



Hell's Claim (Hellfire MC #13)

Author: *Elizabeth N. Harris*

Category: Action&Adventure

Description: They mourned him for years believing he was dead, and to Hellfire MC, he was. However, he escaped the darkness that swept his club that nearly cost him his life and discovered a new family. But time marched on, and he needed answers. Hellfire still had a rat, and he needed to hunt it down and get vengeance. Returning to Spearfish was meant to give him answers to his questions, except it gave him much more than he'd expected.

One night blew her mind, but the next day wrecked her confidence. She fled Spearfish, determined to ignore those who were her naysayers and walk her own path in life. She'd not had a family for most of her life, so who needed them now? If they wanted to be negative ninnies, so be it. She didn't need them! Deep down, though, she did need him despite her stubbornness and anger.

Images torture him of a night spent with a temptress, and he finally realises what he forgot. He knows why she ran, and now she's back, and he's not letting her go. The past stalks them both, and they have their own wounds and scars, some physical, some mental, the rest emotional.

The traitor is on the warpath, old foes return, bodies once buried no longer remain so, and cops are breathing down Hellfire's neck. The traitor is actively working to destroy him and his future. Will he win, or will he finally be brought to his knees and lose the woman he loves, his family and the future he's fighting for?

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Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

Sunny

It was time, he decided as he watched the sun rise over the Black Hills. Since he had returned to Hellfire, he'd wallowed. Sure, Sunny had missed his club while he'd been in the army, but he'd had to escape them, too.

He idly rubbed the bullet scar on his chest—the one that had nearly killed him.

Faking his death had been easy. The doctor had been easily convinced, and Sunny had got the fuck out of South Dakota and headed for a straight fourteen years of serving his country.

Fury had been controlling recent events, but the war was yet to come. The backstabbing motherfucker Hellfire still had in their midst might show his face soon.

Sunny was alert to everything and anything.

He was analysing every little thing he saw, and damn it, he was freaking tired.

It was hard being constantly on guard and watchful and more tiring than people realised.

But he could handle it. He was an ex-soldier, and nobody was going to pull the wool over his eyes.

Sunny's gaze drifted to a vision of sheer beauty. How he got so fuckin' lucky, he didn't know. A smile crossed his lips as she pulled herself out of his swimming pool

and caught sight of him.

A glowing smirk was returned to him. “Hey, Dad!” Olivia called.

Sunny’s baby girl. His reason for living. There was nothing he wouldn’t do for her. She was everything special and beautiful in his life. He was back to clean Hellfire for her.

Sunny realised now that Olivia was older, someone might come looking for her. Chance had a thing for family, and Olivia was a Hellfire Princess.

Fuck no. He wouldn’t let that happen. Nobody would harm his daughter.

“Sweetness. What do you have planned today?” he asked.

Olivia wrung her hair out. “I thought I’d hit the mall. And don’t worry, I’ll take Diaz and Ashford with me.”

Sunny allowed a ghost of a smile to cross his lips.

Liv shouldn’t have to live like this. When he’d resigned from the army, four others left at the same time from his unit.

Diaz, Ashford, Ackers, and Solace. Diaz and Solace were women that Sunny wouldn’t ever cross.

He valued his life too much to risk their ire.

When he’d left, he had explained why, and they came to South Dakota with him.

They were a team and would remain so. No—a team was a lie. They were fuckin’

family, and that counted for something.

Sunny should have felt torn. Hellfire was his family too, and then he had his team.

Yet, he didn't. Sunny's loyalty extended to both; he'd never pick one over the other.

He'd get Hellfire clean, as was his duty, and then think about the future.

Maybe it wasn't with Hellfire; who knew? Not him, for sure.

Ackers was trying to get a candidate's place in Hellfire to watch Sunny's six.

Meanwhile, Solace was drawing up plans of priority members of the club to rule them out as suspects.

She'd already hacked into their systems and found nothing incriminating or dodgy.

Now Solace was organising who to stalk first to see if they led to something illicit or secretive.

As soon as Sunny gave the go-ahead, Solace would start her investigation.

Sunny would find the traitor, and when he did, blood would spill.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

S hit was going downhill fast. The MC he loved was taking paths Sunny didn't agree with. He held a rank—enforcer—but had no loyalty to Zeus. Sunny's allegiance was to Chance Michaelson, whose father had started the club with his.

Sunny had been fourteen when his stepdad had been killed by a Hellfire brother. An unknown person had murdered Enigma. Neither he nor Chance talked about their father's deaths.

Chance had still been grieving when there was an attack on the other founders of Hellfire MC. Fourteen-year-old Sunny had lost his dad that night four years ago when Bullet had been shot multiple times. Cutter, Slash's son, had gone on a rampage, Sunny had no doubt that Zeus had sanctioned it.

Chance, then sixteen, and Bear had saved the one last founder Hellfire had, Big Al. Hell, Cutter had even slaughtered his own parent, Slash.

In retaliation, they'd killed Cutter, which marked Sunny's first kill. Fourteen and he'd a body under his belt, something his dad would have hated.

But Sunny owed Bullet that. The man wasn't his blood father but had got with Sunny's mom when he was one.

His sperm donor, a Hellfire brother called Primal, ignored Sunny and had been kicked from the club when Sunny turned four.

Primal had attacked Enigma in a drug-fuelled haze.

Needless to say, Sunny didn't remember him.

In the years since Bullet's death, Sunny had grown up. Eighteen to Chance's twenty, they had both matured quickly. Then they received fuckin' awful news.

Arrow, Rage MC's founder, had died from cancer. Chance had been working with Arrow to reclaim Hellfire. The fight had just become harder. No way would Arrow's son claim the presidency. Drake Michaelson was still a kid. Sunny didn't see a clear path to Rage and Hellfire staying clean.

In the four years since Zeus had stolen presidency from Chance, Hellfire had been on a steady decline.

It hadn't happened at once, but gradually, with good members blacking their ink and shit replacing them.

Over half the club was stoned most nights; cheap, tacky pussy was in abundance.

Sunny was sure ninety per cent of the bitches attending had some sort of sexual disease.

Booze flowed freely, and Zeus made bad choices.

In Enigma's time, all brothers worked and paid into the MC a cut of their wages.

Most of them had left, so Zeus used illegal means to get money.

He'd been running pussy for three years, much to our disgust, and that was the tipping point for the decent brothers.

Last month, we'd breached into drugs, and now Zeus was making noises about guns.

Chance had started looking outside the club to recruit brothers that thought the same as us.

Shotgun and Levi, our friends from childhood, had joined us a year ago.

A quiet lad we had known at school, Chatter, would join next year.

He was another old friend from kindergarten.

Chance was searching for more decent guys to bring in, and we'd slowly start taking Hellfire back from the filth that infected it.

This would be a drawn-out battle. But that was too fuckin' slow, in Sunny's opinion.

Sunny wanted Zeus and his band of thugs gone.

Despite Zeus's clique denied knowing anything about Cutter's killing spree, Chance and Sunny did not believe him.

Much like they didn't believe Zeus and his buddies knew shit about Enigma's murder.

Some days, Sunny felt like pulling a gun and just shooting the fuckers dead, but his father deserved justice. True retribution would come by Sunny's hands. Cutter hadn't killed Bullet of his own cognisance. That was Sunny's word of the day, and he's used it. Kudos to him. Whatever.

Cutter was a sheep, not a leader. The fuck had been ordered to murder Bullet, Slash, and Stingray. Sunny shook his head. What type of animal could kill his own father? Cutter must have been snorting more than coke.

“Sunny!” Zeus bellowed.

Sunny looked up with narrowed eyes. Chance, Levi, and Big Al glanced in his direction.

“What?” Sunny drawled rudely.

Zeus swivelled his head to where Sunny was sitting. His eyes fixed on him, and Sunny straightened his shoulders. Sunny recognised that mood. Zeus planned to fuck with someone, and he’d chosen Sunny.

“I wanted fried chicken. Go get it,” Zeus demanded.

Sunny held his gaze as Zeus’s little clique chuckled.

“Yeah, that ain’t happening,” Sunny drawled.

“Say what?” Zeus snapped.

“Get a prospect. I’m a full brother. I don’t do food runs, the prospects do. Oi, Grinder, get Pres fried chicken,” Sunny called out. He deliberately picked Grinder, knowing he was Zeus’s cousin.

Zeus smiled.

“Didn’t ask him. Asked you, fucker,” he sneered.

“And I don’t do scut, I’m patched in,” Sunny insisted.

“You’ll do as I fuckin’ order!” Zeus screamed. “Or end up in the ring. Hound needs a workout.”

“Hammer, go clean the toilets, there’s shit everywhere. Anarchy, I want the kitchen scrubbed spotless, and Matches, the trash needs emptying,” Chance said from behind Sunny.

Zeus rose to his feet. “What the fuck are you doing, Michaelson? The inner circle doesn’t do scut work!”

“If Sunny has to, then so do the others. And if they refuse, then they’re in the ring.” Chance smiled. “And in case you forgot, it’s Chance. That’s what my patch name states.”

“Are you fuckin’ with me?” Zeus screeched, going red.

“Sunny is an enforcer. He’s leadership!” Chance said calmly.

“I’ll have your—”

“Watch your mouth!” Chance snapped as Zeus’s eyes narrowed. “I’m a legacy, whether you are president or not.”

“And you don’t outrank me,” Zeus sneered. He stroked the president’s patch. “You’re just VP.”

