



# Blood & Ash (Saint's Outlaws MC: Deadman's Beach, AL #1)

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**Category:** Action&Adventure

**Description:** Welcome to Deadman's Beach.

Where hot summer nights and even hotter bikers await to melt your heart and ignite your fantasies. Grab a helmet and hold on tight because the Saint's Outlaws MC loves as hard as they ride.

At twenty-six, my life is just getting started. I'm not ready to become President, but when my father is taken out, I have no choice. The club is counting on me to lead. I sew on my old man's patch and make a vow to protect his legacy and a brother I never saw coming.

There's no room for mistakes. War's blood runs through my veins and I'll take out anyone who gets in my way.

Blood Ash is the prequel to Blood Honey

**Total Pages (Source):** 11

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

## Chapter One

Goose slaps a palm against my door. “Yo, Blood. Your Pops called church.”

I rub my hand along the curve of Shelby’s ass. “I’ll be there in a second.”

Goose grins, doing a shake of his head as he walks off. The two of us grew up in this club together. My old man and his joined what was once a riding club that started picking up some runs to earn a little extra cash after Desert Storm ended. One thing led to another and eventually they patched over to the Saint’s Outlaws MC. Pure 1% in ‘94.

This club is all I’ve ever known.

Was born in it.

I’ll die in it too.

“Time to vacate, sweetheart. You ain’t gotta go home, but you can’t stay here.” I slap her ass, and she moans.

“Five more minutes,” she mumbles, hugging my pillow tighter. The tan lines from her bikini prominent on her sun kissed shoulders.

I scrub a palm down my face and rub last night’s sleep away. Grabbing the hair of the dog off the nightstand, I take a hard swig, then smack my jaws. My old man will kick my ass if I’m late. I tug on the first pair of jeans I spot off the floor and grab a t-shirt

off the top of the pile stacked on the chair in the corner. I live in one of the apartments over the main clubhouse. Formerly the Mermaid Motel. Where there once was a mermaid sign on a weathered building, there's now the club's insignia painted on the side. A skull and clovers, a display of the original member's Irish heritage.

The place was a real money pit, but my father saw the potential. The repairs and renovations done to the property over the years to make it what it is today cost a whack and then some. Came decked out with a great bar, though.

Plus, he couldn't pass up the opportunity to own beachfront property on the strip. There's nothing like it. Like being on vacation every day of your life when you wake up to the view I've got.

Shelby rolls to her back, giving me another view of something nearly as pretty. Propping herself up on her elbows, she stares at the ceiling as I hop around, struggling to get one of my boots on. Fuck me . What a gorgeous sight to start the day to. Her perky titties, stunning baby blues, and freckle dusted cheeks. Blonde tangled hair dangles over her shoulders. Look up beach bunny and you'll find her picture as a prime example.

I lean down and kiss her lips. "I'll get up with you later."

"Yeah. Sure." She grins. "I work nights the rest of the week."

"Right." Shelby spends most of her time answering phones at the emergency services dispatch office. I shrug my leather cut on and slick back my hair out of my face. "This weekend then."

"All right. This weekend." She blows me a kiss.

I pretend to catch it and shove it down in my pocket as I look for my cell phone and a

lighter.

“On the dresser,” she tells me, knowing my habits better than I do.

“Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“All right. I won’t.”

She flips me off and I nearly trip over my other boot. I’m so out of it I nearly forgot to put the damn thing on. I need to take a damn leak. Leaving her to laze about, I glance at the time on my phone. I’m going to be late.

Fuck it. I can’t stand my teeth feeling all scuzzy.

Rushing through the motions, I gargle some mouthwash as I drain my bladder and spit it into the toilet as I flush.

Shelby’s already fallen back asleep.

Wishing I could crawl back into bed and nestle my face between her thighs for breakfast, I head downstairs to church. I pass by the framed mugshots lining the stairwell walls up and down both sides getting a kick out of the latest addition from Slasher’s latest drunken weekend when he was locked up for disorderly conduct. Dumbass got to drinking and thinking about his ex and missing the daughter he’d helped raise for three years. Brother flipped when he found out she wasn’t his and broke things off. Now he has regrets because she moved in a new man.

He sobered and remembered why he broke things off to start.

Momma Tee waits for me at the foot of the stairs with a mug and a cigarette. Her purple hair teased out big. The bigger the hair, the closer to God is what she says when any of us give her shit about it. Woman is stuck in the damn 80s. Bet she's had that same hairstyle since she was in the seventh grade.

"Thanks." I kiss her cheek, accepting both.

"Don't mention it." The woman has been taking care of me as long as I can remember. When my mom split, the old man hired her to babysit me, which led to her being at the clubhouse. She started out as one of the first club hangarounds after the patch over. A Muffler Bunny. As the years went by, her role here changed. Now she manages the bar and the other girls who all show up hoping to one day work their way up to being an Old Lady. "Is that Shelby in your room?" Her judgmental gaze narrows on me.

I grin, and she shakes her head.

"I'll change the sheets," she mutters under her breath. She's never cared much for Shelby. Doesn't see her as one of us. But I think it's mostly the pregnancy scare that rocked us when we were in high school that pushed Momma Tee over the edge. In her eyes, Shelby was trying to trap me. Lock me down with the promise of a kid.

Wouldn't have mattered if the kid was mine or not. No way in hell would I have put a ring on her finger. Still wouldn't today.

Was never happier in my life when Shelby told me it was a false alarm. I like her well enough, but neither of us needs a kid. We aren't together like that. She's here for a good time, not a long time. The way I like it. We have one of those off and on, mostly off relationships.

Guess you could say we've been fuck buddies since tenth grade.

Now we're well past that, but some shit changes while the rest stays the fucking same.

She doesn't ask questions about who or what I do, and I offer her the same courtesy.

We've just recently switched back to on again.

I take a few sips of the coffee and hand it back to Momma Tee. Fuck knows how or why she puts up with all our bullshit. She's always been a beautiful, voluptuous woman. Gorgeous smile. Nice curves. Respectfully. Neither of them would ever admit shit, but I know her and my father fuck around. Guess that's why she's never moved on from us or the club. I wouldn't say she's holding out for him to make an honest woman of her, but she's not letting go of the idea either.

Isn't any of my business, though. She seems happy enough with how things are.

"You're the best." I light up my smoke and drop my cell phone in the bin outside the doors where Goose waits for me.

Most of the guys are already inside. My Pops, aka War, sits at the head of the table, worry lines etched across his forehead. The words 'Fuck You' tattooed across his knuckles are all you need to know about the man. He takes no shit and dishes it out, no questions asked. My old man is the type to shoot first without asking any questions. He's one tough mother fucker you don't want to mess with.

His dark eyes that match my own meet mine.

Shit . Nothing good ever comes from him wearing that grim expression.

Goose and I share a look as he drops his ass into the chair next to his father, Eightball. Got his name because he loves him some cocaine. Bastard's nose has a

constant drip. He's had two surgeries to correct the shit he fucked up internally from all the blow he's snorted. These days, his poison is the drink. Not that it's much better. Now he's destroying his liver.

Quiet murmurs pass around the table.

"Everyone accounted for?" Pops glances around the table, doing a headcount. "Where's Hemlock?"

"With Lanora. Doctor's appointment. Scans aren't good," Kevlar tells us.

Lanora is his mother. Skin cancer. All that fun in the sun has taken its toll.

"I'll have Momma Tee reach out. See if there's anything we can do and get some of the old ladies to bake or some shit."

I laugh under my breath. My old man wouldn't know the first thing about what the old ladies do. Been too damn long since he's had a steady woman in his life. Bastard fucks anything that walks outside of when he hooks up with Momma Tee. Can't say that the apple fell far from my tree, though considering my relationship with Shelby basically follows the same model.

"On to old business. We received our payment on that last shipment. Minus your dues, of course." He nods to Poor Boy, who flashes us a smile as he hands out our pay day. "See that this gets to Con's old lady." My old man tosses an extra envelope my way. "For Heather or Hannah or whatever her name is. Dentist is giving her shit about removing her braces for nonpayment." He shrugs.

Con is serving ten years for the club. Took the fall on a bust. Didn't help his case that he assaulted two officers and tried to flee the scene. That scene didn't go down in Deadman's. If it had, he'd have gotten a slap on the wrist. We own this town and

everyone in it. Local PD is on our payroll. No one fucks with the SOMC.

“Goose and I’ll ride by after church.” I stuff the envelope in my cut along with my own.

“While you’re at it, drop by Peg Leg Randy’s. He’s late.”

“I’ll come with,” Gotti volunteers.

“Good idea. His boys are likely to get scrappy.”

“They can try it.” Goose bumps his fist against mine.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Two

Rolling up to Con's Old Lady's place, we've barely shut off our bikes when one of his kids runs up asking to bum a cigarette. Goose and I chuckle as Gotti picks him up by the back of his shirt. He can't be older than seven.

"Which one are you?"

"Let me down, asshole." The little redheaded bastard kicks Gotti in the stomach and he drops him down in the dirt.

"Little shit," he grumbles, attempting to wipe off the shoe print left on his white tee. "Going to feed you to my pet gator."

"Kevin. Get your ass out back and watch your sister." Mindy stomps toward us, looking worse for the wear. "What are you doing here?" She stands with a hand on her hip, making her rounding stomach more prominent in the sundress she's wearing as she puffs on a Marlboro with the other.

Fucking hell.

She catches me staring.

"Con knows. It's not ours. I'm doing a surrogacy for money." She snuffs out her cigarette with her bare foot. Bitch is wild and crazier than hell. Con swears he married her because he was scared not to. Big man like himself, the thought is comical. Like an elephant terrified of a mouse.

I hold up a hand. “None of my business, babe. That’s between you and your old man. We’re just here to drop this off.” I pull out the envelope with Con’s name on it. “This is for you and the kids.”

“Thanks.” She snatches the money from my hand and shoves it down into her bra. “War tell you that crook of a dentist is refusing to take off Hannah’s braces.”

“He mentioned it. What’s his name?”

“Dr. McGuire.”

“That the one that set up in Doc’s old office?”

“Yeah. Fucking fraud. Doesn’t even have a real license.”

“That so?” I nod and Gotti shakes his head. Him and Goose know how I feel about that shit.

I bring out my own pay and give Mindy an extra five hundred. “Take her to that one in the plaza by the home health supply store. They give you any trouble, call me. I’ll handle the crook.”

“Thanks, Blood.”

“No problem. You and the kids good?”

She lifts her bony shoulder. “You know how it is. The kids miss their daddy. I miss my man.”

“Right.” I notice Con’s dickhead brother watching us from his porch at the trailer next door. Lazy prick. He’s not the only one. That’s a trailer park for you. Everyone

knows your business. There are no secrets around here. The moment we rolled through, all eyes were on us. “I’ll swing back by in a few weeks to see how Hannah’s smile turns out.”

“Yeah. Sure. Tell your old man I said thanks for keeping his word.”

