead,” he says, crossing his arms over his chest. “Maybe there’s hope for you yet, Axel.”

“You know the Riders of Retribution are my top priority,” I say, standing up

straighter.

These men gave me purpose when I was lost. If it weren't for them, I'd probably have ended up just like my alcoholic mother.

"Whatever I need to do to make up for this, I'll do it without complaint. That's a promise."

"Good," Cliff says, looking me up and down. After a second of contemplation, he says, "So what do you think about that girl you tried to get yourself killed over?"

"She was nice," I say with a shrug, the corners of my mouth lifting without my permission. "Saved my ass. Pretty too."

"Yeah, that's what I heard from Slash," he says.

I have to bite my tongue as the jealous monster living inside me tries to roar to life.

I don't have anything to worry about. Slash is harmless and doesn't have a lick of charm when it comes to women.

Still, just the idea of another man looking at Hazel and seeing how gorgeous she is makes me sick.

I'll fucking kill him if he tries anything.

"Why are you asking about Hazel?" I say, clearing my throat to cover the uncharacteristic swell of emotions. I just met this woman and she's already doing things to me that I can't explain.

"Ah, so you know her name," Cliff says, narrowing his eyes at me. "Funny. I thought



you said you didn't know who she was."

"I didn't," I say, resisting the urge to puff my chest out. "But she did sew my leg up. We exchanged names. I'm polite, unlike some of the members of this club."

"Yet you're the only one that decided to get into a firefight on your own."

"Even after I make up for this, I'm never going to live it down, am I?" I observe.

That gets Cliff's stony facade to crack. He smirks, seemingly pleased that I've accepted my fate. That bodes well for me.

"You're damn right you aren't," he confirms out loud before glancing at the clock on his wall. "Alright, Axel. I'm calling this meeting to an end, but I've got something you can do for me to start making up for your stupidity."

"What's that?" I ask, bracing myself for something that's going to be hell on my injury.

"Leave Hazel alone."

For a minute, the entire room goes quiet. I want to believe I haven't heard him correctly, that he isn't asking me to abandon this girl. It's not an option.

"What do you mean?" I say, measured and slow.

"I mean that I'm going to need you to stay away from her," Cliff says like it's that simple, like I can just pretend we never met, like I can ignore the fire that's burning hot in my chest for her. "Don't ride by her house, don't contact her. Hell, try not to think about her."

“But they were going to hurt her!” I shout, unable to keep myself under control.

The outburst is so unlike me that he’s stunned into silence.

When he recovers, there’s an odd look on his face.

I brace myself to be chewed out for it, but instead, he’s reasonable, talking to me calmly.

It wouldn’t surprise me if he can read the thoughts on my face; he’s known me since I was eighteen.

Spending nine years working with someone in high stakes situations will give you a pretty good sense of their emotions.

“Listen, Axel,” he says, waiting until I release the tension from my jaw to continue. “She’s obviously mixed up in some serious shit with these guys. Do you really think that hanging around her is going to help her situation?”

I grind my teeth. I refuse to admit he’s right, even if he does have a point. I was right to protect her, but my presence must have stirred things up.

“If you really insist on hanging around her, that’s fine,” he says with a defeated sigh. “But wait until we’ve cleaned up the mess you’ve made. Poking around her business isn’t going to do anyone any good. Now get the hell out of here. Go rest up. I’m calling an emergency meeting tomorrow.”

“Understood,” I say before leaving the office.

As I head out of the clubhouse, I know that I should listen to him.

My loyalty to the Riders of Retribution is unwavering.

Following orders is usually second nature to me.

But now... I just can't shake the sense of duty I feel toward Hazel.

She needs help. Whatever danger she's in, she's not going to get out of it alone.

And that's something I can't ignore.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Hazel

Since my shift at the hospital started, I've been watching the clock and looking over my shoulder.

I haven't heard anything from the Apex Runners since the...

incident yesterday. I'm not naive enough to think that their silence means I'm in the clear.

In fact, I'm fairly certain that their absence is worse than their presence.

I'm prepared for them to come – I really am – but I'd prefer it if this confrontation happened anywhere but my job. The patients I take care of have enough to worry about without their nurse being shaken down by a group of burly motorcycle club members.

Thankfully, the end of my shift comes quickly enough.

So, after ensuring the comfort of my patients and briefing the nurse taking over for me about the care plans, I grab my jacket and hustle out of the hospital.

I don't necessarily breathe any easier when I step outside, but I'm assured that if anything happens now, it's my problem and mine alone.

As I walk to my car, I let myself actually consider leaving Rio Lunas.

I was caught up in my own emotions last night when my dad suggested we run away.

If I look at it logically, this is the best way to keep both of us safe.

Maybe I shouldn't have stopped him when I caught him trying to leave before this whole thing started.

I could have just gone with him and we'd already be living a stress-free life in some foreign country where we'd never been found.

I'm so wrapped up in my thoughts, in trying to figure out where we'll go and what we need to take, that I don't notice the Harley parked next to my car until I'm only a few steps away.

I freeze, my heart rate spiking. This is the retaliation I was dreading. They're going to grab me right here in the hospital parking lot. I'm torn between wanting someone to notice what's going on and wanting no one to see.