“If you wanna go for a vote, let’s do it. Right now. I ain’t a kid anymore, and I have a founder behind me,” Chance taunted.

“Watch your back, you’re dangerously close to mutiny,” Zeus warned.

“Since when were we on a boat?” Big Al demanded.

“Disrespect to a legacy has consequences. Check the charter, then come back to me,”

Chance retorted and squeezed Sunny's shoulder. "Let's ride. I need a decent fuckin' drink."

Sunny got to his feet. Eighteen or not, Sunny wouldn't bow to Zeus.

Straightening his shoulders, he glared at Grinder. "Gave you an order. Your president wants fried chicken. Fetch."

"I won't be a prospect forever, Sunny," Grinder warned.

"We'll see," Sunny taunted. "Now go."

Grinder mumbled under his breath and sent Sunny a dire look. Confidently, Sunny walked out. Zeus was heading for a fall; he just had to wait.

1995

Sunny's skin crawled as he took the money from the whore in front of him.

She gave him a gap-toothed smile. "How about a blow job, boyo?" she offered.

"Not for me, Merry. You had any further trouble from that John?"

"Nah. Seems the beating you gave him, son, did the trick. Me and the girls ain't seen him since," Merry replied with that toothy grin. Shit, she needed to see a dentist, Sunny thought.

"Anything else?" Sunny asked.

"There's a new girl. She shouldn't be on the streets. Men are eyeing her, and I don't think she's on the game, but she's close," Merry said.

“Why’s that my problem?”

Merry eyed Sunny. “I remember your Pa. He was a good man, and none of this bullshit would have happened with him or Enigma around. Bullet would have got her safe. Hambone and Greaser have been watching her. It’s mere days before they take her,” Merry warned.

Sunny’s gut churned. He knew exactly what Merry meant. Hambone and Greaser would rape the girl and then pimp her out. If she fought, they’d drug her up and sell her that way.

“Sure she’s innocent?” he asked.

“Don’t know about that. But she’s not a street girl. Get her safe. I’ve seen enough shit in the last decade. Do not need that kid on my conscience,” Merry proclaimed, and Sunny nodded.

“Point her out,” he ordered.

“She’s with DeeDee,” Merry said. “We’ve been keeping an eye on her.”

“DeeDee at her usual spot?”

“Yup.”

“Take care, Merry,” Sunny said and headed towards DeeDee’s area. It was a minute’s walk away, and he left his bike, knowing Merry would watch it. As he turned the corner, Sunny heard a girl pleading, and his gut tightened even further.

“Please, let me go. I’m not a whore!”

“You soon will be, babe, just spread those pretty thighs and stop fighting,” Hambone growled, and Sunny sped up. He spotted them down an alleyway and noted Greaser was with her, too. With a swift punch, Sunny took Greaser out and headed for Hambone.

He’d managed to knock the girl down and was struggling to rip her clothes off. Sunny wrenched him back and sent him flying.

“What the fuck?” Hambone exclaimed, and Sunny noticed his blown-out pupils. The fucker was high. The girl scrabbled backwards, sobbing.

“Yeah, what the hell?” Sunny spat as he stood in front of her.

“She’s fresh meat and is gonna be working for us,” Hambone boomed.

Sunny thought quickly. The girl was crying quietly and had curled into a small ball.

“She’s my woman, and you attacked her,” Sunny snapped. He walked backwards, keeping an eye on his two club brothers, and knelt near the shaking girl. “If you wish to escape this intact and not be forced into whoring, go along with me,” Sunny murmured.

Wide blue eyes stared at him as she wiped tears from her cheeks and nodded. Sunny scooped her up with a warning expression and turned as Hambone came at him.

“You’re going to share!” Hambone snapped, agitated.

“This is my woman. Mine. I don’t ever share,” Sunny retorted.

“You’re fuckin’ a whore?” Greaser demanded, confused.

“She’s not a ho. She was working undercover for me, checking the whores weren’t skimping us on their cuts,” Sunny replied.

Hambone’s eyes narrowed, and Sunny wondered how high he was. Greaser wasn’t as far gone and stared at the sobbing girl. She was stiff in Sunny’s arms, and he needed her to relax. Sunny dug his fingers into her thigh as a warning.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

“Bitch doesn’t seem keen to be near you,” Greaser stated and stepped forward. “Maybe you ain’t giving her the good shit. Ten minutes with me, and she’ll know a real man!”

“Don’t make me sick. Why the hell would my girl fuck you? You’re fat, smell, and just fuckin’ repulsive,” Sunny retorted.

Hambone and Greaser stared at him with hate.

“Only one of you, Sunny. Walk away before you get hurt. If she’s really your woman, then you can have her when we’ve done. Who knows, she might like our cocks,” Hambone slurred, grabbing himself and thrusting.

Sunny swore he was sick in his mouth. The girl hid her face in his neck and tightened her arms around him.

“Leave, now!” a voice ordered, and Sunny relaxed.

“What?” Hambone complained.

“I said fuckin’ walk, there’ll be consequences for this,” Chance snarled as Hambone and Greaser turned.

“You might be—”

Chance didn’t argue. He grabbed Hambone and cut his sentence off. With one vicious shove, Chance smashed Hambone against the wall.

“Take your woman and leave. From now on in, no more undercover work,” Chance ordered Sunny as Bear appeared behind him.

Sunny nodded and quickly left, heading in the direction of his bike. Chance had clearly overheard the last part and was supporting his bullshit lie, but Sunny was in trouble. What the hell was he going to do with this girl?

“What’s your name?”

“Julie,” she whispered. “Put me down. I can manage.” “You just bought me a shitload of problems. If I release you, those assholes will hunt you. Now I’m responsible for you,” Sunny complained.

“I’ll hide at DeeDee’s,” Julie insisted.

“Who do you think DeeDee works for? Shit, Julie, you might be young, but you’re no fool. How old are you?”

“Nineteen,” Julie replied.

“Bullshit,” Sunny said.

“I’m nineteen! That’s the truth,” Julie exclaimed.

Sunny heard her ire and shock, but he also felt her body shaking in his arms. “Julie. I’m not going to hurt you.

I haven’t put my neck on the line to attack you myself.

But we’ve got a problem, I’ve declared you off-limits as my woman.

If you run now, I'll get a beatdown, and they'll hunt you down.

Before you know it, you'll be spreading your legs as a drugged-up club whore.

"Julie flinched. "I'll never be that. "

"You won't be given a choice. What just happened, Julie, was a mere taste of what would lie in wait for you should my lie be exposed," Sunny explained.

He reached his bike and nodded at Merry.

Merry's eyes were huge, but she kept her mouth shut.

"Nobody rides on the back of a brother's bike unless they're their old lady. Julie, I need you to get on mine," Sunny murmured.

"I don't understand. Just let me go, please," Julie begged with tears.

"If I ride away without you, those men will come back and attack you. And I won't be able to stop their rape attempt a second time. You got two choices, me or them," Sunny stated.

There wasn't time to mess around with Julie. She either needed to get with the programme or walk. Sunny swung a leg over his bike and waited. As he started his engine, Julie sprang into action and leapt at him.

Sunny helped her onto the back of his Harley and rode off.

Chance

Sunny had just nearly fucked up badly. Luckily, Chance had heard Sunny's lies and

backed him.

Chance guessed what had happened. Hambone and Greaser had seen a pretty girl and decided to take something they weren't offered.

How those two hadn't ended up inside was anybody's guess.

Chance needed them out of the way. He knew Hambone and Greaser were sloppy and had raped five women.

Chance didn't have a problem using whatever means were necessary to get his club back. He watched Sunny ride past with the girl on his bike. Another innocent to protect. Chance headed down the road and hit a phone box. With a spiteful grin, Chance dialled three numbers.

Sunny – 1996

“Hambone and Greaser went down for fifteen years!” Zeus screamed at them all.

Sunny didn't dare look at anyone but the irate president.

“What did you expect to happen?” Chance asked calmly. He was lounging in his chair, showing Zeus—or this parody of church—no respect.

“What?” Zeus hissed. Sunny wondered if he'd have a heart attack and do them all a favour. Zeus's face was bright red, and his veins stood out in stark relief.

“They raped several women and left their cum inside them. The police had DNA on profile and matched them. For fuck's sake, it was a mere matter of time!”

“They're your brothers,” Zeus screamed. He looked crazed as he spun on Sunny.

“Was that bitch of yours involved?”

“Julie? What the fuck are you talking about?” Sunny demanded, confused.

“They attacked her. Did she tell the police?” Zeus spat.

“Did you sit in the same courtroom as me? Did you see Julie take the stand?” Sunny said incredulously.

“Don’t make yourself look more stupid, Zeus,” Big Al sneered, shaking his head.

“Your brothers are behind bars tonight, and I want to know why!”

“Because they’re filthy rapists,” Tiny snapped.

At the same time, Sunny spoke. “Ain’t no brother of mine.”

Zeus spun on him. “They wear a Hellfire patch!” he yelled.

“I’ll never call two rapists’ brothers. There’s plenty of willing women, you don’t need to rape one. I will not stand by a cunt who rapes. What you going to do about it?” Sunny challenged.

“I’ll whip the skin from your body,” Zeus screamed.

“I wouldn’t worry about Sunny. From what I heard, the cops are watching several members of the club.

I told you to keep a tight leash on your minions.

You failed. All you care about is booze and drugs.

Great, in the meantime, the clubs falling apart.

Those motherfuckers are the first Hellfire members to end up behind bars. More will follow,” Chance warned.