“He always has,” I remind her, though I shouldn’t need to.

I climb back on my black and chrome Road King and the three of us ride out to Cooters and Hooters. A seedy strip club out on the interstate that caters to truckers and poor tourists. It’s one of the many business fronts that washes money for the SOMC.

Occasionally fucking Peg Leg Randy gets greedy and takes a little too long to make his drop. When that happens, we have to remind him of what happens if he fucks with our money. His idiot sons run his security. Big, stupid motherfuckers that don’t have two brain cells to rub together. Muscle is all they are good for. Randy got his nickname some years back. Dumbass blew his own leg off with a homemade bomb.

The glowing hot pink neon titty sign greets us as we all veer into the gravel parking lot. Being midday, the club is dead. No one is on the door. Not even to check for ID. The sign on the entrance says closed, but they usually open the doors at noon for the regulars. Local alcoholics who want something pretty to look at while they drink their life away. No shame in it. I love tits as much as the next man.

Pushing the door open the second we enter, I know something is wrong. The lights are off, and the place is dead silent. Usually, classic rock vibrates from the speakers while some mid hot bitch works one of the poles.

The three of us press further into the club. Randy’s on the center stage, illuminated by strobe lights. Poor bastard is bent over a chair, ass up with a beer bottle wedged

between his cheeks.

“Fucking hell.” I scrub a palm over my eyes as Goose and Gotti try to maintain straight faces. Pulling out my cell, I dial my old man.

“Talk to me.”

“We’ve got a problem.” I give him the gruesome details, wishing I had some bleach for my eyes.

“God damn it,” he curses as I overhear the sound of him busting a glass. “Anyone know you’re there?”

“Cameras in every corner, but I don’t know if they’re working.”

“Call it in. I don’t want this blowing back on the club. Anyone asks. You boys stopped to catch the show, yeah.”

“Right.” I hang up and call the Sheriff.

“What the fuck kind of sick animal would do something like that?” Buford Adams mutters as he stares at the predicament he’s tasked with. He’s a decent guy. Always been a friend to the club. His daddy was sheriff before him and one of his sons will be once he retires. Legacy and family mean everything around these parts.

Goose, myself, and Gotti are sitting at the bar smoking while we wait to be formally released from the scene.

No one wants to move the body because they’ve gotta decide if they want to remove the bottle from his ass here or at the morgue.

Tawny, one of the dancers, enters the bar from the back and lets out a bloodcurdling scream. Moses Witham is the first to comfort her as she presses her fake tits to his chest. He rubs her back and guides her to have a seat a few stools down from us for questioning.

Goose slides down a seat and offers her a cigarette and a shoulder. Leave it to him to try to get laid during a death investigation. Buford hasn't shared whether or not he thinks foul play is suspected.

We didn't venture close enough to the body to be able to tell. My guess is he fucked around with the wrong stripper and got worked over by her man. Everyone knows Randy was a greedy, perverted piece of shit who didn't pay his girls enough and expected them all to suck his dick.

Tawny's tears are as fake as her tits. I watch her as she dabs at the splotches of makeup running down her cheeks.

"Maybe a drink will calm your nerves," Goose tells her, helping himself to a bottle of liquor behind the bar. I frown at him, and he shrugs. "He's not gonna mind." He motions toward the stage where the coroner is examining the body.

"Do you think he did that to himself?" Gotti turns his head sideways, trying to decide from a different angle.

"I don't want to fucking know. You're wrong for that."

"I need a drink," he mutters and rounds the bar. "You want one?" He pops the cap off a longneck. Gotti comes from old money. His great grandfather was one of the richest men in the state of Alabama. Inherited wealth passed down from generation to generation until his old man lost it in a bad investment.

“Hell. Might as well.” I grin.

Buford waves me over. “You and your crew head on out. I received another call. Neighbors heard a commotion. Randy’s boys. Clay stabbed T-bone and took off. My guess is he also snapped his father’s neck.”

“Is T-bone okay?”

“Hell if I know. I’ve gotta get this mess sorted and start looking for Clay.”

“If we see him, do you want us to haul him in?”

“I’d appreciate that.”

“You got it. Oh, if you happen to get a call about a disturbance at Doc’s old office, no you didn’t. I need to have a word with the dentist.”

He shakes his head and walks away muttering under his breath.

I give the guys the signal to ride out.

Goose and Gotti head back to the clubhouse and I go pay this asshole a visit.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Three

“Do you have an appointment?” The beady eyed receptionist questions as I ring the bell at her window.

“Need to speak to your boss.”

“He’s with a patient.”

“Listen.” I glance at her name tag. “Lois. I don’t give a fuck what he’s doing. You can either tell him to get his ass out here or I can come across this counter and fetch him myself.”

She swallows and nearly trips over her chair as she rushes from her desk. Seconds tick by. The prick shuffles into the waiting area in his scrubs, pulling his mask from his mouth.

“You Dr. McGuire?”

“Who’s asking?”

“Saint’s Outlaws MC is asking.”

“I don’t want any trouble.”

“Should have thought of that before you fucked with one of ours. Heard you don’t have a license to practice orthodontics. That true?” I take a step toward him.

Holding up his palms, the greasy fuck takes a step back. “I’m sure we can work something out, bro.”

“I’m not your bro.” I shove him into the wall. The cheap framed artwork falls to the floor.

“I’m calling the police,” the bitch behind the counter threatens.

“Go ahead. Let’s see what they have to say when I tell them your boss doesn’t have a license and has been taking a single mother for a ride. How many others do you try to shake money out of every month by intimidating them? Better yet, why don’t you pack up your shit and get out of town before I decide to make your fucking scam my problem?”

“Fine. Yeah. Whatever. You want me out, I’m out. No harm, no foul, man.”

I spit at him, and he whimpers like a pussy.

“I see you again and I won’t be so understanding. Got me?”

I grab one of the waiting room chairs and throw it through the front window.

The piece of shit pisses his pants.

“Feel better?” Goose questions as he passes me a joint.

“Little bit.” He shakes his head as I take a hard toke. “What a fucking year today has been,” I grumble as one of the hangarounds slides a beer across the bar to me.

“Thanks, darlin’.” I shoot her a wink.

“Fuck. I’m still trying to scrub that image of Randy from my brain.”



“I hear ya. Any news on that shit?”

“Nothing but bullshit rumors about how you and Randy were tagging the same piece, so you took his ass out in more ways than one.”

“Seriously?”

“Nah. Just fuckin’ with you. All is quiet on the front.”

“For now. Until that cunt he married catches wind.”

“Think Devie will be a problem?”

“She was born a damn problem.”

“No doubt.”

Devie was one of his dancers. She only married him for his money. When that ran out, she left his ass high and dry. Never divorced him, but if there’s a dollar to be gotten from his corpse, she’ll turn up soon enough to collect it.

“What’s up with you and Shelby? You two back on?”

“Hell.” I chuckle. “You know how it is. Had an itch. She scratched it.”

“You might as well marry her.”

“You’re one to talk about marriage.”

“I’m only sayin’. You two have been doing this back-and-forth bullshit for how long?”

“Too damn long.” I take a long drag, trying not to get choked on the smoke pulling through my lungs. Truth is, I need to cut her loose. Maybe if I did, she’d do something with her life besides wasting it fucking around with me when I call on her for an easy lay.

I don’t love her. There’s no time for falling in love.

No room for an old lady in my life.

I have too much riding on me. Like the future of this club.

My old man isn’t getting any younger and Eightball isn’t fit to lead. Only reason he’s still VP is because he’s loyal. He’s not Prez material. None of us are, but I know my father is setting me up to fill his seat at the head of the table when the time comes, and he’s taken out or can no longer ride.

I try not to dwell on that shit too much. Pops is fifty-five and has another good ten years in him.

“Check this shit out.” Goose slaps me across the chest as Starla and Daisy turn the stereo up and start grinding up against each other in front of Hash. The bastard loves every second of the show.

Hell, so do I. Especially after the day I’ve fucking had. Not sure it could get much more fucked. That is until Shelby comes running down the stairs naked and covered in blood screaming, “Someone call an ambulance!”

My whole world fucking stops at the sight of her. This life never fucking slows down. I try to catch my breath as everyone jumps up and barks orders.

Chill bumps fan across the back of my neck. I don’t know if it’s her blood or if it

belongs to someone else. I'm not sure what she's even doing here still.

Goose shakes my shoulder. "It's your Pops."

Chaos erupts, and yet I'm frozen in place. I stare at my boots, trying to force my feet to move. There's nowhere to run and hide. Whatever is happening, these men look to me behind my old man. I get to my feet and rush past the stupid cunt, unable to get the vision of her out of my mind as I take the stairs two at a time.

When I reach the top of the stairs, Gotti is there. He shakes his head, pressing a palm to my chest to keep me from going into the room where my father lays in the bed with blood gushing out of his nose, mouth, eyes, and ears. It's not only him though, Eightball is slumped over in a chair with foam coming out his mouth. I push past Gotti, dropping to my knees at my father's side. I've never been the type to pray, but I'm here begging God not to take him now. As I clutch his hand in mine, praying for the first time in my life, deep down, I know he's gone. My Pops has left this world behind.

Left me here to pick up all the shattered pieces.

Everything happens in slow motion, like a silent picture playing out in front of me. Like all that is happening around me isn't happening to me. It's an out-of-body experience, being knocked out of the way as a paramedic tries to resuscitate my father. I sink down against the wall with my head in my hands.

Across the room, Goose is in the same shape as me.

I watch in horror, unable to do a damn thing as he too loses his father.

Standing in the doorway, with a sheet wrapped around her, stands Shelby. I don't know what comes over me, but at the sight of her, I lunge with my hands outstretched

for the cunt's throat.

"I'll kill you, whore." I rage at her, digging my fingers into her skin, doing my damndest to choke the life out of her as her eyes bulge out of their sockets. Gotti and Kevlar wrestle me away from her. Shoving me down the hallway toward my room. Where she was with me this morning and now she was with him. My father and she's killed him.

Shelby stares at me from the opposite end of the hall, every breath rattling from her chest a struggle, with nothing but fear. She better be scared. She'll be wishing she died right next to him by the time I'm done with her.

"I'm sorry," she mouths.

"You're dead to me. Don't think about me. Anything we ever had means nothing. Fucking nothing. You hear me, bitch. Stay the fuck away from me. You're as good as dead."

"Blood, please," she cries, and I punch the wall.

"I'm cool." I hold up my hands in surrender as Kevlar pins me to the wall.

"You little bitch," Momma Tee screeches, pulling a gun out from between her tits and aiming it at Shelby. Right as she shoots, Goose jerks her hand up, sending her bullet into the ceiling.

I can't deal with this shit right now.

I storm past them all, going straight for the bar. Grabbing a bottle of Jack, I head out the back doors to the beach. I collapse in the sand and light up a cigarette with my father's blood staining my hands. I take a hard pull from the bottle and stare out at the

waves, wondering where in the hell this all went so fucking wrong.

