



# Bond (Crow MC: Crowthorne Chapter #1)

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**Category:** Action&Adventure

**Description:** BOND

I met the woman meant for me until I realised, she couldn't be.

Not when she belonged to another.

For a year I kept my distance even when all I wanted to do was wrap her up and keep her safe. Especially when I was told she was being mistreated.

Changes were coming and I had to see her one more time.

Fate must have been listening because when the chance came to make her mine, I took it.

I knew it wouldn't be easy, not with the threat to her but along with my brothers I'd do everything in my power to keep her safe.

And another Crow finds his one!

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# Page 1

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Zambia

January 2015

BOND

It had taken us some time, but finally those of us who had opted to relocate to Zambia to start the new chapter of the Crow MC were all here. Crowthorne Chapter was now up and running. Paperwork allowing us to stay in Zambia had all been completed and registered with the government. We were settling into our roles. It had been a hell of a ride so far.

We'd spent most of last year cleaning up the businesses that Noni and Rogue had inherited. They'd been nearly run into the ground, badly managed, and funds had been misappropriated by trusted managers. Initially, we'd had a lot of pushback and had ended up getting the police and lawyers involved. It had not been a good time for any of us. We were hopeful that it was all behind us now.

Not only had we been trying to clean up the town and the businesses, but Noni had ended up pregnant at the same time, and let's just say that Bull hadn't taken it well. We'd all understood why, and we'd all been relieved and had breathed a little easier when Noni had safely given birth to a beautiful little girl that they'd called Samantha Gwen. It always amazed me at the capacity for love the Crow women had for each other. Noni had named her daughter after her friend, who had also been Bull's first wife.

There were not many women that I knew of who would be comfortable doing that.

But it seemed the Crow women were a different breed altogether.

Over the last year, it had made me wonder if Blaze, Cairo, and I would find anyone who would fit in. I'd thought I had, for all of a minute, but it wasn't meant to be.

Out of the four of us that had prospected together, only Skinny had an Old Lady. Josie was a kick-arse woman who'd been there through thick and thin for Skinny when Bull had fallen apart after Gwen passed away. She was also perfect for our brother and had taken to living in Zambia like she was born to it. Her practice was thriving, and I had a feeling that before long, we'd be adding a rehabilitation centre to her veterinary clinic for all the injured wild animals that seemed to be finding their way to us.

I slowed my speed down as the heavens opened and the rain came bucketing down in a massive torrent. This was another thing we'd had to get used to: the rainy season—which consisted of torrential rains and thunderstorms that were often accompanied by huge bolts of lightning. Sometimes, it could last hours, but most of the time, it would be over and done within about twenty minutes, and the sun would come back out. The heat was unrelenting at this time of the year. Some days it made me yearn for the cooler climes of the UK, but not enough to make me want to move back. I loved the slower pace of life here, even with all its hardships, such as not having electricity twenty-four-seven or being able to do online banking.

It was a hot and humid day today, not helped by the rain that I'd been hit with. Luckily, today I was in one of the Land Cruisers that had both tinted windows and air conditioning. Four-by-four vehicles were a must in this country; not only were the roads in terrible condition, but because of the distances that had to be travelled to collect supplies, it made more sense to have the room to load up. It had been just on a year since I'd last done this trip. I had my reasons.

I'd managed to farm it off on either Blaze or Cairo. Not this time, though. I'd had to

do this one; I couldn't not do it—not with the changes we'd be making soon when it came to our collections and deliveries.

Bull had a plan to get a plane that would not only pick up guests from the city but also bring in supplies. We'd already cut through the bush and made a runway for it. Noni's baby daddy Monroe was funding it as it would make it easier for him and his family to visit his daughter. He'd told Bull to use it as often as needed because he'd only be using it a couple of times a year.

Getting anything done out here took time, but I loved the slower pace of life. This trip would be the last one we'd be doing to stock up on spare parts for a long while. Not only were we changing supplier but also how we'd be transporting them.

I knew that if I wanted to get my last fix of the gorgeous woman who worked at our current supplier, this would be my last chance to do it. I needed to see her one more time. In my heart, I knew that under different circumstances she would have been mine.

Not that I was planning on doing anything but checking in on her and making sure she was okay. She was married and it may not have been happily, but if there was something that I didn't do, it was go after another man's woman.

She was the reason that I'd stopped doing this journey, even though the garage and tow were my responsibility. I'd had Blaze or Cairo do the trips to collect our order of spare parts. I'd not mentioned her to them, but we'd been friends for a long time, and they knew me. They both knew I wouldn't shirk my responsibilities if I didn't have a good reason to. It wasn't how I was built.

It had been over a year ago when I'd first seen her. We'd not long been in the country, and we'd needed stock for the shop. She'd been stocking the shelves in the back storeroom. I hadn't realised it was her father who owned the wholesalers where

we got our spare parts. He'd sent me back to find a part that wasn't on my list.

And there she'd been, not paying attention to what was going on around her as she studied a clipboard.

She was of medium height, around five six or seven at the most. She'd been dressed in a pair of denim shorts, a pink tank top, and hiking boots on her feet.

She had masses of tight, dirty blonde curls that hung down her back and were held off her face by a bright pink bandana. And her face, fuck me, her face. She was gorgeous, with high cheekbones and skin tanned a warm brown.

I must have made some sort of noise even though I'd been standing still, struck by the perfection before me. She'd looked up from her clipboard with a wide smile, her cheeks dimpled, and the corners of her bright green eyes crinkled slightly. A light dusting of freckles crossed over her nose, which seemed a little too wide for her face. While she wasn't what most would consider beautiful, to me, she was gorgeous.

I knew the minute she smiled at me that she was mine, except she wasn't and never could be. Not with the wide gold band on the fourth finger of her left hand.

"Hi, I'm Rochelle," she greeted me, coming forward with her hand out. "Can I help you with something?"

Jerked from my stupor, I cleared my throat and shook her hand. Ignoring the spark that raced along my arm, I replied, "Hi, yeah, I'm Bond. The guy in the front said I was to come and find a part for myself while they loaded my vehicle."

"Old and surly or young and whiny?"

"Sorry," I asked, confused.

“The guy who sent you back here. Old or young?”

“Oh, old,” I replied.

“My dad then, the young one is my husband,” she told me, completely unaware of the thoughts I’d been having about asking her to have lunch with me. But now that she’d confirmed she was married, that would never happen. “What was it you were after?”

“Umm, here,” I handed her the piece of paper with the part number on it. She took it from me, read it, and walked off saying over her shoulder, “I won’t be long, I’ll just go grab it for you. Take a seat if you want to.”

I didn’t sit because I wanted to get out of there; my chest felt heavy, and I started sweating. It had nothing to do with how hot it was because the air conditioner was running at max and the temperature in the warehouse had been perfectly comfortable when I’d first entered. No, I knew what this was. It was disappointment mixed with regret that the first woman to get such a reaction from me was already taken. I couldn’t wait to get out of here and back home. I just hoped they’d loaded my vehicle already.

“Here you go,” Rochelle said, coming towards me with a box. “Did you need anything else?”

“Nope. I’m good, thanks,” I replied, backing away from her. “It was nice to meet you,” I told her, turning away and hastily leaving, knowing there was no way I’d ever be back here. Not if I could help it; the temptation would be too much, and if there was something I’d never do, it would be poaching someone else’s woman.

And until today, I’d not been back. I was a glutton for punishment, though; I had to see her one more time, especially with what Blaze and Cairo told me of the few times they’d seen her and how she was being treated. They’d offered to help her more than

once, but each time she'd said she was fine and there was nothing to worry about. Even with the bruises covering her face. And I knew there were bruises because Cairo had snapped a picture of her the one day.

While I'd been gutted to see the bruises, what had held my attention was her belly that was pushing up against the loose dress she wore. My heart sank to my stomach at the sight, and I couldn't help but wish that it was my baby she was carrying.

Neither Cairo nor Blaze had agreed with her, but they couldn't force her to leave even if they wanted to. I'd even had a quiet word with Noni, and she'd stopped in the last time she was in the city, but Rochelle wasn't working. Her father had said she was at the hospital having a baby. That had been three months ago.

Suddenly the rain let up, and I was brought out of my self-absorption of the past. Sitting straighter in my seat, I prepared for the traffic that I was about to hit that would take me to the industrial area where the wholesaler was. The next shipment would be picked up at the airport, and I can't say that I wasn't looking forward to that. We wouldn't be wasting an entire day travelling three hours either way when we had the plane.

Not long after the rain stopped, I pulled up in front of the wholesalers. Staring at the front door, I wondered for what seemed to be the hundredth time if this was a good idea. I just needed to see her one more time to see how she was. Just one more time, that's all, then I'd leave and never come back.

Getting out of the vehicle, I made sure to lock the doors before slowly walking into the shop. Her father was behind the counter, and I was shocked at how he looked. When I'd last seen him, he'd been a big man, well-muscled and healthy-looking. In the space of a year, he seemed to have withered, and his dark skin had a decidedly yellow tinge to it.

He looked up as the bell on the door tinkled to let him know someone had entered, and the relief that filled his eyes made me wonder what was going on with this family.

Walking towards the counter, I nodded a greeting at him, “Joe.”

“It’s you. We haven’t seen you in a while, but it’s like my prayers have been answered.”

Frowning with confusion at his words, I ask, “What’s going on, Joe?”

He looks around the store surreptitiously, as if he is worried about someone hearing him. Bending over the counter towards me, he motions for me to come closer, “I need you to take my daughter and granddaughter with you when you leave.”

Not understanding what he meant, I stand up slightly, but he grabs hold of my hand to stop me from moving away, “I’m begging you, please take my daughter with you when you leave.”

Still not sure what was going on, but the desperation in Joe’s voice makes it clear that what he is asking for is urgent.

“I’m going to need more than that, Joe. Isn’t she married? Her husband won’t be best pleased if she disappears with me, and I don’t need that sort of problem.”

He shakes his head quickly, “You won’t; her husband is dead, thank God. I saw the way you looked at her over a year ago, and the fact that you haven’t been in since then but still have your brothers check on her tells me that you’re a good man. She needs protection from her husband’s family. I’m too sick, and I don’t have long left. I need to know my girls are okay. I’ve asked around about you and your club. Everyone I’ve spoken to tells me you are trustworthy and are capable of protecting



them if needed.”

A feeling of dread creeps up on me at his words. “Joe, you have to understand I’ll need more information than what you’ve just given me. And I’ll have to check with my president and club. I can’t bring danger to our club and family without them being aware of it. We have women, children, and our townspeople to protect.”

His shoulders sink and his head lowers in defeat, but he nods, “I understand. I’m sorry for asking.”

I’m not ready to leave it like that, though, “Hey, tell me what’s going on. If I can help, I will, but I need all the information I can get, and I’ll have to check with my president. Do you have somewhere we can talk privately?”

Hope lights his eyes again, “I do. Let me close and lock the front door.”

He hurried, well, as much as a sick man could hurry, to the doors of the shop and turned the sign around to ‘closed’ and locked the doors before shuffling back to me and motioning me to the back. I looked around but didn’t see Rochelle anywhere.

“She’s not here,” he informs me, sitting heavily down in a chair behind the desk in the office he’d taken me to. “I sent her home to pack in hopes that you’d take her. She’ll be back soon.”

I wasn’t sure how I felt about that because until I had more information, I wasn’t agreeing to anything.

“Tell me what’s going on, Joe. Why does Rochelle need to get out of town?”

Joe runs a shaky hand down his face, sweat beading his brow. Picking up a bottle of pills from the table, he tries to open it, but his hands are shaking so much that he

can't. Taking them from him, I read the label and see that they are painkillers, strong painkillers. Shaking two out, I hand them to him along with the bottle of water on his desk.

"It's my fault," he starts, "they approached me four years ago wanting to use my warehouse to store drugs. I, of course, refused, but then I started getting break-ins or my shipments went missing, and then they threatened Rochelle. It's only been the two of us ever since her mother died when she was ten. She's all that matters to me." He takes another sip of water before continuing.

"What I didn't know was that they'd done the same to her. They threatened me if she didn't marry the youngest brother. She was twenty-one at the time. She married him, and her life has been hell ever since then. The only thing she had a say in was whether or not she had children, and then he messed with her birth control. Daisy is a blessing, but I can't have my girls getting pulled in anymore to their gang.

"And they will be now that her husband has been killed; they'll want Rochelle brought in. I've managed to keep her and Daisy at mine, saying that she was grieving and that she needed help as it's not been long since she had the baby. Not that any of that is true; she's not grieving—we both breathed a sigh of relief when he was killed in a deal gone wrong, and she's a natural mother.

"I only have a few months, if not weeks, left to live, and I need to know my girls are somewhere safe. I'm begging you to please take them with you. I've got money; you can have it all." Tears were running down his cheeks as he looks beseechingly at me.

"I don't want your money, Joe; that should go to Rochelle and her daughter. First, tell me about this gang. Why did they want your warehouse?"

"They're called the Black Mambas, and they've been running drugs through the city for years. They wanted to use my shipments because my trucks move easily between

bordering countries when I buy stock. Nobody bothers my trucks at the borders.

“They built false floors into the storage area of the trucks, and once the pallets of spares are over them, nobody bothers to check them. It was easy for them. It’s mostly cannabis and heroin that they run through their nightclubs, and of course, they make money off the girls they run. I know in my heart of hearts that if they get hold of my girls, that will be their fate.”

He probably wasn’t wrong; it’s how it seemed to work worldwide. On every continent and in every country I’d ever been to, there was always someone who profited off someone else. I should know; my childhood wasn’t far off what he was describing, except I had a father who didn’t give a shit and a mother who sold herself to pay for her fix. My blood turns cold thinking of Rochelle being used in that way. No matter what, I’d ensure that she didn’t suffer that fate, even if I had to ship her off to the UK to ensure she was safe.

Patting his hand, I stand up, “Let me call Bull and see what he has to say. I’ll do whatever I can to ensure that your girls are safe.”

He starts to sob. I hated to see such a strong man broken. “Thank you,” he whispers.

Taking my phone from my pocket, I find Bull’s contact details and, putting the phone to my ear, I wait as it rings until he answers.

“What’s up, Bond?”

I wasn’t sure how I was going to ask for this favour, “It seems like I have a bit of a situation here, Pres.”

There was silence from the other end of the line, then Bull tells me, “Hang on, I’m with Rogue. I’m going to put you on speaker.”

“Okay,” I reply, waiting for him to give me the go-ahead.

“You’re on speaker, Bond, go ahead,” Bull advises.

Taking a deep breath, I tell him and Rogue what has happened since I’d arrived in town and Joe’s request.

They were both silent when I finished.

“Is this the girl you asked Noni to check on?” Rogue wants to know.

“Yeah,” I reply.

“And she’s the reason that you haven’t been doing the runs for the last year?” Bull questions.

Gripping the back of my neck, I pull at the tension that is building. “Yes.”

“Is she yours?” Rogue asks, curiosity in his tone.

I’d never lie to them or myself; they needed to know everything, “She is, but she was married, so I stayed away.”

The two of them were silent again before Bull asked, “Was married? Meaning she no longer is. Are you going to make her your Old Lady?”

“I don’t know,” I reply honestly. “I’d love to ask her to be my Old Lady, but she was forced into her marriage; it doesn’t seem fair to ask her to become an Old Lady just for protection. If that’s the only way to protect her, then I’ll offer to get her out of the country instead. I never want her to be forced into a position again.”

“I’ll do it,” a soft voice says from behind me. Turning around on my heel, I swallow at my first sight of her in nearly a year. She’s as gorgeous today as she was all those months ago. Today she’s dressed in a pair of black cargo pants, a floral flowing tank top and the same boots from a year ago, her curls held off her face in a high ponytail. The only difference is instead of a clipboard, she’s cradling a tiny baby in her arms, and by tiny, I mean tiny.

“What?” I question, shocked surprise in my voice. I’d been so focused on letting Bull and Rogue know what was going on that I hadn’t heard her come in.

“I’ll do it,” she replies in a louder voice. “If becoming your Old Lady or marrying you means my daughter is safe, then I’ll do what I have to. I can’t protect her by myself, and I don’t want to leave Zambia. My life, such as it is, is here. It won’t be the first time I’ve had to do what I can to keep my family safe, but I’m hoping you’ll be kinder than the last man.”

My heart clenched at her words; that she’d suffered to do what she thought was right was no surprise to me. She had the bearing of someone who was strong and would do what it took to survive in this life.

“Bond?” Bull prompts. “Is that her?”

“Yeah, Pres, it is.”

“Put her on speakerphone,” Rogue tells me.

I did as they asked, not taking my eyes off her face, and she seemed to feel the same because her gaze hadn’t left mine either.

“Hi, Rochelle, is it?” Bull wants to know.

“Yes, that’s me,” she answers.

“Rochelle, I want you to know that you don’t have to do this; we’ll help you either way. Like Bond said, we can get you out of the country if you want or to another part of this country. Our help isn’t dependent on whether or not you become part of our Club.”

Her gaze still on me, she answers Bull, and her tone lets it be known that she was done with this conversation. “I understand, and that’s part of the reason that I know this is the right choice.

“The other is that a year ago a man walked into my warehouse and my heart stood still. I knew then what I know now. He was meant to be mine, but circumstances and timing weren’t right. I’m not going to tempt fate a second time.

“Now, that’s not to say he feels the same way, especially as I now come with another man’s daughter, but I’m hoping that my instincts aren’t wrong and he won’t hold that against me or her.”

I had to smile at her words, and both Bull and Rogue chuckled because it was clear she knew nothing about us if she thought that blood meant anything.

“Has she got a birth certificate?” I ask, nodding at the sleeping baby in her arms.

She shakes her head, “No, I’ve been putting it off for some reason.”

“That’s good,” I tell her. “Bull, can you speak to Skinny?”

“Already on it, brother,” Bull assures me. “Get your ladies home. I’m going to speak to Dex and let him know what’s going on there. Maybe there’s somewhere we can put her father so that he’s safe because I can’t imagine this gang will be letting her go

easily.”

“Thanks, Pres, we’ll be home later tonight.”

“I’ll let Noni know to have a cot added to your room for now. Time you got to building that house, brother.”

“Seems like,” I reply with a smile. Noni and Rogue had gifted each of us brothers a piece of land near them to build homes on. I’d been putting mine off, but it seemed that I’d better get started on that sooner rather than later.

Walking towards Rochelle, I stopped just short of touching her boots with the toes of mine. My gaze dropped down to the tiny bundle that she was holding. With a finger, I pulled the baby blanket down and fell instantly in love for the second time in my life. A miniature Rochelle was nestled against her breast, from the tight blonde curls and lightly tanned skin to the shape of her small, pursed lips.

“She’s gorgeous,” I say softly. “She’s tiny though. Is she okay?”

Rochelle smiles up at me, tilting her daughter slightly towards me so that I can get a better look, replying, “She’s fine now, but she was born really early, so she’s a little smaller than most.”

Letting the blanket go, I was unable to not touch Rochelle, so I wrapped my arm around her waist and turned her towards her dad’s office, “Come on, let’s go and tell your dad that he doesn’t have to worry about you and Daisy. You’re a Crow now, and we look after our own.”

It took a couple of hours, but I got our order loaded and more. Joe was closing down the warehouse and told me to take what I could load; he had a friend coming who was going to take the rest. He wanted the warehouse to be empty after today.

When I mentioned getting him somewhere safe, he told me not to worry about him, just to look after his girls. I waited as Rochelle clung to her father as they said goodbye to each other, both knowing this was likely to be the last time they ever saw each other.

He'd handed Rochelle a big bag that was so heavy she couldn't hold it. I'd taken it from her, surprised at the weight. I'd had a look when I'd put it in the vehicle and found it to be full of dollar bills.

My eyebrows had risen at the amount; it seemed he wasn't joking about making sure his girls were taken care of. It was getting late, and I wanted to be on the road before it got dark, but I was reluctant to break up their goodbye. Finally, it was Joe who did it for me.

Taking his granddaughter from Rochelle, he kissed her cheeks and put her in the car seat that had been in Rochelle's car. We were going to leave that here in the loading bay of the warehouse. Once he'd said goodbye to Daisy, he helped a crying Rochelle into the seat next to her. I was thankful that this particular vehicle had tinted windows so nobody would be able to see in. I wouldn't put it past this gang to be watching who and what was coming out of the warehouse loading area.

Once Rochelle was seated, he closed the door before turning to me and embracing me, "Thank you. Look after my girls for me."

Returning his embrace, I couldn't help but feel sad that I wouldn't get to spend time with this man who loved his family so much he was willing to send them away from him on the last days he had on this earth.

"I will," I reassure him. "They'll be safe with me, I promise."

"I know," he replied, patting my back and letting me go. "You'd best get going. I've



still got a bit to sort out here before I can get away. I'll have a friend get word to you somehow once I'm gone, and I'll have them send my ashes. Make sure that she doesn't hold onto them. Have her spread them in the Zambezi for me. It's where we spread her mother's."

"Okay," I assure him, getting into the driver's side. I hoped we'd be able to resolve Rochelle's issue before that happened so she could be with him to say goodbye.

Starting the car, I slowly drove out, watching him disappear behind us in the rearview mirror before my gaze caught and held Rochelle's tear-drenched gaze.

Nothing I'd say would make it any easier on her, so I let her cry and vowed I'd make sure that she didn't shed many more tears if I could help it.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

ROCHELLE

I hated my life, and I had nobody but myself to blame for it. Instead of speaking to my dad first, I'd got married to a man I hated because I thought I was protecting him.

After the break-ins and then my dad being attacked and beaten up, I wasn't risking losing him—not when he was the last parent I had alive.

He'd been furious with me when he found out what I'd done, but it was too late to do anything about it by then. The Black Mambas had been around for over thirty years and had grown bigger and bigger as the years went on. They'd obviously been watching our business before making their move.

I'd put up with the beatings and the verbal abuse as long as they left my dad alone, which they had done for the most part, even when he'd got into it with whiny Jared, my husband, about the bruises I'd been sporting more often than not.

It's amazing how much abuse a human body could take. I always wondered how far he'd take the beatings, but it hadn't gone any further than punches and slaps. I was just glad he didn't seem all that interested in me sexually; the only time he seemed to remember I was around for that was when his brother got on at him or one of the other members mentioned me.

Then I knew I'd have to prepare and grit my teeth until he was done, which luckily never took him long. I'd long ago ensured that I wouldn't fall pregnant; I'd been on the pill since I was sixteen, and I had no intention of ever not taking it. There was no way I would be bringing a child into the world I lived in.

There's no way I'd want my son to grow up like his father and brothers or my daughter to be used as they saw fit. It was a literal godsend that Jared didn't seem to be bothered with sex. I'd be worried that he was getting it elsewhere, but as we spent most of our days together, it didn't seem likely, and in the years we'd been married, he'd not given me any diseases, for which I was thankful.

I'd been so lost in my thoughts, concentrating on the clipboard and the stock take I'd been mired in for the last three hours that I didn't hear the doors to the warehouse open. It wasn't until his shoe squeaked slightly against the floor that I realised I wasn't alone anymore. Turning around, my heart stuttered in my chest at the man standing in my warehouse.

He was beautiful, if a man could be called that. He had blonde hair cut short and tidy, was clean-shaven, with a strong jaw and high cheekbones; he wasn't overly muscular, but you could see he looked after himself. He wore khaki shorts, a grey T-shirt, and hiking boots. All his clothes looked neatly ironed and tidy—so different to the slovenly mess that I'd tied myself to. I realised he was as struck by me as I was by him, and then his eyes caught sight of the gold band on my finger, and his eyes shuttered, his face seeming to close down. My heart sank at the look on his face. I shouldn't be surprised, though; I knew from the grapevine what type of men they were in Crowthorne. They'd had all the women aflutter, but none of them seemed interested in relationships, no matter how many women threw themselves at them.

It was well known that they'd been cleaning up their town and rejuvenating the hotel and shops in Crowthorne, a tiny town over three hours away from the city.

The tingle that had run down our arms when we'd shaken hands had sent shivers down me. I wished I could have kept him with me for longer, but I knew it wouldn't end well for me if Jared found me in here alone with him, so I'd found his spare part and then watched as he turned around and hurried away from me. Disappointment filled me, and I knew deep in my heart that under other circumstances he'd have been

the one for me. It made me irrationally angry, and I'd not watched my mouth when Jared had come looking for me; I'd been wearing bruises from that day for a few weeks.

Bond hadn't come back after that first visit; instead, he sent two of his brothers, Blaze and Cairo, and while they were both good-looking, lovely men, I'd have preferred if I could have caught another glimpse of Bond.

Both had tried to get me to leave with them at one time or another and had offered help on several occasions when they saw the bruises I was sporting. I'd long since given up covering them up because I just didn't care anymore—not when my heart hurt at what could have been.

Most would think I was stupid because I'd thought that all it had taken was one chance meeting and that I'd met the man meant for me. But when you grew up with parents like mine, who had met on a Wednesday, had their first date on a Friday, and got married the following Saturday—all within two weeks of meeting—you understood what instant love was.