Zeus ignored him, focused on Sunny. “You’ll acknowledge them as brothers.”

“Nope. Do what you want, but I ain’t doing that,” Sunny retorted.

“Can we get back to the matter at hand?” Chance bellowed, letting everybody see a hint of temper.

“I’m talking, and I’m the president!” Zeus snarled.

“Yeah, you need to keep reminding everyone of that. Makes you wonder how fuckin’ insecure you are!

You’ve got a massive problem. You didn’t maintain control of your people.

The cops are looking to lock several more brothers up for crimes they’ve committed,” Chance thundered and banged his fists on a table.

“Well, if we’re a one percenter club, we should have members banged up,” Zeus replied.

Sunny glanced around as eyes widened. Nobody agreed with Zeus, and even in his drunken rage, he realised that.

“You saying you want brothers behind bars?” Chance demanded incredulously.

“No! I’m saying most one-percenters have a few men locked up,” Zeus answered.

“You’d be okay with Grinder doing time?” Sunny poked, and Zeus spun on him.

“You’ve no fuckin’ respect for your patch. I want your stripes,” Zeus hissed.

“Not happening. Sunny is entitled to a position as a legacy. Check the charter. You can’t take his role from him,” Big Al interrupted.

Big Al looked bored as fuck, Sunny thought

“Then he will go in the ring with Hammer, Hound, Spider, and Anarchy for lack of respect,” Zeus snapped.

“Not a problem,” Chance said. “Grinder disrespected me last week. He’ll be facing Levi, Tiny, Shotgun, and Diesel.”

Sunny began laughing at the look on Zeus’s face.

“You can also add Sooty and Brady to that,” Chance added.

Sooty, who was another enforcer, nearly fell off his chair as he gaped at Tiny. Brady, who was treasurer, swallowed hard.

Zeus went even redder as Chance leaned forward. “How many times do I need to repeat myself, asshole? Actions have consequences. Go after one of mine, I’ll take three of yours. Thought that was plain by now.”

“One of yours? They all belong to me,” Zeus yelled.

“Yeah? You don’t have their respect. I do.

You’re nothing but a fat, drunken slob who holds the vote of president by numbers

alone.

Only because you bring in women, drugs, booze, and turn a blind eye to the criminality of those you surround yourself with.

A reckoning is coming, Zeus. Time is ticking,” Chance warned.

Despite the fact he was in for a world of pain, Sunny smiled. The club would be cleaned, one way or another.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

Sunny moved swiftly to take Big Al's back as his brother wrenched the young woman from Dodge. He'd just got to Big Al's side when he lashed out and stabbed Dodge in his throat.

The girl, no doubt jailbait, screamed, and Big Al spun on Zeus as the confrontation blew up.

The kid was another Julie. This time, Big Al had stepped up to save her. The escalation continued until a near fight broke out, but it ended when Chance waded in, and Big Al left with the woman.

Sunny didn't bother hanging around and headed out on his bike.

Julie had been nineteen, as she said. Their initial plan had been to live together for six months and then say they'd split up, and Sunny would give her money to get the fuck out of state.

Julie had been loathe to accept this, but when Sunny explained exactly what would happen to them both, she soon agreed.

Especially as the MC threw a welcome party, and she got to witness first-hand how Hellfire treated whores and hang arounds.

Julie found herself shocked as Zeus had made moves on her and been rebuffed by Chance and Sunny very firmly. Since then, Sunny kept her well away from the club. Julie understood he was trying to free Hellfire from the filth infecting it, and somehow, they'd ended up in a real relationship.

At first, Zeus had mocked Sunny for heading home each night. But Chance used it as an opportunity to keep Sunny clean. In fact, Chance was starting to buck against Zeus a lot as time ticked on. They'd slowly gained numbers and were, more often than not, calling in tips to the cops.

Chance had forced a vote and lost again. The lure of easy sex, booze, and drugs was too alluring, and Sunny could see the frustration in Chance's eyes. It was beginning to dawn on Sunny that the only way to rid Hellfire of the scum was to kill them.

Funnily enough, he wasn't averse to that.

1999

They'd almost had him!

Zeus had spat the dummy out at Big Al marrying Tati and threatened to change the charter.

Sunny had nearly suffocated holding his breath, but that little fuck, Beaker, fresh out of prison for assault, sneered at Chance.

The fucker had clearly studied the charter, and now Zeus had knowledge in his corner.

Sunny ground his teeth together in frustration. Instead, of forcing Zeus out of position because he'd broken the charter, Sunny got to work his anger out him in the ring instead. Not quite a win but it was somewhat of a consolation prize.

When Sunny returned home, Julie was waiting. She paced, and Sunny wrapped her in his arms.

“Babe, what’s up?” he asked, rubbing her back.

Julie held on tightly. “Some woman insulted me in a shop today. I was wearing your cut, and she sneered at me and said some cruel things. She also mentioned what scum Hellfire was,” Julie whimpered, and tears leaked down her face.

“Don’t wear it in public again. Honestly, I ain’t proud to be part of them, so why the hell should you wear my claim? We nearly had that fuck today, we were so close,” Sunny replied, soothing her.

“Sunny, I’ve got dinner on. Want to talk?” Julie asked.

“Love to, babe,” Sunny answered, kissing her. Julie sank into his arms and relaxed. Damn, he cared a lot for her. They’d make a happy life together once Hellfire was clean.

Sunny - 2003

“I’m pregnant,” Julie whispered.

Sunny stared, shocked. “What?”

“Sunny, you knocked me up.”

“But you’re on the pill, and I wrap up,” Sunny exclaimed.

“Well, it seems those antibiotics I had for that infection in my finger cancelled out my birth control. And we did have that condom split,” Julie snapped.

Sunny reared back. Julie was mad at him, as in seriously pissed. “You’re not happy?”

“Who in their right mind would bring a child to this shitty situation? Hellfire’s no cleaner than the day we met.

I spend half my time waiting for a call saying you’ve been arrested and the rest expecting a death notification.

Tatianna is the same. Plus, Tati, Willa, Amy, and I rarely go to the clubhouse or anything else.

They’re all as afraid as I am,” Julie spat.

Sunny closed his eyes. Julie was right. He couldn’t deny it. They were the only four old ladies on Chance’s side of Hellfire. Willa was Whiskey’s old lady, and Amy was Chaser’s.

“Things are coming to a head, babe. This time next year—”

“Don’t say it. For fuck’s sake, do you know how many times you’ve said it? It never comes, never happens, and now I’m bringing a child into this shit. Something’s got to give, make it right, Sunny, or I’ll leave with the kid,” Julie threatened and tore from his arms.

Sunny froze on the spot. He’d never let Julie disappear with his kid. Never.

October 2003

Julie screamed as she pushed, and Sunny supported her back. She collapsed against him, panting with her face screwed up in pain. Sunny wiped her brow and sent the midwife a quick look. Julie had been in agony for hours, and the labour didn’t seem to be progressing.

“Get me a fuckin’ doctor,” he snarled as he placed the nitrous oxide mask over Julie’s mouth. Julie slumped in his arms as he supported her.

“I’ve paged someone,” the woman said nervously and wrung her hands together.

“I don’t give a fuck, get one now!” Sunny yelled just as Julie’s eyes rolled up. “Shit! Julie’s unconscious! Help her!”

The midwife sprang into action and hit a buzzer, sounding an alarm.

“Off the bed!” she snapped as Sunny climbed off. She lay Julie flat as the machine hooked up to her alarmed.

The door flew open, and a doctor rushed in. He checked everything in a blink of an eye and began calling orders. Before Sunny knew exactly what was happening, Julie was wheeled out of the room, and Sunny was left alone, staring after her.

???

“All dead? The kids included?” Sunny whispered, appalled. He’d phoned Chance to update him and instead was receiving the shock of his life.

“Yeah. Willa stayed alive long enough to give names. We know who was behind their attack.”

“Make them hurt,” Sunny seethed. He was on edge knowing Julie was fighting somewhere for her life—and their child’s. Now he was hearing news of murder. Whiskey, Willa, Chaser, Amy, and their kids were all gone. Brutally slaughtered.

“We’re taking Hellfire back,” Chance promised.

“Heard that before,” Sunny groaned bitterly.

“It’s happening,” Chance said grimly. “Keep me updated on Julie.”

Chance cut the line. As much as Sunny wanted to believe him, he didn’t. Zeus and the others had escaped the shit they had caused too many times.

“Mr Barlow?” a woman asked, and Sunny spun.

“How is she?” he demanded, his eyes going to the doctor. Her name badge said Dr Leese.

“The baby is fine; she’s a girl. She is a couple of weeks early, but she’s strong.” Leese spoke solemnly.

Sunny broke into a grin. “A girl!” he exclaimed happily.

Leese nodded but didn’t smile.

“What’s wrong?” Sunny asked, happiness fading.

“I’m sorry. But Miss Kershaw bled heavily during the delivery.

We carried out a caesarean section, but unfortunately, the damage was done.

Miss Kershaw is alive but has little chance of survival.

Come and say your goodbyes,” Leese said bluntly.

Sympathy shone on her face as Sunny stepped backwards, reeling in shock.

“Julie’s dying? She can’t, she’s too young,” Sunny spluttered. “She’s only twenty-nine.”

“Mr Barlow, time is a necessity. I’m sorry, but there’s nothing else we can do. We’ve made Miss Kershaw comfortable, but she has little time left,” the doctor said softly.