I'm in a nightmare I can't wake up from.

This morning, I had it all.

Now my world has been blown to bits.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Four

I'm not sure how much time has passed when Goose drops to his ass next to me, smoking a blunt. "They had to sedate Momma Tee. Gotti drove Shelby home. Always thought those bastards would go out together, just not like this," he says, shaking his head before taking a hard toke.

"Gotta hand it to him. Fucking went out with a fucking bang. Shelby. That shit. I can't wrap my head around that one."

Goose shrugs.

"You knew she was fucking him."

"Didn't find out until you did. When she came running down the stairs. I'm just not shocked by it."

Guess he wouldn't be considering his last stepmother graduated a year after we did. His old man has always liked them young. Didn't see this shit coming. Not even close.

I don't understand any of it. Except Eightball. Him getting fucked up and tagging Shelby makes sense. My Pops. Can't wrap my mind around it. Every time I close my eyes, all I think about is them fucking behind my back and laughing about what a dumbass I've been not to see it.

"Buford stopped by and said to come to the morgue when we're ready. My old man

had a couple of baggies on him that tested positive for fentanyl. Paramedics said War's heart burst."

"Jesus," I mutter, and take another swig. I stare out at the ocean, wondering what the fuck I'm to do now. Where do I go from here?

"I know you aren't ready to pick up that gavel, but the club is going to need you to lead."

"Yeah." I hang my head. "Can't believe he was that fucking stupid. Out of all the shit he's done in his life, this has to be the most fucked."

Part of me had always believed my old man was invincible. That nothing or no one could take him out. Was foolish. They say never meet your heroes. My dad was mine. Tough and mean.

Fucking Shelby behind my back. Of all the women, he had to choose her. I expected more from him. Her too. Eightball I could see, but not my father. My flesh and blood.

I sniff and take another hit, passing the doobie back to Goose.

"At least he went out staring at some nice tits." Goose chuckles and hands me the joint once more.

"That he did. That he fucking did." I take two puffs as the silence stretches between us. There's no one else I'd rather have by my side to do this shit with. The sun sets fire to the sky, and I hope wherever and the fuck he is, my old man is having the ride of his life. Who am I kidding? Him and Eightball are crashing through the gates of Hell side by side on their Harleys brothers in arms till the very fucking end.

I pour out two shots in the sand.

One for each of our fathers.

Our fallen heroes.

Slicking back my hair, I let out a sigh and then brace the sink. I'm not ready for this. Nowhere near prepared to walk out of this clubhouse and ride in my father's and Eightball's memory. Goddamn them both. It wasn't supposed to be this way. I'm twenty-five years old. Too damn young to be burying my old man and filling his shoes.

It wasn't his time to go.

Not yet.

Everyone is looking at me. Some depending on me like I'm their lifeline where others possibly want to watch me fail. This shit isn't fair.

Momma Tee comes into my room without knocking. "How you holding up, baby?"

I exit the bathroom and grab my cut off the bed. "I'm breathing."

Her lips tip into a sympathetic smile. "Loved him like no other. That man." She smiles to herself, biting her lip in an effort not to cry.

"I know. We all did."

"I wanted to talk to you about something."

"If you're worried about your place here, don't be. This is your home as much as it is mine."



“It’s not that.” Frown lines appear etched around her lips and in the crinkles of her eyes. Whatever she’s about to say, I’m not going to like it.

“What is it then?” I pull out my smokes and light one up.

“Shelby.” Fidgeting, she twists her fingers together, hesitating to continue past that cunt’s name. I’ve never known Momma Tee to be nervous or to beat around the bush.

“What about her?”

“That wasn’t the first time. I always wanted to tell you, but I loved your father more than he probably deserved. Was always loyal to him.”

Taking a hard drag, I motion for her to get this over with. I’ve got shit to do. A club to lead. I’m not ready for this, but I have no fucking choice. Last thing I want to do is stand here and listen to her recite some bullshit about my old man fucking the same woman as me. “How long?”

“I can’t answer that.”

“I’ve got shit to do. Get to the point.”

“She’s here and wants to talk.”

“Fuck me. You tried to shoot her the other day and now you’re standing here doing her bidding. I don’t want to see her.”

“You need to hear the girl out.”

“The time for her to talk was whenever this bullshit started. Not now.”

“She’s pregnant, Blood.”

Her words hit me straight in the gut, but I can’t do this. Not today. Maybe not ever. “Been there with her before. If this is some sick way to get me to talk to her.” I snuff out my cigarette. This bitch has a death wish. “Can’t believe she’s pulling this shit again.”

“It’s your father’s baby.”

I stop at the doorway. “Jesus. This shit gets deeper and more twisted. That’s just fucking great.” I slap my palm against the wall, trying not to fall to my knees and show any sign of weakness. Shelby and my old man. A baby.

Perfect.

Fucking perfect.

How could she look me in the eye knowing that shit? Any of them. How many knew? How many laughed behind my back that my fucking childhood sweetheart was giving it up to my old man on the regular? How could she lay in my arms and pretend she gave a fuck about me while giving her pussy up to my father? Did he know she was still sleeping with me? Was that why he’d been giving me dirty looks?

“Blood, you may not want to hear it, but she’s messed up. She needs you.”

“Needs me?” I lick my lips. “Only thing she needs is to leave and never look back. There’s nothing here for her or the bastard in her belly.”

“I know you’re angry.”

I turn fast on her, getting in her face. “Fuck yeah, I’m angry. I’m pissed at him. At

her. And you. I think you're the worst of all standing here defending them after all this. Look around, Momma Tee. War is gone. He didn't give a fuck about you. Me. This club. He died snorting coke off the tits of his son's whore. And now you want me to feel sorry for that bitch because she was stupid enough to get knocked up? That baby could belong to anyone."

"He knew. Was planning on telling you. They were going to get married. She was going to be his second chance to do shit right."

"What did he ever know about right?"

"You turned out okay."

"Not because of him. And I don't know if you've noticed, but I've not been okay for a long time."

I stomp down the stairs to see Ghost and Rogue out of the mother chapter in Boston sitting at the bar with Smoke and Gunner out of the Pensacola chapter. They all turn to me, giving me a nod.

Means a fuckuva lot that they made the drive.

"Daisy, make sure they have whatever they need. Rooms, food, pussy." The job would normally fall to Momma Tee, but who knows where her head is at?

I can hear my old man's voice in my head telling me, "Atta boy." The prick.

I want to hate him, but I can't.

Before I can give them a proper welcome, I spot Shelby hanging around the front door as Goose walks through it. He ignores her as he should. Bitch is as dead to me as

my father's ashes, but I don't want her to cause a scene. I shoot him a chin left toward the bar so he can properly greet our guests.

"Outside," I growl, grabbing her by her bony elbow. Dragging her across the parking lot, I get her out of earshot of anyone at the clubhouse. I release my grip, not wanting to touch her any longer than necessary. "What the fuck are you doing here? Made it pretty goddamn clear you're no longer welcome here."

"I wanted to..." she trails off, her bottom lip quivering as the sun beats down on us.

"You wanted to what? Apologize for fucking or murdering my Pops? Which is it?"

"I didn't know the drugs were laced."

"You ready to tell me who sold to you?" Bitch is lucky that despite all this bullshit, there's still some piece of her rooted in me. Anyone else, I'd already tortured the information out of them. Peeled off their fingernails. Busted their kneecaps. Gouged an eye. Not Shelby, though. I couldn't fucking physically hurt her. I don't beat women, but for the first time in my life, I want to.

I want to carve out her fucking heart.

If my Pops were still here, I'd make him watch.

That should scare me that I'm becoming everything I swore I wouldn't. A cruel and heartless bastard.

"I can't. We both know you'd be reckless and kill them. Then where would the club be? I know you hate me, and you should. But I'm not sorry I fell in love with your father. I'm only sorry that I didn't tell you. Your father loved me, too. I'm having his baby."

I snort. “And I’m what? Supposed to be grateful that you’re doing all this to protect me and the club out of love and loyalty. Cut the shit, Shelby. You’re worried about your meal ticket and what you now see as your child’s inheritance. Let me clue you in and save you the suspense. I don’t give a fuck if that kid comes out looking like a clone of my old man. You’ll never see a dime.”

“He left it all to me. That’s what I came here to tell you, but I don’t want you to worry. The clubhouse is yours.”

“Bitch, I don’t know what you’ve been smoking, snorting, or shooting, but whatever he promised you.” I shake my head. “I’ll kill you first.”

“I’m not the enemy, Blood. We could get married, and nothing would have to change. I wouldn’t expect a real marriage, but you could help me raise this baby.”

“Fuck you. I’d burn this whole town to the ground before I ever put a ring on your finger or give you or that bastard in your belly a dime. I mean it, you fucking whore. You need to get gone before I permanently erase you.”

“You don’t mean that.” She stares at me with those gorgeous blue eyes I used to drown in the depths of they are so deep. Now when I look at her, the only sensation that engulfs me is disgust. “You need time.”

I grab her under the chin, squeezing tight. “So help me, Shelby. If you don’t get out of my face and off club property, I’ll drive you out to the middle of nowhere and bury you alive. This is your final warning. Keep the fuck away from me. The sooner you get gone, the better your chances are at living. I’m not fucking around. I’ll slit your throat from ear to ear if you say one more word about the club or my father.”

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Five

“Goose, you’re with me. Gotti, hold down the fort. I’ll be back before the wake.”

“What’s up?” Goose asks as we get on our bikes.

“Shelby and a bunch of bullshit,” I tell him, and we ride out to pay my old man’s lawyer a visit.

This is the last thing I want to do right now, but there’s no way Pop left everything to Shelby, of all people. I have to know that he didn’t fuck me and the club over.

We roll past the strip of motels and palm trees and further into town, away from the touristy coastline.

“What are we doing here?” Goose stares at the front of the fancy ass law office, looking every bit as confused as I feel.

My head is racing a hundred miles a minute with thoughts of what if. My heart is going to beat out of my damn chest. Nothing makes sense.

“You have no idea, man. Everything is sideways.”

Goose follows me inside with fifty questions hanging on the tip of his tongue as I storm past the front desk.

“He’s with a client. You can’t just go back there.”

We ignore the receptionist and show ourselves into Marty's office.

"Blood. I was going to call you," he says, standing up from behind his desk. Marty is a crooked piece of shit. Stubby, bald fuck who has always done decent by the club.

"If you want to wait, I can speak to you when I finish with Mr. Stevens here."

"Should I call the sheriff?" The old bitch who works his front desk questions.

"No." he holds his hands up, waving her off. "Joe, give us a few minutes. This won't take long."

"Yeah, Joe. Give us a few," Goose says, looming toward him menacingly. The guy nearly pisses his pants as he scrambles out of his seat and out the door.

I slam it behind him and stalk toward Marty. "Is it true? Did my old man change his Will?"