When I'd found out I was pregnant, I'd wanted to cry because now I was well and truly stuck. I wondered how it had happened until I realised that the pill I'd been taking had been tampered with, and it made me wonder if Jared realised that I'd been making plans to leave.

Now that I was pregnant, I knew that it would be impossible to leave without help, even with the substantial amount of money that I'd managed to steal and put away.

Not while I carried a baby that had blood ties to the family that ran the Black Mambas, especially if the baby ended up being a boy. I'd never be able to disappear without help because they'd never stop searching. My dad and I had cried together when I told him about the baby and then again when he was diagnosed with

pancreatic cancer.

Then Jared's best friend was killed while on a run when I was seven months along, and Jared went ballistic, taking it out on me. It was a miracle that our neighbours interfered and got me to a hospital in time to save Daisy, although it was touch and go for both of us. When I finally got to hold her, the feeling of all-consuming love flowed through me, and I knew no matter what, I had to leave for her sake. Because if I didn't, we'd both be sucked into the world the Black Mambas were part of, and we'd more than likely end up being sold over and over again.

Jared had been killed while I'd been in hospital; nobody knew who had done both the hits. And that's what they were. Taking out the second and third made the Black Mambas weak.

Dad had somehow managed to move me and Daisy in with him when we got out of the hospital, making up an excuse that I'd just had a baby and I was grieving the loss of Jared.

Which was the furthest thing from the truth. The Mambas were so busy trying to figure out who'd killed two of their members that they forgot about us, and I was eternally grateful. Putting our heads together, Dad and I made up a plan to get me out of town. Crowthorne was far enough away and not somewhere either of us had any ties to. Cairo and Blaze had offered many times to help me out, but I'd always had to turn them down, even though all I wanted was for them to take me with them.

This time I was going to take them up on their offer. Never had I thought that I'd be leaving with Bond or that he'd offered to make me his Old Lady. Added in the fact that he'd been gentle when he looked at Daisy and had quickly arranged to have his name added to her birth certificate, I wasn't sure what to think about a man who was both caring and protective. Other than my dad, I didn't know of any others, and that was a sad state to be in.

Even though I knew we'd be leaving Dad behind, it was so hard to say goodbye. Because if this dragged out, it would more than likely be the last time that I saw him. I hugged his shrunken frame as hard as I could.

He'd slowly been getting worse and worse over the last two weeks, and I think if it wasn't for the fact that Daisy and I needed him, he'd have left this earth already; it was one of the many reasons I didn't fight him on leaving.

I didn't look back as we drove away because I wasn't sure if I'd have been able to not stop the car and demand Bond take us back. In the end, I'd ended up crying myself to sleep, hoping against hope that my trust wasn't misplaced and that the decisions I made today wouldn't be detrimental to either Daisy or myself.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

### BOND

I kept an eye out to see if we were being tailed, but it didn't seem like it. I'd clocked one of the gang members as I'd left the yard; you couldn't miss them with their denim jackets depicting a black snake that I assumed was the Black Mamba. He'd seemed more worried about chatting up the woman who was with him than being a lookout. Small blessing that he was more worried about getting his dick wet than doing his job.

It didn't take long for Rochelle to join Daisy in sleep. My heart hurt for them. While I didn't know what it was like to have a parent who gave a shit about you, I'd been in the company of some pretty phenomenal parents since I'd been with the Crows, and I knew how much it had to have hurt Rochelle to leave her dad behind, especially as he was obviously a good one.

It was closing in on eight in the evening when I pulled into the private drive at the back of the hotel. I'd worry about unloading tomorrow. Tonight, I wanted to get my girls into my room so that they could get comfortable.

Switching off the engine, I sat back in my seat with a relieved sigh, thankful that I was back on home ground where there was protection.

Getting out, I stretched my back out and swung my arms, trying to ease the tension that had crept up my neck and shoulders, knowing that if anything were to happen, I'd be hard-pressed to protect Rochelle and Daisy by myself. With the type of threat against her, I needed to assess how much she knew about firearms. Although having grown up here, where most people carried a firearm, I'd be surprised if she didn't

know how to shoot.

Through my open door, I could see that Rochelle was still fast asleep and Daisy hadn't made a peep the whole journey. I wasn't sure if I should be worried about that or not because she seemed to be really quiet for a baby as young as her.

Walking around to the passenger side rear door, I slowly opened it. Just then, the back door to the private rooms of the hotel opened, and Skinny, Josie, Blaze, and Cairo walked out.

Not wanting to wake Rochelle and Daisy up, I nodded at my brothers as they walked up.

"Hey," I quietly greet them.

"Bond, you doing okay?" Blaze asks just as quietly, coming up beside me to look into the back.

"I'm good, brother. Can one of you grab Daisy and the bags that Roch put on the floor? I'll have to unpack the truck tomorrow; I don't want to leave them alone tonight," I tell them.

"Give me the keys," Cairo says, holding out his hand. "Blaze and I'll go and unload into the warehouse, and you can sort it tomorrow. Safer than leaving the parts out here, where they can be nicked."

"Thanks," I reply, tossing him my keys before removing Rochelle's seat belt. Skinny is on the other side of the car from me, and he's unhooked the car seat from the base and handed it to Josie before grabbing their bags from the car. Once he has them all, I slip my hands under Rochelle and pick her up and out of the car. I'm shocked at how light she is. Surely, she should be heavier. I hope she's been getting enough to eat,



especially as she is nursing.

Rochelle wakes slightly when Cairo starts the truck and looks up at me, her green eyes hazy with sleep.

“Daisy,” she says, looking around.

“It’s okay, Skinny’s Old Lady has Daisy,” I tell her, nodding towards Josie, who is walking slightly ahead of us. “Skinny is behind us with your bags. We’re going to my room, and I’ll get you two settled and some food sent up.”

“Okay,” she says, snuggling her head back into my shoulder with a soft but heartfelt, “thank you.”

It made me wonder how long she’d been carrying the weight of the world by herself. She’d not have to do that anymore, not now that she was with us.

It wasn’t long and we were at my door. “Where are your keys?” Josie asks.

“Here,” I answer, shaking the keys on the finger of the hand that was cradling Rochelle’s legs.

“You can put me down,” Rochelle informs me.

“It’s okay, baby,” I tell her as Josie takes the keys from where I had them hanging off my finger and opens the door. After a year of not allowing myself to think about her and what could be, I liked having her close, and if that meant carrying her for a bit, well then, I was good with that.

Josie pushed open the door to my room and switched on the light that turned the bedside lamps on rather than the main light. Immediately, I saw that someone had

taken the time to add a cot for Daisy, and I now had a microwave sitting on the dresser along with a case of bottled water. Stopping at the foot of the bed, I set Rochelle on the end.

Josie set Daisy's car seat on the bed next to Rochelle with a smile, holding out her hand to introduce herself, "Hi, I'm Josie. It's lovely to meet you."

Rochelle shakes Josie's hand with a smile, "Hi, Josie. Thank you for bringing Daisy in for me. I appreciate it."

"Aw, that's okay, she's a real cutie and so tiny," Josie says.

"She is," Rochelle answers. "She'll be waking up soon to eat. I'm surprised she hasn't started crying yet."

Josie shrugs her shoulders a little, pulling the light blanket down so she could look at Daisy's face, "Probably the car ride. I know I'm asleep before we even get to the end of the road if I'm not driving."

Rochelle laughs, and I chuckle and nod. "It's true; she really is asleep by the time we hit the end of the road. I'm going to check where Skinny is with your bags so that you can change Daisy when she wakes up."

Turning around, I left Josie and Rochelle talking and went to see where Skinny had got to. He'd been right behind me until we'd walked through the door, and that's exactly where he still was—standing at the door talking to Bull and Rogue.

"Hey, all good here?" I question.

"Yeah, brother, we're just checking in to make sure you got here with no problems," Bull tells me, clasping my shoulder. "Your girls doing okay?"

“She cried for nearly an hour after leaving her dad. I’m not sure if she’s doing okay or not. I have a feeling she wouldn’t tell me if she was having a hard time. Rochelle’s used to doing everything on her own,” I answer honestly. Because it was true, I wasn’t sure if she’d tell me if something wasn’t right or if she was unhappy; she’d just soldier on and make the best of it.

Bull nods with understanding, “Something to keep an eye out for then.”

From down the passage, Daisy let out a little cry, nothing like the cries that I was used to from our MC kids.

“Is that the baby?” Bull asks, tilting his head curiously.

“It is, and she’s fucking tiny, man. Her asshole ex beat Rochelle bad enough that she went into early labour. Daisy’s three months old, but she was born two months early,” I answer, taking the diaper bag that Skinny holds out to me.

“Take this and I’ll bring the rest in behind you.”

“Thanks,” I reply, hurrying down the passage and back to my room as Daisy’s squawks get louder until they go quiet.

Walking back into the room, I avert my eyes when I find Rochelle with her top up, exposing her breast to Daisy. Now I know why she suddenly went quiet. Josie stands up as soon as I walk in and tells me, “I’ll go and grab you something to eat as I’m sure you’re hungry,” she smiles at me, then turns back to Rochelle. “We’ll chat again in the morning. Have this one,” she throws a thumb over her shoulder at me, “bring you by my office and I’ll show you around.”

Rochelle smiles back at Josie, saying warmly, “Thank you, Josie, and thanks for the friendly welcome and the help tonight. I’ll definitely have Bond bring me over. I’d

like a look around and see if there's a job going somewhere."

Josie slants her eyes at me at Rochelle's statement, but I don't say anything because she's had decisions taken from her for the last few years. She has a job with me if she's interested in it. I'll broach that with her tomorrow, though.

Tilting my chin at Josie, I slightly shake my head, letting her know that I don't want her to say anything.

"I'll be back in about twenty minutes," Josie says again before she turns and walks out of the room, stopping Skinny from entering, probably worried about how Rochelle would feel with a man she doesn't know coming in when she's nursing.

It's my excuse to walk away from a sight that I'm hard pressed not to want to look at because it's so beautiful: the soft look on Rochelle's face as she looks down at her daughter, who's going to town like she's starving, and she probably is, considering how long it's been since her last feeding.

"Thanks, Skinny," I say, taking the bags from him, "and thanks, Josie, I appreciate you making Roch feel welcome."

Josie smiles, wrapping her hands around Skinny's arm and leaning up against him, "You're welcome. I like her; bring her around tomorrow before you hijack her to work for you."

"I will," I reply with a small chuckle, glad she'd understood what I'd been trying to say.

"We'll be back soon with something to eat. Are sandwiches okay?" Josie questions.

"Sandwiches are fine, Josie, thanks."

Closing the door as they walk away, I walk back into the room and come to a stop when I see Rochelle, eyes closed, leaning back against the headboard. Daisy looks to be finished, but the two of them seem to be dozing again. It makes me wonder just how much rest Rochelle has got over the last few months. Not much, I'd imagine, coupled with a new baby, the stress of her dad being ill, and the threat from the Black Mambas hanging over their heads. I am surprised she is still standing.

Squatting down beside the bed, I lay a hand on her leg and gently squeeze it.

She opens her sleepy green eyes and looks down at me with surprise.

"Hey, baby. Are you okay with me taking Daisy and changing her while you go and grab a shower?" I ask.

Rochelle shakes herself slightly before letting out a small yawn, covering her mouth with her hand. "Sorry," she says, sitting up, "I can't believe how tired I am. Do you know how to change a baby?" she asks curiously.

Laughing softly so as not to disturb a sleeping Daisy, I reply, "Oh, yeah. The Crows are a prolific lot, and we all learned how to change diapers pretty quickly with the number of babies that were born in a short space of time."

"That must be nice," Rochelle murmurs, gently removing Daisy from her breast and covering up before handing her to me.

"What must be nice, Roch?" I ask, wanting to know what she means. Standing up, I cradle Daisy's lightweight form against my chest. I stifle a chuckle as she smacks her lips like someone who has just had the best meal ever.

"Having all those people around to help out."

Turning my attention from Daisy to the woman who I'd not been able to forget in the last year. "You'll have that now, Roch," I tell her.

She frowns slightly and says in a disbelieving tone, "But they don't know me, and Daisy isn't even blood."

Laying Daisy down on the bed, I open the diaper bag. Taking out a tiny baby grower, nappy, wipes, and cream, I start to change her, telling Rochelle, "Blood doesn't mean anything to a Crow, Rochelle. You'll understand more tomorrow once you meet everyone. For now, go and grab a shower while I settle Daisy. Skinny and Josie will be back soon with some food for us."

When she still hesitates, I turn my full attention back to her. Lifting my hand, I cup her cheek, tilting her head slightly towards me before reassuring her, "I promise, baby. Everything is going to be okay. You and Daisy have nothing to worry about."

Her gaze searches mine, and whatever she sees has her nodding her agreement. "Okay," she whispers with one last glance at Daisy, as if to ensure that she is still okay. It is only then that she goes towards the bags and starts rifling through them. Once she has what she needs, she goes to the bathroom; it isn't long before I hear the shower start.

Turning back to Daisy, I was surprised to see her eyes open. Eyes that are the exact same colour as her mother's.

"Well, hello, princess. Did you have a nice nap? You're probably going to keep us up all night, huh?" I speak softly to her as I quickly finished changing her nappy and putting her in a fresh grower. Picking her up and resting her on my shoulder, I gently rub her back to be rewarded with a huge burp, making me chuckle and then sigh happily as she snuggles her head further into my shoulder, seemingly content for the moment. Looking around my room, I'm surprised that the slight messiness isn't

bothering me as much as it usually would.

My childhood had left me with many scars—messiness, being dirty, and ill-fitting clothes only being a few of them. It was how I got my name, Bond, because when I got the chance, I'd made sure that I'd never have to live like that again. I'd always been well turned out, with tidy hair and pressed clothes. My brothers understood my quirks and made allowances for them. That didn't mean that I didn't get dirty when I had to, because I could, as long as I knew there was a shower and fresh, clean clothes at the end of it.

Taking Daisy with me when there was a knock on the door, I opened it to find Blaze holding a plate, not Skinny or Josie as expected.

"I sent them to bed," Blaze explains at my puzzled look. "Josie has to get started early tomorrow. This must be Daisy."

"It is," I told him, turning slightly so he can see her face. She is wide awake and happily gurgling away.

"Fuck, Bond, she's tiny, man. Beautiful and strong though," Blaze says softly, holding out his finger, chuckling slightly as she grips it tight in her little fist.

"I'll catch up with you tomorrow," he continues when we hear the shower shut off. "I'm happy for you, Bond, and I'm glad she's out of there. We'll handle whatever's coming. Bull's going to call Church tomorrow just after lunch."

"Thanks, Blaze," I tell him. None of us thought that this was over. We all expected there to be blowback; it was just a matter of time. The only good thing was that this gang didn't know us and what we were capable of when it came to protecting ours. Luckily, we had made connections before we even arrived in the country, and Bull had organized a stockpile of weapons and ammunition should we need it.

Closing the door on Blaze, I put the plate that was piled high with sandwiches on the table. I wasn't sure how hungry Josie thought we were, I thought with a twinge of amusement, taking in the number of sandwiches on the plate.

"It looks like your Aunt Josie thinks we haven't eaten in days. What do you think, Daisy?" I ask the sweet little girl who seems utterly content to be carried around. Keeping my hand around the back of her head to make sure she is secure in my hold, I squat down by the fridge and open the door, perusing the contents, "What will your mum drink, hey, Daise? Coke won't be good for you, so it's either juice or water." Turning my head slightly, I look into her big green eyes; her lips give a small lift at the corners that I take for a smile. Smiling back at her, I nod my head, "Yep, I agree with you, princess, water it is." Taking two bottles out of the fridge, I put them on the top of the fridge. Closing the door, I stand up and stop when I see Rochelle standing just in the doorway of the bathroom, watching us with a small smile, her eyes soft.

"Princess and I decided water all round," I tell Rochelle.

Rochelle's lips twitch slightly, "Princess, huh?" she states, amusement in her tone.

"Yep, princess," I reply, handing Roch a bottle of water and waving a hand to the chairs before continuing, "Sit, baby, and have something to eat. You're way too thin."

Rochelle lets out a bark of laughter at my words, "That's a first; usually, men are telling us to lose weight."

Snorting a little, I tell her, "Well, they're idiots. All I want is for you to be happy and healthy. You're feeding Daisy, so you need extra food. That's just common sense," I say as I put a sandwich on her plate and nudge it towards her before taking one for myself.

Rochelle doesn't reply to my statement, but I'm happy to see she eats a couple of



sandwiches and finishes her water. When she pushes her plate away, only then do I say anything.

“How are you really, baby?”

Her eyes fill with tears, but she blinks them away and clears her throat before replying, “Honestly, I don’t know. It’s all happened so fast. This morning, I woke up in my childhood bedroom expecting my day to go as it usually did, and then Dad saw your name in the order book, and he hustled me to get packed.

“I’m not sure what lit a fire under his arse, but something did. And now I’m here in the bedroom of the man I’ve not been able to stop thinking about since I first met you last year, and you’ve taken us in like it’s nothing. You’ve taken Daisy as yours, and you’ve looked after us like you’ve always known us.

“It’s confusing. I’ve never known a man like you. Not even my dad, as wonderful as he is. I’m scared it’s all going to be taken away from us, and then Daisy and I’ll be homeless again.”

Leaning forward slightly, I take Rochelle’s hand, “I promise, Rochelle, it’s going to be okay. You’ll see tomorrow when you meet everyone. Bull’s called Church after lunch, and we’ll sit down and hash out a contingency plan to keep you and Daisy safe. I don’t want you to worry.”

“Umm, Church? Are you going to pray for answers?” she asks with confusion.

Chuckling quietly so as not to disturb the now sleeping baby, I shake my head in amusement, “No, baby, Church is what we call our meetings.”

“Okay,” Rochelle replies, but I can still see the confusion in her eyes.

“I’ll introduce you to the other Old Ladies tomorrow, and they’ll explain most of it to you better than I can,” I reassure her. “Just know we don’t work like other motorcycle clubs. While what we speak about in Church is for our ears only, our women are allowed in meetings. We’ve found it’s better for them to know what is happening so that they are prepared should they need to be. That reminds me, can you shoot?”

“Yeah,” Rochelle nods, “I think most who grow up here can. I have my handgun in my handbag.”

“Good,” I tell her. “Make sure you keep it on you at all times, at least until we know what the threat level is. Now how about you get into bed, and I’ll put our princess down?”

“Where will you sleep?” she wants to know, looking around the room.

Nodding towards the floor, I tell her, “I’ve got a bedroll in the wardrobe; I’ll be fine on the floor.”

She’s shaking her head before I’ve even finished speaking. “No, please don’t sleep on the floor. We can share the bed. I mean, it’s huge.”

Studying her intently, I wanted to make sure she didn’t feel pressured in any way, but all I saw was genuine distress at the thought of me sleeping on the floor.

Standing up, I cup her chin, tilting her face to mine, “It’s not a problem, Roch, I’ve slept in worse places and conditions. I want you to be comfortable here. You don’t owe me anything. If tomorrow you still feel the same way, then we’ll discuss it again, but for tonight, I’ll sleep on the floor.”

Rochelle grasps the wrist of the hand that’s cupping her chin. “Please, Bond, sleep in the bed,” she says softly. “I don’t want to be alone. I trust you, please don’t sleep on

the floor.”

Staring into her green eyes that are swimming with tears, I don't have the heart to push it. If she needs the comfort of someone next to her, then I'll happily provide it.

Gently rubbing my thumb under her eyes, I wipe away the tear that flowed. “Okay, baby, go get ready for bed so you can feed Daisy again while I shower,” I tell her quietly. Letting her go, I tug her to her feet, wrapping my free arm around her; I hug her to me as she wraps her arms around my waist, returning my embrace until Daisy squeaks unhappily at being disturbed, making us both laugh softly. Pressing a kiss to her temple, I nudge her towards the bed, where she again settles up against the headboard. Handing Daisy to her for a feed, I leave them to it and disappear into the bathroom for a shower.

Resting my hands on the tiles, I allow the hot water to pound down my back and over my tense shoulders as I try and settle my thoughts about all that had transpired today. I'd never in a million years thought that when I left this morning, I'd be returning hours later with not only the woman who hadn't been far from my thoughts since I'd first seen her but also her mini-me. Shaking my head, I wondered if this was how my brothers had felt when they met their ladies.

Finishing up, I dried off and put a pair of sleep shorts on before venturing out into the bedroom. Closing the door slightly behind me to allow some light into the now dark bedroom. Stopping by Daisy's cot, I made sure that the mosquito netting was covering all sides so no pesky mosquitoes would get to her. Although we sprayed the gardens, so we didn't have many, it was always better to be careful, as a dose of malaria was not fun to have.

Rochelle was asleep already, tucked on her side, one hand under her cheek, her blonde curls spread out across the pillows. Something settled in my chest at the sight of her in my bed. Reaching up, I undid the mosquito net from above the bed and

fitted it around our bed. Once I was satisfied that it was tucked in just right, only then did I slip into bed next to Rochelle. It didn't take long for the day to catch up with me, and I was asleep.

It felt like I'd only just closed my eyes when I woke to an unfamiliar weight on my chest and Daisy stirring. Rochelle grumbled but sat up, still half-asleep.

"Stay here, baby. I'll get her," I tell her, not wanting her to try and find her way around the semi-dark room. Lifting the mosquito net up, I go to Daisy and pick her up, quickly changing her on the makeshift changing table I'd set up last night before taking her back to our bed and handing her to Rochelle.

"Thank you," she mutters quietly, situating a fussing Daisy to her breast.

"You're welcome," I reply just as softly, sitting next to her and leaning up against the headboard with her. I fully intended to stay awake and put Daisy back in her cot, but the next thing I knew, the sun was sliding around the curtains and Rochelle was asleep next to me. Looking over at the cot, I could just make Daisy out in the murkiness of the morning.

'So much for staying awake to help,' I thought to myself, slightly disgusted that I'd fallen asleep. I slid quietly out of bed, trying not to wake my girls so I could get a head start on my day.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

ROCHELLE

I knew as soon as Bond left the bed. Having lived the last few years on constant alert with a man who would lash out at the least provocation, I'd learned to sleep with one eye open.

Deciding I may as well get up now that I was awake, it didn't take me long to get dressed into one of my many pairs of shorts and a T-shirt. Standard issue for me at this time of the year with the heat we'd be experiencing as the day wore on. Sitting on the edge of the bed to put my socks and boots on, I was just finishing tying the laces on my boots when the bathroom door opened, and Bond walked out.

He looked surprised to see me up and ready to go.

"Hey, baby, you didn't have to get up so early," he tells me, coming towards me.

Standing up, I met him and sighed softly as he enfolded me in his arms. The same feeling I'd had yesterday of safety and coming home enveloped me as I rested my head against his shoulder. Closing my eyes, I returned his hug, my lips tilting up in a smile when I felt the brush of his lips on the crown of my head.

Pushing away slightly, I tilt my head back to better see him before replying, "I'm used to getting up early, and I want to start looking for a job today."

"About that," Bond states, "I was wondering if you'd consider working with me. I run the parts, workshop, and tow, and honestly, I could do with the help, but we've had a lot of trouble with theft, and I don't trust easily, so I've been reluctant to hire on

anyone. It's a plus for me that you don't need any training because you know the parts better than me, and you can bring Daisy with you."

I'd started to smile at his long explanation of why he wanted me to work with him. There was no need. If I got to be part of his day, I'd happily do it, especially after the last year.

Smiling up at him, I say, "Sold. I'd love to work with you."

"Yeah," he replies with a smirk, "you won't get sick of me."

"Never," I answer, going to my toes so I can press my lips to his. Nearly pulling away and second-guessing myself when he stiffens slightly, but then he gathers me tighter in his arms, lifting me slightly and angling his head, his lips parting under mine.

He quickly takes over the kiss, and oh, boy, the man can kiss. A slight moan escapes me as he threads his fingers through my curls, tugging slightly as he tilts my head for better access. Pressing my body closer to him, I am left in no doubt that he wants me, not with his rock-hard cock pressed up against my belly. Whimpering low in my throat as his lips leave mine and trail up my cheek towards my ear, he nips the lobe. I grind my pelvis against him, aching for some relief.

"Fuck, baby," he growls in my ear, "a year I've been dreaming of this. Of having you here with me, in my life, in my bed. It's all I've thought about. It just about killed me that you belonged to someone else. I stayed away for as long as I could. Just one more look, that's all I wanted, and now," he takes my mouth again in a hard kiss before continuing, "now I've got you here and you're free. I'm not going to rush this with a quick fuck."

"Nope," he tells me, trailing his lips down my throat and sucking on the pulse that's beating in time to his kisses. My clit is throbbing with every suck he places on my

neck, and my nipples are hard as rock. I can feel the milk leaking from them, which isn't sexy at all, but I can't seem to step back. It's like he's got me under some spell with his sexy, mesmerising talk. This was what I'd been missing. A man that wasn't shy to let me know how much he wanted me but who was still gentle about the way he handled my body. I shivered, and goosebumps ran up and down my arms as he continued his assault on my neck. My knees went weak with his next words; I wanted so badly for him to take me there and then.