"Angel?" a familiar, unexpected voice says. Axel steps toward me, his brow furrowed.

My entire body relaxes; both the timbre of his tone and his presence making me feel at ease. No one's ever made me feel so safe just by being near me before. I tell myself it's just relief, but it takes all of my strength to keep myself from running into his arms and holding onto him tight.

I can't explain the impulse, but I find that I don't mind having it. Axel's the same man who took a bullet for me yesterday. I'm sure that if I acted on it, he wouldn't care.

"What are you doing here?" I ask, my voice coming out breathlessly.

“I needed to talk to you,” he says, glancing around the parking lot as if he’s worried we’re being watched. The fear isn’t unfounded. “I know you’re involved with the Apex Runners.”

“Excellent observational skills,” I say as my body tenses. I should have guessed this was why he turned up. It would be ridiculous to think he’s here because he felt the same connection I did yesterday. Instead, he’s worried about some turf war that I’m apparently in the middle of now.

“You’re in danger,” he says, sure of himself. But, again, he’s got excellent observational skills. I’m not confirming that for him, though. I need him as far out of this business as possible.

I really need to get this crush under control.

There’s no way that I’ll be able to explore anything with Axel as long as I’m working out my father’s debt.

So, I’m never going to be able to pursue anything with him.

It’s best if I push him away, get him out of my life.

I can’t let myself or him get hurt because of my father’s bad decisions.

“I’m not in danger,” I say, straightening up my back and leveling him with the most confident look I can – the one I use to reassure patients that they have a fighting chance after I give them bad news. “I appreciate your concern, but I’m okay. Really. There’s nothing to get worked up over.”

“So, it’s ‘okay’ that you were roughed up in front of your house?” he asks, no nonsense and firm. “Maybe you have a different idea of what can be considered

danger, but the scene I came across was something that warrants concern.”

“Then I guess we have two different ideas,” I say, desperate to cut this interrogation short. If he keeps questioning me, I’m liable to break and tell him everything.

“You’re telling me you don’t care about your safety?” he challenges, stepping close to me. I have to tilt my head up to maintain eye contact. He’s even more attractive from this angle.

God, I need to get out of here before I do something stupid.

“Why do you care?” I say, my words not as strong as I’d like them to be.

Still, I power through, trying to reason with him and myself.

“We just met. We don’t even really know each other.

I appreciate what you did for me and that you’re concerned, but I don’t have any reason to tell you what’s going on.

It’s probably best for both of us that you get out of here before anyone sees you. ”

Axel pauses, and for a moment I think that I’ve gotten through to him and he’s going to leave. He even climbs onto his bike. But then, he looks at me pointedly and says, “Get on.”

“Why?” I say, resisting the urge to do exactly as he says. I need to at least put up a fight here.

“We can’t have this conversation in the hospital parking lot,” he says.

I hesitate, if only so I can tell myself that I tried. Then, I climb on behind, acutely aware of how close together our bodies are pressed. I wrap my arms around his waist and hold on as the engine roars to life.

“Hold on tight,” he tells me, his voice booming over the sound of the bike.

I do as he says, tightening my arms around him. Holding onto him like this makes my face flush. It feels right, and I can sense his strength through his jacket. I wish that we weren't out in public, that he was facing me and holding onto me too.

He takes off, driving quickly out of the parking lot. We go relatively slowly, riding carefully through the traffic in town. Then, when we hit the open road, he picks up our speed. I'm hit with a rush of adrenaline.

I've never ridden a motorcycle before today.

I've never understood the appeal or the reason that people are so into their bikes or why MCs host long rides.

I get it now. The feeling of the wind whipping around our bodies and the way the motorcycle roars beneath us is the most exhilarating thing I've ever felt.

The longer we ride, the further we get away from town. The joy of the ride starts to fade. There are no signs of us slowing down, and our surroundings are starting to look unfamiliar to me. Being out this far from town with someone I don't know well makes me a little nervous.

Finally, he stops in a remote place and kills the engine.

After a second of getting used to the absence of the rumble and roar of the bike, I get off, keeping my hands on Axel's waist until both of my feet are on solid ground.



After I let go, he dismounts, his face contorting slightly with pain when he puts weight on his bad leg.

I glance around our surroundings. There's nothing for miles, nothing between us and the mountains in the distance. The sun is slowly sinking below the horizon, and the brightest stars are starting to appear in the sky.

Axel grabs something from the under-seat storage area. Then, he offers me his hand. I take it without thinking. I let him lead me even further away from where he parked his bike. When we stop, he unfolds a blanket and lays it on the ground before gesturing for me to sit.

I take the invitation, noting how private this place feels despite the open air. Once I'm on the ground, I stare up at him, watching as he sinks down next to me. He sits close, and I can feel his body heat radiating through his clothes.

He tilts his head up toward the sky, and I follow suit.

The two of us sit in a silence that's profoundly right, watching as more and more stars join the scenery.

It's peaceful, enough to remind me that my problems are small in the grand scheme of things.

I'm overcome by the sense that everything's going to work out. I just don't know how yet.

"You asked me why I cared about what's happening with you and the Apex Runners," he says, his voice soothing.

Without even thinking about it, I lean in closer to him, letting our biceps press

together.

“It’s because I want the people in my community to be safe.