Sunny stared at her. Julie couldn’t be dying. Women didn’t die in childbirth, not in today’s society. Leese took his arm, and Sunny looked down.

Mutely, he allowed her to lead him to Julie’s private room.

“I suggest, Mr Barlow, you tell Miss Kershaw whatever she needs to hear. The baby is in with her, so at least Miss Kershaw got to see her daughter,” Leese said. Sunny nodded and opened the door.

He wasn’t prepared for what he saw. Julie lay in bed, deathly pale, tucked into a clean nightdress.

Beside her was the baby, with a midwife standing close in case Julie dropped their daughter.

Julie smiled weakly as Sunny strode over.

He walked around to the other side and sat, drawing Julie into his arms. The midwife helped keep the baby in Julie’s embrace.

“She’s beautiful, she looks like you,” Julie whispered.

“God, I hope not, she needs to look like her momma,” Sunny murmured, kissing her forehead.

“Need you to promise to put her first, even before Hellfire,” Julie muttered. Her eyes closed as she hugged the infant close.

“Always.”

“I loved you, Sunny. I know you never cared for me the same way, but you became my world. But I was never yours. Love Olivia like you didn’t me,” Julie’s voice trailed off.

“Baby, I…” the words stuck in Sunny’s throat. He couldn’t lie as much as he wished to.

Julie smiled.

“You gave me everything you could. Sunny, you cared a lot, that was enough. One day, you’ll fall head over heels, and you deserve to,” Julie whispered sadly. A tear trickled down her cheek.

“Julie, I…” he began after a few moments, but Julie sagged forward, and her arms slackened.

The nurse caught Olivia, and Sunny let out an anguished cry.

They’d had ten years together. Sunny wished he could have spoken the words Julie so needed to hear, but he’d failed in the end. Julie had died knowing he hadn’t loved her like she deserved.

Bitterness rose in his throat as he held Julie’s body and bade her goodbye. She’d have a quiet funeral with those who knew and cared about her. Sunny’s daughter was now his priority. Julie had given Olivia her first name, Sunny gave Olivia her second: Julie, after her mother.

Sunny – March 2004

“If you tell them I’m still breathing, Doc, you’ll have bloodshed in your corridors. The fuckers who shot me won’t stop until I’m gone. Go out and tell my brothers I never made it,” Sunny croaked. He was barely conscious and bleeding from multiple gunshots.

“I won’t lie!” the man exclaimed.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

“I’ll pay you one hundred grand. Tell them I’m dead,” Sunny tried to snarl but failed. Shit. He might die after all this, anyway.

“Get him to theatre,” a voice ordered as everything went black.

The last thing Sunny saw was Zeus’s laughing face as he shot him.

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“You’re officially dead,” the doctor announced, and Sunny noted his name. Doctor Gibbons.

“Feels like I am,” Sunny grunted as pain swept through his body.

“What I’ve done today could get me struck off. Hellfire has been given a false certificate, but naturally, I haven’t actually registered it. That is a step too far,” Gibbons stated.

“Doc, I’ll pay you,” Sunny murmured.

“I didn’t do it for that. Your mom and daughter are here. That’s why I faked your death. Leave this gang warfare you’re involved in and be a real man. Put your damn child first!” Doc Gibbons hissed.

Sunny froze in place. He’d promised Julie to put Olivia first and hadn’t. Sunny had carried on fighting a war he had no business being in. Sunny was a fuckin’ father and had failed Olivia. Sure, Cherry would have taken care of Liv, if he had died, but his

baby girl didn't deserve to be an orphan.

He needed to focus on Liv.

Sunny nodded as Doc Gibbons left, and his mom rushed in. Cherry looked weary and frightened.

"Sunny!" she exclaimed.

"Mom, I'm fine," Sunny murmured.

"So was Bullet!" Cherry retorted, and Sunny flinched. "Then I lost him."

"Not losing me."

"Zeus came to the house; he was out of his head. I barely escaped with Olivia. Zeus was screaming he was going to kill us both," Cherry whispered.

"Listen carefully, Doc Gibbons told Hellfire I'm dead, on my orders.

We are getting out of Rapid City. This war has gone on too long, and I won't risk Liv.

Leave tonight and head for the safehouse.

Nobody knows I have it. Once we're settled, we'll get someone to pack up the house and put everything in storage," Sunny said.

"We can't. Chance expects us to be there for the burial.

He's putting brothers on us for protection, Bear and Tiny.

I'm going to start packing and tell him there's nothing left for me here.

Chance won't argue that. Olivia is a princess, not a legacy.

Chance won't be bothered by me taking her.

I can get everything packed and move in a couple of weeks.

But if I don't attend my own son's funeral, people will question why," Cherry said.

"Mom, I don't like this..."

"Sunny, I've not liked crap since Bullet was murdered. There was more to Bullet's death than that prick Cutter losing the plot. I think Zeus and cronies ordered the founder's hits, and I believe he was behind Enigma's murder. Can't prove shit, but those are my feelings," Cherry stated.

"I know," Sunny agreed as his eyes closed.

"Sunny, I can't lose you, too," Cherry whispered.

"Make your plans. Mom, we're leaving," Sunny mumbled as he faded away.

Callie – 2000

"That child is freaky, she's too quiet," Mrs Lumnek muttered to her husband.

I hid a sigh. What was I meant to do? I didn't understand the rules. A lot of my foster parents told me to shush and be a good girl. Now, this lady was complaining I was quiet. I was confused.

“Callie is probably feeling shy,” Mrs Jefferson said with a half grin. I didn’t like her smile. It looked like a crocodile. And I’d been informed that crocodiles eat little girls.

“Does she do anything but sit there?” Mr Lumnek asked.

“Of course! Callie loves drawing and playing games, she likes to read too,” Mrs Jefferson spoke quickly.

I frowned. Actually, I didn’t like either of them. Games where people were cruel and made fun of you. Games were not nice. Reading was fun, not games.

“Honestly, I don’t think we’d be a good match. Mrs Jefferson, we want a child with some spark of life, not a wooden doll,” Mrs Lumnek stated.

I lost interest. I hadn’t liked them either. They smelled funny and hugged too much. Hugs were bad, and I hated them. But they weren’t as awful as slaps. Those hurt. Cuddles didn’t feel nice, but at least they didn’t cause any pain.

“Don’t forget, Callie has been in care since she was a baby. Naturally, she’s trying to be quiet to prove she won’t be a bother,” Mrs Jefferson explained.

“Yeah, not our cup of tea. There was another child we wanted to view,” Mrs Lumnek replied.

Mrs Jefferson’s veins in her neck bulged. “View? These aren’t puppies, Mrs Lumnek! They are children with thoughts and feelings. Callie just fully understood everything you said!”

Mrs Lumnek glanced at me, and I held her gaze. I wasn’t frightened of her.

She looked away with red in her cheeks. Mrs Lumnek didn’t like Mrs Jefferson

telling her off, and for that moment, I liked Mrs Jefferson. I don't know why she wouldn't leave me where I was. Why did I need a home?

Callie 2005

Mr Timmons howled as he clutched his hand to his chest while his other cupped his man parts.

I scowled fiercely as he rolled on the floor.

Mrs Timmons came in and shrieked at me.

"I won't let him touch me! It's wrong!" angrily, I screamed in return.

I knew what Mr Timmons wanted, and it had a name.

Child molestation. Holding my ripped clothes together, I proceeded to lecture them as sirens wailed.

The police rushed in, and the Timmons looked terrified.

So they should. I'd already called them and explained what was going on.

Mr Timmons had cried in the background as I made the call.

An officer grabbed me and wrapped me in a huge coat.

In temper, I pulled away. I didn't want a man touching me. I'd been touched enough. Six months in this house was plenty. The policeman was speaking, but I wasn't paying attention. Instead, I watched as Mr Timmons was hauled off and Mrs Timmons made all sorts of wild accusations.

“You better check Sadie, he raped her,” I said dully. The man looked horrified and called to a colleague. The other officer rushed upstairs, and Sadie screamed.

Yeah, somehow, I couldn’t blame her.

2007

“Callie, I don’t understand it. You’re a beautiful, educated, polite girl. Yet nobody wants to adopt you or foster you. It doesn’t make sense,” Mrs Jefferson said, nibbling her bottom lip. Mrs Jefferson sat at my hospital bed as I winced in pain.

“That bitch was beating me, I wasn’t going to let her continue,” I whispered. I was laid on my side because my back was so badly hurt.

“Of course not!” Mrs Jefferson exclaimed.

My latest foster mother had issues, and they included beating her foster kids with a metal chain. I had attacked her in return and gained the upper hand. But she’d torn my back open. I’d had stitches and was being pumped full of drugs. But I still felt that chain lashing into my fragile skin.

“You’re not at fault, Callie,” Mrs Jefferson said.

“I know that. What about that lady that keeps adopting all those children?” I asked.

“Phoenix Michaelson? You’d be very lucky, and I don’t think she’s taking anymore in,” Mrs Jefferson replied.

“Then it seems you are stuck with me. Just like the last twelve years.”

“Callie, I’d never say it like that!” Mrs Jefferson exclaimed.

“Why not? I’m your failure. You’ve adopted or long-term fostered all your kids. And apart from this bitch and the Timmons, they seem to be with good families,” I said.

Mrs Jefferson’s face changed. Her expression grew dark, and intense dislike crossed it.

The Timmons had been charged, and both were jailed.

An in-depth investigation had revealed other children they’d abused.

Sadie had been re-homed and finally adopted six months ago.