"I'm going to take my time with you, baby, and love you like you should have been all along," Bond continues, his lips back on mine before he removes them again and cups my cheeks in his hands. "When I finally get you under me, I'm going to make sure there is no one else but you and me in that bed," he assures as he slips a hand between us and into my shorts, pressing up against my clit.

"Holy fuck," I gasp as I come. He's barely touched me, but I'm so turned on by what he's been whispering, along with not being touched since I'd found out I was pregnant.

"Jesus," I whisper, grinding my forehead against his shoulder, panting slightly, my knees shaking from the force of what I'd just felt.

"You doing okay, baby?" Bond wants to know, his voice husky, and I can tell he's as turned on as I am.

"Am I good? Am I good?" I ask, slightly awed. "I've never come that hard before, and all you did was talk to me; you barely touched me."

Bond chuckles, removing his hand from my pants. Heat blazed across my cheeks as he sucked his fingers into his mouth, his heated gaze never leaving mine. "Delicious," he assures me with a cheeky smirk.

Shaking my head in disbelief, I'd never come across a man like him before. I go to open the button on his shorts, but he shakes his head, "That was for you. I'll keep until we have more time."

At my look of disbelief, he continues, "I'm a man, baby, not a boy. I promise I'll be good. Why don't you go and get changed?" He nods down at my shirt where I'd leaked through.

"Oh my god," I slap my palm to my face, hiding my cheeks that must be glowing red with embarrassment. How could I have forgotten?

"I'm so sorry," I say when I notice how wet his shirt is.

Bond shrugs and takes it off, tossing it towards the basket in the corner. "Nothing to be sorry for, sweets, perfectly natural. Go get changed because I have a feeling our girl is going to be waking up soon," he says, nodding towards where Daisy is moving in her cot.

"Right," I agree, going towards my bag and getting some clean clothes. I hurry to the bathroom to clean up and change. When I come out, Daisy is whimpering, and Bond is walking up and down the room talking to her. He nods towards the bed, and I take it to mean he wants me to sit, which I do, only then does he hand me Daisy.

Once she's settled at my breast, we all relax slightly. "I'll get you a chair for in here so it's more comfortable for you," Bond informs me as he runs his hand gently over Daisy's head.

"You don't have to," I assure him. "I'm okay using the bed."

"I want you to be comfortable, baby."



Clasping his hand, I tug slightly on it to get his attention, “Bond I’m comfortable. We don’t need much. What you’ve given me so far is more than I’d ever expected. Don’t worry so much. I promise me and Daisy are good.”

“Okay, but you have to promise to tell me if you need something.”

“I promise,” I tell him and nearly laugh when he narrows his eyes at me.

“Mmh, I’m not sure that I believe you,” he grumbles slightly.

Seeing that he won’t relax until he knows I’ll tell him if I need anything, I gently shake his hand that I’m still holding, “Hey, I promise to let you know if we need anything. Now, what is happening today?”

Bond makes a deep grumbling sound as if he doesn’t quite believe me. Sitting on the bed by my legs, he keeps one hand on me as he fills me in on what to expect today.

“We’ll head out once Daisy has finished breakfast and grab some for ourselves. Then we’ll head over to the shop so we can do inventory on what we brought with us yesterday and open up. Once that’s done, I’ll take you for a tour of the town so you can get used to where everything is. By then, it will be lunch, where you’ll meet everyone as we all have lunch together, and then Church. We’ll play it by ear from there onwards.”

“Sounds like a plan. I’m looking forward to having a look around. Crowthorne has had its fair amount of attention in the city.”

Bond didn’t look all that pleased when I told him that information. “Nothing bad,” I assure him. “To be honest, you and your brothers have been what most of the ladies have been discussing,” I inform him, then smile as his cheeks redden slightly.

“Whaaat?” he stutters slightly.

Throwing my head back, I laugh at the look on his face; it was a combination of slightly horrified and pure embarrassment with a dash of smugness.

When I collect myself, wiping away the tears of laughter, I realise that it had been a long time since I’d laughed that hard, and it felt good.

“You should laugh like that more often, baby. You’re always beautiful, but when you laugh... well, let’s just say you take my breath away.”

“I haven’t had a lot to laugh about,” I remind him, realising a little sadly how true that was. I am hopeful that that will be changing, though. “I’m hoping that’s going to change, though,” I tell him my thoughts as I fix my top and put Daisy to my shoulder.

“Oh, it definitely will be, Roch, that I can promise you,” Bond told me. “Come on, let’s get breakfast and I’ll go and show you around,” he said, taking Daisy from me. “We’ll grab a pushchair from stores. I know that Noni keeps a bunch of them around for guests.”

Ushering me out the door, I wait as he locks it, and then takes my hand and walks me down the passageway. I look around with interest. It’s gorgeous, with long parquet floors that shine in the early morning sun; big pots of ferns and delicious monster plants line the passageway, and through the floor-length windows, you look out onto the rolling green lawns and colourful flower beds.

We walk into a bustling dining room that has tables full of hotel guests. You can tell right away that they are tourists, not just from their clothes but also from the different languages that are being spoken. It made me realise that this was a world away from what I was used to.

Bond was leading us towards a table that was set up near the back of the dining room and could easily fit about twenty people by the look of it, but at the moment, only had three men sitting around it. I recognised Blaze and Cairo but not the other man. He was about the same height as Bond, with fair skin, green eyes, and dark red hair. The way he was studying me had me wanting to squirm slightly; I guess I'd have to get used to it, being a stranger among them.

Bond pulled out a chair for me, "Sit, baby."

Cairo and Blaze both smiled and greeted me with a good morning. Turning towards the other man, I introduced myself before Bond could, holding out my hand to him, "Hi, I'm Rochelle."

His lips twitched slightly as he gently grasped my hand and gave it a quick shake, "Rogue. I know who you are, Rochelle. I'm glad you found your way here."

Surprise clear in my voice as I questioned sceptically, "You are?" because the expression on his face didn't match his words.

"Yeah, I am. Hopefully, Bond will be happier too. You'll learn that we only want what is best for our family, and you and Daisy are Bond's, which makes you ours." Not saying anything, I look down at the full plate that Bond places before me. I'd been so caught up in meeting Rogue that I hadn't realised he'd walked away.

Looking from my plate back up at Bond, I say, "Um, thank you. But this is a lot of food." I hated waste, but I wasn't sure if I'd get through the plate he'd put before me.

Across the table, Cairo chuckles, "Eat what you want, doll; one of us will finish whatever you don't want."

My eyes widened in surprise, but I figured if they didn't mind eating someone's

leftovers, then I wouldn't mind them doing it.

"Give the baby to me," Rogue demands of Bond, holding out his hands.

Bond looked reluctant, but it would be hard to eat holding Daisy, no matter how good she was. "Fine," Bond huffs. "But I get her back afterwards. You can't keep her."

"What?" I squeak slightly.

"Rogue's a baby hog," Blaze tells me with a small smile as Bond transfers Daisy to Rogue, who looks more than comfortable holding a baby.

"How many kids do you all have?" I wonder.

"Rogue and Julia have two, Noni and Bull have four, so only six here for now—well, seven with Daisy joining the ranks," Bond informed me.

'That was still a fair number of children,' I thought as I started to eat.

"What are you up to today?" Rogue wants to know as we start to eat.

Bond fills him in on what we'll be doing for the rest of the morning. We finish breakfast, and everyone disperses. Bond takes me to find a pushchair for Daisy, and then we walk towards town. It doesn't take long—just five minutes—before we hit the top of the main road. It's something special, that's for sure. It reminds me of the old-fashioned towns I'd seen in pictures; all the buildings are freshly painted, and there're big tubs of plants along the covered verandas. There are a few craft shops and a small mini market that has a bakery attached.

In the distance, I can see a fuel station, making it the first and last stop, which is genius really. Next to it is a sign for the garage, the parts shop, and the towing

company. Next to the parts shop is another storefront that is being renovated, and Cairo is speaking to a couple of the builders.

“What’s that going to be?” I ask curiously, taking it all in.

“Cairo’s opening a machine shop. His family owned one, and he apprenticed there before joining the army.”

“Where’s the vets?” I wonder, looking around but not seeing anything.

Bond points to a big brown building just on the outskirts of the town with a fenced-in yard. “Just over there, Josie needed a bit more room for runs for the animals that she has to keep longer than usual and also more parking than the town offers.”

“This is us,” Bond says, taking keys from his pocket. He unlocks the doors and pushes them open for me to enter while he follows with Daisy. I’m pleased but not surprised to see that we walk into a neat and clean shop with a counter at the far end and neat rows of parts along the back wall.

“Blaze and Cairo unloaded for me last night; all the parts should be in the warehouse.”

“Well, then,” I say, slowly turning around in a circle to have a proper look before stopping to see Bond looking at me with amusement. “Show me to the warehouse, and let’s get started. The quicker we get that done, the quicker you can show me more of this beautiful town.”

That’s what we did. The warehouse, while not as big as what I was used to, was more than adequate for the size of the shop that Bond was running. It didn’t take long to unpack and stock the shelves, even with stopping to feed Daisy.

I missed my dad and hoped he'd be as okay as he could be, but for me and Daisy, for the first time in a long while, I felt like I was home. I just hoped that whatever trouble followed me—because I knew it would—that Bond and his brothers would be able to keep us as safe as they seemed to think they could, because I wanted to stay here where I had a feeling we could be happy.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

### BOND

Having Rochelle working side by side with me was like a dream come true. I still couldn't believe that she was here with me. I knew she had doubts and was sceptical about us keeping her safe, even if she didn't voice them. She'd been under the gang's thumb for a long time, and I knew it would be hard for her to see that they weren't omnipotent and had weaknesses much like everybody else. Theirs would be greed and arrogance. It would be their downfall. It wasn't the first time we'd been up against men such as them, and I very much doubted it would be the last time.

It didn't take long for us to finish up. Writing out a message along with my number on it should a customer happen to come by, I stuck it to the glass on the front of the door before we left for a quick tour so that Rochelle could get her bearings, and then we'd be back at the hotel for lunch and Church.

Josie was at the door of her clinic when we walked up, talking to a client. She waved as soon as she saw us, motioning for us to come on. Her client smiled and waved goodbye as we approached.

"You made it," Josie beams. "Come in and have a look. Although we can't take long because Skinny has just messaged me to say lunch is ready in twenty minutes, but I wanted you to know where I was if you ever needed anything."

She wraps her arm around Rochelle's and tugs her to the back; I could hear them talking a mile a minute. Looking down into the pushchair, I see that Daisy is awake and looking up at me with wide eyes.

“Hey, princess, how about we get you out of there so you can have a proper look around?” I ask her as I unbuckled her, smiling as she kicks and waves her arms as if in agreement.

Picking her up, I tuck her firmly in my arms and follow the sound of voices and laughter. I’m glad that Josie and Roch seem to get on; it would be good for Roch to have friends she can rely on, as I have a feeling she hasn’t had that in her life.

I found them exactly where I thought I would, in the back with the litter of puppies that someone had abandoned outside.

“Wow, they’ve certainly got big,” I tell Josie. “What are you going to do with them?”

“Oh, I’ve already got homes for them all. I think Skinny breathed a sigh of relief when I told him,” Josie chuckles, taking the puppy, that Roch was holding and putting it back with its siblings. “Let’s wash up and I’ll walk back with you.”

Roch beams a smile at me, her face relaxed and happy. It was more than I expected, considering her world had fallen apart yesterday, but I was quickly coming to realise that my woman was made of strong stuff and rolled with the punches. She’d had to with the life she’d lived; I hoped that now that she was mine, I’d be able to give her happy and easy.

It didn’t take the two of them long before they were back, and we were out the door. Josie and Roch were walking ahead of me, pushing the now empty pushchair. I’d found I was reluctant to let go of my little princess, and she seemed quite content in my arms. Roch had found her little hat and plonked that on her head before we’d left. Daisy wasn’t too keen on it but looked cute as fuck under its floppy brim.

Ahead of me, Josie was explaining who everyone was and assuring Roch that she’d like Noni and Julia. For me, I was more than content following along behind, my eyes



trained on the sway of Roch's arse with every step she took. I don't think she realised quite how sexy I found her, but, fuck me, did I ever.

Cairo and Blaze joined us as we walked past them. Cairo chuckles softly, "Fuck, Bond, are you even watching where you're going, or are you hypnotised?"

Smirking, I slant my eyes towards him, "Hypnotised, brother, all damn day."

Blaze barked out a laugh; I guess they hadn't thought I'd be honest about watching Rochelle with what I'm sure was a hungry look on my face.

Roch tensed and looked over her shoulder at us at Blaze's laugh, but whatever she saw in my face had her turning around and back to her conversation with Josie.

"Are you going to let one of us hold your baby?" Blaze demands, his eyes on Daisy's face. I'd never known a man that had baby fever as bad as he did. I think if he had his way, he'd have a half dozen kids.

Looking down at Daisy, I ask her, "What do you think, Dais? Should we let Uncle Blaze carry you for a bit?"

Daisy burbled; I took that to mean she agreed and transferred her over to Blaze, shaking my head slightly as he crooned something to her. My eyes caught Rochelle's as she again looked over her shoulder. Winking at her to let her know all was good, she smiled and turned back around.

We walked over to the table that was always reserved for us. Bull, Noni, Rogue, Julia, and their kids were already sitting at the table, along with Grace, who was Noni's babysitter and who would be teaching the children along with Julia once she completed her teaching degree. For now, she was earning money babysitting before she went back to school.

Noni and Bull both stood as we walked up, Bull rolling his eyes when he caught sight of Blaze and Daisy.

“We need to find the man a woman so he can have some sprogs of his own,” Bull mutters with amusement.

“You know that’s not how it works,” Noni tells him, slapping his shoulder. “It happens when it’s meant to happen.”

Smiling, I wrap my arm around Rochelle’s waist, tugging her slightly under my arm as I introduce her, “Bull, Noni, this is Rochelle.”

Noni smiled warmly and stepped up to Rochelle, “Welcome to the Crowthorne Crows, Rochelle,” she tells her, wrapping her arms around her in a warm hug. Rochelle’s shoulders relaxed at the warm welcome. I’d known she was nervous, but I’d also known there was nothing I’d be able to say that would stop her feeling like that. I had faith in the Crow women that they’d make her feel welcome, and I wasn’t wrong in my faith.

Noni let go of Rochelle but kept hold of her hand, turning towards Bull as she introduced him, “This is Bull, he’s my Old Man and the President of this club.” Bull smiles and shakes Rochelle’s hand.

Noni continues, “You’ve already met my brother, Rogue; he’s our Vice President, and Julia is my long-suffering sister-in-law.” Noni laughs, and the rest of us chuckle as Rogue crosses his eyes at his sister, sticking his tongue out. It was a purely childish reaction, but it lightened the atmosphere. Julia stands and welcomes Rochelle just as warmly as Noni and Josie had.

Noni continues with the introductions, “You already know Josie and the guys.” She waves a hand at Cairo, Skinny, and Blaze before introducing the children, “The two

older ones are Roman and Rosie—they're Rogue and Julia's two. Then you have mine and Bull's—they are Van, Briana, Alana, and the baby in the pram is Samantha. And lastly, this is Grace, who I miss when she's back at school. Grace looks after my brood for me," Noni explains, wrapping an arm around Grace, who smiles shyly at Rochelle and waves.

"And that's us," Noni tells her, "You'll get used to us. Come sit and have some lunch."

Blaze handed Daisy back to me, and I settled her in the pushchair next to me. As I sat back and waited for the dishes to be passed around the table, it hit me at how content I was feeling; I'm not sure if I've ever felt like this. It's a feeling I like, and as Rochelle absentmindedly settled her hand on my thigh as she chatted, I realised I'd do anything that I had to if it meant keeping this feeling. No matter what, I'd protect what was mine in any way that I had to.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

### BULL

Leaning back in my chair at the head of the table in the conference room we were using as a temporary meeting room for Church while our new clubhouse was being built farther back on the property. Moving to Zambia and starting a new club had been a steep learning curve for all of us, and I'd had to lean hard on Reaper for those first few months. Noni had unfailing faith in me, and I didn't want to let her down. Added in the fact that she'd been pregnant, which hadn't been planned, had sent me into a tailspin at the thought of losing her like I'd lost Gwen.

We'd had to clean house those first few months, and it had been hard, especially learning the laws of a new country and what was acceptable. Luckily, we already had contacts who were born and brought up here. Dex Macgregor and his brothers, as well as Noni's ex-bosses Ava and Marie and their husbands, had been happy to help with anything we needed, along with Dragon's best friend, Cassie, who was also related to Dragon's Old Lady. It had almost felt too easy, the way everything slotted into place. It was good to have allies in a strange country, even if sometimes the hair on the back of my neck stood up in their presence.

There was something about them, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was that always had me slightly on edge in their presence, even though they were the nicest people I'd met. Their families worked similarly to the way the MC worked, with Dex being in charge on the whole and most big decisions going through him, although they all worked together to run their businesses.

From what I understood, they all met once a month to go over their companies and to make decisions that benefited them all. I also had a feeling that they weren't scared of

getting their hands dirty if needed—not when it came to protecting their families and those that relied on them.

Although Noni had told me in no uncertain terms that we were never visiting them because there was something in their water—she was sure of it—that made them all have multiple births. I'd laughed but agreed that we'd stay on our side of the country.

As soon as Bond had called me yesterday, I'd put a call in to Dex to see if he knew anything about the Black Mambas. When he'd wanted to know why, I'd explained about Bond and Rochelle.

My thoughts turned to Bond; he'd always been quiet, and I'd known him for a very long time. He'd grown up on the same estate as Skinny and me. He'd been best friends with Skinny for years, and I thought of him as another younger brother. He'd got the name Bond when he joined the military alongside Skinny for the same reasons we did: to get off the estate we lived on. Although I think he'd had it even worse in his house than we did, he never said anything. But when a person preferred staying in our warzone over going home to his place, then you knew whatever he lived in wasn't good.

That he hated dirt and untidiness, even on himself, spoke volumes. I'd often wondered if we should get him assessed for OCD, but Noni had said to leave him be; it wasn't affecting him or the way he lived. That didn't mean I didn't worry about him, especially over the last year. It had taken some time, but I'd finally figured out that he'd met someone on one of his trips to the city and that she wasn't free to be with him. He'd withdrawn so much from everything that I was beginning to wonder if we should send him back to the UK for a bit, but something had held me back. We'd all kept an eye on him to make sure he didn't fall too far.

I'd been surprised when he'd said he'd do the trip into the city yesterday. With the use of the plane we now had, there was no need for us to drive the three hours in and

out, and we'd found a different supplier.

When he'd called, I'd been hard-pressed not to get on my bike and head towards the city to escort them back. I'd said so while I'd been on the call with Dex, but he'd told me to hang on and he'd have some of his guys who were already in the city follow them instead. Not that Bond had been aware of that. Dex had assured me that his people would only make themselves known if there was a threat.

None of us had been able to settle until we'd heard his vehicle park behind the hotel. Noni and Julia had held me and Rogue back, instead insisting that his closest brothers go and meet them along with Josie so it wouldn't overwhelm them.

I could already see the difference in him last night when we'd checked in. Rogue had drawn the straw for this morning's meet at breakfast to see what she was like. It didn't surprise me in the slightest at how protective we all were over him, and the need to make sure that Rochelle was good enough for him had been eating at me, even though Rogue, Blaze, Skinny, and Cairo had all assured me that she was perfect for him. Added in the fact that he'd taken to her daughter like a duck to water helped settle me some.

Watching the two of them interact at lunch had me realising that they were completely in sync with each other after only a night.

Deep down, I knew I wouldn't relax until we got rid of Rochelle's brother-in-law because we'd have to if we wanted to protect her and keep her and Daisy safe. I knew deep in my heart that if something happened to either of them, we'd lose him.

The door of the conference room opened, and Noni came in smiling, her wild red hair hanging loose today, green eyes sparkling and her face clear of worries. "Hello, handsome," she says, bending to kiss me. Threading my hand through her hair, I deepened our kiss when she went to pull away. "Fuck, Noni, you get more beautiful

every day,” I mutter against her lips when I let her up for air. She laughed softly, pressing another kiss to my lips and replying with a soft, “Thank you,” before sitting down on my right. Rogue would sit on my left when he arrived, with Julia next to him and so on. I’d made sure there was an extra chair brought in for Rochelle earlier.

“What do you think?” I question.

“I like her; she’s had a hard time, but she hasn’t let it break her. I think she’s perfect for him, and he’s already bonded with her little one, who is gorgeous and so frigging tiny,” Noni answers, knowing exactly what I wanted to know.

“No!” I state unequivocally.

“Just one more,” she teases. And I knew she was teasing because we’d both agreed that the four children we had were more than enough. I don’t think my blood pressure could take it if we had to go through another pregnancy.

“You’ll have to make do with any babies the brothers give us if they ever find the right woman. Plus, you only just had Sam,” I tell her.

“Fine,” Noni sighs and pouts playfully, then laughs, patting my hand. “I’m just teasing, honey. The four we have are more than enough, trust me.”

“So, you think she’s a good match for him,” I worry, going back to my original question.

Noni smirks at me, “Yeah, honey, I do. Stop worrying. If you’re like this about your brothers, what are you going to be like when our kids start bringing partners home?”

“I still have years to worry about that. I just want my brothers to have what we have,” I tell her.

Noni grips my hand to get my attention, “My thoughts are she’s tough because she’s had to be; she’s loyal because she put up with years of shit to save her dad, and even though her heart is breaking because she said goodbye to the man who raised her just yesterday, knowing she’s probably never going to see him again, she hasn’t let it break her.

“She got up this morning, took care of her baby, and started working. That’s not to say she won’t break later when she’s not running on adrenaline, but if she does, we’ll be there to help her. Once she knows she can trust us, she’ll be just as loyal to us. That’s what I think.” Noni’s gaze didn’t leave mine as she laid it all out for me.

“Okay,” I say, just as the door opened and Rogue came through, stopping in the doorway before the rest could follow in after him.

“We good in here?” he wants to know when he took in how Noni and I were sitting.

Relaxing, I wave him in. “It’s all good, brother. Come in and let’s get this meeting started.”

Rogue let go of the door and walked over to Julia’s chair, pulling it out for her as the rest of the club slowly started filtering in, with Bond and Rochelle coming in last with Daisy. It amused me a little to see her because I had a feeling we were one of the few MCs that allowed our women in Church, never mind a baby. It made me wonder what other MCs would think. Not that it bothered me because I liked that our women knew what was going on and how to protect themselves, even those like Julia who didn’t like violence.

Once everyone was settled, I slammed the gavel on the table, calling the start of the meeting.

“First, I’d like to welcome Bond’s Old Lady to the club,” I state, turning my gaze to



Rochelle's nervous one. "Welcome to the Crowthorne Chapter of the Crow MC, Rochelle. We'll have a celebration and get your cut made as soon as possible." With the welcome out of the way, I didn't waste any time in getting to the reason for this meeting. Rogue already knew most of what I had to say, but the rest needed updating.

"I put a call into Dex yesterday to find out what he knew about the Black Mambas," I start, and note the wince that Rochelle made at their name. "It seems that once upon a time they were a massive gang. When the current leader's father and uncle were in charge, they were a force to be reckoned with. Most left them alone because not only were they violent, they had a lot of government and police officials on their payroll.

"However, it seems that the new leader, Jason, who is your deceased husband's older brother. Rochelle am I correct?"

Rochelle nods, replying, "Yes, that's correct."

"It seems that Jason doesn't have as much of a grip on the gang as he'd like people to think. The older generation have been calling for an heir, which neither he nor his brother seemed inclined to give them until you had Daisy," I say to Rochelle.

"Now it seems that Jason is losing grip even more ever since his brother and his brother's best friend were killed in different gang-related shootouts. And it seems he's partial to sampling his own product.

"There've been rumblings of a takeover, but we don't have any confirmation yet. It's probably just as well you got out when you did," I inform Rochelle. "Dex had heard through the grapevine that Jason was going to take over where his brother left off and make you his wife."

Bond muttered something under his breath at my words as Rochelle gasped, gripping the table until her fingers turned white. Her lightly tanned skin paled, and the light

dusting of freckles stood out against the whiteness of her cheeks.

“No,” she whispers brokenly. “I can’t go back, and definitely not to him. Jared was bad enough, but Jason,” she hesitates before continuing, “he’s evil; women don’t always leave his place alive.”

She looked ready to bolt, and I think that if Bond hadn’t had a good grip on her hand, she’d have been out the door.

“Rochelle,” I boom loudly to get her attention. When I am sure I have it, only then do I continue, “darling, you don’t have to worry about him. He won’t get anywhere near you,” I reassure her. “I promise we know what we’re doing. This gang is not the first gang we’ve been up against.”