It’s obvious that you don’t want to be working with them.

And, since I’m being honest here, I like you Hazel.

I don’t want to see you get hurt. I want to help you. ”

I shrug, unable to ignore how comforted and cared for those words make me feel. I should open up to him, but the thought of doing that makes my stomach twist. So, I say, “That’s noble, Axel. But I don’t know you. I’m not going to tell you all my shit.”

“I figured you’d say something like that,” he says, threading our fingers together. I glance down at our intertwined hands, my heart flip-flopping in my chest at the sight of how his palm completely dwarfs mine. “You know, I joined the MC when I was eighteen.”

“Why are you telling me this?” I ask, looking at his side profile, struck by how devastatingly handsome he is in the moonlight.

“I can’t expect you to tell me what you’re going through if I don’t share anything about myself first, right?”

“Oh,” I breathe.

“Anyway, my bike was the first big purchase I made for myself,” he says, nodding toward his Harley. “I started working to take care of me and my mom when I was fifteen. I saved for two years to have enough for that.”

“It was just you and your mom?”

“Yeah,” he says, getting a far away look in his eyes. “My dad disappeared when I was twelve.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” I murmur, leaning in closer and resting my head against his shoulder to provide him a bit of comfort.

“It’s okay, it was a long time ago,” he says with a shrug. “Besides, it was harder on my mom. Her grief paralyzed her and she used alcohol as a crutch. She couldn’t hold down a job for longer than a few months. We struggled a lot until I was old enough to get a job and take care of the both of us.”

I rub his thumb with mine, unsure of what to say. This is one of those situations where words don’t fix anything. Besides, it’s an old wound. The most considerate thing that I can do is give him the space to tell his story.

“Anyway, I’d always wanted a motorcycle.

So, when I finally bought that beauty over there, I treated her like a princess,” he says, and I can’t help the way the corners of my mouth twitch up at the imagery.

“I learned how to do the maintenance on her all on my own, and one day while I was working on her in our driveway, Cliff from the MC stopped to tell me about the Riders of Retribution and invited me to one of their Wednesday meetings. I was off work that week, so I went. When I got there I realized they were the family I’d always wanted. ”

“Axel...” I murmur, emotions flooding through me.

I see this man in a whole new light. The two of us might be more similar than I care

to admit.

He's looking at me, and that spark from earlier has grown into a raging wildfire.

Partially because of the insane urges I can't suppress any longer, and partially because I don't still want to spill my guts even though he's offered this information about himself, I surge forward and kiss him.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Axel

As soon as I feel Hazel's lips against mine, all of my walls start crumbling around me.

The little bit of self control I've held onto dissolves.

The only thing I can think about is getting closer to this woman, showing her how much she's come to mean to me in such a short amount of time, making her mine without a shadow of a doubt.

I cup her face in my hands, pulling her closer to me as I deepen our connection. I make no attempts to conceal my hunger for her. Licking desperately into her mouth, I chase her taste, pouring the things I don't know how to say into the action.

She responds in kind, though her own actions are a little sloppy. I assume it's nerves, but a part of me hopes it's inexperience. In fact, my cock twitches with interest at the idea of being the only person to touch her intimately.

As my mind screams Claim! Claim! Claim! I give in. With my tongue exploring the depths of her mouth, I let my hands roam over her body. Her curves combined with the nurse's strength I can feel just beneath her skin only makes my cock harder, driving me more wild.

My palms dance over her sides, squeezing her hips. The movement of her mouth against mine stutters, but I take it as a good sign. Slowly, I drag my hand up her stomach, relishing the way her breath stutters. But, when I reach her breasts, she goes

rigid.

“Hey, are you okay?” I ask, pulling away and resting my hands on her hips.

“Yeah,” Hazel says breathlessly, glancing at her lap. “Just...”

“What is it, angel?” I say, ducking my head to catch her eyes.

“Well...” she murmurs, her face getting bright red in the moonlight. “I’ve never... done this before?”

“Done this?” I say, already knowing what she’s getting at but needing her to say it out loud.

“The most I’ve ever done before now is kissing,” she says, looking up at the sky with a nervous smile on her face. “I hope... I hope that’s not a problem.”

“It’s the opposite of a problem,” I groan as my cock twitches hard in my pants. I cradle her cheek in my palm, turning her attention back to me. “Will you let me take care of you?”

“Yes,” she all but whispers.

“Good,” I reply, connecting our lips again. I don’t let the kiss get too deep, and when she starts to relax into me, I pull back and say, “Lie down for me, beautiful.”

She does as I ask, her body just fitting on the blanket I spread for us. With a gentleness I didn’t know I had, a gentleness I suspect is only for Hazel, I kiss her once more. She makes a soft, satisfied noise, wrapping her arms around my neck and pulling me in closer.

As our kiss slowly gets more intense, her mouth opening up to allow me deeper access, I slip off the blue scrubs and her panties. She lifts her hips to help, and I'm emboldened by her eagerness. Once the garments are deposited to the side, I swipe a finger through her wetness.

"Already dripping for me," I murmur against her mouth.

Before she can respond, I pull away, sliding down the length of her body. Stationed between her legs, I get a mouthwatering view of her pussy dripping in the moonlight. With a growl, I lean in, lapping up her sweetness.