Me? I was left on the shelf again. I didn’t know what I was doing wrong, but I’d done it my entire life.

The longest I had ever stayed in a home was a year.

The Abbotts had been planning to adopt me when Mrs Abbott fell pregnant, and it was bye-bye Callie.

At twelve, I considered myself an adult.

Life was simply miserable. According to the older kids, it wouldn’t improve either.

Nobody wished to parent children over seven or eight.

We were known as the unwanted. That was the story of my life... unwanted.

I doubted it would ever change now. Twelve years old, and I was fully aware of how cruel this world was. Lessons had been learned.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:39 pm

Happy fucking eighteenth to me, I thought as I stood at the bottom of the steps of the last care home I'd ever live in.

Mrs Jefferson had said goodbye and handed me an envelope.

Inside was a credit card in my name with two thousand dollars on.

It was pretty kind of her. Mrs Jefferson had also arranged an apartment for me and a job.

Strangely, I had left school with top marks.

Mrs Jefferson had been as surprised as anyone, well apart from me.

I knew I was clever; it was just nobody had ever showed an interest in me.

Now, I was legally an adult and basically on my own.

No one cared if I lived or died or even if I turned up for work tomorrow.

If I was a weaker person, I'd throw a pity party.

Not me. Something inside me was stronger than that.

I picked up my backpack with all my worldly goods in and headed for the bus. Luckily, it stopped outside my apartment.

I'd secured a job as an intern in an office. I was quick to learn and thankful for employment. Some kids left the care home and ended up on the streets, drugs and whoring soon took care of them. I didn't care how bad shit got, I'd never prostitute my body.

The wind was chill today and blew through my thin coat.

Thanks to my less-than-ideal childhood, I knew how to budget and manage money.

I'd buy some smart outfits with the card Mrs Jefferson had given me and a new coat.

It wouldn't do to arrive at a new job looking like what I was—an unwanted kid who nobody cared about.

2017

I stared at Belinda, the HR officer for the company I worked for.

"I don't understand," I stammered.

"Callie, when you signed the contract, you agreed to no interoffice relationships," Belinda said slowly.

"I'm not retarded, I just don't remember that clause," I snapped.

"It's there. And you've admitted to having a relationship with Adam Drake."

"Is he being fired, too?" I demanded, anger flaring.

"Well, he is—"

“In other words, no. Because he’s management. Let me inform you I know I’m not Adam’s only girlfriend who worked here. Did you sack all of them too? You have a predator working here. And you’re as guilty as him for defending him,” I hissed.

Belinda had the grace to look shamefaced. “We’re giving you six months’ severance pay—”

“And in the meantime, I get blacklisted like all his other ex-girlfriends? Oh, the girls in the office couldn’t wait to tell me Adam’s past. You are as culpable as him.

Adam will keep getting away with this shit, and young women will have their lives ruined.

I wonder what a lawyer would say!” I continued and got to my feet.

“You can’t sue us!” Belinda cried.

“Wanna bet? You’ll be hearing from my lawyer!”

With all my dignity, I left the room. I passed the offices of the managers and saw their knowing looks. Yet another woman who’d fallen victim to the office Lothario.

Adam was nowhere to be seen. That wasn’t a surprise.

I was furious. I’d been up for promotion and everything and honestly had not known about that rule.

If I had, Adam could have done one. I’d been flattered by his attention, and, over time, he’d gained my trust and worn me down.

Adam had known what he was doing was wrong and hadn’t batted an eyelid. I wasn’t

going to take this lying down.

2018

I despaired as I left my apartment, which had been in a semi-decent area, and headed towards my new shitty apartment.

Even though I'd won my case against Adam, I had been blacklisted.

Who'd want to hire someone who slept with management and then sued the company?

That was how I'd been labelled. The money I'd won wasn't much, but I'd been vindicated, and other women were suing.

Sure, the job hadn't been brilliant, and it hadn't paid enough to let me build up savings, but it had allowed me to live like a human being. My payout showed just how low on the totem pole I was. Two steps above poverty. And I was in trouble.

The compensation had kept me afloat until now.

I was down on my luck and spiralling. A local restaurant had given me a waitress job, but it didn't even come close to my old wage.

I had to downsize and sell most of my furniture.

The world was grinding me down, and I couldn't stop it, no matter how hard I fought.

Standing in the street, I blew my cheeks out and bent my head.

I had to remember I was a fighter. But somehow, my strength seemed to have fled.

I'd gone from a nice job to a waitress making minimum wage.

How had that happened? I wasn't stupid. I should have seen the warning signs with Adam, but I hadn't.

The unwanted child had raised her head when Adam had showed affection, and, like an idiot, I had fallen for it. My entire life, I'd been ground down, ignored, a burden, and here was Adam with candle-lit dinners and romance. My inner self had gone after him like a dog with a hambone. Fool!

Why the hell hadn't I remembered that nobody really wanted me?

They wanted shit from me, but they never actually needed or cared about me.

I tried straightening my shoulders but couldn't.

The world had won. I was moving into a cockroach-infested slum.

It was no more than I deserved. A kid dumped by her parents and with no friends or support.

2019

Sisters. I had sisters and a brother somewhere out there.

An hour ago, strangers had knocked and claimed to be my family. When I opened the door, I was blown away by an identical person staring at me. Not only was she my quint, but she was also my identical twin. I was twenty-freaking-four and had just discovered family.

Polly, my twin, seemed shocked as I brought out two bags of items that I owned.

Thalia, who was dressed in extremely expensive clothing, looked at me with pity.

Somewhere inside, a flicker of pride lit, and I drew my shoulders back.

Sure, she'd given me one hundred thousand dollars, but so what?

I wanted their stories. Had we all been adopted, or just me? Was it a kidnapping situation?

Clio, the pregnant one, held my hands.

"I thought nobody would ever come for me," I muttered.

"We came, it just took time," Clio murmured.

I sensed a similar person to me in Clio. Somehow, her life had been as hard as mine. But Thalia, no, she had money, obviously. And Polly, my quint-twin, seemed to have had a happy life, too.

I stared out of the window as I tried to assimilate what had just happened in the last hour.

The limo sped towards the airport as I said goodbye to Roanoke, Virginia.

The town had been cruel to me many times over, and I wouldn't miss it.

But I was on guard. While I was quiet and usually unassuming, I wasn't stupid.

I had strength and a temper. They were why I had survived the abuse I'd received in some of my foster homes. A small part of me was desperate for a family... okay, a huge piece of me. But it didn't mean I was going to accept them blindly.

Firstly, the men with my sisters wore cuts.

That meant they belonged to an MC. Which could mean they were dangerous.

Fortunately, I understood about judging people and wasn't going to make snap judgements.

Long ago, I'd been taught to be cautious and keep my thoughts in my head; that wasn't about to change yet.

And sure, Thalia had put one hundred thousand in my bank, and mentioned ten million, but that sure as fuck didn't mean I trusted her. In fact, it was even more suspicious. Who the hell gave away millions of dollars? Nah. I'd stay on guard.

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It was hard to stay on guard the next day.

Clio clearly hated shopping but was willing to do it for her sisters.

Polly also loathed it. Thalia and I thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

Thalia had kept her word, and I had woken to ten million dollars in the bank.

I'd been totally blown away. Even so, doubt remained prevalent, and I moved all but half a million into a saving account.

No way was I going to risk that much money.

It had been wonderful to go shopping and not worry about hitting the thrift stores.

I'd never had that, not even when I had a decent job.

My style was different from the others, but I was fine with that.

It allowed me to indulge my love of slightly steampunk—and not having to worry about money made it so much more enjoyable.

A guy called Shee had shadowed us, who really did enjoy shopping. He used the four of us as clothes horses, making pithy comments and guiding us away from fashion disasters.

Clio repeatedly teased him about his taste until he refused to help her, and then she begged for forgiveness.

The whole scene was rather amusing. But while Clio warmly embraced everyone, as did Thalia, who maybe tried a bit too hard, Polly was reticent like me.

Polly was the youngest but also the most famous of us.

I could understand her wariness. But she'd had a stable home and not survived what Clio and I had.

At the end of the day, I was relieved to return to my hotel room. Because even though it seemed I had a place, I didn't know where I fit in. Gaining what I'd always wanted came with additional problems I'd not expected. Seems there was always a freaking issue somewhere!

Callie – 2020

I grinned at the team assembled around the table.

Grandma sat next to me as I smiled at Phil, Freddie, Harry, and Jack.

Phil was our cameraman; he'd be responsible for setting up the cameras and making sure we had coverage.

Phil would also edit our footage and watch the monitors.

Freddie was the tech girl—and boy, did she have some.

Harry loved research, and Jack was a seasoned investigator; we were lucky to grab him.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“So where do we go first, and how are we doing this? Are you looking for TV or podcasts?” Jack questioned.

“Podcasts and I hope we get a following,” I replied.

“How are we doing this? An overnighter? Three days or a week?” Phil asked.

“Great question. I think we need to take it as it comes. If it’s a big haunting, a week, if a simple haunting, maybe two days, and we can judge the rest. It depends on the information and how detailed it is,” I responded.

“That could make for some good episodes. I’ve started creating a buzz on social media already. Tell me you have a plan,” Phil said.

“We have four large houses lined up to start with. All famous, but with little evidence ever being filmed. We’ve been given a week to stay in each,” I announced, and they all grinned.

“I have to ask. Who’s funding this?” Harry inquired.