“But,” she whispers as tears fill her eyes, “I don’t want any of you to get hurt because of me, and he’ll come for me, especially as I’ve had Daisy. She’ll be useful to him as she gets older; he’ll trade her like he’s done to his sisters.”

“Fuck that,” Bond curses, making Daisy jump and let out a cry. Blaze reaches over and plucks Daisy from Rochelle’s hold, stands up, and starts to pace, patting her back until she is calm.

Bond continues furiously, “He’s not getting anywhere near you or Daisy, Roch. I can promise you that. He doesn’t know what he’s up against. Not only are we all trained, but our women are no slouches either.”

“He’s right,” Noni assures Rochelle. “We’ll leave the men shortly to the planning, as that’s what they’re good at, and I’ll take you to the shooting range. I’m guessing you can shoot, having grown up here.”

Rochelle nods, wiping at the tears on her cheeks. “Yes, I can shoot,” she replies. “I

can also use a slingshot, and I'm pretty good with knives. My dad insisted that I learn to protect myself."

"Well, God bless the man," Julia says kindly, reaching across the table and patting Rochelle's hand. "He obviously raised a strong woman. Trust me, this will all get sorted."

"Plus," Rogue tells her, "we're not alone; we have allies we can call in if we need to, but I doubt very much we will."

"Okay," Rochelle answers shakily, but at least the colour is returning to her cheeks, and Bond no longer looks like he is coming out of his skin. Daisy has settled back down, and Blaze has handed her back to her mother now that Rochelle is a little calmer. "Thank you, none of you had to do this. I'm very appreciative."

Noni smiles at Rochelle, "You're a Crow now, Rochelle, and protection comes along with being an Old Lady. Now how about us ladies leave so the men can make a plan, and we'll touch base with them later?" Pushing back from the table, Noni stands, Julia and Josie following suit. Slowly, Rochelle stands up, still looking shaky and uncertain. Josie, not letting her think too much, wraps her arm around Rochelle's, pulling her towards the door, saying, "Come on, let's go shoot some shit up."

Laughter flows around the table, and Rochelle relaxes slightly as she looked over her shoulder at Bond, who nods to let her know it is okay. As soon as they are gone, he turns to me, "What's the plan, Pres?"

I look around the table at my brothers and shake my head at the excitement that lights their eyes at the thought of creating some mayhem, especially as it would mean protecting someone we cared about.

Leaning forward, I outline my thoughts and then wait for them to come up with their

own strategies; between us, we'll come up with a plan to ensure that Rochelle is safe. In the distance, the sound of shooting takes over, and I thank the Lord that we have women who aren't afraid to get their hands a little dirty when necessary. Once we've finalised our plans, I'll call Church again so we can fill them in so that they know what we'll be doing to keep everyone safe.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 12:39 am*

ROCHELLE

I'd never met people like this before, and that made me a little sad. Noni, Julia, and Josie had scooped me up from the meeting and taken me to their temporary range. I'd left the meeting feeling a little sick to my stomach that they would be going to war for me, for the want of a better word. I knew the Black Mambas—they were all a little touched in the head, be it from the drugs they used or from them all being psychopaths.

I'd always been grateful that Jared had, for the most part, kept me away from them. I wasn't sure why he'd done that, and I'd never wanted to ask or bring attention to the fact, so I'd kept my mouth shut and got on with life.

We ladies had spent a pleasant few hours shooting and then throwing knives. It seemed that one of the Old Ladies in England was a pro at throwing knives; of course, they'd called her and had her critique us.

They'd welcomed me into their fold so easily, and I'd been laughing by the end and feeling a lot more empowered than when I'd started. Plus, Molly, the Old Lady from England, was hilarious, and before we'd ended the call, she'd told me, "Don't worry, Rochelle, the guys will sort this, and if they don't, the women will. Noni just says the word, and we'll be out on the next flight."

Noni laughed and assured her we'd be fine but that she was welcome to visit anytime. By the time supper came around, I was calmer and looking forward to making this my home for as long as Bond wanted me.

The men had been in their meeting room, or Church as I was told it was called, for most of the afternoon. Noni and Josie schooled me on motorcycle clubs but also told me that theirs worked a lot differently to most, as the women affiliated with the club from the originals right down to the second generation always attended Church. If there was something that the President and Vice President thought it was better the women didn't know, he'd say so, and they wouldn't attend that meeting. So far, that had happened only once, right at the beginning, when they'd first restarted their MC and were fighting a drug gang in the UK called the ACES.

They'd found over the course of time that they were stronger as a club if everyone knew what to look out for. While nobody had said anything, I had a feeling that some of the women weren't afraid to do what needed to be done when it came to dispensing justice. Not all of them, but definitely some of them. In my heart of hearts, I knew that if anyone threatened Daisy in any way, I'd have no problem making sure they didn't see the light of day.

Bull and Rogue had updated us that evening on what had been decided. Dex Macgregor had assured Bull that he had scouts keeping an eye on the gang in the city, and as soon as they made a move, we'd be informed. He'd also told Bull to let me know that my dad was safe and staying with friends of theirs and was being cared for. I'd be able to speak to him later tonight.

I had no idea who all these people were, but I was so grateful that, for some reason, they thought that Daisy and I were worthy of help.

"But they don't even know me," I said tearfully. "I could be an awful person, and they're doing all this for me."

Bull smiled and passed the box of tissues that had been sitting on the cupboard behind him down the table to Bond, saying, "Roch, they know you aren't an awful person. You think they didn't first check into you and your dad? The way you were

treated didn't make them any happier than it did us. We take care of our own, and we're connected to the families out at Sanctuary Holdings through family. We'd do the same for them if we had to. Now, this is what's going to happen until we know more. We'll be running patrols; Blaze has a list of people we can trust. They won't have to do anything except keep us informed. We'll have time to set things up because of how far the Black Mambas will have to travel. Our contacts in the police has been updated, but honestly, they don't really give a shit what we do. If we wipe out the gang, they'll be thrilled.

"That's where we stand at the moment. There's nothing you can do except enjoy your new home and get to know Bond and the rest of us. Bond tells us that you'll be taking over his parts shop, leaving him free to run the garage and tow, which takes some pressure off the rest of us.

"As it stands, Blaze is still running the market and Noni still wants to open a spa here in the hotel, and then we have the discussions we are having with Falcon Macgregor regarding taking some of their antelope stock so that we can start doing photographic safaris and game drives on the property. That is still a little way off as we have to first fence the property, and supplies won't be arriving for about six weeks." Bull pauses and looks around the table before asking, "Is there any other business?"

Josie raises her hand up, "I'd like to open a sanctuary for all the wounded and injured animals I'm getting. I'm running out of space, though, and need to extend my runs if possible. I was thinking of approaching the university and seeing if any of their students would like to do an internship, but we'd have to provide accommodation and meals."

"I have no problem with that," Bull informs her before opening it up to the table to vote. It was unanimous, and Josie got the go-ahead.

"One more thing before we finish," Skinny adds. "The builders are nearly done with

mine and Josie's house. If Bond is happy to wait a month or so, I think we should build accommodation out by the veterinary office for the students. I was thinking two or three rondavels that are like a bedsit—bedroom and living room in one with a separate bathroom. They'll be eating here, so all they'll need is somewhere to make coffee or tea and a small fridge. It would add additional security to the vet's office as it's out of the way. Would you and Roch be okay to wait?" Skinny asks Bond.

I'm surprised to hear my name mentioned and slant my eyes towards Bond in shock to find him nodding.

"It's good with me," Bond answers Skinny. "Roch and I need to sit down and design a house first anyway."

"If that's the case," Noni interrupts, "why don't you and Roch move into the cottage behind our house? It will give you more room and Daisy can have her own space. If Dad and Maura visit before your house is done, they can stay in the hotel."

"As long as you're okay with that, then that would be great," Bond responds. "I'll take Roch out there tomorrow to have a look. Is that okay, baby?"

It takes me a little while to realise that he's talking to me because I'm so out of my element. I nod my head, "Of course, but I'm just as happy to stay where we are. I don't want to put anyone out."

Noni waves a hand as if to dismiss my worries, "You won't be; I don't imagine Dad and Maura will be back until probably August, and by then your house should be nearly done."

Overwhelmed, I just nod and grip Bond's hand that he'd slipped over mine under the table as if he knew I needed something to ground me.



“Okay then, if that’s all, we’re finished. Remember, keep an eye and an ear open for anything suspicious, but otherwise, until we hear from Dex, it’s business as usual. Have a good night, everyone.” Bull slams the gavel down on the table, and everyone gets up and starts to disperse.

I had to bite my lip to stop my laugh when Bond calls out, “Blaze, give me my kid back before you leave.”

I’d barely walked in the door when he’d taken Daisy from me. Noni and Bull’s daughter, Samantha, was with Grace and the other children, but I wasn’t comfortable having Daisy out of my sight just yet.

Blaze stops at the door and turns around, and he’s pouting. I kid you not, the man was full-on pouting. And that is something to see on a grown man, especially one his size with a full beard and close-cropped hair. He was the epitome of an alpha male, but at the moment he looked like a five-year-old who’d just had his favourite toy taken away. “But she’s sleeping so peacefully,” he protests. “Look, she’s so comfy.”

Laughter flowed from those left in the room. “Dude, you really need to get your own woman,” Cairo laughs. “Then you can have your own sprogs.”

“But I like these ones because I can give them back and get a peaceful night’s sleep,” Blaze points out, but he does walk back to Bond, who takes Daisy from him.

I’d worried about how much Daisy slept when I first brought her home, but the doctor had assured me that being premature, she would sleep longer and that it was good for her. As long as she fed well, then it wasn’t something to worry about.

I was still smiling when we walked into our room. It didn’t take long to get Daisy settled and for us both to have showers and get into bed. I’d thought that Bond would push for sex after this morning, but to my surprise, he just pulled me toward him,

tucking me up tight against him.

Pressing a soft, barely felt kiss to my head, he whispers, “Night, baby. Wake me if you need me tonight.”

Taking his hand that was between my breasts, I lifted it and pressed a kiss to his palm, replying softly, “Night, Bond.”

“Andrew, or preferably Drew,” was his answer, which had me confused.

“What?”

“My name is Andrew Smith, but I prefer Drew, or you can keep calling me Bond; I don’t mind, but I thought you should know my name.”

“Oh,” I respond quietly, running his names through my mind before trying them out, “Andrew, mmh, Drew? Bond?” Sighing softly, I tell him, “Bond suits you best. I think I’ll stick with that if that’s good with you.”

“That’s perfect, baby,” he reassures me as we drifted off. Bond it was; he’d only ever be Bond to me.

### BOND

I'm not sure if Rochelle thought that I'd push for sex that night, but as far as I was concerned, I wanted more from our relationship than her feeling that she somehow had to give me sex to keep me happy. I knew that this was learned behaviour from her marriage. But if our relationship was going to survive the ghost of her marriage, I'd have to show her how different it was going to be.

That didn't mean that I wasn't going to touch and tease her at every opportunity, because I would, so that she'd get used to receiving and not always giving. It was no hardship to me to show her how much she meant to me every chance I got. I'd come to love the little confused glances she'd give me after I'd kissed her senseless, leaving her wanting just that little more. I had a feeling when we eventually came together it would be explosive. This was the longest foreplay I'd ever indulged in, but I found myself enjoying it immensely.

We'd put off moving out of the hotel until the weekend when we all had a little more time because we'd been busy as hell over the last week, not only fortifying our businesses but also letting the tenants who hired shops from us know that we may be expecting trouble. Not that any of them seemed all that worried, having lived through us cleaning up the town. They knew that we could handle anything coming our way.

Rochelle had completely reorganised the parts shop, and I had to say it was working much better; this week she was going through the order book and calling customers to come and collect their parts. I was busy drilling holes to fit shutters that we could pull down over the windows of the shops every night should anyone decide to target the businesses. We'd done our tenants first, leaving ours for last. Screwing the last bolt

in, I wiped the sweat from my forehead with my T-shirt, thinking I could really do with something cold to drink when a lightly tanned hand appeared in front of me holding a bottle of water.

“Thank you, baby,” I say to Rochelle, bending to press a light kiss on her lips, only to have her tug on my T-shirt when I go to lift my lips from hers. Wrapping my hand around her neck, I pull her closer, angling my head to deepen our kiss.

“Mmh,” I whisper when she whimpers slightly, “I’ve missed you today.”

Rochelle laughs softly, wrapping an arm around me in a light hug, sighing quietly as she nuzzles into my chest, replying, “I’ve been here all day.”

“Oh, I know, but I still missed you,” I tell her, pressing a kiss to her cheek before taking a long drink of water. Only when I’ve satisfied my thirst do I continue, “Did you need something?”

Letting me go, she moves slightly back so that she is able to see my face clearly, “Yeah, I did. I’ve found your discrepancy of missing money and how it was done. You’re not going to be happy because it’s going to cost quite a bit to fix it. I hope whoever you had running this place before is in prison for theft.”

“Fuck,” I say, rubbing a hand over my head, “yeah, he is. But I had a feeling there were still some discrepancies hidden. Can you show me?”

“Of course,” Roch replies, taking my hand and pulling me into the shop towards the warehouse. She’d taken a quiet corner of the warehouse and made it into an area for Daisy; we’d brought over a rug, a travel cot, as well as a table to change her on. Stopping at the cot, I lean over and, seeing Daisy awake, I scoop her up before following Rochelle down the aisle.

“You’re going to spoil her,” she chides. “She needs to get used to amusing herself.”

“And she will,” I assure Rochelle, “when she’s with you and you’re busy, but I have free hands right now and she’s awake, so my princess is going to keep us company.”

Rochelle smiles and shakes her head at me, reaching for a box on the shelf. “Here, read the part number first before you open it,” she informs me before handing the box to me.

Reading the part number, I then open the box, wondering where this is going. “Fuck,” I mutter harshly. In the box is a part, but it was no good to me as it is not only scrap, but it is also a completely different part.

“Yup,” Rochelle responds. “We’re going to have to do a whole new stock take and open every box except for the order that came with me and you the other night.”

“How many have you found so far, and how did you know?” I ask, closing the box and setting it on an empty shelf.

Rochelle bites her lip and looks at me, “I’ve found twenty boxes so far. How did I know?”

“I’ve been working with parts since I was ten years old,” she says. “I know when the weight of a box is off. That’s how I figured it out.”

“From the weight!” I’m gobsmacked. I’d never have even thought about the weight difference.

“Yeah,” she answers, looking slightly worried. “I can show you,” she continued as if I didn’t believe her.

“You’re amazing, do you know that?” I praise her. “I would never have known the difference just by the weight. Can you imagine how pissed off a customer would be to find he’d bought the wrong part or a second-hand one.

“I’m just sorry it’s going to make so much more work for you. Let me call the guys and have them come and give us a hand,” I tell her, knowing we were going to have to open every box and check each part.

“I don’t mind,” Rochelle assures me, her cheeks slightly pink from my praise.

Wrapping my arm around her waist, I tug her towards me. “I know you don’t, baby,” I say, pressing a kiss to the corner of her mouth, “but we’re a family, and we work together through all the highs and the lows. The guys won’t mind. In fact, I have a feeling most will turn up, including the kids, so we’ll have to get some toys out of the cupboard for them.”

“You have toys?” she asks, eyes wide.

“Of course, the kids know they are always welcome in our shops. We all have shit for them to do. I keep it in the cupboard over there,” I state, nodding towards the door next to the office.

“You lot are something else,” she mutters, taking Daisy’s hand and pressing a kiss to the palm. “We got lucky, baby girl.”

My heart clenches at her words. That she thinks this is amazing makes me remember how shit my childhood was, and I’m glad that most of the Crow kids won’t know what that’s like. Admittedly, some do, but not since they became ours.

“I’m the lucky one, sweetheart. I was just coasting along until you and Daisy came into my life. You both make me richer for having you in it.”

“Ugh,” Roche mutters tearfully, wiping at a tear on her cheek, “you’ve gone and made me cry. You are way too sweet for the likes of me, Bond. But I’m not giving you back, so I’m afraid you’re stuck with me.”

Chuckling, I reassure her, “I wouldn’t be stuck with anyone else, baby. You’re it for me; I’m never letting you go.”

We stood there grinning at each other and probably would have continued to grin stupidly if Daisy hadn’t let us know she was tired of waiting for attention.

Kissing the top of her head, I hand her to Rochelle, “Go to Mama, Princess. I’m going to get your uncles so we can get this sorted.

“I’ll be back soon, baby. Love you,” I comment offhandedly to Rochelle, ignoring her surprised, wide-eyed look as I hurried out of there. A smile breaks out on my lips when she shouts after me, “I love you too.”

I’m still smiling when I get to Cairo and Blaze and let them know about the stock situation.

“I thought you’d be pissed,” Cairo says in a puzzled tone.

“Oh, I am,” I state.

“Then why the manic smile?” Blaze asks.

“She told me she loves me,” I smirk, “well, she shouted it at me.”

“Ah,” Blaze claps me on the shoulder, “I’m happy for you, Bond.”

Cairo nods, “Me too, brother. Now come on, let’s let Bull and Rogue know and go

and sort this out. I can't believe she knew just from the weight of a part. That's something all right."

He's not wrong. I'm just glad we found out before one of our customers bought something that wasn't the correct part.

Reaching for my phone, I called Bull to let him know where we all are and why. He assured me that he and Rogue would be over shortly to give us a hand.

Twenty minutes later, we're taking orders from Rochelle on who's to do what. It makes sense as she's the one with the most experience in this. I'm fucking proud of her; it's been barely a week, and we can all already see the change in her. Not only is she standing straighter, but she's finding her place with us, and I have a feeling she's going to be a force to be reckoned with when she realises that she doesn't have to hide her personality with us.

We worked well into the night; Julia, Noni, Josie, and the kids joined us, bringing supper with them. We broke for an hour before we continued. It's when Rochelle lets Daisy go back to the hotel with Josie that I know she's starting to feel comfortable with us. Up until now, she's only left Daisy with me. She's happy for anyone to hold her but only if she's in the room.

"Thanks, Josie," Rochelle says as she hands Daisy over. "I'll be back in time for her next feed, but if you need me, call Bond's phone and I'll come back to the hotel."

"No worries at all," Josie reassures her. I held out our room key for Josie to take. "Me and your little princess are going to have a nice bath, get into our jammies, and watch a movie. Aren't we, Daise?" Josie cooed.

I have a feeling that before long, she and Skinny would be thinking about having kids. Turning my head slightly, I caught Skinny looking at Josie with a soft look on



his face. Yeah, I gave it a year and there'd be another little Adams joining us.

It's another couple of hours when suddenly Rochelle lets out a whoop and ticks her clipboard. "We're done," she throws her hands up in the air. Her exuberance has us laughing.

"Thanks, guys, that would have taken me at least a week. Tomorrow I'll update the ordering system and start calling clients to let them know we have their orders."

"Good catch today, Rochelle," Bull praises her. "You not only saved us some money because this would have been costly to put right if it had gone to a customer but also embarrassment. Proud of you."

Rochelle blushed at his praise and was bright red by the time all the brothers had given her their thanks as they left.

Locking up, I take her hand, switching on my high-powered torch because the nights out here are pitch black with no streetlights, and the last thing we need is to step on a snake.

We walked along the covered veranda that covers all the shops towards the distant hotel lights. It's so different from the UK; the night here is alive with the chirping of crickets and the noise of bullfrogs singing their songs. Every now and then, in the distance, you could hear a troop of baboons barking calls at each other and the hippos making sure we knew they were around, although the water was a bit too fast for them where we were, but farther down the river, there was a herd of them.

Sound carried here at night with it being so quiet.

"It's so peaceful out here," Rochelle hums with a happy sigh, resting her head against my shoulder. "Very different from the city."

“It is,” I agree. “It’s completely different to the UK. It’s like night and day.”

“Do you miss it?” she asks.

“The UK?”

She nods, “Yeah, do you miss being in a first world?”

I think on it before I answer, “Some things but not everything. The weather here is better, and we live a freer, more laid-back life here. I suppose I miss the convenience of having stuff easily available and not having to travel miles to get it. I don’t think I’d be as happy living in a city. I much prefer it out here in the bush.”

“Me too,” she agrees, stepping up the first step of the hotel, “I prefer it here to the city. I feel like I can breathe here.”

“I’m glad, baby,” I respond, stopping her from walking farther up the steps as I tug her towards me. Bending my head, I kiss her, long, hard and deep, knowing that when we got to our room, I’d be sharing her attention, and selfishly, for just one moment, I want all of her to myself.

We’re tired and filthy, but somehow this moment on the top steps of the hotel veranda, the heavy scent of flowers permeating the air and the sounds of the African night surrounding us, is perfect, and I wouldn’t change a single moment of it.

ROCHELLE

‘Gah this man,’ he was going to be the death of me with his perfect kisses, working me up and leaving me hot and wanting. Well, no more; tonight, I was making it known that I wanted him. He didn’t have to be careful with me. Not anymore. I knew deep in my heart that he was it for me.

I was going to do what my dad had whispered to me just before he’d put me in the car: ‘I want you to live your life and be happy, my girl. I don’t want you to put your life on hold while we wait for this disease to take me. I’ve lived my life, and other than the last four years I’ve loved every minute of it. You have been my blessing, but I miss your mum, and it’s time for me to be with her again. But you, you my girl are going to live the life that you should have lived all along with the man who was meant for you. Don’t waste a second of it because all too easily it can be ripped away. Love you and Daisy with all my heart, and I’ll miss you but don’t wait. From this moment on, this life is yours to take and make your own.’

I was going to do my utmost to live up to his request; he’d done so much for me, and I could ensure that I’d do this for him. I’d live my life to the best of my ability, and I’d make sure he was never forgotten. Bond broke our kiss and searched my eyes, for what I’m not sure, but whatever he’s looking for he must see it because he threads his fingers through mine and leads me through the main doors, past the reception desk, waving at the night receptionist, and down the hall to our room where we find Skinny with Josie pushed up against the wall, and he’s kissing the shit out of her. Biting back a chuckle, my amused gaze meets Bond, who’s also looking like he’s trying not to laugh.

Our bedroom door is slightly ajar, so I slip through, trying not to disturb the two of them although they're in their own little world and I'm not sure much has penetrated their little bubble. Bond has no qualms in nudging them out of the way, "Thanks, Jose. Skinny, brother, I'd continue whatever you two are about to do away from prying eyes," he chuckles.

"Fucking hell," Skinny mutters a little hoarsely, and then Josie lets out a squeal as he must pick her up because she starts berating him but is also laughing so I'm guessing she doesn't mind all that much. Going over to Daisy, who is now in a clean baby grower and kicking her legs and screwing up her face as if she's working up a proper snit.

Smiling, I pick her up and bring my nose to her head, inhaling her gorgeous clean baby scent, and carry her to the bed, murmuring, "Aunt Josie gave you a bath, didn't she, sweetheart?" Sitting on the bed, I continue crooning softly, "And now you're ready for some dinner, aren't you? Let's get you sorted then."

It doesn't take long to get Daisy settled at my breast, and I lean back, resting against the headboard. Turning my head slightly, I find Bond watching us with a soft look on his face, but in the few days that I've known him I've come to pick up that he doesn't like being dirty, and with how filthy we are from doing the stocktake today, I know it's got to be bothering him, "Go shower, Bond. I'll just finish feeding this little piggy and get her settled, then I'll have mine."

He looks towards the bathroom, a slight longing on his face, "Are you sure? I can wait until you've had yours."

Smiling softly, I reassure him, "Go shower, love; I can keep."

"Okay," he replies, already stripping his shirt off like he can't wait to get it off his skin, and tosses it in the laundry basket. Not that I'm complaining; he's welcome to

strip for me whenever he wants. Bond isn't as big and muscular as Blaze, Cairo, or Skinny, and he's certainly not the size of Bull; he's more like Rogue in physique. While both have muscular bodies and are fit, they tend more towards the swimmer's physique. It turns me on no end to see his bare chest, and I love it even more when he tucks me close to him in bed.

It doesn't take long, and he's naked; I'm not sure he's even remembered I'm in the room as he hurried towards the bathroom—not that it's a hardship for me to watch him walk away, not when his perfectly biteable arse flexes with every step. Biting my lip, I turn my head slightly as I ogle him as he disappears behind the bathroom door.

Once he's gone, I turn my attention back to Daisy, who's blinking her big green eyes at me as if in judgment.

“I can't help it, baby girl, the man is fine,” I explain, which she ignores, definitely not interested in her mother's idiosyncrasies.

Settling Daisy, I wait for Bond to finish in the bathroom, more than ready to take my turn and get the dirt and sweat of the day rinsed off. The entire time I'm in the shower, all I think of is him and what the thought of him does to my body. And his kisses—God, his kisses—they burned me up until I was ready to combust from them alone.