Above me, Hazel makes a strangled noise. Her body tenses as she experiences pleasure that's entirely new to her. My arousal pulses in my jeans, and I lean in for more, savoring her sounds and her flavor.

Her fingers thread through my hair, her short nails scratching at my scalp. Electric shocks of desire course through me, prompting me to dig in deeper. I want to make her scream my name. I need her to associate this kind of ecstasy with me and me alone.

As I lick at her folds, plunging my tongue into her opening, I can't help but think that nothing else has felt as right as this moment.

I accept that the awful things that happened to me as a kid led me here.

I'm grateful for them, grateful for every single seemingly inconsequential thing that led me to my angel.

I shift my attention upward, changing the target of my ministrations from her pussy to her clit.

Her reaction is immediate and a goddamn work of art.

She gasps into the night, her grip getting tighter.

She squeezes her legs around my head, trying to pull me in even closer, to focus more attention on the part of her that wants it the most.

I'm happy to oblige, flicking my tongue over the bundle of nerves. I send shocks of delight through her, making her writhe in response. Then I close my lips around the nub and suck.

"Oh, shit," she curses, pushing her hips hard against my mouth. "That's— oh my god, Axel."

That's exactly what I want to hear. My name sounds like Heaven coming out of those sinfully perfect lips. I want more. I need more.

I hum, hoping she takes the sound as the encouragement it is. My angel is quick on the uptake, grinding against me harder, making desperate noises. Please spill from the tip of her tongue.

"Axel!" she exclaims, the grip she has on my head getting impossibly tighter. "Axel, I'm—"

She's close. She can't finish her sentence, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know she's about to tumble over the edge. I grind my cock against the ground through my jeans, groaning as her taste gets more intense.

When she cums, it's with a shout of my name. She says it like a prayer, like I'm her salvation. And I lap it up the same way I'm lapping up her juices.



I work her through her orgasm, my dick leaking in my boxers. God, I can't wait to be inside this girl. I can't wait to fill her up with my seed. I've already marked her, now it's time to claim her as mine and mine alone.

Her pleasure subsides slowly, and when she's reduced to quiet whines and soft whimpers, I pull back. She's staring at me like I hung the moon, like my presence is more impressive than the stars lighting the night sky above us. It's intoxicating.

"Axel," she whispers.

I crawl back up the length of her body, kissing her again. My tongue plunges inside her mouth, letting her get an idea of just how fucking good she tastes. I grind against her, desperately needing relief.

She's a virgin, though. If I want to get inside her, to pop that sweet, sweet cherry, I can't do it here. The ride back to my place is going to be torture, but that's where we need to go.

"Get dressed," I growl when we part, my chest heaving with the effort to keep the beast in me under control.

"What? Why?" she asks, propping herself up on her elbows.

God, she looks so cute all confused like that. The innocence that's rolling off of her is intoxicating. If we don't get a move on soon, I'm not going to be able to wait. I'm going to take her right here.

"Because I'm taking you back to my place," I say, thrusting her clothes into her hands. "Our night is just beginning, Angel."

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Hazel

The ride back to Axel's place takes way too long. His promise of something more when we get back thrums through my body. I keep myself pressed against him the entire trip, a ball of anticipation forming in my gut.

When we get to his place – a modest two bedroom that looks completely unassuming – both of us hop off his bike and rush inside.

His hand is tight around mine, urging me through the front door.

I don't get a chance to take in my surroundings as he shepherds me to his bedroom, but truthfully, the way he decorates his space is the last thing on my mind.

Once we're inside his bedroom, he pushes me against his wall. His mouth is on mine in an instant, and his hands are everywhere. He fondles my breasts through my clothes, he caresses my neck, he squeezes my hips and pulls me closer to press his hardness against me.

My clothes don't stay on for very long. He makes quick work of them, shoving my pants and underwear down with expert precision.

When he discards my jacket before yanking my shirt off, he only breaks our kiss long enough to get the offending garment over my head. My bra goes next, undone with one hand.

After a moment, he breaks away from me. His eyes sweep over my bare body. My

face burns with embarrassment at being so exposed in front of him.

“God, you’re fuckin’ perfect,” he curses, not bothering to hide the overt lust in his tone.

I shiver. He looks like he’s going to eat me alive. I don’t think I’ve ever wanted anything more in my life.

He pulls me into another kiss, spinning me away from the wall. I try my best to keep up with his passion as he walks me backward toward his bed. When my knees hit the back of the mattress, I fall onto it, staring up at him with wide eyes.

“I’ve wanted you since I saw you, angel,” he tells me as drops his jacket and throws his shirt to the side. “From the moment I saw you, I knew I’d do anything to make you mine. And I’ll do anything to protect you. If anyone lays a finger on you, they’re dead.”

My heart pounds in my ears as the sincerity of his words hits me full force. I know I just met him, but I know him well enough by now to hear the promise there. I wonder if I should be scared by this kind of proclamation, but I’m not. It only makes me want him more.

The sound of his belt buckle snaps my attention to his waist. I watch with rapt attention as he shoves them down, revealing a large bulge in his boxers. My eyes widen as he reveals his hard cock.

He’s huge. I’ve seen plenty of phalluses in my time as a nurse, but never something quite as big as what Axel’s endowed with. I wonder if it’ll fit.