“I am and covering all your expenses and giving you a salary. You’ll all, including Callie, be employed by the Dixon Paranormal Investigation Company. There are contracts in front of you. They are basic and easy to understand, but if you wish to consult a lawyer, please do,” Maylene stated.

I had taken Maylene’s, my Grandma, surname in the last few months, dumping the one I’d been given when abandoned. And I certainly wasn’t taking my parents’,

who'd given in to my other set of grandparents and deserted their children. I was glad they never had another child; they hadn't deserved one.

I'd been to visit my parents' grave and not felt anything.

They'd been strangers to me, and honestly, I spat on their grave; their selfishness and self-centredness disgusted me.

Clio and I had been helpless against what life threw at us, and we'd suffered.

We both had feelings of emptiness and of not being worthy of affection.

Although Clio was a lot better than me, as Chance had really boosted her confidence.

"Sweetheart?" Maylene murmured, and I jolted.

"Sorry, I got lost in my thoughts," I said with a smile. "Let me tell you about our projects."

Sunny – December 2019

It was time. He stared at his re-enlistment papers and put them down.

Cherry gazed at him, and Sunny frowned. Sunny had given his country fifteen years and had been placed in zones that no man should go.

But he'd done it and somehow survived. Liv needed him home more, and his last tour of duty had been painful for her.

His beautiful baby girl was now sixteen and a totally amazing kid.

She'd not turned into an army brat, and Cherry had reassured him that Liv didn't do the usual teenage stuff.

Which was surprising, considering the shit he'd got into at her age.

Cherry swore Liv was a good girl and focused on her studies, which relieved Sunny to no end.

He could sign up, but he knew Liv missed him.

"What are you thinking?" Cherry asked softly.

Sunny told her.

"You either do or don't, son. I'll support you no matter what," Cherry said.

"We'll have to move, we can't stay on base," Sunny drawled his mind elsewhere.

Cherry stared at him shrewdly. "You want to go home."

"There's unfinished business there, Mom. I deserve to know what happened. Chance thinks the club is clean, you and I know different. Bullet ain't resting easy," Sunny murmured.

"Don't you tell me, boy, what Bullet is doing. My man rests peacefully because he did his best. Never forget that. What you actually mean is it's bothering you because you know something doesn't add up," Cherry argued.

"No, it does not, Mom. We both know that Zeus shot me, but I was only at that place because I received a text from someone in our group. There's a backstabber in Hellfire MC. I am fuckin' owed justice. My sperm donor was a brother; my father

was VP. I'm a legacy twice over."

"You think I need telling? If this is something you need to do, then do it, but don't wrap it up in pretty bows. You want vengeance," Cherry snapped.

"Yeah, I do."

"So this," Cherry tapped a finger on his re-enlistment papers, "has an answer. File it, and let's hunt for a house. And son, I want a nice one in a good area with a swimming pool," Cherry demanded.

Sunny began laughing. "Sure thing, Mom."

"I mean it. If we're going back to that place... it needs to be worth my time!"

A pang hit Sunny, and self-doubts momentarily surfaced. "If you feel that strong, look for a house elsewhere. I'll handle business in Spearfish and then join you."

Cherry paused before shaking her head. "Nope. Someone in Chance's MC betrayed you.

They got you to meet with them and never turned up.

Worse, they stole your phone after so nobody could check it.

That's premeditated, Sunny. They went after you to weaken Chance.

I also believe that the same person warned Zeus about the meeting at Chaser's that day, which is why you walked in on their bodies. God bless them all."

Sunny startled. "You've never mentioned that before."

“Why would you think that?”

“You told me, son, that meeting had been planned to make moves. Then they end up dead. Zeus was so whacked out at the time he’d no idea what he was doing. Someone wanted Hellfire to stay on the path they were. Sure, we now know that Fury and Stingray were pulling the strings. But...”

“Wait up, Mom, what do you mean Stingray was managing Zeus?” Sunny exclaimed.

“Sunny. Didn’t you work it out? Stingray was the one who brought Zeus in, he supported every decision Zeus made. Bullet, Big Al, and Slash went against Zeus. So, Zeus made a power move. Did you really believe Zeus had the brains to carry out what he did alone?”

“But Stingray?” Sunny muttered, stunned.

“He was buddies with Fury, cousins in fact, they were inbred that family. It was obvious Stingray was managing events to suit himself. But then I heard Zeus one night. He was laughing with Grinder, chortling over Bullet, Stingray, and Slash’s deaths.

Zeus asked Grinder if he’d have placed money on Cutter killing his own father,” Cherry recalled.

Sunny was horrified. “That shocked us all.”

“More shocking was that Cutter did it for a packet of coke and heroin. That kid was a smacked-out waste of space. No matter what Slash did to clean him up, Cutter was just born bad. Grinder began laughing in return. He asked Zeus if Stingray had realised that when he’d ordered all founders be killed, and that he should have clarified: not himself. They roared with laughter at that.”

“You’re kidding me? Stingray gave the order for them to die and forgot to omit himself, so Cutter thought Stingray meant for Cutter to kill him too?” Sunny exclaimed.

“Yes. Exactly that. Big Al was lucky. I just wish they’d reached Bullet in time,” Cherry said softly.

“You’ve never taken another man,” Sunny replied, taking Cherry’s hand.

“Nope.”

“You’re young enough.”

“Oh, Sunny. That might be so. I was seventeen when you were born. I’m sixty-five now. There was only ever going to be one Bullet, and he is hard to replace,” Cherry responded with a faraway expression.

“Mom, Bullet wouldn’t have wanted you to be alone,” Sunny insisted.

“I wasn’t. I had Liv and you. Bullet’s waiting for me, and we’ll be together again. That’s my belief, even though I’m no churchgoer.”

“You deserve happiness,” Sunny pushed.

Cherry had given up a lot for him and Liv. He was just coming to that selfish realisation. Cherry had never complained when Sunny moved them to Florida and signed up. She was more Liv’s parent than he was, considering his time away on tours.

“Listen to me. Forget what I said, what do you want to do, Mom?” he asked. Sunny couldn’t ask Cherry to give up more.

“I want you to find peace, and you don’t have that. Someone played you, Chance, Bear, and the rest for a fool. Get them and make them pay for nearly stealing Liv’s daddy from her,” Cherry answered emphatically.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, because we have lived with the threat of Hellfire finding out you are alive for the last fifteen years. Even here, we’ve had to watch our backs.

Especially with the Venomous Fangs so close.

Fury could have recognised you if he’d crossed your path.

Those tours abroad were a blessing in disguise.

It’s time to get the truth, no matter what the consequences are.

And while you’re doing that, I’ll be planning our escape route,” Cherry stated.

Sunny threw back his head and laughed. Sure as fuck, Cherry would do that.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

I was trying hard not to laugh as Phil raced out of the old building we were investigating.

He'd been setting up the monitors and had switched a camera on just as a shadow figure appeared.

Phil had seen it, but I hadn't, and Phil fled.

It was highly unprofessional, but the look of sheer panic on Phil's face had done me in.

My phone rang, and I glanced down and saw it was Polly.

"Hi," I answered.

"Hey, are you in South Dakota?" Polly asked.

"No, I'm in Texas investigating an old prison. We've got activity already, it's exciting."

"That's good," Polly said dismissively. That rankled a little. Polly had made it very clear she didn't believe in ghosts and viewed my job as a bit of a joke. The fact my podcast had become extremely popular had confused and then bemused Polly.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"That is blunt. I was wondering if you were local, none of us ever seem to know

where you are.”

“Am I meant to be checking in?”

“No, it would be nice, Callie, for a little communication,” Polly chided.

“I’m an adult. I do not need to check-in, and I’m not accountable to anyone. Don’t you dare judge me!” I snapped.

Polly’s attitude rankled. “I’m not! We never see you,” Polly said quickly. I heard the realisation in her voice that she’d overstepped the mark.

“Polly, whether you like it or not, this is my job. I don’t see you or Clio dropping your jobs and running off for fun times.

No. Just because you do not believe in the paranormal, it doesn’t mean my career is bullshit.

I have debunked several claims of hauntings while proving others.

And by the way, I’ve signed with a network, your sister will be on TV.

Good job we’ve got different surnames, isn’t it?

I won’t embarrass you,” I snapped and hung up.

My confidence had grown by leaps and bounds over the last two years.

Living the dream of a paranormal investigator had given me courage.

My podcasts had started slowly, but social media had soon picked them up.

I was known as ‘the honest investigator.’ If we didn’t find anything, we said so.

If we did, we would show where everyone was during the event so we couldn’t be accused of setting it up.

We did not run around screaming or exaggerating shit. We were straight up and to the point. Even with things like what just happened to Phil. He entered the room we were using as a base and gaped at me.

“Did you see that damn thing?” he snapped, and I could not help it. I put Polly’s call out of my head and began laughing. Phil would edit Polly’s call out later, but the laughter would stay in the episode because that’s what made us unique.

Sunny

He’d been back a year, and things were different with Hellfire. The changes were obvious from the past. No drugs were tolerated, anything illegal was shut down. Chance worked hand in hand with the police and helped keep the streets clean.

Sunny had been shocked at how different the club was.

They had candidates who had to do a minimum two years in that role before hitting prospect.

And prospect could take just as long. He was surprised at how little growth the MC had actually had because they were now being so picky.

Applicants underwent a thorough vetting before even getting an interview.

They were rebuilding what had been blown to hell in a bombing.