Goose stares between the two of us as Marty stutters around the question. "You know how th-these things work. There will be an official reading soon enough."

"Don't fuck with me. I'm in a real bad mood this morning," I warn him.

"Look, about a month ago, he made an appointment."

"Did he sign anything over to a little tart named Shelby?"

"What the fuck?" Goose mutters.

"I can't answer that, but he did make changes."

"Let me guess, that little cunt was sucking his cock and jerking yours off at the same

time. What'd she promise you? A cut of the money when she sold the clubhouse out from under us?"

The guilty expression is written all over his pudgy and wrinkled face. I'm not stupid. Been many men try to get our property due to the location. We own a nice fucking slice of real estate when you factor the garage across the street into the mix.

"I tell you what? You hand over the paperwork and I do mean every fucking copy, and I might leave you breathing, you fucking slimy fat fuck. Anything comes up to fuck me and the club, Goose will come pay you a visit in your sleep at your cozy mansion and slice open your dick from tip to balls, skin it, fry it like slices of bacon, and feed it to your fat little wife one sliver at a time."

His face turns visibly green at the threat.

"Anyone comes asking questions, you don't know anything besides what is in that original Will." Goose flashes one of his knives at him, waving it around before he stabs it into the desk.

"If you have any digital records, I expect those to be destroyed too." He hands me some paperwork and I start flipping through it. "You piece of shit. This isn't my Pop's signature. It's close, but not quite."

The stupid fuck reaches into his desk and pulls out a handgun. "Don't come any closer," he threatens, pointing it back and forth between Goose and me with shaky hands.

I shake my head. "Do you even know how to use that peashooter?"

Goose grins wickedly and responds, "Looks like a toy, doesn't it?" He steps closer to Marty, baring his teeth in a predatory smile.



I grab Goose's arm and pull him back as the lawyer waves the gun around, seemingly lost in fear. "You won't be needing that," I say, lowering his arm before he accidentally kills someone. I make my way towards the door, forged paperwork in hand.

Goose follows me out, slamming the door behind us. "You think we can trust him not to try anything else?" he asks, looking at the crumpled paper in my hand.

I shake my head. "Not a chance. We'll have to take him out, but we've gotta do it quiet and smart. Make it look like an accident tonight during the wake."

We get on our bikes, agreeing not to relay the news to our brothers. Not yet. The fewer people who know about the situation with Shelby, and the betrayal by Pop's lawyer, the better.

If word gets out about this shit, the vultures will descend to pick us apart like roadkill.

Weaving through traffic, all I can think is I should have got shot of Shelby years ago. Maybe if I had, I wouldn't be in this mess. My Pops and Eightball would still be here. I can't dwell on what ifs or coulda, shoulda, wouldas. Too much is riding on me.

We pass abandoned buildings and boarded-up houses, the remnants of a forgotten part of town where the low-income apartments used to be before a fire nearly took out two blocks. The sun glints off the chrome and metal of our bikes as we ride down Vincent Street to pay a visit to one of our stash houses.

Circling the block before pulling over gives me peace of mind that no one is following us.

"This shit is seriously fucked up, man," Goose says as we pull up under the carport. "I can't believe Shelby would do that shit. Do you really think she killed them on

purpose?”

“Wouldn’t put anything past that bitch. Not after this shit with the fake Will.”

I get off my bike, doing another perimeter check. Never can be too fucking careful. Not with whoever was behind this still out there. We could all have targets on our backs.

“Need to act fast,” I say, my voice echoing in the quiet, dark house. “We can’t risk losing our club and our land to some gold-digging cunt. How did I not see it? Did everyone know they were fucking?” The silence that stretches between us gives me my answer. The whole fucking club knew they were going behind my back and didn’t say a damn word. There’s no time to be pissed about it right now. There’s too much at stake.

Too much to prove.

“What are you going to do about Shelby?”

I rake a palm over my head. “Fuck if I know. She swears she’s having his kid. Taking out a pregnant woman.” I shake my head. The thought of it makes me sick. Bile churns in the pit of my stomach.

“Let me do it.”

“I can’t put that shit on you.”

“She took out my father, too. Bitch earned my retribution and figure I owe you for not saying shit, but you gotta understand the position I was in. Stuck between betraying my Prez and my best friend. I’ve always had your back, and that hasn’t and won’t ever change.”

I nod. He has. All my life it's been me and Goose.

And right now, I need his support more than ever.

Yeah, this whole situation sucks, and it'd be easy to blame him as much as I'm blaming myself. However, that's not going to make our problems go away. The last thing we need is to turn on each other.

"Now we need to make sure we've got everything we need before the wake tonight."

Together we run down our list of options while going through our cache of supplies: rope, cable ties, a tarp, gloves, masks, a couple Glocks with the serial numbers etched off and a van that's untraceable. Buford makes a lot of exceptions for the club, but not with this. Shelby's a woman and pregnant. This is different than taking out some low life. This can't be traced back to the club.

If this comes back on us, we're cooked.

We go over our plan one last time, making sure we're in sync. I can see the worry etched around Goose's eyes, but we both know this is necessary to protect the club.

There's no other option.

Neither of us wants to do what's needed, but what choice do we have? We're in the thick of it. Backs to the wall. Only one way forward.

Shelby has to go.

Marty too.

Goose holds my gaze, and I know he wants to ask if I'm sure about this.

Revenge never makes a man feel better, but it's them or us, and I choose us.

I choose the club.

I always will.

Loyal to the day I die.

"It's better to go into this fully prepared than be caught off guard," I remind him, answering his unspoken question, mirroring the words my father has spoken to us a thousand times. Hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Fuck, I miss him even if I am so angry with him.

As we finish packing our gear up, my heart is heavy with the responsibility now weighing on my shoulders. Goose follows close behind, his movements unhurried but focused. I'll handle Marty and he'll deal with our Shelby problem.

It's fucked that despite all that she's guilty of, there's a small dark space deep inside me that still cares about her. I should be the one to take her out. Not Goose. I invited her into our lives.

It should be me, but Goose knows me well enough to realize I can't be the one that snuffs out the light in her eyes and live with myself after.

Despite the tough guy attitude I live by, deep down I loved her. I never admitted it to her or even to myself. But though she's still currently breathing, I've lost her as well.

Part of me always thought maybe she loved me, too.

Really fucking read her all wrong.

The way she played me—I'll never make that mistake twice.

What made her go this far? Blackmail and murder? What happened to the girl I fell for all those years ago? The one with so many hopes and dreams of leaving this place for better.

Shelby is dead to me.

She's got to be.

No amount of explanations will change that.

Whatever her reason was, what she did was inexcusable.

Unforgivable.

She could have come to me if someone was threatening her.

Emotions clog my throat. The bitterness of reality settles on my tongue.

The timing with Randy being taken out isn't adding up. This goes much deeper than greed. Something else is at play.

There's no way this is all Shelby.

It hits me.

The stupid bitch is a pawn in a much bigger game.

A puppet.

A distraction.

I look at Goose. “Change of plans. We need to get Shelby and find Randy’s boys. Put them in lockdown and get some answers.”

He raises his brow. “And Marty?”

“That bastard too.”

He nods. “It’ll take more than the two of us.”

“I know. Fuck.” I take out my phone and send out a message.

Church.

We ride toward the clubhouse, not another word exchanged between us. The path that lays ahead of us is nothing but a long stretch of pavement, cold and daunting, leading us towards a future that holds no guarantees.

Everything we’ve bled for is at risk.

We do this tonight or we end up with nothing.

Everything is on the line.

The club.

Our lives.

The legacy our father’s built.

We do this for them.

For the club.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Six

Entering this room without seeing my father seated at the head of the table should break me, but I'm built stronger than that. He raised me to be tough and never back down from a fight. I stare at his empty chair, knowing I can't hesitate to claim it. My hands rest on the back of Pop's chair, the old leather worn with years of love and battle scars from club fights. I allow myself a moment to remember him, the man who taught me everything I know about being in a brotherhood, about leading, about survival, and loyalty. I can't focus on the betrayal of him fucking Shelby behind my back, but I can let it fuel me. Inhaling a deep breath, I release it as I take my seat at the head of the table, sitting where he did countless times, prepared to lead.

I've got no other choice than to continue what he started.

To be the man he raised me to be.

I claim his gavel, and a shiver passes over me.

I'm not ready for this.

But these men expect nothing less.

I can step into my father's boots and ride or die.

I can't afford to show any signs of weakness.

"Everyone," I begin, my voice steady over the quiet murmurings in the room, "we've



got a situation. A big one. I know you're all angry and want answers. I want that more than you know. Sadly, this was no tragic accident. It was an attack on the club."

A collective roar of anger sounds around the room as I relay what Goose and I discovered at Marty's office, as well as our suspicions about Shelby and how this plot seems to be much bigger than we initially thought. Their faces are etched with disbelief and rage. Nods and rumblings of agreement ripple around the table when I suggest we need to take action tonight.

The conversation is an eruption of chaos.

Goose is at my side, calming the storm they all want to unleash, his unwavering support grounding me during this moment of validation that this club needs me to lead them. He adds his own piece about his father, Eightball. Anyone who ever knew him was aware of his struggles with addiction.

Shelby knew enough, but someone put this whole thing in motion.

"I say we kill this bitch," Slasher says.

"I don't disagree, but we need to know who is pulling the strings. This situation with her is complicated. She's claiming she's pregnant. Says the baby belongs to my father."

"Convenient," Shack mutters.

He's not wrong.

"Here's what we're going to do," I begin, once the room has quieted enough for me to be heard. "We divide and conquer. We'll split into groups. I'll nab Shelby. Poe and Goose will grab Marty. Rook and Combat will go on the hunt for Randy's sons. We

need to find out exactly what they know. Someone has declared war on us.”

A chorus of grunts fills the room as they agree. Every man in this room is ready to ride or die. We all know the consequences if we fail. Our club, our family, and our lives are on the line.

“We need answers,” I continue. “And we need them fast. But remember, this club is about brotherhood, about family. No matter what happens, we look out for each other. We have each other’s backs. Nobody fucks with us and walks away breathing.”

The solemn nodding around the room reassures me that they hold the same values close to their hearts. We are a brotherhood. Protective and fierce. It’s us against the world. No one is going to take what’s ours or destroy what my father built. We’ll stop them or die trying.

“Get geared up,” I command, standing from my seat at the head of the table. I bang the gavel on the table, signaling the end of church. We’ve gotta do this tonight. The wake is the perfect cover. The best alibi we’ve got should anything go south.

We need everything to go smoothly.

Once everyone has their orders, the men disperse to prepare. Goose hangs back, waiting until it’s just the two of us.

“We’re really doing this, huh?” he asks, his voice heavy.

“Looks like it,” I respond, my gaze on the urn containing my father’s ashes.

“You sure you can handle this Shelby situation?”

“There’s no other way.”