Switching the water off, I dry myself before slathering cream all over my body and freshly shaved legs. Leaving the bathroom light on, I walk out completely naked with one mission in mind: to make the man mine. Pulling the door until it closes slightly so there is only a sliver of light, I walk over to the bed, expecting Bond to still be awake as he'd been every night since I'd arrived.

Instead, I find him fast asleep on his back, one arm tucked behind his head as if he'd been trying to stay awake waiting for me to finish in the shower. Glancing across at

Daisy to make sure she is still asleep and seeing that she is, I turn my attention back to Bond. Biting my lip, I waver between waking him up or putting my pyjamas back on and slipping into bed with him, and he'd be none the wiser at what I'd had planned for tonight.

After a minute or so, I decide it is now or never. I want this man, and I am taking this man. Not that I think he'd fight me about it. Lifting the mosquito net, I put one knee on the bed and then the other, making sure the net falls back to the floor behind me as I slowly crawl towards Bond. Gently, I ease one leg over his hips but don't sink down yet. Nope, I want to explore and use his words against him from the other morning. He'd wanted to take his time with me; well, I want to take my time with him.

Slowly, I ease the sheet down his stomach and down his hips, past his cock that lies heavy and long against his leg. I knew he'd be naked; after the first night when he'd been polite and kept shorts on, I'd woken the second night to find him tossing and turning restlessly until he'd stripped in his sleep and then settled down. The third night, I'd told him not to be uncomfortable and that he didn't need to sleep in shorts. He'd taken me at my word and had stripped off so fast I'd laughed, but I'd liked having him naked against me.

Taking my time, I look my fill of him in the gloom of the room. He is slightly bigger than my ex but not by much. I find my mouth watering at the thought of having him in my mouth. I'd never enjoyed that part of being married, but with Bond, I have a feeling it won't be a chore at all.

His cock twitches against his leg, and he shifts restlessly under me.

"What you doing, baby?" he rumbles sleepily.

"Looking at you. But I'm done looking, and now I'm going to get to tasting," I warn him as I lean forward and lick up his length from bottom to top. Bond hisses and

jack-knives up towards me. Putting my hands on his chest, I gently push back, “Lie back down, love, and let me.”

Bond hesitates but does as I asked, relaxing back against his pillows. “Are you sure? You don’t have to do this,” he says.

Smiling at him, I reply, “I know I don’t, and it’s part of the reason as to why I’d like to. I’ve never had a choice before, but I do this time. If I do anything you don’t like, let me know,” I inform him. Taking his now hard cock in my hand, I squeeze gently. Bending my head, I run my tongue gently around the rim. His stomach muscles clench, and his hands fist the sheets. I know he is trying hard not to reach for me, and I love him all the more for it. Taking his hands, I put them to my head, telling him, “Guide me,” before I suck him deep.

“Holy sh...” his guttural roar is cut off, I’m guessing because he didn’t want to wake Daisy. As for me, I was going to enjoy every minute of this, and I did, all the way until he came panting down my throat, his hands still in my hair, fingers gripping my curls to just the point of pain. I was so turned on that a gust of wind would set me off.

Taking my mouth from his cock, I sighed happily, then gasped as he flipped me onto my back, my legs over his shoulders and his mouth on my pussy. It was my turn to search around for something to hold on to, and I wasted no time in gripping his head, tugging at his hair as I rocked my hips against his face—not that Bond seemed to mind. From the sounds he was making, he was loving me riding his face. It was a new experience for me, never having had this done to me before. With one last long suck to my clit, he thrust a finger into my dripping cunt, and I came hard.

I’d never felt anything like this before; it felt like my entire body was on fire as my orgasm exploded out of me. It was too much, too much of what I didn’t know, whatever feelings were happening to me. They felt huge, so huge I couldn’t contain them.

I didn't even realise I was crying until Bond gathered me in his arms and rocked me, crooning softly to me as I wept on his chest. All the time he pressed kisses to my cheeks, my forehead, the corner of my mouth as I continued to sob. When I'd quietened down to the last gasping sob, I wiped my cheeks and tilted my head to look up at him to find him watching me with quiet concern.

"Are you okay, baby?"

Thinking about my reply, I took stock of what I was feeling and realised that yes, I was okay. I'm not sure what had happened, but I was feeling much lighter than I had a few hours ago.

"I am," I assure him, "I'm sorry I cried all over you and ruined everything."

Bond grasped my chin, tilting it up towards him, "Rochelle, you didn't ruin anything. You've gone through a lot over the last week. You can cry over me anytime; I'll always be here for you no matter what. When things get too heavy for you, then you share them with me so that I can carry some of the burden. You're not alone anymore; you and me, we're a team. Always. Your happiness and wellbeing will always be my priority."

Tears welled in my eyes again at his words. The thought of having a partner I could rely on was almost too good to be true. Reaching up, I fitted my lips to his, kissing him quickly before drawing back, "Thank you, Bond. You have no idea what that means to me," I whisper, reaching up for another kiss, deepening it this time, rolling onto my back and taking him with me, widening my thighs so that he fits comfortably between them. When he removed his lips from mine to rest his forehead against mine, I ask him, "Will you make love to me?"

"Is that what you want, baby?"



“It is,” I assure him, tightening my thighs around his waist.

“Okay,” he agrees, pressing his lips to mine for a bit. “But this time we do it my way,” he murmurs, kissing me again, this time long and deep. I can feel myself getting wet as his cock edges against my clit, letting out a whimper as he drags his mouth from mine, kissing down the length of my neck to the top of my breasts and then back up to my mouth as he gently nudges his cock through my folds. Lifting my legs, I wrap them around him as he slowly enters me until he can’t go any further, then stops. I sigh softly against his lips as my body adjusts to his.

“You okay, baby?” he asks. I nod, and he rocks his hips in a slow and steady rhythm, delicately taking me higher and higher until we both come. This time I come gently, and as I float back down, Bond gathers me close to him.

My last thought as sleep claims me is that ‘ This is how it’s meant to be.’

### BOND

It had been a week since the night that Rochelle had woken me up with her mouth on my cock. While it had been a surprise, it had been a welcome one.

Not once had we gone to bed since then without making love, and I made sure she came every time. For someone who had been married as long as she had been, she was pretty innocent when it came to sex, and I had a feeling that was all down to her fuckhead of a husband. It seemed that as long as he got off, he didn't give a shit about her. Somehow, I wasn't surprised, not with the way he'd treated her out of the bedroom. Although she'd assured me that the one thing he didn't do was force her, I was still careful because he certainly hadn't made sex good for her. I'd make sure from now on it would only ever be good.

We'd slipped into a comfortable routine, the three of us. Rochelle still wasn't comfortable letting Daisy out of her sight. Not that having her with us at work was a hardship. I loved having my girls with me twenty-four seven. There had been a big uptick in our orders since Rochelle had taken over. It seemed our customers liked talking to someone with her experience. I'd been surprised that not only did she know her spare parts, she also knew a lot about fitting them. It wasn't long before I was having to put another order in with our new suppliers.

But this weekend was our moving weekend. We'd had to put it off for a little while because Noni had decided that the cottage needed to be painted, even though Rochelle had told her she was happy with it as it was.

Noni wasn't having it. She'd insisted that as we were going to be living there for

longer than a few weeks, it gets redone. Rochelle didn't realise that Noni was having the spare bedroom painted and kitted out as a nursery for Daisy.

"That's the last one," I call out to Rochelle, who was in the bathroom packing up, taping up the last box and stacking it near the door.

"Are you finished in there, baby?"

"Yep," Rochelle replies, walking out with a box in her arms, blowing the curls that had fallen from her bandana out of her face with a huff of frustration. "Ugh," she mutters.

Laughing, I pinched her curl with my fingers and tucked it back under her bandana. "There you go, baby," I tell her, pressing a kiss to her cheek.

"Hey, hope you two are decent," Cairo calls out, knocking on the door jamb and walking in with his hand over his eyes.

Rolling my eyes at Rochelle, I ask her, "Does he really think we'd be fucking with the door open?"

Snort-laughing, she falls against me. "Knowing you lot, probably. And don't call it fucking," she slaps my chest. "It's more than fucking; trust me, I now know the difference."

A rumble left me, and I scowled. I knew she was joking, but I hated that she knew that. A soft hand cupped my cheek, drawing my attention back to her, "Love you, Bond. Stop scowling. While I know the difference, it doesn't mean that I won't want you to fuck me at some point."

Cairo laughed out loud, slapping my shoulder, amusement clear in his tone when he

said, “That tells you, brother. Now come on, let’s get this loaded and you three into your new home.”

Rochelle laughed along with Cairo, not in the least bit embarrassed at having just discussed our sex life in front of one of my brothers. I guess she really was settling in. Reaching for one of the boxes, I direct her, “Grab our girl, Roch; I’ll help Cairo get this loaded.”

“I’ll be back just now, and I’ll help,” she responds to me, walking towards the bed with a length of colourful material in her hands. Cairo and I watched as she made short work of getting Daisy tucked up and situated on her back snug in the colourful material. I’d seen modern wraps used the same way in the UK, but it always amazed me to see it done in the original way and that the babies always seemed perfectly content all snuggled up like that.

Rochelle looked up from making sure the material was tied tight between her breasts to catch us watching her. Clapping her hands, she ordered, “Well, chop, chop, let’s get this lot loaded,” before grabbing a box and carrying it to the luggage cart that Cairo had brought with him.

Cairo opened his eyes wide at me, nodding his head at Roch as if to say, ‘ Are you going to let her carry shit?’

“Trust me, brother, it’s not worth the argument. Just try and get as many boxes as you can before her. The woman is as stubborn as the day is long and used to doing shit on her own,” I inform him, picking up two boxes and following Rochelle out with them.

Cairo and I made quick work loading the boxes without trying to make it obvious that we didn’t want Roch picking them up. But my woman wasn’t an idiot. Narrowing her eyes at me as we loaded the last box, I closed the bedroom door behind me, both of us panting slightly.

“You two are ridiculous,” she grouses, but she did it with a smile on her face. “I’m perfectly capable of helping.”

“We know, little sister, but just because you can doesn’t mean you have to when you have us to do it for you,” Cairo smiles at her as he tucked the shirt he’d taken off earlier in the pocket of his shorts, his dark chest gleaming a little with the sweat we’d worked up loading the boxes. Making me hate him just a little bit, even though he wasn’t trying to get Roch’s attention. It was just who he was. He hated wearing shirts unless he had to, saying the seams bothered him. Not that Roch appeared to even notice.

“Fine,” she huffs, “but that means as a thank you, you have to let me cook for you at least once this week instead of eating at the hotel.”

Cairo’s eyes light up at the mention of a home-cooked meal. The food we got at the restaurant was amazing, but we all missed the meals that Maggie had cooked for us. There was nothing like a home-cooked meal. “And pudding,” he pleads.

Roch laughed but nodded, “And pudding,” she agrees.

“Deal,” Cairo tells her, “now let’s get this stuff to your new place and get you unpacked. Noni is planning a barbeque for us tonight.”

“Braai,” Rochelle corrects.

“What?” Cairo and I look at each other a little confused.

“If you all are going to live here, then you have to know we don’t barbecue, we braai; you’ll have to get used to it. I suppose you haven’t had our local maize meal and gravy either?” Then she waves her hand, dismissing our answer, and walks towards the door. “Don’t worry, Grace and I’ll sort that out.”

Shrugging, I pushed the trolley as Cairo pulled it, following a muttering Rochelle, who seemed to think that we were missing out on a local delicacy.

I loved that she was comfortable enough to start being herself around my brothers. Rochelle was not a shrinking violet, and I had a feeling that she'd only get more confident as time went by. I, for one, loved her feisty side.

It didn't take long to traverse the path towards the houses at the back of the hotel. They were separated from the hotel by a wall and a locked gate that stopped guests from wandering onto private property. I was surprised to see Rochelle stop by Grace and hand her Daisy, but her hands were going a mile a minute, and Grace was laughing with her.

Rochelle's eyes were sparkling a little, and a wide smile graced her face when we drew even with her, "Grace is going to keep Daisy for a little bit; I'll come and get her as soon as we've unloaded."

"Okay, baby. Give us a shout if you need us, Grace," I tell her.

"Don't worry, Uncle Bond," Roman states, coming up next to me, with a panting Rosie following him. The siblings were never far from each other. "Rosie and I'll help Grace."

"Thanks, Ro," I answer, holding my fist out to him for a fist bump before ruffling Rosie's hair.

Leaving the kids in good hands, we continue past Bull and Rogue's homes to the two-bedroom cottage behind them, coming to a stop at the steps of the small veranda. I hear Roch exclaim tearfully, "Oh, Noni. Thank you."

Cairo's gaze meets mine over the boxes, and he nods towards the house, "Best you

get in there, brother. The rest are on their way, and they can help me unload.”

Leaving him to it, I bounded into the house and went straight to the nursery, coming to a stop when I saw Roch wrapped in Noni’s arms, Julia rubbing her back, and Josie looking on almost as tearful as Roch. Looking around, I see what’s caused the tears.

Daisy’s bedroom.

It's beautiful; painted a bright white with pink trim around the top and bottom. On the one wall is a large daisy with smaller daisies blowing away in the breeze. On the other wall, there’s a bank of photos of all of us from the Crow MC, including the UK chapter. But pride of place is a picture of Rochelle, her dad, and Daisy from the day Daisy had been born. I’m not sure how Noni had got hold of it, but I’d guess that Skinny had something to do with it. Next to that one is a framed photo that I know had only been taken a few days ago of Roch, Daisy, and me. We’d been standing on the steps of the hotel, Rochelle holding Daisy in her cute floppy hat and me behind them, arms wrapped around them both. Josie had insisted on the photo, and now I knew why. I fucking loved it. It showed nothing but happiness on all our faces. Noni and the ladies had also furnished the nursery with a pretty white cot that had draped mosquito netting, making it look like a princess cot. There was a matching changing table, chest of drawers, and wardrobe.

“Thank you,” I mouth at them all.

Rochelle turned her head as I stepped further into the room, “Did you know?”

I shake my head, “I knew Noni was painting the nursery, but no, I didn’t know the ladies did all this, but I’m not surprised, though; it’s the sort of thing the Crow ladies are known for.”

“It’s beautiful,” Rochelle sputters tearfully, going to each of them and hugging them,

and saying thanks before she ended up back next to me. “I can’t thank you all enough. I’ve never had this. You can’t know what it means to me.”

“You’re welcome, Rochelle,” Julia smiles at her, reaching for her hand, and she gives it a little squeeze. “You’re a Crow now, and that means you no longer have to do everything alone. We’ve got you.”

“I’m starting to understand that,” Rochelle assures Julia as she looks around the nursery one more time, wiping the tears from her cheeks as she pulls herself together.

“Come on, let’s get unpacked so that I can cook a few things for tonight. You can’t call yourselves Zambian if you’ve never eaten any of the local food,” she informs us.

“As long as it’s not grubs,” Julia shudders.

“But they’re so good for you,” Josie teases laughingly. “Full of protein.”

“Eww, no grubs,” Rochelle assures Julia, “although I do think you should try fried flying ants; they’re delicious.”

Julia goes green at the thought of eating the winged insects and holds up her palm, “I’m good,” she declares.

Laughing, we left the bedroom. It didn’t take long to unpack, as neither Roch nor I had much. Before long, we were settled in. Everybody had left, and Daisy was fed and down for a nap. Finding Rochelle in the kitchen, I picked her up and tossed her laughing over my shoulder.

“Time to christen our new bed,” I inform her, slapping her gently on the arse as I walked down the short hallway towards our room, where I tossed her gently down on the mattress.



She bounced and laughed as her bandana flew off and her curls cascaded over the dark blue bedding. Toeing my shoes off, I followed her down, my mouth taking hers in a hard kiss, and I proceeded to show her that I do know the difference between fucking and making love.

We're both smiling and panting by the time we're finished.

Rochelle angled her head to look at me and states, "I'm loving being a Crow. Thank you, Bond."

Smiling, I tucked a curl behind her ear, "No thanks necessary, baby. I'm glad you're happy." Pressing my lips to hers, I rolled on my back, taking her with me.

"Ride me, baby."

"With pleasure," she replies, taking hold of my cock and sinking down onto me. It's a little while before we get back to finishing putting away the last few bits we had left to unpack and start cooking for this evening.

I'm still smiling hours later as we're eating, and Rochelle and Grace insist that we try what they call 'nshima.' We all do to appease them, some liking it more than others.

I don't mind it. It's filling for sure, but it definitely needs the gravy that they made to go with it. They were both horrified when they realised we'd never eaten a local sausage called boerewors either. Noni was laughing at them; having lived here longer than us, she'd tried it all and was happily tucking into the 'nshima' and gravy.

"I'll order some for the next braai," she assures them with a grin.

"Oh, thank the Lord," Grace replies, "because there is no way I can make that."

“Yeah, me either,” Rochelle agrees with a smile as she looks around the table set up in Noni and Bull’s garden. “This has been fun, though. Thank you all so much for everything today.”

“You’re welcome,” Bull assures her.

Dinner over, we moved to the fire pit we’d put in between the two main houses. Some things don’t change, no matter the country. And it may be hot as balls out here at the moment, but there was just something about sitting around a fire and shooting the shit with your brothers and their women.

Rochelle walked out of our house and handed out the beers she’d picked up when she’d gone to check on Daisy, who we’d put down earlier in her new cot. Daisy hadn’t seemed at all bothered by being in a new room and had fallen right asleep.

All the houses had screen doors to keep the mosquitoes out. We left the main doors open to hear the kids in case they woke up while we were outside.

Snagging Rochelle’s hand as she walked past, I tugged her into my lap, where she snuggled up with a happy sigh.

“Thank you,” she says, taking the cup of tea that Julia handed her. I looked around the fire and couldn’t help but think that just a couple of weeks ago, when the Crows from the UK were here for Christmas, I’d been so envious when I’d seen them with their ladies on their laps, at the time thinking I’d never have that. Not when the woman I wanted belonged to another. And now, with Rochelle on my lap and our daughter sleeping, I gave thanks to whoever had decided that I was worth having them in my life.

### ROCHELLE

It hadn't taken me long to realise that those in the Crow MC were as genuine as they came across. I was a naturally suspicious person, and the last four years of my life hadn't helped.

After this weekend and how Noni, Julia, and Josie had done something as lovely as the nursery for Daisy, it was at that moment that I realised I could trust them with anything, and my daughter was one of the most important things to me. I had to ensure that she'd be safe if anything happened to either me or Bond. There was no way I could allow her to end up with her father's people. Not my baby. I'd do everything I could to ensure that never happened.

With that thought in mind, I finished completing the order I'd been working on and walked out to the front of the shop to find Bond. He wasn't at the counter, which meant he was probably outside. The pushchair was missing, so I assumed that Daisy was either with him, Blaze, or Rogue.

The three of them seemed to have serious baby fever. Shaking my head in slight bemusement, I'd never met men like them. They were tough when they needed to be but were complete marshmallows when it came to their women and children.

'I was right,' I thought as I walked onto the shop veranda and looked across the road to where Cairo's new shop was nearly finished being built. All the Crow men were congregated in the shade on the other side of the road, including Roman and Van, who it seemed were being taught how to lay bricks by the builders.

Turning, I pulled the shop door shut and locked it behind me before walking out into the blazing hot sun. Sweat immediately started to pool along my lower back. Taking my sunglasses from where I'd shoved them in my hair earlier, I lowered them over my eyes. Bond seemed to have a sixth sense when it came to me and turned around as soon as I stepped onto the road; the rest turned to see what had caught his attention. It was a bit disconcerting to suddenly be the focus of all that male hotness. And they were all hot. I may be totally enamoured with Bond, but that didn't mean I was blind. I fought the urge to lift a hand and waft my face like some Victorian lady, but holy moly, it was hard.

"You good, baby?" Bond wants to know as soon as I am within hearing distance.

"Yeah," I reply, going up on my toes to press a kiss to his lips before settling back on my heels. "I need to go and see Noni. I've locked the shop. Do you want me to take Daisy?" I ask, looking around for her.

"She's with Blaze," Rogue grumbles, looking put out. "He's got five minutes, then I'm taking her. This one," he points a thumb at Bull, "wouldn't let me take my niece."

Bull rolls his eyes, "She was sleeping. Don't you know the story about sleeping dogs and babies? You leave them alone when they're asleep."

Biting my lip to stop myself laughing at how ridiculous they all were, I meet Bond's gaze and see he is just as amused. "They're over there," he points towards the small supermarket. Turning, I watch as Blaze walks back with Daisy in his arms, and Briana and Alana walking hand in hand back to us. The two little girls each have ice creams in their hands and are making a huge mess. Blaze seems totally unconcerned as he watches them walking ahead of him while he licks his cone. Daisy watches him with interested eyes every time he takes a bite, and I am wondering if it is time to start giving her watered-down porridge.

“Okay, if you’re good with keeping her, then I’ll go speak to Noni. I shouldn’t be long.”

“It’s all good, baby; we’ll be making our way back soon. It’s hot as hell, so we’re going to take the kids for a swim,” Bond assures me, pressing a kiss to my cheek before he pats my arse and pushes me gently towards the hotel.

Meeting Blaze along the path, I checked on Daisy, but she was happy enough, so I left her to her dad and uncles, walking quickly along the shaded veranda towards the hotel.

Noni was where I expected to find her—in her office; she amazed me with the amount of juggling she did.

Knocking on the door, I stuck my head around it, happy to see Julia in there with her.

They both smiled when they saw me, although I could see the surprise on their faces. It was the first time I’d actively searched them out. “Hi, Roch, what do you need?” Noni asks.

“I need your help,” I state baldly, walking in and sitting in the chair across from Noni.

Surprise lit their faces, and they glanced at each other. “Okay,” Noni responds slowly, “what do you need my help with?”

“Umm,” Julia put up a hand as if she were in school, making me bite back a smile, “do you need me to leave?”

Shaking my head, I answer, “No, please stay because this involves all of us. Do you think we should ask Josie to come? I don’t want her to feel left out.”

“I’ll send her a message,” Noni says, picking up her phone and typing into it. We wait a minute until she gets a reply. Noni reads it out loud, “Go ahead without me. You can fill me in later, I’ve got an emergency c-section on a patient.”

“Okay,” I say, taking a deep breath, wiping my hands down nervously on my thighs. “So, a couple of things, and none of this reflects on the guys and their ability to keep us all safe. It’s just that over the years, I’ve learned to be prepared.”

Julia moved from her desk to sit in the chair next to me. Patting my hand, she says, “It’s okay, Roch. Tell us what you need.”

“First, I need to do a will so that if anything happens to me and Bond, then Daisy will be okay. I know that Skinny has done some magic with her birth certificate, but I’d also like to ensure guardians for her should anything happen. I haven’t spoken to Bond about any of this because I honestly don’t think he’s thought about it. But take it from someone who knows that the best-laid plans go awry when you least expect it, and I’d like to know that Daisy will be okay. And I doubt very much he’ll be upset with what I want to do.”

Both Noni and Julia nodded that they understood, and as mothers, I figured they would because they’d want the same thing for their children.

Turning towards Julia, I declare, “I’d like to put you and Rogue down as guardians for Daisy should anything happen to me or Bond.”

Surprised delight flowed over Julia’s face at my statement. “Oh wow, of course. We’d be happy to be her guardians. Nothing is going to happen to you, although I totally understand needing to be prepared. We’ve done the same for our children and have Draco and Molly as their guardians. But,” she hesitates, and her eyes slide towards Noni, who didn’t look surprised at all. “Why us and not any of the others?”

“Because even though Noni and Bull would happily step up, they have four young children already, and adding another one didn’t seem fair to any of them.

“All the guys are single, and I wouldn’t put that pressure on any of them, plus what happens if they end up with a right witch and she’s mean to my baby?

“Skinny and Josie, I think, are wanting to start their own family, and I didn’t think it was fair to ask them.

“You and Rogue would love her like she was your own, and Roman and Rosie are older, and watching you with them makes my heart happy. Plus Rogue is already wrapped around her little finger, and you are what I’ve always thought of as a perfect mother. If I had to choose a perfect second set of parents, then it would be you.”

“Oh, Rochelle,” Julia responds, wiping at her eyes, “that’s such a compliment, thank you.”

Smiling at Julia, I looked towards Noni to see if she’s upset, but she’s beaming with happiness. “Perfect choice,” she assures me. “When do you want to do this?”

“As soon as possible,” I inform her.

“Okay, let me contact the lawyer. We may be able to do this online and just have you sign it,” Noni states, picking up the phone again and calling the lawyer.

Julia and I sit quietly, waiting until Noni is finished talking to the lawyer. From what I could gather, we could set it up today, and he would send it over for signing. It should all be done by the end of the week. I heaved a sigh of relief, and a weight disappeared from my shoulders.

With that taken care of, I ask another question that had been burning at the back of

my mind ever since the first Church meeting I attended where I laid everything out for them.