Sunny was up to his neck in shit organising builders and other stuff. Rooster was recovering, as was Fanatic, alongside a couple of the others who'd got wounded. But Fanatic and Rooster had suffered the worst. Rooster lost his lower leg below the knee, and Fanatic had lost his liver.

Rooster was now walking with a prosthetic, but Fanatic was healing more slowly.

He'd been told to rest but kept getting infections and was run down.

Building him back up was taking time. The new clubhouse had been built and was far nicer than the original one, and Hellfire plans were marching along with building also happening on their old site.

As of yet, Cherry and Liv hadn't set foot on Hellfire.

Some of those who remembered Liv asked when she'd be visiting, but Sunny always had an excuse.

In the end, they'd stopped asking, although Chance and Bear regarded him with suspicion.

They knew something wasn't right but couldn't put their finger on what.

It had taken time for Sunny to find his place once again in Hellfire. He had been VP before, and now he was lieutenant. A step below VP, and it smarted a bit. But Sunny couldn't demand VP; he'd walked away and faked his own death. Even so, despite old and new faces, Sunny was watchful.

A year ago, his team had also quit the army, and they'd stayed in contact.

Sunny was paying them to watch members of the club, and he planned to get one in

as a candidate as soon as possible.

He needed two sets of eyes on the club. But right now, Chance was on high alert.

After being bombed and nearly losing his baby and Clio, Chance wasn't looking to accept candidates.

Sunny would bide his time. It was what he did and what the army had taught him.

Sunny – 2022

She looked so fuckin' sad. Callie, he knew it was her by her style of clothing, sat alone as everyone partied.

Out of the quintes, Callie was the one who'd kept herself aloft.

Even the taciturn Polly had come around and was more open.

But Callie expected rejection, and it showed.

Sunny had been fetching two beers when he'd seen her.

Sunny wasn't feeling the party either and, for some inexplicable reason, wandered over to her. He placed a bottle in front of her, and Callie looked up, startled.

"What's wrong, little flower?" he asked.

"Little flower?" Callie repeated, amused.

"Yup. Babe, darling, sweetness... the usual ones get boring. Little flower is unique," Sunny said, sitting down.

“I guess I’m one of many in your garden!” Callie quipped.

Sunny chuckled. “Nope, just you so far. What’s up? You seem sad.”

“Not really, more overwhelmed.” “Apprehensive?” Sunny asked.

“Yeah, that’s a good word for it. I don’t like crowds, and while everyone tries to reassure that nobody here will hurt me, it’s hard to trust.”

“I get that, Callie. After my betrayal by the club... I wasn’t sure if I ever wanted to step foot in here,” Sunny agreed.

“How did you? I mean, you were clear, fifteen years free, but you came back. Why?” Callie asked.

“Because I had unfinished business.”

Sunny felt like squirming under her steady gaze. He was shocked when she whispered a moment later.

“You think there’s dirt here still. It’s in your eyes. You don’t fully trust those around you,” she murmured.

Sunny was stunned. “What makes you say that?”

“I’m quiet, shy, but not a fool. I was shipped from home to home, some good, some bad.

But I learned lessons. One of which was when people were on edge and said things they didn’t feel.

You do not feel easy here. The question, then, is why?

If the MC was as clean as everyone says, you'd be relaxed.

But you're not. You are constantly alert and on guard.

"Your daughter hasn't been seen since you moved here. Which means you're keeping your family separate from the club. If you were comfortable, there'd be no need. Your actions belie your words," Callie stated, and Sunny began to smile.

"Pretty direct."

"No point in beating around the bush."

"And I thought you were the quiet one," Sunny teased.

Callie flipped the lid off the bottle of beer he'd given her.

"I am. But that doesn't mean I'm a pushover. I may not be as confident as my sisters and brother, but nobody walks over me anymore. I don't like lies, deception, or bullshit."

"Good to know. So, tell me, why are you here in a corner and not with your family?"

"Because I don't fit in. For years, I yearned for a family, and now I have one, I am being ungrateful.

But I'm used to being alone, and even in a crowd, I feel lonely.

Honestly, I'd hoped for bonding experiences.

Yeah, I got them, but while my siblings bonded, I didn't.

Not even with my twin. Shit, my paranormal team is more my family than them," Callie said, and Sunny was surprised.

"They know you feel like that?"

"Hell no. Sunny, I don't like or enjoy hurting people, which means my sisters won't know how I feel."

"Anything I can do to help?" Sunny offered.

"No. Thank you, but I guess it's just time. When you've been by yourself most of your life, you tend to be wary of those who come into your life."

"That's hard for me to understand. My childhood was surrounded by some of those present, and I basically grew up in the club.

When I left here and joined the army, I found a new family.

You must have felt so alone, yet had siblings you knew nothing about.

That had to be gutting to discover," Sunny said.

Callie looked at him in surprise. "It was. Nobody has considered that."

"I'm a deep thinker. What you see isn't always what you get," Sunny quipped, and Callie nodded.

"That's true."

“What else is bothering you?” Sunny questioned, and Callie shook her head.

“You don’t want all my problems. Why aren’t you partying with your brothers?”

“Maybe because, like you, I feel like an outsider looking in.”

“Do you regret leaving the army?” Callie asked.

Sunny thought about it for a few moments. “I regret losing being part of something huge. I miss my brothers in arms, but I don’t miss the danger.”

“Not even with this rumoured war between clubs?” Callie inquired softly.

“I’ve no doubt of the danger from the Venomous Fangs, but compared to fighting abroad, they’re easy to handle.”

“Do you think people will die?”

Sunny gazed at Callie for several long moments. “In war, there is always death.”

“That’s not answering my question, Sunny.”

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Callie, I can’t promise you everyone will walk away unharmed. As much as I’d love to, I can’t, I’m not God. But I can assure that we’ll fight and protect each other. We’ll watch everyone’s backs and ensure that we bring as many home as possible.”

“That sounds like a speech to deliver to families of soldiers before you left on tour,” Callie replied.

“Who’d have thought bikers would end up defending their country?” Sunny mused.

“Is that what this is? Or just a war over territory?” Callie probed.

“Do you really think that? You’ve been around a couple of years, do Hellfire push for land? Or are they happy being here and building their own world?” Sunny challenged.

Callie regarded him shrewdly, and Sunny felt he’d given something away.

“You said they. Don’t you consider yourself one of them? Are you not part of Hellfire?”

“I am wearing their colours, of course, I’m part of the club,” Sunny defended himself.

“Keep telling yourself that, bud,” Callie retorted and took a sip of her beer.

Sunny watched her as she placed the bottle on the table.

“Thanks, Sunny. I’m going to head back to my hotel, I’ll see you around.” Callie got

up and walked towards the car park

Sunny stared after her and then gazed across to where her siblings were standing, laughing and chatting.

Damn, Sunny felt that for Callie. Her sisters hadn't included her in their group, nor had they even realised she'd left.

How lonely was Callie Dixon, and how distant was she from those who were meant to care about her?

Sunny downed his own bottle and headed out after her.

And he realised exactly how Callie would have felt because not one of his brothers noticed him go.

Callie - Christmas 2022

"Sorry, I'm working."

"Callie, really? You need to come home," Polly exclaimed, exasperated.

"And as I said, I've got work. The team has been booked from the eighteenth until the second of January to investigate someone's house," I replied.

"Beg off, for God's sake," Polly demanded.

"And when are you quitting work?" I snapped.

"I'll be off from the twenty-third until the twenty-sixth," Polly answered.

“Ah, so it’s okay for you to work up until Christmas, but I am meant to drop what I’m doing and jump to your every whim!” I spat as my anger rose.

“Mine’s a proper...” Polly cut off as Thalia whacked her.

“Say it,” I hissed.

“Callie, what Polly is saying...” Clio began.

“Shut up. Go on, Polly.”

I stared at Polly through the laptop camera and knew she was swallowing her own heated words.

“Mine’s a proper job,” Polly said and lifted her chin in stubbornness.

“Unfortunately, mine is a proper job too, but you won’t acknowledge that because you’re a judgemental, raging asshole. I employ several people, I have shooting deadlines, and as much as you loathe it, I’m a household name. And you fucking hate that, it kills you I’m more famous than you.”

“I did something worthwhile; I represented my country at the Olympics. You run around faking footage for the camera and audiences.”

Thalia and Clio hissed at Polly.

“Yeah, we’re done. I am so sick of your petty jealousy.

All you ever do is take digs. I earn my money honestly and don’t live on the coattails of my former fame.

Say what you will, but I'm so tired of you all.

Judge this, make fun of that, demand and order.

God, I was better off alone. Fuck you, Polly and your snooty claim to fame, and screw Christmas," I said loudly and cut the call.

Silence reigned.

Had I been too harsh? Who cared? I was sick of the sneers and everything that came along with having those three around. Okay, Thalia and Clio weren't as bad, but I knew they regarded my job as a joke. And that made me tired. I worked damn hard. We'd made something special and were household names.

The team, called Ghost Seekers, were known for our no-nonsense approach to hauntings. We didn't make things up nor play to the camera. Sure, the network had tried issuing demands and making us like other paranormal teams, but the viewers responded to our honesty.

They especially liked our screw-ups or when we began laughing at something.

But if they experienced fear, it was because we were afraid.

I rubbed my temples in distress; this confrontation had been coming a while.

Polly had got more and more derisive over time as my fame grew.

There'd been sly digs and quips, and she'd even outright poked fun at me.

Thalia and Clio weren't as bad, but they had had their own moments asking how we faked some of the footage.

Despite me insisting it was all genuine, they'd just winked and said for me to keep my secrets.