I really, really hope it does. Because I want him inside of me just as much as he wants to get inside me.

“Like what you see?” he asks, smirking at me when my eyes snap away from his throbbing length.

“I—” I say, swallowing hard. All of a sudden, my mouth is very dry. I manage to get myself together enough to say, “You’re huge.”

That pulls a chuckle out of him, and as he steps between my legs, “That so?”

“Uh huh,” I say, letting him work me into the center of the bed.

“I’ll go slow,” Axel says as he leans down to capture my lips with his.

I melt into the contact, sighing and opening my legs wider for him. He takes the invitation to settle in, his hard cock pressing against my inner thigh. A whimper escapes me without my permission, and he swallows it up eagerly.

The kiss only gets filthier and filthier.

Our tongues slide against each other, and he brings up a hand to tangle into my hair.

He angles my head so he can explore even deeper.

I’m so distracted by the way he’s kissing me that I don’t realize he’s lining himself up with me until his member starts to push into my opening.

“Oh!” I gasp, breaking the kiss and looking up at him. “Axel, that’s—”

“Does it hurt?” he asks, still sliding in, though he’s going slightly slower.

“No, no,” I say, not wanting him to stop. Oh god, I don’t want him to stop. “It’s just... it’s a lot. But it’s good.”

“Good,” he replies, before leaning in to connect our lips once again.

As he fills me up, I’m hit with the realization that the pull I feel for him is more than just attraction. Like this, we’re one. This is exactly where I’m meant to be. Axel is my future, and I desperately want him to be my present too.

Once he’s fully inside, he pulls out about halfway before plunging back in. When I moan in pleasure, he does it again. Then again. He works himself up to a fast, steady rhythm that makes my toes curl in delight.

As he fucks me, gives me all of him and takes my virginity, the fact that I’m falling for him becomes glaringly obvious.

The way he’s so protective of me, the fact that he was so quick to act when he saw that I was in danger...

No one has ever made me feel the way that he has.

If I were with him, I could just turn off the worry center in my brain and let him take care of everything.

For the first time in my life, it feels like someone actually cares about my wellbeing.

“God, you’re so fuckin’ tight,” Axel groans, breaking away from the heated kiss we’re sharing. “Feels like you were fuckin’ made for me, angel.”

“I was,” I moan, and it’s the truest phrase I’ve ever uttered. “I was made for you, Axel. No one else. Just you.”

“That’s right,” he practically growls before his mouth is on mine again.

He picks up speed, changing the angle of his thrusts and hitting something deep inside me that makes me scream. All at once, I'm on the precipice of falling over the edge. He's awakened something in my soul, and I don't ever want him to stop.

"Axel," I whine, wrapping my arms around him even tighter as my orgasm starts to dig its claws into my gut. "Axel... Axel!"

"Just let it go," he says, sensing my impending climax. "I'm right here. I've got you. Let me see how good I'm making you feel."

With his encouragement, I can't hold back any longer. My orgasm slams into me, and I cum with another cry of his name. And, when my pussy clenches around him with spasms of pleasure, Axel makes his own noise, cumming deep inside me.

I'm filled up with his seed, and I feel like he's taken me completely.

I'm his beyond a shadow of a doubt. This man is my protector, he cares about my wellbeing more than any other person in my life.

I know then, the revelation swirling in my lust-drunk brain, that I have to tell him everything.

It doesn't matter if it upsets my father or if it makes things more dangerous for the both of us.

Axel can help me. He might be the only person in the world who's able to get me out of the mess I'm in. It's foolish of me to think otherwise.

He pulls out gently when his pleasure subsides, kissing me with a kind of reverence I wouldn't have thought he was capable of just a few hours earlier. Then, he rolls onto his back, pulling me with him. I let myself be taken, feeling the safest I have in a long

time surrounded by his strong arms.

I'm on the verge of drifting off when my phone starts ringing in my jacket pocket across the room. I curse and stumble out of bed, worried that it's a call from the hospital. When I glance at the caller ID, I see my father's name, and anxiety pools in my stomach.

"Dad?" I say as I answer the call.

"Hazel," he says, the anxiety thick in his voice. "Hazel, you have to get home right now."

"What's going on?" I reply, throwing the call on speaker as I search the room for my clothes.

"It's the Apex Runners," he says in a rush. "They're here and looking for you. I'm trying to stall but I need you to get home. Now."

With that he hangs up, and my own anxiety spikes. My hands shake as I pull my clothes on. When I turn around to tell Axel he needs to take me to my car, he's already up and getting dressed.

"I'll go," he says with a cold edge to his voice. "I'll take care of it. You stay here."

"No," I say, lifting my chin defiantly. "I'm coming. This is partially my fault. I'll explain everything later, but I'm coming."

Axel looks at me with something I'd dare to call admiration in his eyes. Then, he says, "Then let's get out of here and give 'em hell."

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Axel

As Hazel shoved her feet into her shoes, I made a quick call to our Sergeant at Arms, Blade, to tell him I needed assistance at her address.

Before he could ask any questions, I hung up.

In the same way that Hazel's going to tell me everything once we get this mess cleaned up, I'm going to do the same with my MC.