“One more thing: in the last meeting, Bull mentioned that you would be adding a fence so that you could bring in stock for game drives and such. I took Daisy for a walk along the river the other day, and I was wondering if you’d considered fishing safaris and extending the front of the hotel along the riverside. You could put in a boat ramp with an outdoor bar and seating area. There’re no rapids down that end, and you could also do an evening boat cruise for your guests, similar to what they have in Livingstone.”

Noni sits back in her chair as she thinks about it before replying, “Honestly, no, I haven’t thought about it. Mostly because we’ve been so busy getting the hotel and businesses up and running again after they’d been nearly run into the ground. It’s a good idea, but we just don’t have the finances at the moment. We could do it maybe next year or the following, though. You’re right; it would bring in more revenue as we’d be bringing in different clientele.”

“I’ve got the money,” I respond quickly, then let out a whoosh of breath. Not sure why I was so nervous, on the next breath I muttered, frustrated with myself, “I’m not explaining myself very well.”

“Let me start again,” I declare, sitting up straighter. “Noni, I’m not sure how this works, but what I’m trying to say is that I’d like to contribute to the business. If I’m going to be a Crow, then I need to be a Crow, and if there is one thing I know, it’s running a company.”

“Here,” leaning over, I pulled a notebook from the bag I’d dumped next to my chair when I’d walked in earlier. Opening it up, I handed it to Noni, “I’ve started rough figures for you, but I think it could work. I have money I’d like to invest in this venture with you.”



Noni grins, taking the book from me, and Julia let out a little chuckle, “She’s perfect for the Crows; it’s like she’s Bren point two.”

I knew Bren was one of the Crows in the UK, but other than that, I had no idea why I reminded them of her. “She’s the one who always comes up with our business ideas,” Julia explains at my look of confusion. “Noni, Bella, Avy, and Bren are a force of nature when it comes to driving the different businesses the Crow MC owns.”

“Ah,” I reply with a nod, my attention drawn back to Noni, who was reading through my business proposal. I was so nervous that I started chewing on a nail.

“Relax,” Julia says, patting my leg, “it will all be fine.”

“This is really good,” Noni states, looking up from the notebook, excitement gleaming in her eyes. “Are these projections accurate?”

“Yeah,” I reply with a nod. “I did some research and picked an old acquaintance’s brain. Those are conservative estimates.”

“This is a lot of money to invest,” Noni comments. “Are you sure about it? You know how things can change on a dime in business; it’s a lot to lose if we fail.”

“We’re not going to fail,” I respond with certainty, “and yes, it’s a lot of money, but it’s blood money that I’ll be using. Jared was an idiot when it came to money, so I’ve been stashing away whatever money I could get my hands on for years.

“It’s been sitting in a bank, growing interest for four years. Initially, I was going to use it to get away from him after Daisy was born, but now, I’d like to use it for this instead. Nobody knows about it, not even my dad. It’s under an assumed name, and I opened it with fake identification, so I may need Skinny to work his magic, but it’s all there.

“Dad left everything he had to Daisy and me, so if it does fail, which it won’t because none of us are idiots, we’d still be okay financially because, like you say, we’re a team,” I assure Noni.

“In that case,” Noni grins, standing up and holding out her hand, “welcome to the Crow Ladies Consortium. All the Crow MC businesses are in our names, so that if the shit does hit the fan, we can still run them with no problems from the authorities. It’s one of the reasons we don’t always get told when the men are doing things; it’s best we don’t know anything about.”

There was no need for her to say more; coming from the life I’d lived, sometimes it was better not knowing. Standing up, I took Noni’s hand and shook it. A feeling of rightness flowed through me. It had taken a few years, unhappiness, and hard living, but I was finally home.

Noni squealed happily and danced on the spot, making Julia and me laugh. “I knew you’d be perfect as soon as I met you,” she exclaims, hands thrown up in the air, before getting serious again, “Let’s get this into a PowerPoint, and I’ll tell Bull to call Church so we can let the men know.”

A few hours later, my mind was reeling with figures and ideas. The will had been the easiest part of the afternoon. I’d had to tell Bond about the guardianship—not that he minded—and he seemed relieved that I’d thought about it. Rogue had been stunned, but from the hug I’d received, he’d been happy when asked to be Daisy’s guardian.

Daisy wasn’t christened yet. I was going to speak to Bond about that later, and if he was happy with it, I wanted to ask Rogue and Julia to be her godparents, it made the most sense. I’d like to wait until the situation with the Black Mambas had been put to rest because I’d like my dad to be there if he could.

We’d done Church later that evening after the children were in bed. It had been

quick, filled with excitement and laughter. I'd given Skinny the bank details and passwords, and in less than ten minutes, the half a million dollars I'd managed to put away was in the Crow company account, ready for us to use.

Noni and I had a meeting booked tomorrow to get started on the first bit of the plan, which was building the slipway to launch the boats. The first tendrils of excitement filled my belly as we went through the PowerPoint, and everyone listened, throwing out ideas as we went.

They really did work as a team; nobody shot down an idea without explaining why. Just as we had to lay out why we thought it would work, including projections for the future. The revenue raised by this venture, along with the revenue from the photographic and game drives, would more than pay for itself within a year.

I was excited to be part of this, even with the threat of the Black Mambas hanging over my head.

Bond hadn't mentioned anything to me about them, even though I knew that Bull was in constant contact with those who were watching them. For safety's sake, I'd not spoken to my dad yet, but I'd been assured that he was comfortable and looked after. You never knew who was listening in or who to trust in the city. Not with how far-reaching the Black Mambas' contacts were.

I had to have faith that they knew what they were doing and that it would all work out in the end. Bond had assured me that Bull would let us know if there was anything we needed to know about or if the situation changed.

It was hard not to worry, though; I knew what the Black Mambas were capable of. I hoped that Jason was so far gone on drugs that he'd forgotten about me and Daisy. Probably not, though. Not when the next shipment of drugs was due at the end of the month and none of Dad's trucks would be there to pick it up.

I'd love to be a fly on the wall when he realised that his delivery hadn't made it. He'd never checked, just assumed that Dad and I were so broken down and scared we'd do what he wanted. He'd not been entirely wrong about that either.

It would be interesting to see how Jason managed it. He was used to using violence to get what he wanted, and I almost felt sorry for whoever was supposed to be watching our old warehouse.

Almost sorry, but not completely!

### BOND

Church was loud but happy as everyone discussed Rochelle's idea. Even if we'd only been together a short while, I knew my woman, and Rochelle was worried about the future. I knew this, and nothing I said would stop that worry until the threats to her and Daisy were all buried six feet in the ground.

While she was uncertain about the future, it didn't stop her from living her life, and it made me proud that she was mine. Her asking Rogue and Julia to be guardians to our princess had cemented her place in everyone's hearts without even trying. They would be perfect guardians. She was right; we needed to make sure that Daisy was looked after. I'd been happy to sign the will that Rochelle and Noni had the lawyer draw up. While I had no intention of anything happening to either of us, I also knew that life was uncertain, and situations happened that we didn't always see coming.

I'd had no idea that she'd been thinking about starting a business with the Crows; why it surprised me, I had no idea. Our women were nothing if not enterprising. From when I'd joined the Crows back in the early two thousands, I'd always thought that the brothers were the muscle and the women the brains.

I knew most MCs didn't work that way, preferring to keep their women separate. But it worked for us and, in a way, made us stronger.

None of us were hurting for money, and that was mostly because the Crow women were fucking amazing when it came to investments.

We'd not been able to do anything with the money that Rochelle's dad had given her

because we didn't want to leave a paper trail when it came to her. We could have taken a leaf out of her book and opened an account in someone else's name, but we'd decided to err on the side of caution and bring as little attention as possible to us. So, for now, we'd put it in the safe in Noni's office.

It made my heart happy to see Rochelle settling in and putting her stamp on things. I'd ordered her cut, and we were going to have a small ceremony tonight to welcome her to the family properly. We'd arranged to set up a Zoom call with the UK chapter so that she could meet most of them that way. Once the threat to her was over, I'd take her and Daisy on holiday to the UK to meet the family there. Call me a caveman, but I couldn't fucking wait until she was mine in all ways.

I was brought out of my musings by Bull thumping the gavel onto the table, making me jerk slightly. Next to me, Blaze sniggers slightly, "Where was your head, brother?"

"On what's coming," I reply quietly, "and on how lucky we are when it comes to our women."

Blaze started to reply but was interrupted by Bull, "If that's all, the meeting's done. Any further questions on this project, see either Rochelle or Noni. Any other business?" He looks enquiringly around the table.

"Just a few more things," Noni replies, looking up from her notes. "My friend Jill will be coming to stay for a couple of days. I'm hoping to persuade her to stay and take over managing the spa and gift shop side of the hotel. Is everyone okay with that?"

Most of us had met Jill Landry and liked her. She seemed to be a general dogsbody to her family, the one they called on for all manner of support. I knew it annoyed Noni, who felt like they took advantage of her good nature.

“I’m fine with that,” I answer Noni. The rest of the table all gave their votes.

“Don’t forget to be at mine and Noni’s tonight for supper,” Bull reminds us before ending the meeting. “You’re all free to go. Remember to look out for anything weird or out of place.”

“Yes, Pres,” we shout as one.

Bull rolls his eyes, standing up, “Get out, you fuckers.”

Laughing, I stand and pull Rochelle’s chair out for her, “Come on, baby, let’s go and get Daisy from Grace and head home.”

I feel the need to spend some time with just my girls before tonight. I’ve been feeling on edge for a couple of days, and I have a feeling that our time of peace is going to be over before we know it.

I’ve spent time with Rochelle and Daisy in the pool. We’ve been joined by most of the club, and we’ve smoothly transitioned from the pool to Bull and Noni’s home for the evening.

We’ve just finished eating when Bull stands up and bangs on his bottle of beer with the back of a knife, calling our attention to him. The table falls silent; even the children are waiting quietly for whatever is coming next.

“Bond,” he gestures to me to come and stand next to him. Pushing my chair back, I get up and walk to stand next to my president. Noni passes him a box, and he turns towards me and hands it over.

Clasping my shoulder, Bull declares, “You’re the first for this chapter of Crows to do this. Skinny, Rogue, and I did this with the Originals. Before you do, I want to say

something.”

Bull takes a deep breath, clearing his throat before continuing, “I’ve known you all your life. We grew up together, we’ve been through good and bad together, and I consider you my little brother just as much as I do Skinny. I’ve worried about you my whole life, from the time I knew how bad it was in your home to when you joined up with Skinny and me.

“But this last year, I’ve worried about you more than any other time, even when we were getting shot at, because I knew there was nothing I could do to make your hurt any better. Then you took that trip a few weeks ago and came back a completely different man.”

Bull pauses, and I swallow at the lump in my throat because I’ve never realised how much Bull cared for me until this moment. I’ve always thought he’d put up with me because Skinny and I were best friends.

“What I’m trying to say,” Bull continues, “is that I’m proud of you. I’m proud of the man and the father you’ve become.”

Then Bull grins teasingly, “And the fact that you’ve somehow managed to bamboozle a smart woman like Rochelle into taking you on is just the icing on the cake.”

Laughing, I put the box that Bull had handed me down on the table and embrace my president, taking the pounding on the back that he gives.

My words nearly lost amongst the hooting and hollering from the rest of the brotherhood, the women, and children, as I say quietly so that only Bull can hear me, “Thank you, Samuel, for always looking out for me. I couldn’t have chosen better brothers than if we’d been born to the same parents. I appreciate all you and William have done for me over the years.”



“You’re welcome, Drew. Now make her yours,” Bull responds, giving me one more back-pounding slap and letting me go. When the table quietens down, I call out to Rochelle, who is smiling, her eyes a little tearful as she watches Bull and me.

“Rochelle, baby, can you come up here?” I ask her, holding out my hand. Surprised, Rochelle stands up and hands Daisy to Blaze when he holds his hands up for her.

As she walks up to me, I can’t help but think to myself that I’m a lucky fucker. She’s the whole package: gorgeous, smart, and doesn’t care that I have to have things a certain way. Although that need to always have everything in its place seems to have got better since she and Daisy have been in my life.

Rochelle comes to a stop near Bull and me, looking enquiringly at me. Taking her hands in mine, I start, “Rochelle, I know you’ve already agreed to be my Old Lady, but that was when you were under pressure, and you needed to feel safe.”

Taking a deep breath, I look into my love’s bright eyes. She is smiling at me as I continue, “You know how important this is to me, so I’d like to ask you again here amongst my family if you would do me the honour of agreeing to be my Old Lady, not because you need to, but because you want to.”

Rochelle smiles as she throws herself into my arms. “Of course,” she answers, pressing a kiss to my lips. “I’d be honoured.”

“Thank fuck,” I whisper hoarsely, deepening our kiss to the hoots and hollers of my brothers, making us laugh.

Removing my arms from around Rochelle, I open the box that held her cut and take it out, holding it up for her to slip over her shoulders. As it settles over her shoulders, something in me settles as I read the property patch on her back, seeing my name on her. Rochelle turns around, her face beaming with a smile as she runs her hand over

her name patch on the front.

“Thank you,” she whispers, wrapping her arms around me. “You’re welcome, baby,” I reply, pressing a kiss to the crown of her head before we are inundated with well wishes from everyone. It was only when I heard the faint whistling, cheering, and shouts coming from the laptop Skinny set up earlier that I remembered we’d arranged to do a video call. Looking around for Blaze, I take Daisy from him before tugging Rochelle over to the video to introduce her to the UK chapter.

“Congratulations, Bond,” Reaper smiles, pulling Abby closer to him. His sharp gaze moved to Rochelle, softening slightly as he welcomed her, “Welcome to the family, Rochelle. You’ve got one of the good ones.”

“Thank you,” she responds, “and I know. I’ve had bad, so trust me, I know a good man when I see one.”

Reaper doesn’t say anything else; he just nods his acknowledgment as he looks at Daisy, “And this must be Daisy. Fuck me, brother, she’s tiny.”

“She is,” I agree. “But she’s a fighter.”

From behind Abby and Reaper, a soft voice came over, “Orange,” Ellie pushed her way between her parents. Even at the age of twenty, she still has that slight innocent ethereal quality about her that she’s always had. She smiles at us, her blue eyes sparkling. “Your colours are orange. It’s beautiful. And you’re right, Uncle Bond, Daisy is a fighter,” her eyes flick towards Rochelle, “and so is her mama.”

Ellie chews on her lip as she hesitates; I hate that she’d been made to feel that she had to hide who she was, but I also understood. People are dickheads. Ellie cants her head to the side slightly as she looks at Rochelle, “It’s going to be okay. Trust in the Crows and their allies.”

Rochelle doesn't say anything at first, then she smiles slightly. Reaching out a hand, she touched a finger to the screen. Ellie mimics her on the other side. "You're very special, Ellie. I do trust the Crows."

Ellie beams at Rochelle. "Good, I can't wait to meet you in person. Congratulations, Uncle Bond, you've found the one." She blows a kiss at us. "Love to you all," then disappears again.

Reaper and Abby chatted for a bit longer before they were pushed out of the way for the next couple. It was a good evening of celebration and bonding until we called it a night.

I do one more round of the cottage to ensure it's all locked and secure before I make my way back to our bedroom. Rochelle was just about to hang her cut up on the hook by the door when I stopped her. Taking it from her, I tell her, "Take your clothes off, baby, and put your cut back on. I want to fuck you while you're wearing it."

Her eyes widen at my words and her cheeks flush slightly. "Mmh, you like that idea," I rumble, my lips just touching her ear. Rochelle shivers slightly, so I continue, "You like the idea of me fucking you while wearing my name?"

"I do," Rochelle answers, "I like knowing that I belong to you."

'Fuck me, she needs to strip and do it now,' I thought as my cock hardened when she admitted that she liked belonging to me. I'd never been the possessive type, but with Rochelle, I found I was.

Stepping back slightly, I huskily order, "Strip, Rochelle," licking my lips as she hurried to comply. When she was standing completely naked, waiting for me, I helped her into her cut. "Hands on the end of the bed, arse in the air. I want to see what's mine," I instruct as I kicked off my shoes and socks and stripped off my own

cut, hanging it on the hook by our bedroom door before removing the rest of my clothes as Rochelle did what I asked. Holding back a groan of need, I gripped my cock hard as I looked at her luscious arse thrust out as if waiting for me.

Dropping to my knees behind her, I run my hands up the back of her calves then her thighs, nudging them further apart so that I can get to what is mine. Rochelle whimpered low in her throat as I spread her open; seeing her glistening wet pussy has my mouth watering and I can't wait to taste her.

Tapping her thighs, "Open for me, baby."

She opened her thighs wider for me, and I wasted no time in burying my face in her waiting pussy. Holding tight onto her thighs to stop her moving, I licked her from top to bottom and didn't stop until she was begging me to come. Sucking her clit into my mouth, I held on tight as she bucked against me, riding my face as she comes. I didn't wait; standing, I shoved my cock into her still rippling pussy, eyes rolling to the back of my head as I gritted my teeth and tried not to come.

Rochelle lay panting, arms spread out in front of her as she grasped at the bedspread, my name on her cut filling me with possessiveness and the need to mark her with my cum.

"One more time, baby," I tell her. She shakes her head slightly, "I don't think I can."

"Oh, you can," I assure her as I snap my hips forward, before drawing back and planting myself deep. Reaching around, I find her clit and flick it gently; I'm instantly rewarded by Rochelle thrusting back against me, so I do it again until she's riding my hand and my cock at the same time. Bracing my legs, I stand firm. "That's it, baby, use my cock," I croon just as she comes, sobbing again.

Wrapping my hand around her leg, I lift it until it is resting on the bed, and then I

power into her, thrusting hard. The only sound in the room is our skin slapping, Rochelle's whimpers, and my moan as I feel that familiar tingle just as Rochelle's pussy ripples around my cock. "Fuck," I snarl as we both come, my back bowing as I throw my head back and bury myself as deep as I can in her soft folds. We come hard; knees weak, I lean forward, panting slightly as I wrap my arms around her and press soft kisses to her leather-covered shoulders.

"Holy fuck, Bond. I think you broke me," Rochelle chuckles. "I don't think I've ever come that hard before. If that's what you call fucking, then we need to do that again."

Laughing softly, I groan as my cock softens and slips out of her warm body. Pressing one last kiss to her back, I bend and pick up my shirt, wiping at our joined cum that is running down her legs. Once she is clean enough, I pull her up and into my arms, resting my lips against the damp curls of her temple.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"Nope," she shakes her head before yawning. "I'm feeling all sorts of good right now," she assures me tiredly.

"Come on, baby," I tell her, pulling back the covers. Taking her cut off her, I help her into bed, tucking the sheet around her. I know I won't be able to sleep without a shower. Leaving her tucked up in bed, I quickly shower, then check on Daisy one more time before joining Rochelle in bed, knowing it will only be for an hour or so before Daisy wakes us up.

It's not Daisy, though; it's my phone that wakes me up. Groaning tiredly until I see Bull's name. All vestiges of sleep leave me as I hurriedly answer, getting out of bed so as not to disturb a still-sleeping Rochelle. "Bull?" I answer.

"Dex called; the guys watching the Black Mambas say they're making a move."

“Okay,” I answer. “Do we know when?”

“Not yet; probably won’t be until night after next. They’re running around like chickens without a head, apparently. The bossman is upset because his drugs haven’t arrived. I’m letting everyone know now, but we’ll meet in an hour to firm up our plans.”

“Okay,” I agree, ending the call. Daisy whimpers from down the hallway.

Walking towards her room, I vow to do all I can to make sure my girls are safe. We’d already put a plan in place, and tomorrow we’d go over it all again. But before we got there, I had a job to do first.

Picking Daisy up, I quickly change her before pressing my lips to her little head, “Daddy will keep you safe, princess,” I whisper to her as I take her to Rochelle.

“Who called?” she asks, taking Daisy from me.

“Bull,” I tell her. “The Mambas are making a move.”

Rochelle inhales, and her wide, worried eyes meet mine. Cupping her cheek, I assure her, “It will be okay, Roch. We have a plan in place, and we’re not alone. Dex has men on the ground in the city. I may have to leave for a little while, but if all goes well, I’ll be back before the evening.”

When I’m dressed, I open up her nightstand and take out her handgun, putting it next to her.

“Keep that on you today. Don’t open the shop; have the phone transferred to your cell. Stay close to the other women today. If there are any issues, Noni will get you all to the safe room.”

Rochelle swallows but nods. I know she's scared, but she's not falling apart, showing how strong she is. Bending, I press my lips to hers, "Love you, Roch."

"Love you too," she replies, tears swimming in her eyes. "Please be careful."

"I will," I assure her before kissing Daisy's head. "Daddy loves you, princess."

With one last kiss to Rochelle, I leave the house, ensuring to lock the doors behind me and walk towards the hotel and our temporary Church, meeting Rogue on the way. We nod to each other, but neither of us says anything. We all know what we have to do. It's not the first time, and I doubt it will be the last time.

Rogue and I are the last to arrive. Bull turns as we walk in. Everyone is standing in front of a map of the city.

"Right, let's get started," Bull states. "Bond, you and Cairo will be leaving within the hour. Are the bombs ready to travel?"

Both Cairo and I nod. "Yeah, Pres, they are," I assure him.

"Okay, you know the targets; let's get this done with as little damage as possible. The bombs will throw them, but they'll still come for her."

"Do we know how they found out where she is?" I ask.

"Money talks, brother, you know that. The private hospital that her dad's in, they got to one of the board members who has a drug problem; he squealed like a canary."

"Where's he now?" I grind out.

"Drake and Sam have taken care of him."

My shoulders relax slightly. Drake and Sam Madden, are married to Ava and Marie Moore, Noni's ex-bosses, but that's not how we knew them. We'd served together. If they'd taken care of him, then I didn't need to worry.

"That's good. Cairo and I need to leave. Are you all good to keep an eye on things here?"

"We're good, brother. We'll help Noni move the guests to Ava and Marie's hotel. Julia, Grace, and the children will all be going over there too," Rogue assured me. "You two be careful, and for fuck's sake, don't get caught."

"We will, and we won't get caught. It's like you don't even know us," I reply with a smirk. Tilting my chin at Cairo, I ask, "You ready?"

Cairo grins slightly maniacally, "I was born ready for this type of mayhem, brother. Let's go blow some shit up."

"Fuck," Bull groans, wiping his hand tiredly down his face, "don't blow yourselves up for Christ's sake."

"Don't worry, Pres," Cairo claps his hand on Bull's shoulder as we leave. "You know Bond and I live for all things that go kaboom."

He claps his hands together before throwing them up in the air to show a bomb going off. Laughing at the look on Bull's face, he walks out, and I can't help but smile as I follow him. He's not wrong; both of us do love our bombs.

The usual three-hour drive to the city was cut in half, with it being the middle of the night and there not being any traffic on the road to contend with. That, and the fact that we were on our bikes, meant we could travel faster than we would in a vehicle. We split up as soon as we got to the city. We each had our targets and knew where



they were. After setting the last bomb, I got back on my bike and headed back to our rendezvous spot to meet up with Cairo.

We'd been in the city for just over an hour, and we were already on our way back home. The sky was just starting to lighten as we drove towards it. As the sun started to slowly rise in the sky, I couldn't help but grin as I watched the first explosion in my wing mirror. We'd hit almost all their warehouses that held their stock. Rochelle had given their locations to us during the first Church meeting, and we'd had people watching them. Considering how much stock they held and the monetary value of that stock, the guards they'd had on them were shit. It hadn't been hard to get around them. I'd been hoping to at least have one of them stop me. Cairo hadn't had any issues either. A few of the properties he'd been to hadn't had any guards at all; the one that did have a guard was so busy with a lady that Cairo found it easy to slip past.

"They're going to be pissed, brother," Cairo shouts over to me.

"I know," I acknowledge. "Come on, let's get home so that we can help Noni get her guests moved and the town shut down." Opening up my bike, I relaxed as I flew down the road and the air flowed past, relaxing me. Even with the threat hanging over us, there was nothing quite like riding with a brother on an open road to blow your worries away. Even if it's only for a little while.

ROCHELLE

Bond leaves us. Picking up my handgun, I put Daisy back in her cot and checked the house. Everything is as it should be. Seeing a light on in Noni's house and knowing that I'm not going to settle anytime soon, I get dressed, pack Daisy up, thanking my lucky stars that she's such a good sleeper and an easy baby. Walking over to Noni's door, I knock, "Who's there?" Noni calls out.

"It's Rochelle," I answer her. "Can I come in?"

"Of course, give me a minute."

It doesn't take long for her to unlock and open the door for me to walk in. "I'm sorry to barge in," I tell her. "I couldn't settle."

Noni waves her hand, "Don't worry about it, hun. I'm not going to go back to sleep either. Come into the kitchen; you can put Daisy in Sam's pram, and then you can help me sort out a list for organising things once the sun comes up. We're going to move the guests to a friend's hotel and the children with Julia and Grace."

Guilt instantly fills me, 'God, they're rearranging their whole lives for me.'

"I'm so sorry, Noni," I apologise as I follow her to the kitchen and put Daisy in the pram set up in the corner.