Goose claps a hand on my shoulder, solid and reassuring. “We’ll get through this.” Out at the bar, the tables have been cleared for Eightball’s casket and my Pop’s urn. He said he knew he was going straight to Hell and might as well arrive already charred. He had a dark sense of humor. Said to stick his ashes on a shelf behind the bar where he could still be part of the party. That’s exactly what I plan to do.

The wake isn’t open to the public, but I know folks like Buford Adams will want to pay their respects and I want them to come. To see Goose and I mourning the loss of our fathers. To see we’re here getting shit faced with the rest of the club and the other brothers who traveled to be here.

The wake begins as the sky darkens outside. The clubhouse fills with men who revered War and Eightball. Their faces are hard and yet sorrowful as they pay their respects to the fallen leaders of our club. There’s an unmistakable sense of loss hanging heavy in the air. The old ladies all have tight faces, knowing that any time this could be the fate of their men. Even the hangarounds and whores’ faces are ashen.

My father was a tough son of a bitch, but he was loved by many.

Feared by more, which is why this coward’s way of taking him out makes me angrier with every passing second. He deserved to go out honorably. Not at the hands of a greedy whore.

I walk with Goose to his father’s casket. “Party is over, old man,” he mutters and shakes his head. “How could he be so goddamn stupid?” he looks at me and I wish I had an answer that made fucking sense.

“Wish I knew, man. Wish I fucking knew what either of them were thinking.”

I leave him to stew on his anger. I’m mad as hell, too. If I were a better leader, I’d gut

Shelby with a wire hanger, drop her out in the gulf to be fish food, and that'd be the end of it. Her and that fucking sleaze, Marty. No one would miss them.

Well, Ashley, Shelby's little sister, might, but she'd be the only one.

I accept offers of condolence from Pop's oldest friends. Ol' Ladies offer up all their baked goods and pre-made dinners. Enough to feed an army for two weeks. I'm sure Momma Tee will appreciate their efforts. Who the fuck knows where her head is at. I glance around the room, wondering where she's at. I haven't laid eyes on her since she was trying to get me to talk to Shelby.

I figured she'd be the first here, but everyone grieves in their own way.

Even Goose's mom is here and that's saying something considering how she felt about Eightball. I watch as she stands at his casket, shaking her head. I can only imagine the words she has for him, even in death, with how volatile their relationship was.

Buford Adams arrives later in the evening, his gaze wandering around the room before landing on me. He hurriedly shuffles straight up to me, extending his hand, ready for a handshake. I take it reluctantly, wondering if he was in on this fucked up attack. I don't trust anyone who isn't a brother in this club.

"Sorry for your loss. Damn shame. Always liked your old man. I know a lot of folks liked him while others woulda loved to run him out of town. Want you to know that whatever is going down tonight, I'm on your side."

"The fuck do you know?"

"Walk outside with me and I'll tell you what I can."

I light up a cigarette and make it appear I'm escorting him out.

"Picked up Randy's boy copula' hours ago. Clay confessed he was paid to take his father out. Someone offered him a substantial amount of money. Got him all fucked up on meth and played on his fears and paranoia that Randy was going to close up shop and skip town before the FEDS shut down the whole operation. We know that shits not true. I've always turned an eye. Your club puts a lot of money back into this town. I'm not looking to fuck that up."

"He give a name?"

"Yeah. If I tell you, I need you to promise me I won't be getting a call about a body."

"You know I can't promise that."

"I don't ask for much, son. But this isn't negotiable."

"Fucking Shelby." I flick the butt of my cigarette to the ground.

"I've watched you kids grow up. I don't know who made her do it, but I know she's a good girl."

"Right. A good girl who got three men killed."

"I've got a car on her house and an officer following her. Don't do anything stupid. I'll question her and get to the bottom of this."

"Don't worry. Won't be a hair out of place on her head." I may not be able to kill the bitch, but I damn sure can make her suffer.

I fire off a text, telling her we need to talk.

Just the two of us.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Seven

“Who put you up to this bullshit?” I loom over Shelby, holding onto the last shred of control I have left. Right now, all I want to do is wrap my hands around her throat and choke her until her eyes pop out of their sockets. Looking into her eyes, it’s hard to imagine her as a killer.

We share a lot of history.

Was each other’s first everything.

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

“Why is that?”

“Ask yourself who didn’t show tonight. I know I fucked up and nothing I can say or do will ever make up for what I did.”

“You’re right. It won’t.”

“I’m not lying about the baby, Blood. I swear.”

I shake my head. “I’ll make you a deal. You tell me the truth and it checks out. I’ll let you live on one condition.”

“I’ll do anything.”

“You’ll take care of yourself until this baby is born and if it’s my old man’s or mine, you’ll give me the kid and leave town. You’ll stay away. You won’t contact me. The kid. Not a soul in this town will utter your name and you will forget we exist.”

Mascara streaked tears race down her cheeks. “What about my sister?”

“I’ll make sure she has whatever she needs.”

“I can’t cut her off.”

“You don’t. You’ll be signing her death sentence because I promise you, if anyone hears from you, it’ll be the last time for both you and them.”

“I know you’re angry.”

“Angry!” I roar, spit spraying across her face. “You ripped out my goddamn heart. You nearly destroyed everything I love. You murdered my father. And Goose? What did he ever do besides show you kindness and keep your fucking secret? My old man wasn’t enough. Had to take his too. You disgust me. Looking at you makes me want to throw up.”

“So what? You want me to hand my baby over to the woman responsible for all of this to raise like she did you?”

“You saying Momma Tee orchestrated this?”

“They threatened Ashley. Marty has friends he said would pay him for the privilege to rape and murder her. I was scared, and I didn’t think you’d believe me. I wasn’t going to go through with any of it, I swear. I wanted to tell you, but then Ashley told me about this black SUV that had been following her home from school.”



“You better not be making this shit up.”

“Who didn’t show tonight? I did knowing you hate me and will always hate me. And that you might kill me for being here. Momma Tee and Marty are probably already on his boat setting off for who knows where.”

Pulling out my burner, I dial Goose on his. “You find him?”

“House is empty.”

“He’s with Momma Tee. Check his boat.”

“Momma Tee?”

“Yeah. You know what to do.” I end the call.

“Blood,” Shelby says in a whiny tone, that grates every nerve in my body like sandpaper.

“What?” I snap.

“I did something bad.” She offers me a faint smile then sticks out her tongue, showing me there’s a handful of pills resting there.

“You stupid fucking cunt.” I go straight for the drugs as she clamps her teeth and swallows. “The fuck did you take?”

“The same thing I gave your father and Eightball. Just wanted to tell you I’m sorry. Promise me you’ll watch after Ashley. And tell her I love her.”

“You don’t get to be a coward.” I shove two fingers down her throat, forcing her to

gag. Vomit erupts fast and hard enough to shoot out of her nose, spraying the front of my fucking cut. I shouldn't try to save Shelby's life, but I do. Soaked in her puke, I gather the bitch in my arms and have Hemlock drive us to the nearest hospital.

With her head in my lap, pale skin, and purplish-blue lips, she looks up at me and smiles. "You should have let me die," she whispers.

"Evil doesn't die that easily." I tell her, hating myself for having an ounce of compassion for her.

"I'm sorry." She closes her eyes as I urge Hemlock to drive faster.

Eight Months Later

"What did you name him?" Ashley grins down at her nephew, mentally counting his fingers and toes.

"Ash."

"Hello, Ash." Her gaze lifts to meet mine. "Why Ash?"

"Because despite his beginnings, he's going to rise from the ashes. And I don't know. Thought it seemed to fit. You can say he's named after you."

"He's lucky to have you looking out for him. I am too."

"Just doing my part."

"It's more than that. Most people would have left us to foster care when Shelby deserted us. I can't believe she took off like that from the hospital. You're a good guy. She never deserved you."

“That’s me, sweetheart. One of the good ones.” I chuckle under my breath. I’m anything but a good man. I put a kill order out on the woman who raised me. Had that piece of shit Marty set Shelby up with a new identity and a new life. One better than trash like her deserves.

I read in this morning’s local paper that Marty was the victim of a tragic accident. Gas leak. Real tragic.

Ashley looks at me like I’m some sort of hero.

I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing. I’ve got a club to lead. I can’t be playing babysitter to a newborn and fucking teenage girl.

But I’m all they’ve got.

I’ll figure it out as I go.

There’s a light knock at the door. I glance over to see Goose standing there wearing the dopiest expression on his face. “It’s done.” He personally escorted Shelby out of town. Out of our lives. What it’s done means I don’t have it in me to ask. That’s between him and the big man upstairs or the one down below. Shelby killed his old man and mine. If Goose killed her, then the bitch got what was coming to her and if he let her ride off to her new life, then I can live with that too.

All that bad shit is behind us and we’re starting anew.

I grab Ash from Ashley and place him in his crib. He’s a cute kid, even if his mother was a whore. “Come on. I’ll drop you at school.” I tell Ashley as Candyce, Kevlar’s sister, arrives to take care of the baby.

“Are you taking me on your bike?” Ashley’s eyes light up full of hope.

“Yeah. Why not?” I’m not putting any other woman on the back anytime soon.

Maybe not ever.

“My friends are going to be so jealous. I’m earning so many cool points today.”

“Why is that?”

“Everyone at school talks about how hot you guys are.” Blush stains her cheeks.

I snort. “Tell your friends to get better idols.”

“No way. None of them believed me when I said I was living at the clubhouse. Now they have to. Jackson will be so jealous.”

“Who?”

“My boyfriend.”

“No boys,” I grumble, and she giggles.

“Okay then. No slutty women for you, then.”

“Fucking hell,” I mutter as she climbs on the back of my Harley as though she’s done the act a million times. I’m not cut out for this shit.

Ashley wraps her arms around me, and we shoot out of the parking lot.

I don’t know what the future holds, but whatever that may be, I’ll be ready.

My brother and this club are counting on it.

### Chapter Eight

“This clubhouse is no place for a baby.” Candyce pins her glare on me.

It’s been two weeks since I signed the birth certificate claiming to be the father of Ash. Anyone who needs to know any differently is aware, but it’s really no one’s business. Was the easiest way for me to take custody without any legal issues.

Custody of Ashley is different. As far as anyone knows, Shelby is still her guardian. I’m just looking after her until I can find a better situation for her. Something more permanent than here.

“I turned out all right.”

“Define the meaning of all right,” she tells me with the hint of a smile teasing at the corners of her lips as she changes Ash’s diaper before she leaves.

“That’s why I’ve got you.”

“This isn’t long term.”

“I’ll figure it out.”

“And Ashley?”

“I’m working on it.”

“Work harder. The way she looks at you. It's going to end badly.”

“She's a kid.”

“She's almost seventeen. And her being here. It's not right.”

“You got a better idea? She's safe here.”

“All it'd take is one drunken fool accidentally stumbling into her room. You guys party way too hard. You can't protect her twenty-four seven, take care of a baby, and run a club.”