Right now, we don't have the time for that. Whatever shit my angel is mixed up in is serious, and there's a good chance her dad's in trouble. I can't let anything happen to her or the people she loves.

I ride as fast as I dare with Hazel behind me. She presses against my back, almost as though she's urging me to go faster. This girl's spark is admirable, and I'm surprised I found someone that's able to keep up with me. Most women balk once my bike reaches the speed limit.

As I eat up the pavement, my adrenaline pumps.

It's been a long time since the Riders of Retribution have gone head to head with the Apex Runners.

While I'm not hoping for an all-out brawl, I can't help but think that if there is one, we'll be able to whip them into shame.



Our rival MC has been getting far too comfortable with their morally questionable practices.

I've heard whispers of a trafficking operation, and these guys would do well to have a little bit of fear moving forward.

By a lucky stroke of timing, we run into a group of members from the Riders of Retribution heading toward Hazel's place. They all raise their fists when they see me, a show of their solidarity. No matter what happens, we're all in this together. We're family, and they have my back.

I take my customary place at the rear, fulfilling my duty as tail gunner on what is without a doubt the most important operation I've been a part of. For Hazel, I'd burn the entire world down. I'm fortunate enough to have a family of badass bikers who are willing to help me do it.

Before we even get to the house Hazel shares with her father, the place where I first saw her, I spot a group of motorcycles gathered in her driveway. The view of her front door is blocked by a large, black, windowless van. I have to assume that that's where our rival crew is currently gathered.

I'm sure the roar of our bikes alerts The Apex Runners of our arrival, but that's good.

That's what we want. We might be a group of hard-asses who engage in some shady shit, but we're not the kind to sneak up on someone.

Sure, we'll ambush them, and we're willing to make concessions if civilians might be in the line of fire, but with situations like this, we're going in with guns blazing and bikes screaming.

We come to a screeching stop in Hazel's front yard. The first members of our club to

arrive hop off their bikes and pull their weapons, but they don't shoot. In return, they aren't shot. When I arrive, bringing up the rear, I see why the volley hasn't started.

There are two men from the Apex Runners standing guard at Hazel's front door.

They have their own weapons pulled, but they're smart enough not to start a fight where they're outnumbered.

I know there are more of them inside, though.

There are at least six bikes parked at the end of the driveway, and god knows how many more are piled into that van.

Hazel hops off first, and I have to grab her before she storms up to the door.

She looks at me with fire in her eyes, and I feel myself falling in love with this woman.

I would lay down my life for my crew, and I love the fact that she's willing to do the same for her father.

However, I will be damned if she's shot.

She's the only one here who isn't armed, but I wouldn't put it past The Apex Runners to take advantage of that fact. My life's purpose is keeping her safe.

"You need to stay back," I tell her, keeping my voice low and my eyes on the guards. Our own members are looking at me, waiting for their instructions.

"Axel, I—"

“Hazel, I know. This is your problem,” I say, watching as her mouth clamps shut. Looks like I hit the nail on the head. “I know they’re here for you. Isn’t that what your dad said? But we’re not just going to hand you over.”

“I won’t let you fight my battles for me!”

“I’m not asking your permission” I retort, squeezing her bicep as I give her a smirk. “But I’m going to do it anyway. So, please. Stay back.”

Her jaw works as she processes her anger at being told what to do.

After a beat, she nods. I lean forward, pressing my lips to hers before pulling away.

I say, “You’re my girl, angel. Which means the Riders of Retribution are your family now.

Your problems are our problems, and we going to fix this. ”

Then, without giving her a chance to respond, I march toward the front door, a slight limp in my gait from where one of these bastards shot me yesterday. Members of my MC fall in line behind me, ready to follow my lead. We make an intimidating formation as we approach the guards.

“I suggest you boys get out of here,” one of them says as we continue to move forward. He aims his gun right at my chest. “This doesn’t concern you.”

“You’re wrong about that,” I reply, walking right up the stairs, unbothered by his threats. This idiot doesn’t even have his finger on the trigger. He’s not going to shoot me. “This actually does concern us.”

“We’re here to settle a debt,” the other man replies. At least he’s holding his gun like

he actually plans on shooting someone. “I’m sure you fellas understand.”

I might not have the whole story from Hazel yet, but I’m not stupid. The debt they’re talking about has to be her father’s. She’s probably doing something to help pay it off, and if I had to guess, they decided whatever they agreed upon isn’t enough.

It’s the kind of thing I’d expect from these slime-balls.

“From what I can tell, your debt is more than settled,” I say, because regardless of if they’ve recouped what they’re owed monetarily, after today, Hazel and her father don’t owe them shit.

“I don’t think that’s for you to decide,” the first man says, finally moving his finger to the trigger.

That’s more like it. I was worried I was dealing with a coward. Still, I’m not going to let any of these guys have the satisfaction of putting another bullet in me.

With a smile on my face, I smack my gun against his face, sending him to the ground. His buddy starts to move, but he’s too slow. Another member of the Riders of Retribution jumps in, knocking his weapon from his hand. It discharges as it hits the ground, and that’s when all hell breaks loose.

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Hazel

At the first sound of gunfire, I duck behind the van.

The cacophony of the rival MC's shouts and the pulse of their weapons fills the air.

I take deep breaths, trying to center myself.