Noni waves her hand as if none of this is a big deal when I know that it's a huge deal. "Don't worry about it, Roch. The guys are pretty excited about shedding some blood.

Plus, it's been a little while since we've had some drama. We missed the drama with Navy and Gia because we were here."

"What drama?" I ask curiously.

"Oh, girl, come sit and let me fill you in on the Crows and how they met their ones. It's not all been plain sailing, let me tell you."

That's how I find out about the couples and how they met, and I have to say it settles me some when I realise they really do know what they're doing and maybe I'd been part of the Black Mambas for so long that I couldn't see them for what they are—a weak gang run by a weak leader who was so high most of the time that I'm not sure how he functions, especially as whoever pissed him off would get killed pretty quickly.

By the time the sun rose, Noni and I had a working list. I'd already made up my mind that I'd be staying because this was my fight too and I needed to take some of my independence back. Daisy would be going with Julia, though. I needed her to be safe and as far away from whatever was going to happen here as I could get her. And while Julia was a soft-hearted woman, I had a feeling that if someone threatened any of the children, a whole other woman would make herself known.

By mid-morning, with the help of Noni's friends Ava and Marie, along with their husbands Drake and Sam, who'd helped, we'd ferried the guests to their hotel an hour away.

We were just waiting for Drake and Sam to return to help move all the children, Grace, and Julia. Rogue would be going with them, leaving the rest of us here.

Josie had said she couldn't leave as she had a few animals that couldn't be moved. She and Skinny were setting up at the vet's office and barricading themselves in. The

town had been warned about what was happening and were shutting up their shops and bolting the metal grates over the doors and windows.

I'd been surprised that there hadn't been any pushback when it came to them losing business. I hadn't realised quite how far the Black Mambas' reign of terror had stretched, and it seemed most of them had been affected one way or another, and if they hadn't, they knew someone who had.

I'd been relieved when Bond and Cairo had ridden back in half an hour ago; they'd both been filthy and tired. After a quick kiss, I'd sent him home to wash up because I knew that him being as filthy as he was would be bothering him. It didn't take him long, and he was back to find out what the next steps were.

Julia and Rogue were getting ready to leave, and I was having a hard time letting go of Daisy. I knew I'd have to suck it up, but it was harder than I'd expected to let her go. We'd never been separated from the day she'd been born.

"Here," I hand Julia the cool bag, "I've expressed as much as I can, but if you need to give her formula, there's a tin in there as well as some bottles." I bite my lip. I'm fighting hard against tears.

Julia wrapped her arms around me and Daisy, swaying us slightly. "I'll look after her for you, Roch. She'll be safe with me," Julia assures me.

"Oh, I know that," I answer. "I'm not worried about her safety; it's just I've never been away from her."

A firm hand rubs at my back, and I instinctively know it's Bond, "It's not too late, Roch; you can go with her."

Shaking my head, I say, "No, I'll stay. I know who they all are, and you may need

me. Plus, this is my mess, and I need to be here to help clean it up.”

Kissing Daisy one more time, I give her to Bond, who kisses her head before strapping her in her car seat.

Rogue and Julia were getting ready to pull out when Drake and Sam arrived to pick up the older children. They weren't alone, though. They'd no sooner stopped the car than a tiny whirlwind erupted from the back and flew towards Noni, who laughed as she hugged the new woman.

“What are you doing here?” Noni asks her but didn't seem overly surprised to see her.

“I heard you guys were going to have a little fun, and I was bored at home, so I thought I'd come and offer my meagre services,” the woman replies with a wide, happy smile.

“Who's that?” I ask.

“That's Jill Landry,” Rogue answers. “She's probably Noni's best friend after Avy.”

Noni and Jill are talking a mile a minute as Jill goes to the vehicle she's arrived in and surprisingly pulls out a rifle bag, which she casually throws over her shoulder and starts walking towards the hotel.

Sam and Drake shake their heads as she walks away with Noni towards the hotel. They unload a few more bags and rest them on the ground by the hotel steps.

“We can come back,” Drake offers.

Bull shakes his head before replying, his eyes darting towards his and Noni's

children, “Appreciate the offer but no, you keep our kids safe, and we’ll manage shit here.”

“Okay,” Sam agrees, “but if you need us, we’re not far away.” They turn to walk back to their vehicle and are just about to get in when Sam hesitates and turns back to us, “Bull, make use of Jill, she’s a fantastic shot, better than most. Set her up as a sniper somewhere. She has her rifle as well as a few other things for you to use. And trust me, if she says she can hear an ant taking a shit, then you better believe she can. Her hearing is phenomenal. Trust her.”

Bull stares hard at Sam before he nods, “I will. We’ll set her up on the roof of the hotel with Noni and Roch.”

Sam looks relieved and taps the door before checking on the children in the back of their vehicle. It’s not long before the two vehicles leave, carrying a bit of our hearts with them.

Bull turns to the rest of us and starts to speak until he notices Blaze and Cairo walking up the road, “We’ll wait for those two.” He turns his gaze on Jill, who’s casually leaning up against the hotel wall next to Noni. She waves and smiles at me when she notices me looking at her. I can’t help but smile and wave back; she seems really happy to be here, and I’m wondering if she has a few screws loose. I mean, who would voluntarily be here to fight when she doesn’t even know me?

“Jill,” Bull states, getting her attention, “Sam and Drake say we should use you as a sniper. Is that good with you?”

“Perfect,” she grins happily. “I’m guessing up on the roof.”

Bull nods before querying, “Is there anything else we need to know about you?”

“Umm,” Jill tilts her head back as if she were thinking, “I’ve got great hearing, and my sense of smell is awesome. Oh, and I’m the youngest sibling of nine, so I have some pretty spectacular combat experience,” she sniggers at that comment.

“Along with my Zelda,” she pats her rifle case, “I’ve also got her sisters,” she smirks, pulling up her trousers to show us the handguns strapped to her ankles, then pulls up her sleeves showing us the knives she has strapped to her forearms. “And a few extra goodies that I’ve brought with me to share with you.”

“That’s fucking hot,” Blaze mutters quietly from where he is standing next to me.

Jill’s eyes slide to him and widen slightly when she sees him, “Thank you,” she responds.

“Fuck, your hearing is good,” Bull says. “I barely heard him and I’m standing next to him.”

“I’ll be an asset,” Jill assures Bull. “Do you want to let me in on the rest of the plan so I can get settled?”

“Yeah, let’s meet in Church,” Bull orders. Taking hold of Noni’s hand, he leads the way with the rest of us following.

Bond and I are bringing up the rear, my hand clasped tightly in his. I slow my steps until I stop and look up at him.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, tears building in my eyes.

“Hey,” Bond cups my head in his hands, tilting my face up to his. “You’ve got nothing to be sorry for. Trust me when I say that this would have happened sooner or later. We don’t put up with gangs terrorising people, and after speaking to some of

our townspeople, it seems that the Mambas would have become our problem eventually anyway. At least this way we had warning, and we have inside information.

“Trust me when I say they’re going to make mistakes because they’re pissed and not thinking straight after we blew up their warehouses.”

Bond kisses my forehead, wrapping me in his arms. I sigh and relax for the first time since he woke me up. “It’s going to be okay, baby. We have a plan and we’re good at what we do,” Bond reassures me.

“Now, let’s get in there so Bull can fill us in on what’s going to happen, and we can get this lot dealt with so we can go back to living our lives. We have a house to build and siblings for Daisy to make.”

Laughing slightly, I wipe at the tears that have gathered under my eyes, squeezing him one more time before letting go completely and walking into the room they’d been using for Church. By the time we leave there, I’m no longer worried; they’ve thought about everything, and now it’s just a waiting game until the Mambas make a move.

Dex Macgregor still has people watching them in the city, so at least we’ll have advanced warning of their arrival and can get into our places.

They can only really come at us from the road as the hotel backs onto the river, so we only have to watch from one direction. Blaze, Cairo, and Skinny have set up several booby traps, and Skinny has the place wired tight with cameras all over the place. He’ll be monitoring them along with Josie and feeding us information through our earpieces.

Noni and I will be on the roof with Jill, helping her spot and also picking off those we



can from up high.

The men will be on the ground doing what they did best.

I know the Mambas will come in guns blazing, thinking a big show of force will be intimidating. I can't wait to see Jason's face when he realises he is outgunned by men who are ten times the man he is.

### BULL

Our temporary Church slowly fills up with Bond and Rochelle bringing up the rear. I know she feels guilty that this is all somehow her fault. And while yes, it's because of her that this skirmish has been brought to a head so quickly, it would have happened eventually anyway. Especially with the information we'd received when we'd spoken to the shop owners and the people from our town. All of them knew of this gang and most had had run-ins with them. When we'd explained what was happening, there had been volunteers to offer help, which we'd declined.

It was bad enough that my brothers and our women were putting our lives on the line; I didn't want any others on my conscience.

Bond closed the door behind him, and I turned towards the screen that Skinny had set up. There were pictures on there of the main men in the gang with their names under them. Most of them looked drugged up and in ill health, and I hoped that this would help us, although we all knew that if they were high, it could change the entire outcome.

Turning back to the room, I look at Rochelle and ask, "Tell us what you can about this lot and who you think will come with them. Do they have any military training? Anything you can tell us about them will be helpful."

"I know them all," Rochelle replies, "They'll all come except for the one in the third row. He's different from the others; he doesn't take drugs, and he manages all their finances. I think if he thought he'd get away with it, he'd take over."

“Mmh,” I hum as I think over what she’s just said. “Do you know him? Would he speak to you?”

Rochelle looks uncertain. “His name is Dindi. I don’t know if he’ll speak to me. I didn’t have much to do with him. I do know he’s not a thug like the others; he’s educated and thinks things through. He did stop Jared from hitting me once, and he’s always been polite and kind when I’ve had anything to do with him, but,” she shrugs, “I honestly don’t know if he’ll speak to me. Why, what are you thinking?”

“If he’s interested in a coup and taking over, then it might be beneficial for us to speak to him. Make a deal that if he keeps his shit to the city and doesn’t encroach on us, we’ll leave him alone; but if he doesn’t want to take the deal, then we’ll take every last one of them out. He’s got to be haemorrhaging money paying everyone off, and if they’re using more than they’re selling, they’ll be broke before long. But we want inside information on who’s coming and when.”

“You want to make a deal like that?” Cairo looks surprised and a little angry.

I hold up my hand, “I don’t like it any more than you do. But we can’t have a war that’s going to continue forever; we don’t have the manpower, and yes, we have allies, but I’d rather get this over and done with as quickly as possible.

“Now I’m not saying we become best friends with this guy, but if he stays on his side of the country, I’d rather leave it to the authorities and Dex to deal with if they want to. From what I understand, until Jared and Jason, they mostly ran under the radar, and drugs weren’t sold by them; they were the go-between that passed it on. It’s only been in the last five years that things have escalated. So, no, I’m not happy about making the deal, but to keep all of us safe, I will.

“You all let me know what you think, and if you’re happy with it, we’ll get Rochelle to call Dindi, and we can hear what he has to say.”

I look around the table, and while there was some indecision, they know I'm right; we can't afford to have an ongoing war, and it will be. We need to put this to bed so that we can get our families back and continue to build our businesses. I'd known that Cairo would have a problem with it, having lost his sister to drugs. He hated anything to do with them.

"Okay," Cairo nods his agreement. "Let's put it to a vote."

"Aye," Blaze agrees, "I'm good with us calling this guy."

"Aye," Bond puts his vote in, and so we went around the table until all votes were recorded.

Handing my phone to Rochelle, I tell her, "Call him but put it on speakerphone."

Rochelle takes the phone and enters the number I give her. We wait while it rings until someone picks up and answers with, "Hello."

Rochelle takes a nervous breath before she replies, "Dindi, it's Rochelle."

"Rochelle, why are you calling me? Do you know how much of a problem you and your father have caused?" His words were harsh, but he didn't sound it. He sounded more curious than anything, as if he was questioning where her head was at.

Shaking my head, I hold out my hand for the phone, telling her, "Don't answer him; give it to me, you've done your bit."

"Who's that?" he growls, "You better not have gone to the cops, Rochelle, because if you have, there's nothing you can do to save yourself. Jason knows where you are."

He was starting to piss me off, so I cut him off, telling him, "She hasn't gone to the

cops. Now are you going to shut the fuck up so that we can have a conversation, or are you going to continue to flap your gums? Because if you are, then I'm going to end this call, and you're not going to get what you've been after for the last five years."

He went silent for a minute, and I heard a door close, and then the background noise that had been there disappeared. "I'm listening," he informs me.

I don't beat around the bush; we don't have time to mess around, so I get straight to the point, "Rochelle tells me you've got a brain, don't take drugs, and have ambitions to take over the Black Mambas."

He hesitates before answering, "Maybe."

"Well, I have a proposition for you. We'll take care of your current problem, but I want something from you in return."

"I'm listening."

"I want you to tell us when Jared is on his way here and how many of them. We'll take care of that problem for you, but in return, you have to promise to stay away from this part of the country. You leave my town, its people, and my family alone. That includes Rochelle, Daisy, and Rochelle's father. If you come anywhere near here, go after any of my family, or sell your poison anywhere near our town, then this conversation never happened, and you'll wish you'd never been born. Am I clear?"

Dindi is silent on the other side, and if it wasn't that we could hear him breathing, I'd wonder if the line had been cut when he suddenly speaks, disbelief in his tone, "Let me get this straight, all you want from me is when Jason leaves, the amount of men he has with him, and to not go to your side of the country once you've taken care of his fucking arse. That's it?"

“That’s it,” I agree. “We don’t need a war that’s going to go on indefinitely; we have families here, a town to build, and businesses to get off the ground. We want this sorted as quickly and quietly as possible. And from what I understand, you have a business to grow and a family of your own to keep safe. This way, we both win.”

“Huh,” Dindi huffs out a breath, “I checked you out when we found out where Rochelle was. I know your backgrounds. I’ve not said anything to Jason. If you get rid of his arse, you have a deal. I’ll not be bothering you and yours. Although you do owe us some compensation for the warehouses you blew up.”

Grinding my teeth at his audacity, I ground out, “Listen here, you motherfucker. We could have blown them all and could still do so. You think we don’t know where they all are? The ones we blew were to send a message. Now you have a choice. We can work together and each go on our way, or once we’ve taken care of Jason, me and my brothers will come back and finish the job we started this morning. Only we won’t stop there; we’ll dismantle it from the inside out, starting with you.” I pause, “You have a choice, cocksucker; make it now. You say you’ve done your homework on us, then you know we don’t say what we don’t mean.”

“He’s leaving tonight just after midnight, and he’ll have twenty men with him, all armed and probably high. Let me know when it’s done.” With that, he ended the call.

“Huh, I guess he didn’t want to go to war with us,” Blaze mutters. “Cheeky gobshite asking for compensation.”

Looking at the others around the table, I take Noni’s hand and give it a squeeze. “Let’s go over our plans, then catch some sleep,” I tell them.

Two hours later, we’d gone over the plans with a fine-tooth comb, and we all knew what we were doing. The women would, for the most part, be kept out of the fight as they’d be on the roof of the hotel spotting for Jill, who showed us that she was more

than capable. Skinny and Josie would be in the veterinary office and would be feeding us intel from the cameras that Skinny had set up all around the property.

We were as ready as we were going to be; all we had to do now was wait for them to arrive.

It was time to call an end to Church. Banging the gavel on the table, I looked at each of my brothers and then at the women who were slowly filtering into our midst.

“Church is done. We’ve done what we can when it comes to plans. Take your time and get some rest. We’ll meet back here at ten tonight.” Standing, I pull Noni up with me. I need to hold her and beg her to be safe because I can’t imagine my life without her in it. As we walk out of the hotel to our home, I send a little prayer up to Gwen, asking her to look after Noni tonight. Later that evening, after I’d lost myself in my Old Lady’s body, I wondered if I’d made the right decision.

“It’s going to be okay, Bull,” Noni whispers, running her hands through my hair as the sweat cooled on our bodies. “You’ll see, you and the boys have planned for every eventuality, and me and the girls aren’t helpless. We’ll be okay.”

“I hope so, love. You’d better make sure your arse is safe, and you’d better not have a scratch on you when all this is said and done. I couldn’t take it if you were hurt,” I whisper against her throat.

“Same goes for you, big man,” she replies just as softly.

I had a feeling that my brother and Bond were having similar conversations with their women.

### BOND

With a plan in place and Church done, I took Rochelle's hand and followed Bull and Noni out of the hotel to our home. I needed to spend the next few hours holding Rochelle and assuring myself that she'd be safe.

We hadn't wasted any time when we got home, and we'd barely made it through the door before we attacked each other, stripping clothes off as fast as we could. Turning us so that Rochelle was up against our front door, I thrust my hard cock into her pulsing warmth, closing my eyes in bliss as her pussy enveloped my aching cock.

"Fuck, baby," I grind out as I again thrust up into Rochelle. "You feel so fucking good; missed you today. I'm not sure I'm going to last, need you too much," my voice husky with need, I warn her.

"Then don't," she whispers against my lips. "Fuck me hard now and then soft in our bed. I need you, Bond, so fucking much that I hurt. I want you to fuck me so hard that I'll be feeling you all night while I'm up on that roof."

"You got it, baby," I reply, tilting my hips back and surging forward, driving my cock hard and deep just like she asked, again and again, until we both came hard. Resting my head against Rochelle's chest, I listened to the wild thumping of her heart and smiled.

"Hold on tight, sweets," I order, moving us away from the door and carrying my love to our bathroom to wash up and then back to bed.



Where we spent the next few hours lost in each other. I know we should be getting up and finding something to eat, but I can't make myself move away from my woman. We've been connected in some way since we left Church hours ago.

I'm slowly, almost lazily, pumping in and out of Rochelle, my hands cupping her face, leaning on my elbows to hold my weight off her. Her green eyes are hazy, and I can feel she's about to come again, but I'm not ready yet.

Stopping my slow thrusts, I wait a beat. "What's wrong, love?" she asks, tightening her legs around my hips and running her hands through my hair.

"I love you, Rochelle."

She smiles her wide smile that makes the dimple in her cheek pop, eyes crinkling at the corners, "And I love you too, Bond."

Stretching forward, I moan slightly as my cock slides deeper into her depths, "You have to promise to be safe tonight, baby. You stay on that fucking roof; our baby girl needs both of us to come back alive."

"I promise, and you have to keep yourself safe too. I can't do this without you."

My lips take hers in a hard kiss, our tongues twining and dancing as we lose ourselves in each other, coming hard.

While I have faith in myself and my brothers, I can't help but worry that I've only just found her and that I may lose her.

Unfortunately, time doesn't stop, and before I know it, Blaze is hammering on our door to let us know it's time. I'm holding tight to her hand as we walk towards the hotel. It's strange to see the big windows shuttered by corrugated iron to protect them

as much as possible; the double doors were also reinforced so that nobody should be able to break through them unless they drove a truck through them, which honestly, I wouldn't put past these motherfuckers.

Securing the hotel was one of the first things we'd done when we'd taken over the town, before we'd even thought of doing the businesses. At the time, I'd wondered if we were going for overkill, but now I was glad of it.

Everyone was waiting for us in the main foyer of the hotel. We were all dressed much the same in black combat trousers and long-sleeved black shirts, our hair covered in tight black skull caps. Josie and Noni had kitted Rochelle out as she didn't have any suitable clothing.

Bull nodded at us as we walked in. "Here," he says, handing us two bulletproof vests. Taking them, I held them up with my eyebrows raised in question. It was the one thing we'd not been able to get, and I wondered where they came from.

Bull tipped his head towards Jill, who was competently checking her rifle. On the table where she was sat, there was an arsenal of knives, handguns, and... my eyes widened. Was that fucking grenades?

Blaze was staring hard at Jill, and you could almost see the little hearts floating around his head. She was exactly the type of woman he liked: small, feisty, with a take-no-shit attitude, and the fact that she knew her way around a gun! Man, he was so fucked because from what I gathered, she was a bit of a free spirit and didn't do relationships. Although that might change if Noni had her way.

"Thanks, Jill," I state, helping Rochelle into her vest. Jill looked up from her task, her strange whiskey-coloured eyes a little confused until I waved my vest. Her confusion cleared, and she smiled.

“Oh, you’re welcome. There’s more hardware in that bag if you want to help yourselves,” she waves towards a duffle bag.

“Um, Jill,” Noni starts as she has a look in the bag, “not that I’m not grateful, but where did you get all this stuff?”

Jill stands and starts strapping her arsenal to her body. I’m wondering how the hell she’s going to keep standing with the weight because she’s not a big person.

She only replies once she’s done, “You know that I’ve been the person that everyone in my family calls on when they need something, right?”

Noni nods; we all know this because it’s the one thing that bothers Noni the most—she feels like Jill’s family takes advantage of her. “Well, I took your advice and started to do things for me when my family no longer needed me as much,” she informs Noni. “I’ve been moonlighting as a bodyguard-come-nanny for clients that,” she hesitates before continuing, “let’s just say they’re unique. And also, very powerful. I’ve kept in contact with most of them over the years and made some powerful connections. This hardware came from a thankful client whose daughter I found when nobody else would look for her. It’s all untraceable, so no need to worry about the police or anything.”

“Um, well, fuck,” Noni mutters, rubbing a hand down her face. “I was going to offer you a job here, but it seems you won’t need it.”

Jill grins at Noni, and Blaze perks up when she responds, “Oh, I’ll be taking the job, Noni, don’t you worry. I need a break from travelling, and honestly, I’m homesick. I’ve missed spending time with you, and the children are growing too quickly. I don’t want them to forget me. So, yes, I’ll be staying, but first let’s kick some arse and get rid of this problem so that I can get to know Rochelle and Josie better.” Jill walks to another box and opens it up, “Here,” she hands an earpiece to Bull, “I know you lot

have your own, but these aren't on the market yet and are military grade. I thought we'd test them out and see what you think."

Rochelle was smiling next to me as Jill handed her an earpiece. "What are you smiling at, baby?" I ask.

"She's awesome. I love the Crow ladies; they're all fucking bad arse," she smirks at me.

Wrapping my hand around her ponytail, I pull her head back and press a hard kiss to her lips.

"You ladies may be bad arse, but remember to keep yourselves safe."

"We will, don't worry," Rochelle answers, pressing a last kiss to my lips. She picks up a handgun and checks it over before grabbing another clip and another box of ammo that she stuffs in the pocket of her combat trousers.

"Fuck me, brother, is there anything hotter than competent women?" Blaze mutters from next to me.

"Nope," I agree just as Bull calls out.

"All right, people, let's get into place. Ladies, you stay on that fucking roof for as long as you can and keep safe. Josie and Skinny, let's get you over to the veterinary office and get you set up."

Those of us who had women gave them one last kiss, and then we were out the door, waiting as Noni secured it. When we heard the last of the locks engage, only then did we move out, surrounding Josie and Skinny as we walked them over to the veterinary clinic.

Skinny had an office at the hotel, but when we built the clinic, he'd insisted that we build an office for him, and now I was glad. He had a basement put in, and that's where he'd set up. Because of the issue with electricity, the clinic ran primarily off solar, so it was never without power.

Josie made her way through the animals that she had housed here, and we helped her move the cages down the stairs so they'd be safe in the room with her and Skinny.

Skinny had a bank of monitors set up along one wall; we had cameras covering the whole town, including the roads leading in. Josie was used to helping him, so we left them to it, closing the reinforced door behind us as we left, making sure the corrugated panels were pulled down over the doors and windows, ensuring they were as safe as could be.

There was a slight click, and then Noni's voice came through our earpieces, "We're in place."

Bull tapped his earpiece, and the clicks came through loud and clear as he let Noni know we'd heard her.

We stopped off at the garage where we'd left some of our bigger arsenal locked up in the one office there. When we walked in, I noticed that there seemed to be a lot more than there was this morning, including a rocket launcher.

My eyes widened at seeing it, "Holy fuck, is that a rocket launcher? Where the fuck did we get that from?"

"Jill," Blaze answers dreamily, picking up the rocket launcher. Cairo, Bull, and I exchange amused looks.

"Um, brother, you know she's not one to stick around, right? Even though she's said

she'll take the job with Noni, it doesn't mean that it will stick," I remind him.

Blaze sobers, "I know, and there's no interest there from her, but I can't seem to help myself."

Clasping his shoulder, I shake it gently, "I'm sorry, brother, I've been there, and it sucks."

Blaze shrugs, "It is what it is; now let's load up."

Understanding that he didn't want to talk about it, we armed up and filled our backpacks with anything we thought we'd need. Cairo and I picked up the spike strips we'd made. They weren't as good as the industrial ones, but they'd work for what we needed them to do. Huh, maybe Jill could get us some with her connections.

"Remember, we let the first car through and then throw those down," Bull reminds us.

"Do we know how many cars they'll be in and where he's likely to be in the entourage?" Cairo wants to know.

Rochelle's voice came through, making us realise we'd been on open comms all the time which meant the women had heard our conversation with Blaze. We'd have to deal with the fallout from that later, though.