She's right.

I can't do it all.

Except I don't have any alternatives.

Fuck my life.

“I'm doing my best. I'm all they've got.”

“I'm not saying you're not. But how long can you keep this up before one of them is hurt?”

“I appreciate the concern. It's mine to handle. If you can't watch Ash, I'll get someone else.”

“Your heart is in the right place and for an outlaw, you're not a bad guy. It's only that no one would fault you for giving them both over to people who can provide them with what they need. I don't mean to overstep.”

I glare back at her. “Well, you fucking are. They’ve got food, clothes, and shelter. They’ve got me and every motherfucker in this place who wears a Saint’s patch. No one is going to touch a hair on Ashely’s head or my little brothers. And if they do, I’ll take them out. One between the eyes.”

“I don’t doubt that. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” I mutter as she places Ash in my arms.

The door shuts and for the first time in what feels like days, it’s just Ash and me.

I stare into my brother’s eyes, searching for traces of our old man there and not finding him. All I see when I look at him is his cunt of a mother. Makes it hard not to hate the little bastard, but none of this is his fault. He’s kind of ugly and wrinkly like an old man.

I snort and he gives me a sleep grin as his eyes flutter shut.

For a spell, I close my eyes too. I’m fucking bone tired. Someone always wants something. It ain’t easy being king around here.

What I need is sleep and to get laid. Neither of which is happening anytime soon.

Not when I’m getting up every two hours of the night to do diaper changes and feedings. My Pops was lucky that mother stuck around until I was out of diapers before she took off.

The sound of the door creaking open ends my rest.

I glance over to see Ashely standing in the open space. “What’s up?”

“I was just wondering...” she twists her fingers together. “What are we doing for dinner?”

“Guess you’ve not eaten since lunch, huh?”

She shakes her head, tucking her golden blonde hair behind her ear. In some ways, she resembles Shelby, but not by much. They had the same mother but different fathers. Their mother died in a boating accident a few years back and the whereabouts of her father remains to be seen.

Last I heard, he was doing time in Florida for an armed robbery.

“Let’s go out. You pick.”

“Okay.” She taps her chin. “How about The Salty Boot?”

“All right. Let me get Ash a bottle and pack his bag.”

“I can make his bottle. Candyce showed me how.”

“Cool. Thanks.”

“I enjoy helping. I don’t mind it. He is my nephew.”

“I’m glad you want to help. Fuck knows I need it, but I don’t want you thinking that he’s your responsibility. You should be focused on school and what was his name?”

“Jackson.”

“Yeah him.”



She shrugs. “I think he’s going to dump me for LuLu Hixson.”

“Then he’s an idiot.”

“She puts out.”

I nearly choke on my spit. What the fuck am I supposed to say to this shit? “Boys at your age only care about their needs. Don’t waste your time on them. Focus on your education, yeah?”

“Is that how you were when you and Shelby were in school?”

“Probably.”

“Are you still that way?”

“Don’t be asking me shit like that.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I’ll meet you at my truck.” I get Ash buckled into his baby carrier and make sure he’s got a change of clothes and extra diapers. I should have just ordered her a pizza. But I know she needs some normality.

Maybe I need to fix up the one of the stash houses to give them a home. I have the house Pops bought back in the day for my mother, but when she took off, he moved me to the clubhouse. Candyce was right about it only taking one wrong move to put Ashley in an unpleasant situation.

I’m responsible for whatever happens to her and Ash.

I can hire someone to cook, clean and watch over them when I'm working. I can make this work.

I've got to.

I sit the baby carrier on the bar top and light up a cigarette while I call Goose. I hold the phone out from my ear. "Keep an eye on him," I order one of the prospects.

"What if he starts crying?"

"Pour him a drink."

"He's a baby," he mutters.

"No shit, Sherlock. Just watch him. Fuck. He's sleeping."

"Blood. You there?"

"Yeah. Sorry, man. Was dealing with this stupid as fuck prospect. What are you doing tomorrow?"

"I'm on tow duty. Why?"

"Never mind. Who's off? I need someone to help me clean out the Pop's house."

"Why not have the prospects do it?"

"Would you trust them with that much firepower?" My old man was always a gun enthusiast, but the last thing I need is one of his guns falling into the wrong hands.

"Point taken."

“I’ll catch you up later.”

“Sounds good, brother. Mom said if you need extra hands to watch the baby to give her a call.”

“Perfect. I’ll get up with her.” Goose’s mom has always been family to the club. Even when she split from Eightball. When we were in about sixth grade, she’d finally had enough with him fucking around with every whore who flashed him their ass. Packed his shit up and dropped it at the clubhouse. Moved in another man the same day.

I swear I saw Eightball cry that day. Was the only time. Martina never looked his way again. He tried every way in the world to win her back. Beat her boyfriend’s ass a few times too, but no matter what he tried, she wouldn’t forgive him. But if we needed her, she always showed up for us.

Would help me out a lot having her in my corner so I can focus on keeping shit moving business as usual.

The garage pulls in decent money now that we do custom jobs, but a majority of our earnings come through other dealings. Now that we bought Cooters & Hooters from T-bone and Devie, we can wash our own money and save on the cut we used to pay his father.

I round up Combat and Hash for the job of helping me with Pop’s place. There’s a storage building out back. We can store most of his stuff until I figure out what to do with it. I don’t know why he hung onto the property after all these years. Always said he was going to rent it but never did. Guess now with the situation I’m in, I’m glad to have it.

The waitress keeps giving me dirty looks. Guess she thinks Ash is my baby with Ashley. I get how it looks. Rough biker with a young girl and a baby. Hope she

doesn't spit in my drink or my food.

"I was thinking I can get a job after school and on weekends," Ashley says, interrupting my thoughts. "Unless you need my help watching Ash."

"Think you can handle working on top of your classes?"

The server slams my Coke onto the table, spilling some of the drink over the brim, but I ignore her as Ashley looks at the woman like she must be bonkers.

"My friend Naomi's parents own a clothing store on the main strip. I could practically walk there and back from the clubhouse."

"Maybe. I've been thinking the clubhouse isn't the best place for either of you. It's why I'm moving you to my Pop's place. Where I grew up."

"Will I have my own room?"

"Yup, and you can decorate your room however you want."

"Cool."

I poke my straw around my drink, checking for spit.

"Can Jackson come over?"

"Thought he was about to dump you?"

"Maybe he won't if I can invite him over."

"I've changed my mind. You can share a room with Ash."

Ashley sticks her tongue out at me as the server slides the complimentary basket of bread onto the table with more force than necessary. “What’s her problem?” She grabs a roll and begins slathering it in butter.

“Beats me. Give me one of those.” I reach for the basket.

“Do you think Shelby will be back?”

“Hard to say.”

“Has she even called to ask about us?”

“No.”

“You don’t find it weird?”

“Your sister does a lot of shit I don’t understand.”

“I’ve tried calling and texting her, but none of my calls or messages are going through.”

“If I hear from her, you’ll be the first to know.”

“You mean it?”

“Yeah. Of course,” I lie, and Ashley studies me as though she’s trying to read between the lines of what I’m not telling her.

Did Shelby share the truth with her? Does she know what her sister did? What she’s capable of?

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Nine

“What do you think?”

Ashley spins around the living room. “It’s bigger than I thought it’d be.”

“Won’t be once I get all of our shit moved in.”

“Won’t they miss you at the clubhouse?”

“I’ll split my time, but there will always be someone here to look after you guys.”

“I don’t need a babysitter. Shelby always knew where I was.”

“I’m not Shelby and you’re still a kid.”

“No, I’m not. I’ll be seventeen in a month.”

“Like I said. Still a little girl.”

“Whatever.” She rolls her eyes. “Do I get to pick my room?”

“Knock yourself out.”

“Sweet.” She takes off down the hallway, opening and closing doors.

I’m doing the right thing.

Ash and Ashley need a real home. Safety.

They were never going to have that with Shelby. She let Ashley run wild, like her mother did with her when we were this age. I'm not letting her loose to repeat her sister's mistakes or mine. Ashley needs stability.

I don't know if I'll ever be what's considered stable, but I'll do my damndest to try.

"How far are we from the clubhouse?" her voice carries from down the hall.

I follow the sound, packing Ash with me in his baby carrier. Who needs to hit the gym when lugging around a baby and all their shit all the time?

I find her in my old bedroom. Been some time since I've been back here but sometimes when I was in high school I'd hang here to party behind my old man's back. Lost my damn virginity to Shelby in this room. She was worried I was going to fuck one of the club sluts.

That never really did it for me. Thinking about sticking my dick where everyone else already had turned me off.

"Nice posters." Her cheeks heat and I track her line of sight to the closet, where I had some old posters of swimsuit models posing with motorcycles hanging up.

"You like them so much you can keep them." I tease.

"Ha. Ha. Maybe if they were of Barry Keoghan." She smirks.

"Who?"

"Guess you've not watched Saltburn?"

“What?”

“Nothing. It’s a movie. Forget it.”

“Better not tell Jackson about Barry. He might get jealous.” I chuckle.

“There is no Jackson. I took initiative and dumped him first.”

“Good. Saves me from giving the no sneaking boys over speech.”

“I don’t need a speech. I’m on birth control.”

“You still into purple, or was it pink?” I change the subject. I don’t want to know about her sex life, but if she has one, at least that’s one less worry.

“Neither. I’ve matured to blue.”

“All right. Blue it is. I’ve got a couple of the prospects coming by later to paint. Just tell them what color you want. Martina will be around if you need anything.”

“You’re leaving?”

“I’ve gotta work. Martina will make sure you get dinner.”

“I can take care of myself. Been doing it for years.”

“I know you can, honey. You shouldn’t have to.”

She nods, and I take Ash back to the living room to see if Goose’s mom has shown up. I find her in the kitchen, going through the cabinets.



“Hey.” I take Ash out of his carrier for her.

“You’re doing a good thing for them,” she tells me before kissing my cheek.

“Trying to. Ashley’s here. Put her to work.”

“I plan on it. Girl needs structure. Lord knows Shelby wasn’t the best role model.”

“No negative Shelby talk around them or at all. I want to forget she ever existed.”

“Kind of hard to do when you’ve got her kid and sister living with you.”

“Yeah, well, that’s my problem.”

“I’m here for you, son. As long as you need me.”

“I appreciate you. Some of the guys will be by with furniture and boxes and to do some painting.” I give the baby over and leave some money on the counter for groceries and whatever else she may need to grab. I’m taking over Pop’s old room. Already cleaned it out to make room for some of my stuff. I’m not moving all my junk out of the clubhouse, but it will be nice to have a place to get away. Which is why I need shit at both places.

I shouldn’t feel guilty for needing a break from diapers and teen girl dramatics, but today I just need to cut loose. Drink a little drink and smoke a little smoke. I’ve been drowning in responsibilities with the club and home life. It’s been about a month since I moved into the old house and fuck me if I’m not exhausted. Before my Pops died, my days consisted of collecting money and fucking around with the guys. Now I’m giving them orders and raising a kid on my own.