My experience in the emergency department helps me calm down, but my entire body still shakes with anxiety at the thought that Axel is in danger.

I wasn't able to hear the conversation, but I can only assume that Axel was trying to get inside. Or maybe they were arguing about the debt if those guards decided to bring it up. It doesn't really matter, though. All I know is that the exchange led to this.

Every once in a while, I hear Axel's voice in the mess. It helps ease my worry just a little bit. He's still alive, he's still fighting. That's all that matters. As long as he's alive at the end of this, it doesn't matter what happens. We'll figure this out. If we're together, we can do anything.

As I'm leaning against the van, I hear rustling from the inside. I press my ear against the side, straining to listen to what's going on inside the vehicle. There's a man inside yelling, though I can't make out what he's saying. The voice, though... It's familiar.

My dad. It's my dad in the back of the van.

A wave of level-headedness washes over me. Now that I have a task, the gunfire fades into the background. I need to get him out of here and away from the fight. Maybe whoever threw him in here was stupid enough to leave the keys in the ignition.

With swiftness, I run to the back of the van and pull on the handles. Thankfully, they were in such a rush that the vehicle is unlocked. I breathe a small sigh of relief as I throw myself inside, closing the doors behind me.

The sound of the gunfight is slightly muffled in here, but it's still deafening. My father's screams get louder, my name falling from his lips. He's restrained, struggling against the duct tape that's holding him in place.

"Jesus Christ, Dad," I say as I rush to him. I begin to pick at the tape around his wrists. "What the hell happened?"

"They showed up looking for you," he says, eyes wide with fear. "I told them you weren't here, and they told me to call you, but as soon as I hung up they grabbed me and threw me back here."

"Shit," I curse as I get his wrists free from their binds. Immediately, he tries to work on the tape around his ankles. Fear has him too uncoordinated to be of much help though, so I swat his hands away. "Dad, just let me."

"We need to get out of here," he says, still grabbing at the tape his ankles.

"I know," I say, pushing his hands away again. "Let me help you out of this and then we'll leave."

"No," he says urgently, finally letting me free his feet. "We need to leave, Hazel. They're going to send you away. Maybe me too. I don't know."

“Dad, what are you talking about?” I ask, my heart rate picking up dangerously.

“They know something’s up,” he replies, rubbing at his wrists.

They’re red and raw from where he was struggling.

“I don’t know if they know we’re planning to leave or if they’re just upset about what happened yesterday, but they don’t want to let us get away.

They kept saying things about how much you’re worth. ”

The words hit me hard. I knew these guys were involved in some shady shit.

They’re connected to the cartel, pushing hard drugs and illegal weapons directly into the community they claim to serve.

They extort people who come to their gambling operations, squeezing more and more money out of them before shifting their attention to their families.

This... this is something completely different.

That ends today. I’ve given them more than enough. I’m not running from them anymore, and I’m not going to let them get away with this bullshit.

“Hazel, wait!” my dad yells as I turn around and march to the back of the van, flinging open the doors. “Don’t!”

I ignore him, because if I say anything to him right now, I’ll probably tell him to shut up. I’m about to walk into the middle of this gunfight. The least I can do is make sure my last words to him aren’t something mean.

With all of the command I can muster, I yell, “Everybody stop! Right fucking now!”

I’m not expecting it to work. At the very least, I thought I’d be ignored. At worst, I thought I’d be shot. Instead, the gunfire ceases, and everyone’s eyes turn to me.

My gaze sweeps through the crowd, lingering on Axel for a few seconds before I find the president of the Apex Runners. I hold my chin up high and take a few steps toward him.

“You have a lot of nerve. I’ve saved your lives multiple times,” I say before pointing to the men I’ve worked on one by one.

“He’d be dead if it weren’t for me. So would he.

Him too! And you. I’ve made house calls for your family.

I’ve done so fucking much. I’ve been accommodating and given more than you asked for.

The debt is settled. Now. It’s gone beyond repayment. It’s extortion.”

The president scowls, taking a step toward me and puffing up his chest. He says, “You don’t get to decide when the debt is paid off, bitch.”

Before I can say anything, before he can get any closer, Axel darts forward. He reels back, wielding his gun in his right hand. It comes down hard against the president’s face, and he goes straight to the ground. He lies there like a rag doll, and the quietness of the crowd stretches on around us.

“We’re finished here,” Axel says, voice commanding. His eyes sweep across the crowd gathered. “The debt is fuckin’ settled. So take your fuckin’ president and get



out of here.”

I hold my breath until the Apex Runners start moving. One of them steps forward, scooping their unconscious president from the gravel. As they walk to their bikes and the van, I say, “And let my dad out before you leave.”

They do as I say, and my dad scrambles out the minute they open the van. He runs through the crowd to the house, standing on the front porch with his hand on the doorknob. When I shift my gaze to Axel, he’s watching my father with a puzzled look on his face.

The Riders of Retribution stay silent as the Apex Runners leave my yard. Then, the man I can only assume is the president starts barking out orders. He asks who’s wounded, and when they start to gather, I hop into action.

“Dad, get my first aid kit,” I yell as I start triaging the injured bikers.

“Are you a nurse or something?” the president says as I drop onto my knees next to a man with a bullet in his shoulder.