"With the number of men he'll be bringing, I'd say there would probably be three vehicles. He'll be in the last one because he's a coward and will send his men in first."

"Thanks, baby."

“No problem, we’re switching off open comms now,” Rochelle informs us before the line goes quiet.

“Okay, brothers, we’ll deal with the fallout of having open comms after this clusterfuck is over. Get to your places, stay safe, and for fuck’s sake, stay alive,” Bull orders as he loops the strap of his AK47 over his head.

“Sir, yes, sir,” we call out, saluting him.

Bull chuckles, “Fucking idiots. Get going.”

We laugh and jog off to our assigned places. It had been good to laugh, though. We needed it, and it took the focus off Blaze.

Dismissed, we each jogged to our assigned places, only stopping to put additional weapons in easy-to-reach places. After this was all over, we’d go through and pick them up.

Once that was done, I settled into my assigned place to wait. This was the boring part, and what I found that I hated the most. Sending up a quick prayer that we’d all come out of this alive and unhurt, I hoped someone was listening.

### ROCHELLE

We'd settled ourselves on the roof, and I'd followed Noni's instructions of putting guns and ammunition in strategic places along the roof. We'd be mostly protected by the wall that ran along the outside of the roof. I'd not realised that the roof was flat until I'd been told we'd be on it. It wasn't something I'd thought about until I'd actually been up here. It made sense, though.

'Worked out perfectly for us,' I thought as I stood taking in the views all around us as far as the eye could see. To the rear of the hotel, the river gleamed slightly in the moonlight, and you could hear the rushing of it as it streamed over rocks and boulders. The crickets, bullfrogs, and wildlife were loud, with everything else being so quiet. To the left and the right of the hotel was thick bush, although I did know that there were hidden roads in that bush that would take you towards the airstrip. But they'd been purposely cut in a way that it didn't take away from the beauty of the bush.

The easiest access to the town and the hotel was from the road. In the distance, I could make out the main highway only because of the vehicles travelling along it, their lights piercing the darkness. I hadn't realised until this moment how far away we were from everything. It made you feel small and alone in a big world. I was brought out of my musings when the men started talking on the comms. What they were discussing was obviously meant to be private, but when Jill's name was mentioned, we all took notice.

Walking towards where she'd set up her sniper rifle, I saw the minute she heard Blaze say she was the one for him, but he didn't think she was interested.



She closed her eyes and dropped her forehead to the floor. Noni ran her hand across Jill's shoulders, but none of us said anything until we had to, and it was only then that the men realised we'd heard everything. Making sure our comms were off before asking Jill, "Do you want to talk about it?"

Jill shook her head, "No, I don't."

"Okay," I say, settling down next to her, knowing that sometimes all you needed was someone just to be there. My eyes met Noni's over Jill's head, and she sat down next to Jill but didn't say anything.

With a sigh, Jill rolls over onto her back, then pushes herself into a sitting position with her back against the low wall.

"My life's too complicated, and there're things I can't say because they affect more than just me."

She was quiet for a long time, and I thought she was done talking until she says softly, "He's wrong, though; I do feel something. He's my ma..." She stops talking, wiping a tear from her face and sighs gently before continuing, "He's mine."

"Then what's holding you back?" Noni wants to know.

"A lot of different things. I can't go into it right now, but just know if things were different, then I'd be jumping that man and riding him until he was worn out."

Noni and I laugh because we'd both been there. "I totally get that," I nudge Jill's shoulder with mine. "And I also get wanting a man that you can't have for whatever reason."

"We all understand that," Noni responds with a sad smile. "But I'll also tell you that

life is short, and it's infinitely better when you have a man that loves you and puts you first by your side. Whatever it is, I hope you don't let it keep you from that. You deserve happiness just as much as everyone else, Jill."

Noni pats Jill's leg, "Think about it."

Jill smiles and rests her head against Noni's shoulder, "I will, I promise."

We sat quietly for an hour or so, lost in our thoughts, when suddenly Jill lifted her head from Noni's shoulder and moved to her knees, tilting her head to the side as if listening to something. She tapped her earpiece, "They're coming. Sounds like three engines. Rochelle was right."

It was Bull who answers, "Thanks, Jill. Skinny will be picking them up on the cameras soon. You ladies stay safe."

"Let's get into place," Noni says, picking up her binoculars and going to her spot, her rifle already set up. Mine was a bit farther down on the other side of Jill. Both of us would be spotters and would take down what Jill was unable to. We weren't as good a shot as Jill, but we'd still be able to do some damage.

As I lay in my position, my heart pounding so hard in my chest, I was surprised Noni and Jill couldn't hear it. All I could hope was that we'd all come out of this alive. Sending up a quick prayer asking my mum to look out for us, I settled down to wait.

### BOND

Jill's warning came through, and I moved to stand in a better position to throw the spike strips to puncture the tyres; Cairo was standing opposite me in much the same position.

Soon we could hear the sound of the vehicles coming. The shouting and banging on the car roof made me roll my eyes. These are fucking idiots; if you're going to attack someone, they should know you come in stealthy and quiet. Cairo was shaking his head, obviously thinking the same thing.

"These guys aren't the brightest, are they?" Skinny mutters over comms.

"No, they aren't," Bull agrees. "Remember the puncture strips after the first vehicle; make sure you get the second and third vehicles. Blaze, get ready with that rocket; as soon as the second car stops, I want you to take out the first vehicle. Jill, Noni, and Roch, you take out as many as you can, and we'll clean up the rest. I'm not worried about casualties. The whole lot are to be taken out; nobody's leaving alive. We're making a statement that nobody fucks with us."

"Gotcha, Pres," Blaze acknowledges.

The first vehicle drove into town, and the occupants went silent as they were greeted by a dead silent town, no lights on and the hotel in darkness.

In the quiet of the night, we heard one of the gang members say to the other, "I thought they were meant to be here tonight? What the fuck? This is a ghost town."

Call Jason.”

They continued to drive slowly down the road, and I let them go past, then threw down my puncture strip for the next vehicle that hit it. They started cursing immediately as the vehicle jerked slightly before coming to a stop, the vehicle behind it in the same position after Cairo threw down his strip. We’re in the shadows just waiting for Blaze now, who doesn’t let us down, blowing up the first vehicle.

The shock wave caused windows to shatter and created absolute chaos as those in the second and third vehicles tried to reverse but got nowhere, not with the strips embedded in their tyres. Pulling a pin from a hand grenade, I threw it in the window of the second vehicle and dove for cover as that one blew up too, leaving only the third vehicle.

I can hear the rat-tat-tat of the women’s weapons as they take out whoever is still walking. Bull is in the thick of things with his preferred weapon of a knife as he picks off whoever the girls have missed. I can see Cairo fighting off someone and make my way over to give him a hand, not that he needs it.

The occupants of the third vehicle have started to shoot wildly at shadows. I pick them off one at a time until there’s only Jason left cowering in the back seat of the last vehicle. Cairo finishes off the guy he’s been fighting. Aiming my gun at Jason, I wait until everything is quiet again, the shots die down, and only the fire on the burnt-out vehicles lights up the area. When my brothers are done, we stand by the last vehicle looking at the snivelling weasel.

“Noni is staying here and calling Rogue. Roch and I are coming in,” Jill warns. “The fire on those cars you blew up needs to be put out, or your town’s going to burn down around you.”

“Shit, she’s right,” Cairo mutters, jogging away to collect the fire extinguishers we

had stashed along the veranda outside each shop and bringing them back.

“Here,” he hands one to me and Blaze. I take it but look towards the snivelling toerag in the vehicle first.

“I’ve got him,” Bull assures me, going towards the vehicle and pulling Jason out, throwing him on the ground, jerking his arms behind his back, and tying him up.

Knowing my president has him in hand, I turn my attention to the burning vehicles and help Blaze and Cairo put them out. Hearing footsteps approach, we turn as one, guns in hand pointed in that direction as we wait to see who it is. My shoulders slump when a familiar female voice calls out, “Relax, guys, it’s just Roch and me.”

I’m not sure if I want Roch to see the carnage up close and personal, but from the way she hardly bats an eye at the dead bodies, I’m guessing it’s not the first time she’s seen one. My heart settles in my chest as she curls her arms around me in a hug, then starts running her hands over my body. “You’re okay,” she whispers.

“I’m fine,” I assure her. “Just a few scrapes and bruises.” Wrapping my hand around her neck, I take her lips in a hard kiss, pouring my relief that she’s okay into it. We’re broken apart by Jill’s frantic voice, “You got shot! How bad is it?”

Turning, I see Jill unstrapping Blaze from his vest and pulling it and his T-shirt off. I hiss in a breath as I see the blood on his side and the entry wound.

“I’m good, Jill,” he tries to reassure her. Jill looks at him in disbelief, her gold eyes flashing. She turns him, and I know he’s not good because there’s no exit point.

“Oh, fuck, the bullet’s still in there,” Jill whispers, pulling her phone from her pocket and trying to catch Blaze as his legs collapse under him.

“Take this fuckhead,” Bull says, thrusting a tied and gagged Jason to his knees in front of me and hurrying towards Blaze.

“That’s not good,” Rochelle says softly, then turns her attention to Jason and kicks him in the back. “You motherfucking bastard. You should have let me go; Blaze better not die.” She kicks him again, vibrating with a combination of fury and worry.

Josie runs past me towards Bull and Blaze with a medical bag. Jill is on the phone to whom I’m assuming is Jett.

“GSW to the side, no exit wound; he’s struggling to breathe. It slipped past his vest. Yes, Josie is working on him now. How soon can you get here?” she’s demanding to know. She listens to something he says, then in a softer voice says, “He can’t die, Jett.”

Blaze was so wrong about how Jill feels about him. Makes me wonder what’s holding her back.

She hands her phone to Josie, who listens to whatever Jett is saying, answering his questions. They must agree on something, but as it’s all clinical jabber, I have no idea. Josie ends the call and hands the phone back to Jill.

“Let’s get him to the clinic. I’ll stabilise him and get him on a drip. Jett is coming in with a team. Bull, can you get to the airfield and pick them up?”

I’m torn; I want to help my brothers but can’t leave Rochelle alone with Jason, even if he’s restrained.

Jill stalks over to me, anger blazing in her eyes. It’s not the first time I’ve seen anger like that in one of our women, so I know whoever it’s aimed at is in for a huge amount of hurt, “Go help them get him into the clinic. Roch and I have this piece of

shit. You and Cairo will have to clean up the vehicles, but we'll deal with the bodies. I have family coming in with Jett to give us a hand."

Turning towards Rochelle, she pushes me gently towards Blaze, "Help your brothers, then come and help here."

Kissing her forehead before I turn and walk towards Bull, I wonder where the hell Cairo's disappeared to. Ignoring the muffled cries of pain from behind me as Jill loses her temper on Jason, I'm thinking he's regretting everything he's ever done.

Bull's got a stretcher ready, and on three, we pick Blaze up and put him on it. My brother isn't looking good; his face is pale, and his lips have a blue tinge to them.

"Fuck," I mutter, picking up the poles and hustling with Bull towards the veterinary clinic. Once we have him on the table, Skinny takes over from me as Josie barks orders at him. It's not the first time they've had to work together, and I know it's best to leave them to it because we have other work to do, but it's hard to leave a brother not knowing if it's the last time I'll see him.

"Come on," Bull clasps my shoulder and pushes me towards the door, "we have work to do."

When we get back to where the women are waiting, I see Cairo with them, and behind him is one of the tow trucks; at least now I know where he disappeared to.

On the ground in front of Jill is a bloody and beaten Jason. Jill has blood flecked on her face and her fists.

Rochelle comes straight to me, and I wrap my arm around her.

"Is he going to be okay?" Cairo wants to know. Bull hesitates, glancing at Jill before

answering. “I don’t know, brother. Josie and Skinny are going to stabilise him until Jett can get here. We’ll know more then. In the meantime, can you clear up here while I go to the airfield to pick them up?”

Jill looks up at his comment, “I have family coming in to help with the bodies. You’ll know some of them.”

Bull tilts his chin at Jill, “Thanks, Jill. I’m going to check on Noni, then I’m leaving.”

Cairo waves him off, “Go. We’ve got this, Pres.”

Looking around at the destruction we’ve got to clean up, tiredness washes over me. All this for drugs and a man who can’t understand that no means no and that you can’t own people. Jason groans at my feet, and I kick him, “Fucking asshole. All this for drugs and not understanding that people can’t be owned.” I kick him once more for good measure, then turn to Cairo, Jill, and Rochelle. “Let’s get the bodies piled up over there; there’s a ground sheet in the office of the garage. Cairo can start towing the vehicles to the yard, and we’ll crush them down. Once the street is clear, hopefully by then Jill’s people will be here, and we’ll deal with the bodies and this fuckhead.” I kick Jason again before asking, “Does that sound like a plan to everyone?”

Rochelle and Cairo nod. Jill answers, “Sounds good to me. Let’s tie this piece of shit up to that grating and get to it.”

Cairo and I grab Jason and tie him to the grating in front of one of the shops, then get to helping the women drag bodies onto the tarpaulin. Noni joined us halfway through clean-up, not saying anything, just getting stuck in with the rest of us. We’d heard a plane land followed by a helicopter about ten minutes ago, so we weren’t surprised when Bull pulled up at the clinic and bodies piled out, hurrying into the clinic.



“Keep me updated; I’ll be back to finish helping as soon as I find out what’s going on,” Noni asks us, hurrying to the clinic.

She blows past a group of people who seem to appear out of the shadows, giving them a quick wave and greeting. There were three men and a woman. Two of the men we immediately recognised, and the other two we could see straight away were family to Jill just from their looks, and she threw herself into the arms of the male as soon as he appeared and burst into tears.

“Where the hell did you all come from?” Cairo wonders, holding out his hand to Rory and then Sean Whyte. They laugh and pull us into back-slapping hugs.

“Jaq dropped us off,” Sean answers him.

“It’s good to see you,” I say, tugging Rochelle closer to me. “Roch, we were with this lot in Afghanistan for a little while. Sean, Rory, this is my Old Lady, Rochelle.”

“Nice to meet you, sorry it’s under these circumstances,” Rory replies before turning towards the woman who was rubbing a hand over Jill’s still-heaving shoulders. “That’s Amy—she’s mine and Sean’s. That’s Joel over there; his wife is Julie, and she’s in with Jett, Hannah, and Cassie. Jill is Joel and Amy’s youngest sister.”

We greeted everyone before explaining what we were doing.

“Have you got a backhoe?” Sean asks.

“Yeah,” I reply, “and we’ve got a bunch of trees that need planting as windbreaks over the road near where the campsite will be going.”

Rory claps his hands, “Well, let’s get to it! Sean, Joel, Amy, and I can do that for you if one of you comes and shows us where the trees are and where the trees are to be

planted.”

“I’ll go with you,” Cairo replies, “Let me get the vehicles towed first.”

“What about him?” Joel wants to know, nodding towards the sniffling Jason.

“Oh, he’s mine and he’s croc food. He doesn’t deserve a burial,” Jill answers, all traces of tears gone from her face.

“I’ll take you to the boats,” Rochelle offers up gleefully. Up until now, she’d been quiet, working with the rest of us but not saying much. I’d wondered if it was all too much for her, but at the glee in her voice, I was guessing that it wasn’t bothering her.

“Sounds like a plan to me,” I say, going over to Jason. I untie him, pick him up, and throw him over my shoulder in a fireman’s lift. “Lead the way, ladies.”

It doesn’t take long to get to the boats, and I toss Jason on the floor of the nearest one as Jill and Rochelle get in. Untying the boat, I jump in as Jill starts it up and reverses slowly out into the river.

“How far out are we going?” I ask.

Rochelle and Jill exchange a look, “About two kilometres, we don’t want to feed the crocs too close to the hotel. You don’t want them to get used to being able to feed here, or you’re going to have problems. The farther away, the better.”

Jason was sobbing behind his gag, his eyes wild as he looked around the boat for a way to escape. Rochelle must have realised the same thing because she squats down next to him and pushes his head back so that he can look at her as she speaks to him, “Stop looking for an escape, Jason; there’s nowhere to go. I want you to think on something, though, as you take your last breath. This would have been avoided if

you'd left me alone. Now you've lost everything, and don't think what's left of the gang is going to come looking for you because Dindi is already taking over and will be running it from now on." She flicks his forehead and tells him again, "It's not nice being on the other side of torture, is it? I hope you're remembering every last one of those women that you hurt and killed. Jill's going to make you hurt. Seems fitting that you're taken out by a woman after all the ones you've hurt." Thinking she's finished, I hold my hand out to help her back up, but she hits him with one last thing before she's done. "Oh, and Jared was killed by Dindi. I found that out last night when I got information for the MC on you. Thought you'd want to know that you were weakened from the inside." Taking my hand, she allows me to pull her up.

Jill cuts the boat engine, motioning towards the riverbank. "This is a good place." Along the bank, there are several eyes reflected in the moonlight, and I can just make out the shapes of crocodiles in the dim light.

"How do you want to do this?" I ask Jill.

"Stand him up on that side of the boat, I'll take care of the rest," she replied. Grabbing him by his arms, I lift him when he starts to buck and squirm. Jill hits him on the temple with the back of a knife, dazing him enough for him to slump in my hold.

"This will be quick, so be ready," she warns. Going to his side, she slits deep enough across his stomach that his entrails spill out. There's splashing coming from the bank, and I know the crocs have smelt the blood and are sliding into the water. He comes awake with a muffled scream that's silenced as she slices her knife across his throat, then cuts his arms free and pulls the gag off his mouth. "Let him go," she orders me. Letting him go, he slips over the side of the boat and disappears into the water that starts to swirl as a croc bites onto him and takes him into a death roll.

"Hope he spends an eternity in hell," Rochelle whispers quietly from beside me.

Wrapping my arm around her shoulders, I pull her close to me as we watch the roiling water start to smooth back out.

“He will,” Jill replies. “Bond, can you take us home? I want to check on Blaze.”

“Of course,” I answer. Kissing Rochelle on the forehead, I let her go, smiling as she hugs Jill.

“Come,” she urges her into a seat. “Let’s get you home.”

For tonight at least, the threat had gone. We’d have to see if it stayed that way. Starting the boat, I turned it around and took us home.

### ROCHELLE

That night would always be a memory that was hard to shake, especially as we nearly lost one of our own. And we still may, because once she'd ensured that Blaze was out of danger, Jill had taken a call from someone and then disappeared; nobody knew where she was, not even her own family. Wherever she was, I hoped she was safe.

It took a week to clear up the aftermath of the gang coming into our town. Rogue, Julia, and the children arrived late in the morning of the next day.

I'm not sure who was worse, me or Bond, as we shifted our feet impatiently while we waited for their vehicle to come to a stop. As soon as it did, I flew down the steps to open the back door, and there she was, giving me her beautiful smile. As soon as I saw her, I knew it had all been worth it. She was worth keeping safe. Pressing kisses all over her face, I undid the buckles and took her out. Turning towards Bond, I smiled at the way he was looking at us, like we were his whole world, just like he was ours.

Once everything settled back down, Bond took me to see my dad. After the attempt on him, Jett had moved him to a cottage hospital. It hurt my heart to see how weak he was, and I knew he didn't have much time, but the time we did have I'd made sure would count. I didn't move from his side until he drew his last breath a few days later; those last hours with him were some of the hardest and the best I'd had.

Bond was sleeping on the cot they'd brought in for us. Daisy was in her travel cot next to him. I'd fallen asleep with my head on the bed that my dad lay in but woke to a familiar hand shakily stroking my head.

Lifting my head from the mattress, I looked into my dad's familiar eyes. "Hi, Daddy," I whisper.

"Are you safe, baby girl?" he asks shakily.

"I am, Daddy; both Daisy and I are safe."

"Good," he replies, closing his eyes tiredly. I thought he'd gone to sleep again, but he hadn't. "Are you happy, baby girl?"

Smiling, I took his hand, pressing a kiss to the back of the hand that had once been strong. Strong enough to pick me up and toss me laughing in the air and catch me again. The hand that had held mine through my life, making sure I was as safe as he could make me. Tears brim in my eyes as I reply, "I'm happy, Daddy. I've got a good man, and I've got my baby girl, as well as a family that has taken me in and made me one of them. I'm happy." Wiping at the tears on my face, I bent my head to whisper to him, "You can let go now. Mum's waiting for you. Give her a kiss for me when you see her. I love you, Daddy. Thank you for being the best daddy I could have wished for."

A smile touched his lips as he took a breath and slowly breathed out, "Love you, baby girl."

I waited, but his chest never rose again. Pressing my face to the pillow that his head rested on, I let the tears come, only turning when I felt familiar hands on my shoulders. Bond pulled me up out of my chair and into his arms, holding me tight as I sobbed into his chest.

"I'm so sorry, baby," he whispers against my temple.

"It's okay," I sniffle, "he's with Mum now."

We had a quiet ceremony for him, and then I let his ashes drift down the river just as he'd asked of me. The sun was setting as I let the last of the ashes dribble from the urn. Strong arms encircled my waist, and I leaned back against Bond, who'd been my rock through all this.

"You doing okay, baby?" he whispers in my ear. Resting my head back against his shoulder, I nod, "I'll be okay."

Turning, I wrapped my arms around Bond, looking over his shoulder at the family that I'd found, and my heart hurt a little less. Blaze was still recovering, and while sad that Jill still hadn't reached out, he took comfort from the children who adored him. Daisy was snuggled against his chest; he was her favourite uncle, with Rogue being a close second.

My eyes drifted over the rest of our family: Skinny and Josie laughing about something, Rogue, Julia, Bull, and Noni chatting at the table we'd set up under the trees. The rest of the children running around and playing. Cairo sitting next to Blaze, keeping an eye on his brother.

Yes, my heart was bruised and hurt at the moment, but I knew with all the love that surrounded me, it would hurt a little less every day.

Tilting my head back and smiling, I had to let the man who'd made this all possible know how much I adored him, "I love you, Bond."

Bond returned my smile, whispering as his lips took mine in a soft kiss, "Love you too, baby."

ROCHELLE

Laughing out loud, I watched as Daisy and Samantha crept up on Lana and Bri before they pounced, all four girls falling to the ground laughing happily in a tumble of tanned arms and legs.

The children were playing on the communal playground that had been set up near the new clubhouse. A lot had changed over the years since I'd found myself part of the Crow MC, and I'd loved every single year that I'd been part of this crazy, loving, wonderful family.

Bond and I'd built our house next door to Rogue and Julia, with Skinny on the other side of us. As the years had gone by and the other brothers had found their ladies, they had all built their homes in the acreage set aside by Noni and Bull for just this reason. We were still a small club, but we had plenty of allies if we needed them.

The project I'd started with Noni all those years ago had grown from strength to strength, and we were one of the few hotels that were fully booked all year round except for the two weeks over Christmas. We lost revenue on those two weeks, but they were set aside for family only. Every year, the first generation of Crows would come out, leaving the second generation to run the businesses. It was what I loved most about them. The fact that it didn't matter if you weren't blood; if you were a Crow, then you were family. I'd also got to meet the O'Sheas. Now they were an interesting bunch, although at their core, their values were much the same as the Crows.

The wind picked up slightly and blew my hair into my face. With a frustrated mutter,



I pushed it off my cheeks, stiffening slightly as arms enfolded me, then relaxing against the hard body behind me, knowing instinctively it was Bond.

“What are you doing standing here in the sun, baby? It’s too hot for you to be out in the heat.”

Shrugging a little, I reply, “Just restless, and I’m watching the kids play, thinking about how much my life has changed and how I’ve loved every second of it since you brought me here.”

Bond moved my hair away from my face so that he could look at me. Tilting my head back against his shoulder, I angled my face so that I could see his. My heart swells with love at the soft look on his face.

“I’m glad you’re happy, Rochelle; you deserve every moment of happiness that I can give you.”

Cupping his cheek, “And you have, and you do,” I assure him, giving him a soft kiss. It’s the one thing he should never worry about. I’ve been so happy living my life with him; even on the days that we get frustrated with each other, it’s still better than anything I could have imagined.

Turning so that I could wrap my arms around him, I winced slightly at the foot that seemed to be permanently pushed up against my ribs. Bond cupped my stomach, then rubbed his hand gently over the mound. We’d waited a bit before adding to our family; neither of us had been in a huge hurry, not when there were other babies around to get our baby fix from. But when Daisy turned three, I knew it was time. She was still just as much a daddy’s girl as she’d always been. It made me happy that this one was a boy, so she wouldn’t have to share that spot for a little while yet.

“He’s wild today,” Bond notes as our boy kicked me again.

“He is. Not much longer now though,” I remark, resting my head against Bond’s shoulder. Arms wrapped around him, I sighed softly, closing my eyes as he swayed me gently. Life was good.

“Love you, Bond,” I whisper.

Bond gently squeezed me, pressing his lips to the top of my head. “Love you too, baby. Very much. I’m so glad you’re mine.”

THE END