I’m twenty-five. I should be hitting the bars. Getting laid.

I look around the bar, seeing everyone having a good time, and all I feel is empty. Numb.

So fucking numb to the scene around me, being weighed down by responsibility and the choices that led me here.

“Let’s go blow some shit up or something. It’ll make you feel better.” Goose gives me a shove.

“Nah. I’m good. Probably going to head out. Give your mom a break.”

“Need you a woman. Any of these bitches would bow at your feet and suck your cock morning, noon, and night to be your Ol’ Lady.”

“The last thing I need is another female complicating my life.”

“All right. Get you a dude then.” He grins and I hold back from punching him.

“Fuck you.”

“You’re not my type, brother. You’ve got a flat ass and aren’t blonde with double D cups.”

“Get the fuck out of here before I stab you in the balls.”

“Knew you had a thing for me. Trying to play with my balls.”

“Daisy,” I call one of the hangarounds over.

“Hey, Blood.” She licks her lips and presses between Goose and me. “Goose. Can I do something for you?”

“Yeah, sweetheart. Take his ass upstairs.”

Goose laughs but doesn't turn her away. I finish my beer and smoke another cigarette before I ride on home.

I pull up to the house and all the lights are on. Ashley is visible through the kitchen window, using a spoon as a microphone. When I walk in, I see Ash in the playpen, asleep, oblivious to the bubble gum pop music blaring from the speaker on the kitchen counter.

Ashley's dancing around without a care in the world, and that's how it should be for her.

“Hey. Martina left you a plate in the oven. I just loaded the dishwasher, and Ash has been asleep for about an hour.”

“When did Martina leave?”

“About two hours ago. I told her it was fine.”

“What'd she make?”

“You have a seat over there. In your chair. Go.”

I'm too tired to argue about it tonight. I kick my boots off and shrug off my cut, hanging it off the back of one of the barstools. I plop down on my Pop's recliner and the music cuts off from the kitchen. Ashley brings me a beer, and a plate loaded down with mashed potatoes and gravy, fried chicken, and green beans. Gotta say it's nice coming home to home cooking and not eating whatever mess the prospects have concocted.

I've not found a replacement for Momma Tee still. I try not to think about the past year.

My life has been flipped upside down, but not all of it has been completely awful.

I look over at my brother and know I'll do anything to give him a good life.

Teach him how to be a real man.

One who doesn't betray their family.

One who doesn't hurt the people they love.

Unlike War.

Unlike his cunt of a mother.

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

### Chapter Ten

“Am I seeing shit or are there a bunch of teenagers taking over the pool?” Goose asks, staring out at the scene unfolding.

There’s about fifteen of them living it up.

“It’s Ashley’s seventeenth birthday. I couldn’t say no to the pout.”

He laughs. “Or the horny little shithead grabbing her ass.”

“Fuck. I don’t want to see that shit. I told her. No drinking. They clean up after and they stay outside.”

“Let me know how that works out for you, man.”

“Where are you off to?”

“Got a date with that sweet piece that started last week at Cooters & Hooters. I don’t do whatever in the fuck it is you’ve got going on here.”

“I’m not worried. I’ve got Buck and Lenora watching them.”

“Fuck. He’ll be asleep after his third beer.”

“That’s why I have Lenora serving him nonalcoholic. His old ass doesn’t know the difference.”

“Couldn’t pay me enough to deal with all that.” He shakes his head. “Sure you don’t want to run them all off and come out with me? I’m sure Krystal has a friend or two.”

“Nah, I promised Ashley I’d stick around for cake.”

“Fucking hell,” he mutters, then punches me in the nuts.

I double over. “Oof. What the fuck was that for?”

“Making sure you’ve still got a set.”

“Go before I murder your ass in front of Ashley’s friends.”

Goose holds his palms out while backing away.

Yeah, I’d be afraid to turn my back right now too if I were him. Fucker.

“Eek!” Ashley claps her hands, jumping up and down at the sight of her birthday present sitting in the driveway. “Be so for real right now. This is for me?”

“Figured you were tired of bumming rides. It’s time you got your own.” We just got back from her pool party at the clubhouse. I had a couple of the prospects wash and wax the jeep I’ve had at the garage for a fixer upper project that I never got around to.

“You’re the best.” She tugs me into a hug, pressing her face to my chest, and I reciprocate the gesture.

“It’s not a big deal. It’s used and has some miles, but it’s a good starter vehicle. If you back into something, it won’t be the end of the world.”

“I love it, but it’s too much.” She goes up on her toes as I move to release her.

“Thank you.” Her lips meet the corner of my mouth, and I step back immediately. “I can’t thank you?”

“You can, but not like that.”

“Okay. It’s only weird if you make it weird, Blood.”

“I don’t want you getting the wrong idea.”

“Did you think I was coming onto you? Gross.” She scrunches her nose up and I feel like an asshole.

I’ve ruined what was meant to be a nice moment.

“You’re hot. Way hot, but I know better, and you used to hook up with my sister. It gives me the ick.”

“Good.”

She holds my gaze, her cheeks blooming pink.

I swallow the lump in my throat. Goose is right. I need to spend time with chicks my own age.

“Don’t stay out too late.” I hand her the keys. “Be home by eleven. I’ll be checking the cameras later, so I’ll know if you try to lie.”

“You won’t be here?”

“I’m going out. Martina has Ash for the night at her place, but that doesn’t mean you can sneak that ass grabbing shithead over.”

“What?”

“Your perverted little boyfriend. Tell him next time he thinks about trying to grab your ass in front of me, to imagine how hard it’d be doing it without hands.”

“I’m not telling him that. You’re nuts.”

“You tell him, or I will.”

I climb back on my motorcycle and ride back out to the clubhouse for a real party.

I shoot off a text to Goose.

About that friend.

Hell yeah, man.

I’m at the clubhouse.

Goose shows up with three badass bitches. He was right. Krystal has friends.

Fuck me.

The one with the nicest rack struts toward me in her black miniskirt and shimmery silver tube top that barely contains her tits. Dark silky hair and even darker eyes.

The stereo cranks loud as this chick drops her ass over my lap and starts twerking.

“Hey, handsome.” She smiles at me over her shoulder with her lips painted a pretty shade of red that would look good staining my dick. “Why do they call you blood?”



“Above your paygrade, sweetheart.”

“Hmm,” she muses, as I slap her ass. “Don’t you want to know my name?” She turns to face me.

“Not particularly.”

“Aren’t you a cocky one?” she coos against my mouth, close enough I can nearly taste her strawberry scented breath.

“Come for a ride and find out.”

“Are we talking about your motorcycle?”

“What do you think?”

“Right.” She shoves her hand down the front of my jeans.

Her other friend grinds on one of the poles, giving the rest of the guys a show.

For a little while, I forget all my problems. The weight slips from my shoulders and for the moment, I’m free from the burden of my old man’s death. The responsibility of caring for Ash. The judgement and expectation in Ashely’s eyes every time she looks at me.

All the pain from Shelby’s betrayal slips between my fingers.

I let go of it all.

All of the lies.

All of the I'm goods when I'm anything but okay.

"Why don't we take this party somewhere more private," the one making me forget whispers in my ear.

She doesn't have to ask me twice.

I take her upstairs to my room here at the clubhouse.

The first I've allowed in my space since the last time I was in here with the traitorous cunt.

We're a tangle of clothes shedding and fingers seeking each other's heat as we go down on the bed. Her hand is on my zipper and there's no turning back. I need this more than ever.

She's on me fast. Gripping my raging hardon with her spit slicked palm. My eyes roll back, and I relish in the lavish attention she pays me with her velvety tongue.

"Oh my." Her eyes widen as she attempts to fully take me into her mouth.

"That's it, sweetheart." I feed her my cock as her lips suction around me. "Fuck. Right there." I groan, nearly ready to come because it's been so damn long. Too damn long.

The fine ass bitch strokes and sucks me like a pro. Maybe she is. Goose could have paid her for all I know. I'm too far gone in the moment to care.

I grab a condom from the nightstand. "Suit me up, sweetheart."

"Sure thing."

Definitely a pro. Sheathed and ready, I flip her over and push up her skirt, lining up with her sweet hole. Right as I'm about to thrust inside, the door flings open and Ashley runs into the room, crying.

"Blood," she sobs my name, and I scramble to get my pants up. She's so upset I don't think she even realizes what she walked in on.

"What's wrong?" I grip her shoulders, trying to get her to look at me.

"I hate him. I went to show Jackson my jeep and when I walked around the back of his house to the game room, he was with Lulu."

"Told you that little shithead isn't worth your time or your tears. C'mere." I embrace her and she presses her cheek to my bare chest.

"Why are boys so stupid?"

"Take it from me, honey. They get worse with age," the chick in my bed says and Ashley stiffens.

"Oh. You're with someone. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have." She shakes her head, pulling away.

"Hey." I press two fingers under her chin, tilting her head, forcing her to meet my gaze. "I don't care who I'm with or what I'm doing. I'll always be here for you."

She nods and snuffles. "I'm going to go home. Sorry I interrupted your date," her voice cracks on the last word.

"Are you okay to drive?"

“Yeah.” She smiles, but it’s weak and doesn’t fully engage.

“Text and let me know you made it.”

“I will.”

“I’ll walk you out.”

“You don’t need to. It’s fine. I’m fine.”

She’s anything but fine. “Hey. I’m sorry. Wait a minute.” I turn my attention to the hot ass waiting in my bed.

“Another time.” She winks and slips out of my bed while adjusting her clothes.

Shit.

Ashley stands off to the side, awkwardly, rubbing her hands up and down her arms.

“Sorry you had to see all that,” I tell her once it’s only the two of us.

“You mean your naked ass?” She laughs and bursts into tears again.

I wet my lips. “Yeah. This is why I moved you and Ash to the house.”

“I’m not stupid. I know you have a lot of women.”

“A lot of women.” I snort, arching a brow. “Outside of people helping with Ash, you’re the only woman in my life.”

“There’s no way that’s true. You’re...”

“I’m what?”

“You’re you. Everyone wants to be with you. What really happened to Shelby?”

“If I told you, you’d hate me.”

“I could never hate you, Blood. I’ve always been jealous of Shelby because she had you and whatever she did must have been pretty bad to lose you and to leave her baby behind.”

I cup a palm over the back of my neck. “Another time. How about we go home and throw some plates?”

“What?”

I shrug. “It’s therapeutic.” I put an arm around her and grab my shirt and my cut on our way out.

“You can do better, you know,” she says.

“Shut up. I didn’t ask.”

“I’m just saying. You said I should hold out for someone special. You should too.”

“Right,” I mutter.

“You’re one of the rare ones, Blood. Shelby always said that.”

“Not sure that’s a good thing coming from her.”