“I am,” I confirm, glancing at the doorway where my dad is running toward me with my kit. “I’m going to stop the bleeding here, then I’m going to move this whole operation inside.”

“And you’re Axel’s girl?” he asks.

I feel Axel’s eyes on me as I answer his question. With pride, I say, “I am.”

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:07 am*

Six Years Later

Hazel

Since getting together with Axel, I've had no shortage of excitement in my life, but it's definitely far less dangerous.

We got married less than a year after meeting.

I was already four months pregnant with our first child, a cute little boy who makes sure our lives are never dull.

After a short honeymoon, I went down to part-time hours in the oncology unit.

I'm still helping people, though. My job now consists of patching up members of the Riders of Retribution when they need it.

Oh, and patching up both of our boys, because less than two years after our first child was born, I gave birth to another baby boy.

They're both extremely active, so I end up cleaning lots of scrapes and using the healing power of mom kisses.

"All better," I say to our oldest, Nathan. He fell playing with the other members' kids at the family gathering that takes place at the clubhouse once a month. He's tough, but knows that I want any wounds cleaned.

“Can I play now?” Nathan asks.

“You sure can, bud,” Axel says from the doorway. “Just be safe. You don’t want to overwork mommy.”

“Right!” he says, before bouncing off the table in my makeshift infirmary and running past Axel to get back to his friends.

“I’m glad you’re free,” Axel tells me, closing and locking the door once Nathan’s gone. “I need you to look at something.”

“That old gunshot wound giving you problems again?” I say, knowing exactly what he’s doing.

“It is,” he confirms.

“Well, take your pants off and get on the table so I can examine you,” I say with a smirk.

He does as he’s told, taking his underwear off along with them. I’m not surprised to see that he’s already half-hard. No matter how many times we do this, it excites both of us every time.

When he’s on my table, I make a show of examining the scar. It’s round and flat against his skin, faded as far as it’s going to get – a permanent mark on his body immortalizing the day we met. With each touch of my fingertips to his skin, he gets harder and harder.

“It looks okay,” I say after a moment, taking hold of his cock and stroking it as it fattens up completely within my grasp. “I just need to check one more thing, though.”

With that, I lean forward, taking as much of him as I can in my mouth. Above me,

Axel swears, threading his fingers through my hair as he says, “Angel, your fucking mouth.”

I hum around him, pleased that I can pull this kind of reaction out of him. In the years that we’ve been together, I’ve learned how to bring him to the edge quickly. And I do just that.

Axel’s hips press up into my mouth, and I taste precum. A smirk appears on my face as I keep going. I’m sure he thinks he’s going to cum from this, but I have other plans. He should know by now that I get my own way every time.

I feel the familiar tells of his orgasm approaching. His breath comes in shallow puffs, and his fingers start to tighten in my blonde locks. When I feel the telltale twitch of his cock in my mouth, I pull away, reveling in the throaty whine I get in response.

“Angel,” he says, his hips humping the air in search of the stimulation I just deprived him of.

“I know exactly what you need for your leg,” I say, standing up and staying in character. I hook my hands in my waistband, pulling my pants down and exposing my ass. “You’ll need to fuck me.”

“Gladly,” he growls, standing up and taking hold of my hips.

He bends me over the table, wasting no time in burying his fat cock inside of me. I whimper at the sensation. He easily nails my sweet spot on the first try, and my legs nearly buckle from ecstasy.

He sets a relentless pace. While some of his urgency is certainly from the fact that I could be needed outside at any moment, I know that most of it is from my admittedly diabolical teasing. He’s chasing the orgasm I cruelly denied him. And that thought turns me on.

“Fuck, Hazel,” he curses as he brings a hand to my clit to stimulate me in time with the thrusts of his hips. “You don’t have any fucking idea how wild you make me.”

“I—” I gasp, gripping onto the table tightly as my own climax starts to build. “I think I have an idea.”

He chuckles as his hips start to stutter. He’s close, about to spill his seed deep inside me. I want it. Badly. So badly that I start babbling before I can stop myself.

“Cum inside me, Axel,” I whimper, my pussy contracting around his length. “I want it. Please.”

“Shit,” he growls, plunging deep inside me. His hips buck forward once last time while his fingers play with my clit.

As he fills me up with his load, my own orgasm takes hold of me. I cum with a gasp of his name, my hips rocking against his, giving myself a bit more friction as I ride the wave out. I’m so full with his cock and his semen that I feel like I could burst in the best way.

When he finally pulls out, I all but collapse onto the table. He chuckles, pulling my pants up from where they’ve pooled around my ankles and kissing the side of my head. His presence goes away for a moment as he puts his pants back on, then he’s back, helping me upright.

“You need another minute to recover?” he asks with a hint of laughter in his voice.

“No, I’m okay,” I say, stretching my arms above my head and adjusting my own clothes. “We should probably get out there before they wonder where we are.”

Axel snorts, resting his hand on the small of my back. He leads me to the door saying, “There are so many goddamn people at this cookout, I doubt anyone even noticed we

were gone. And if they did, they know I love you so much that it's physically impossible for me to keep my hands off of you."

I laugh and shake my head saying, "You're right. And I love you, too. Madly."

He stops me, one hand on the handle, to pull me into a searing kiss. "You're damn right you do."