“That’s what makes it true. You took me in. You’re raising the baby of the girl who

broke your heart. I'm not stupid. I know Ash isn't yours."

"Who said she broke my heart? Maybe I broke hers."

"You may act tough, but I see you."

"Well, let's keep it our secret, yeah?"

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 2:58 am*

One year later

“Fuck. Do you remember prom?” I ask Gotti as Ashley and her friends take pictures in front of the clubhouse dressed to the nines.

“Feels like a lifetime ago.” He chuckles.

“Who was your date?”

“Sophia. Damn, she was a sweet little thing.” He smiles. “Let me guess. You went with Shelby.”

I shake my head, but he’s not wrong. “Yeah. Another life.”

“I hear that, man. You need a drink.”

“That I do.”

Ashley gives me a wave as she and her friends climb back into their party bus.

This is exactly what I wanted for her.

A normal life away from her sister’s shitty influence. And so far, that’s what I’ve given her. She’s got plans to go to community college in the fall. Getting an apartment with her besties. She’s got a shot at a good life.

“Prospect,” I yell once inside. “Make us some drinks and keep ’em coming.”

I flop down in the back booth where my old man used to sit. Felicity drops onto my lap. “Hey, baby.” I wrap my fist in her hair, getting a taste of her strawberry gum. “Mm.” She moans into my mouth.

The prospect slides our drinks onto the table.

“What the fuck is that?” I stare at what looks like Mountain Dew over ice.

“Redneck margarita. Mountain Dew and Tequila. It’s all I know how to make.”

“Just bring me a beer, man.”

“It’s fine, honey. We’re not going to be doing much drinking.” She skips her fingers along my cut. “I’ve missed you. Take me upstairs.”

Fuck. She’s catching feelings. Now I’ve gotta scrape her off. Last thing I need is this chick having expectations.

“Later,” I tell her and knock back a heavy swig of my redneck margarita.

“Did you miss me?” her whiny tone grates on my nerves.

“Yeah. Sure,” I lie.

“Doesn’t sound like you missed me.”

“Try this. It’s not terrible.” I hand her one of the drinks and suck down more myself.

Hell, this is strong, but I don’t mind. By the fourth one, I can’t even feel my teeth with my tongue.

Felicity crawls between my legs under the table to blow me. It’s about the only thing



I'll miss about her when she's gone. Except right now she's drunk and being sloppy as fuck with her teeth.

My cell vibrates from my pocket, giving me an excuse to get shot of her.

"I gotta take this."

I tuck back into my jeans and walk out to the beach, leaving her on her knees for someone else.

"What's up?"

"Prez, man. You'll never guess who I just saw," Slasher tells me.

"Who?"

"Shelby." My blood turns to ice hearing her name and sobers me up some.

"Where?"

"Gas station off third."

"You have eyes on her?"

"Shit," he mutters. "She was just here, but now I don't know."

"All right, try to find out where she is. I'll be in touch." I dial Martina and tell her to be on the lookout. I don't want that cunt anywhere near Ash. Next, I call Ashley, but the call goes straight to voicemail.

Probably having fun with her friends. Hell, I don't know what to even say to her in a text. I don't want to spook her, but I don't want Shelby filling her head with a bunch

of bullshit either if they cross paths.

Fuck.

Ashley

My phone goes off with a text from an unknown number.

You can't trust Blood.

What? Who is this?

A friend. Don't believe me, ask him where your sister really is.

What do you mean? Tell me who this is.

I stare at the messages. What do they mean I can't trust Blood?

"Everything okay?" Jackson shoots an uneasy smile my way.

We've decided tonight is the night we're finally going to have sex. My stomach does a pitch, and I try to forget about the weird texts. "Never better." I kiss his cheek and glance around the room at all our friends having the time of their lives. I should be doing the same, but I can't stop thinking about Blood and my sister.

Every time I bring her up, he gets all tense and changes the subject. I know he's not Ash's father. I've heard talk about my sister and...well I thought she should have at least tried to reach out or come see her kid. Nothing makes sense.

Nothing.

"You sure you're okay? You getting nervous about tonight?"

“I’ve gotta go.”

“What?” His face falls.

“I’m sorry. I’ve gotta go talk to Blood.”

“Right now? Why?”

“I’ll be back. I swear. I’ll meet you back in our room. I promise.”

“Don’t bother. It’s like you’re in love with the guy or something. I think it’s weird that you live with him. Is that why you keep putting me off?”

“What? No. Ew. He dated my sister. He looks after me and my nephew.”

“How do I know that you aren’t fucking him? That baby could be yours together for all I know.”

“Really Jackson. You see me every day. When would I have had a secret baby?”

He frowns and I shake my head. “Wow. Okay. This was a mistake.” I never should have taken him back after he cheated on me.

I get outside of the hotel and realize I don’t even have my car.

Blood tried to call me while I was arguing with Jackson.

I dial him back.

“Hey. Is something wrong? I got a really weird text.”

“What did it say?”

“I don’t know. They were talking about Shelby.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m at prom. You know that. Tell me what’s going on and don’t lie to me.”

“I’ll come get you. I’ll tell you everything.”

His words from forever ago play in my mind. ‘ If I told you, you’d hate me .’

Did Blood do something to Shelby?

Blood

I roar up to the hotel and find Ashley pacing along the sidewalk outside of the front entrance. I park and shut off my motorcycle. My gaze meets hers and I hate the distrust and sadness staring back at me.

“Take a walk with me.”

“I’m in heels.”

“Take them off. A little sand between your toes won’t be the end of the world.”

“Are you really going to tell me everything?”

“I said I would.”

“You know.” She laughs without humor as we stroll off the sidewalk and onto the beach. “It’s weird. You took my sister to prom and here you are at mine.”

“I’m not your date.”

“Or trying to take my virginity.”

“What?”

“Nothing. I thought tonight would be the night, but no.”

“I told you that punk isn’t worth it.”

“So what? I should save myself for marriage?”

“You should do it when you’re with the right person.”

“What if I can’t have the right person?”

“You said you had a weird text?” I drop down to the sand on my ass and she does the same in her shimmery purple dress, putting her head on her knees as she stares at me with a lost expression on her face.

“Yeah. An unknown number. They said I can’t trust you and to ask you what really happened to my sister.”

“You sure you want the truth?”

“I’m tired of the secrets and the lies.”

“You’re a kid. What would you know about secrets and lies?”

“I’m eighteen. Hardly a kid. Whatever the truth is...I can handle it. You tell me a secret and I’ll tell you one of mine.”

I take my flask out of my inner pocket of my cut and take a swig. “All right.” I let out a heavy breath.

Ashley reaches for the flask, and I don't stop her, even though I should. Her lips pucker as she takes another drink. "Tell me."

"You sure you want to know?"

She nods and I take another drink.

"Your sister was fucking my father behind my back. He's Ash's real father."

"Oh my God." She reaches for my flask again.

"There's more, and I want to tell you, but it's complicated. It's club business." We continue trading drinks. Tonight's regret will be tomorrow's problem.

"You can trust me."

"I wouldn't be able to tell you, even if you were my Ol' Lady."

"That's crazy."

"It's my life and soon you'll be off living yours and I don't want any of this shit hanging over you. I don't want to taint you with my fucked-up shit."

Her face softens. "Nothing about you is tainted."

"You owe me a secret now."

"Fair." She smiles at me and inhales deeply. Her blonde hair shimmers around her shoulders under the moonlight. She's beautiful and I shouldn't be looking at her mouth like I want to kiss it. "Don't get mad."

"Oh hell."

“I mean it. You have to pinky promise.” She hooks our fingers together.

“Okay. Whatever you tell me. I promise I won’t be mad.”

“Good. Do you remember that time I almost kissed you and said that it gives me the ick?”

“Maybe.”

She rolls her eyes. “Well, you don’t give me the ick. Not even a little bit.”

“Lame. I know you’ve got a crush on me. That’s no secret.”

“Okay. How about this then? I don’t want to lose my virginity to Jackson. I’ve always wanted it to be you.”

I pull away from her. “Don’t say that. Involving yourself with a guy like me would be a fucking tragedy.”

“Why? Because of Shelby?”

“Because you’re eighteen years old and live under my roof. Because I’ve fucked your sister. I can give you a million reasons, Ashley.”

“Because you killed Shelby?”

“Fuck no. What gave you that idea? Is that what whoever texted you said?”

“Not exactly.”

“Your sister is alive, but if she comes back around.” I gather sand in my hand and fling it out.

“If she comes back, you’ll what?”

“I’ll kill her.”

“Why? Because she screwed someone else? I get it. That’s messed up but to kill her.”

“She murdered my father.”

Thwack.

Ashley’s hand sweeps across my cheek with a stinging slap. “Liar.”

I grab her by the wrist and she tries to pull away. We wrestle in the sand, and I end up straddling her. “I’m not lying. She killed him and Eightball. Gave them laced drugs.”

Ashley stares up at me, her eyes burning with intensity.

I loom over, every breath a fight for control.

Tears well up in the corners of her eyes and all I want is to take away her pain.

“Shelby wouldn’t do such awful things.”

“She did.” I roll off her and onto my back.

She goes up on an elbow. “I’m sorry, Blood.”

“Me too. I thought I loved her.”

“We both did.” Ashley squeezes my hand and brings her lips down on my knuckles.

“Don’t.” I warn her. I’ve had too much to drink, and she’s too damn tempting right



now.

“Don’t what?” She pushes the thin straps of her dress down off her shoulders.

“Stop. I’m drunk and you don’t want this. It’d be a mistake.”

“It’s mine to make, Blood. I’m moving out and we’ll never see each other. Not often. You don’t want to be my first?” Her lips meet mine and I close my eyes.

“Don’t ask me that.”

“I’m asking.”

“I’m a man, honey. Of course, I want you and I hate myself for it.”

She presses her lips harder against mine urging me to give into the sweetest sin.

One taste of her and I’ll ruin us both.

She’s sweet as honey and he’s a filthy outlaw who doesn’t deserve her.

As President of a notorious biker club, Blood doesn’t have time for love or relationships.

He took an oath and promised he’d never claim an Ol’ Lady. That doesn't mean there's a shortage of women eager to be another notch on his bedpost, thinking they will be the one to change his playboy ways. As hard as they try to trap him, he loves his single lifestyle. He’s dedicated to the club and only the club .Nothing can sway his decision until one drunken night changes everything he thought he wanted. A confession leads him down a forbidden road he swore never to travel. Forcing him to break the promise he made to himself not to ever fall in love. The last thing he expects is to wake up and discover that he’s married to his ex's little sister. She’s the

last person who should be in his bed and wearing his property patch. Ashley differs from anyone Blood has ever met. She's a good girl who doesn't belong with a dirty outlaw like him, but he wants her more than he's ever wanted anything in his life. He'll do whatever it takes to prove to her that their union is more than a drunken mistake.

She's always been his.

Now he just has to prove it.