Well, screw them, I wouldn't be sat playing happy families with them. I'd be with my real family.

"You okay?" Freddie asked.

"Hey, didn't see you there." "Couldn't help overhearing, Callie. Are you okay?"

"Yeah. That's been a long time coming, and I'm relieved it's over and done with.

They'll do as they wish, but I'm going to keep on.

This is going to be a huge investigation, two weeks, and we need to concentrate on it.

This, I reckon, will go three or four episodes," I replied, pushing my supposed family from my mind.

"Do you want to run over the plan again?" Freddie inquired as she tapped her nails on the table.

"No. I know it inside out. Has Phil managed to get the extra cameras and everything?"

"Yeah, and I have got that creepy music box. But I've added a twist." Freddie grinned.

"Please tell me you didn't..." I broke off and laughed.

"I sure as hell did," Freddie smirked.

“Jack will shit himself.”

“I know, serves him right for that damn clown,” Freddie replied, looking angelic.

“Okay. Twenty-four hours till we head out. This one will be great!” I said, clapping my hands together.

The place we were heading to was an old plantation house with numerous sightings of ghosts.

It was infamous for its hauntings, but paranormal investigators hadn’t been allowed in.

Until now. Ghost Seekers were the first going in, and we’d been offered a two-week stay, which was unheard of.

But the hauntings were so rife we would need the extra time to pin each legend down.

It was going to be a huge special, and the network was already dropping hints and drumming up interest for it. We were so excited at having the opportunity and promised to be as professional as possible, even if we had a few laughs along the way.

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A week later our fame increased when Jack had freaked the hell out when a spirit triggered the music box... to the theme tune of Psycho. The clip went viral and made us superstars, not just stars. Callie Dixon and the Ghost Seekers were on everyone’s lips.

I wondered how dear Polly took that!

Sunny

He was laughing hard as Jack nearly jumped out of his skin as the creepy music triggered.

He'd watched the clip three times and loved the look of sheer glee on Callie's face as Jack freaked out.

Through their laughter and Jack's terror, Callie and Phil had continued investigating.

Sunny was amazed at how brilliant the show was and how honest the guys were.

They debunked a lot of the rumours about the plantation, but there was activity they couldn't explain.

Sunny paused the video at the look of happiness on Callie's face.

She truly loved this. He was happy she was in her element and making a name for herself.

It seemed Callie had found her place and family.

He'd heard of the big fight between her and her siblings and was glad Callie had stood her ground.

Lessons were being learnt as Callie ploughed ahead with her programme, and her team had conducted several TV interviews. Her sisters were bemused until they began realising that Callie was very serious about her career. Experts sought Callie out for her opinion.

Much to Polly's disgust, Callie Dixon was a household name and famous the world

over.

Everyone knew she was a paranormal investigator, which galled Polly when the news leaked about Callie being a quintuplet.

Polly got her five minutes of fame again, and then the focus shifted back to Callie. Which secretly made Sunny smile.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny rolled over and groaned. The sun hit his face in a harsh wake-up call, and he growled at it. He slung an arm over his eyes and sat up.

He frowned as he looked down. What the fuck? Sunny lifted his duvet and peered underneath. He was freaking naked.

Had he slept with someone? Blinking, Sunny picked up his pillow and smelt to see if there was perfume on it.

Sunny winced when he smelt it. It wasn't a scent he recognised. Sunny gazed around his room, where was she? There was no sign of a woman being present. The war was over. A fortnight had passed since the Fangs hit Rapid City.

Sunny was still reeling from the loss of life they'd suffered. Too many had died defending Rapid City, but there'd been no choice. Had Fury gained a foothold there, the other towns would have swiftly followed. The law enforcement had clearly been overwhelmed, and RCPD had been decimated.

Funerals of the fallen were still happening as the deaths continued.

The latest was Officer Sally Kenner; she'd died of complications following her surgery.

Drake had been discharged, but Calamity remained in hospital.

Though Calamity was no longer critical. Grey had been buried, and Willow had fled.

Fanatic looked like he had lost his right arm.

Sunny wanted to speak to the prospect but didn't know what to say.

Last night, he'd tied one on with the rest of the club.

Sunny wracked his brains. He did not remember much after around eleven o'clock.

Callie had been doing shots while he kept to his beers, and Sunny barely remembered anything afterwards.

And now he was stark naked in his bed, which smelt of perfume.

Was she in the shower? Sunny glanced towards the bathroom but didn't hear any noise.

Snagging his boxers, Sunny rolled out of bed and just stopped himself being sick.

What the hell had he drunk last night? Sunny could handle his booze, so what on earth was wrong with him?

He staggered into the bathroom and emptied his stomach, idly noting there wasn't a woman present.

As he was beginning to believe he was imagining it, Sunny looked in the mirror and winced. There was lipstick on his mouth and a huge hickey on his throat. He'd been marked.

Shit! Sunny wracked his brains but couldn't think who he had possibly slept with.

As picky as he was, Sunny didn't put out.

And especially not with the women that tried hanging around the club.

Despite the no club slut rules, women did end up at the clubhouse.

Not often, but it happened. Which Sunny hoped the hell happened last night.

Because the other option was unthinkable.

He'd either slept with an old lady or a relative of someone belonging to the club.

Sunny's stomach revolted, and he hit his knees and hung his head over the toilet.
Fuck him!

Callie

I scrubbed all traces of last night from my skin. Talk about fucking up big time. I blamed the moonshine that Celt broke out. Wherever he had got that from, needed shutting down. I wasn't that drunk, but merry enough to throw inhibitions to the wind.

When Sunny kissed me, I had jumped his bones. He'd made me come four times; the man fucked like a dream.

I'd fallen to sleep in his arms, and he'd woken me twice during the night. Sunny had stamina and bragging rights. He had moves I'd read about but never believed possible. This morning, I'd woken before him and had snuck out. I didn't want anyone knowing what Sunny and I had done.

It was five a.m. when I drove out of the compound.

Fanatic had been on the gates and had nodded at me as he let me out. Somehow, I

knew Fanatic would keep his mouth shut. Last night had been amazing, but it couldn't be repeated. I had a full schedule and wasn't looking for a relationship.

Later today, I was attending a cookout. I'd speak to Sunny then. In the meantime, I had my sisters to deal with.

Things with Polly were colder than the Antarctic.

Since I had literally told her to fuck off, we'd barely spoken.

Clio and Thalia had worked hard at gaining my forgiveness.

I'd held back, forewarned was forearmed, but we were all meeting this afternoon to discuss our issues.

Grandma had threatened to bang all our heads together if we didn't speak to each other. She said we'd lost enough years.

That may be right, but I still held a huge grudge against the three of them. They might not approve of my choice of career, but that was their issue, not mine. Puffing my cheeks out and resigned to this afternoon's pending drama, I climbed out of the shower to dress.

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I held Polly's gaze as I crossed my arms and glowered. Clio winced as Thalia opened her mouth and then closed it again.

"Yeah, I'm a big joke, aren't I? Because I never got the breaks you did, so that makes my chosen career a farce," I sneered at Polly.

“Polly never said that,” Thalia interrupted.

“Yes, she did. I quote, ‘You make up shit for people’s entertainment and try to trick people into believing you’. Did she not?”

“Thalia, don’t. I did say that, and I meant it. You are little better than a con artist,” Polly said. “We’re Winchesters. We should be setting examples.”

“I ain’t no Winchester. That’s not a claim I’d ever make. I want no part of our father’s name or family. It doesn’t matter how many times you’re told, you do not hear. Honestly, I’m starting to wonder if you’re dense, stupid, or wilfully deaf,” I hissed.

“Don’t you dare talk to me like that!” Polly exclaimed.

“Why not? You don’t care about upsetting or insulting me. Why should I worry about your feelings,” I retorted.

Clio’s eyes were huge. “Maybe if you just admit to faking—”

“Shut the fuck up. My team doesn’t fake anything. Funny how you’re willing to believe in Aurora from Rage, but what we investigate is bull. I don’t see us resolving these issues. Honestly, I can tolerate you and Thalia, but I really dislike Polly.”

Polly’s eyes went wide. “You don’t mean that,” she exclaimed, shocked.

“Yes, I do. Why wouldn’t I? You take every opportunity to demean me and my career. You ridicule and say spiteful things. Why on earth would I like you or want to be around you? Hell, I’ve lost count of how many times you’ve called me a liar!”

“I’ve never called you that!” Polly shrieked.

“Every time you ask me how I fake the footage or ask if I really expect people to believe me, you call me a liar. And I’ve lost count of how many times I’ve told you we don’t fake the footage or make crap up, but no... you still call my integrity into question,” I replied.

“I’m not...” Polly bit her lip as she sought her words.

“And you two support her. With your stupid little teases about what I film can’t possibly be real.

What, just because it doesn’t fit into your narrow ideas of the world, it’s false?

Grow up. I’ve sat here for an hour listening to the three of you being patronising bitches.

Rain is the only one who’s praised me for how much I’ve grown in confidence and how well I have done. ”

“That’s not true...” Thalia began, and I cut her off.

“Then tell me one positive thing you’ve said around my career.”

I watched as Clio and Thalia struggled to find something to say. I let them sit uncomfortably for a minute before speaking again.

“Exactly. Now, again, I can tolerate you two, but I really don’t like Polly.

To be honest, none of you, in the few years we’ve known each other, have bonded with me.

I am the odd one out, and I’m fine with that.

But stop the bullshit requests to join you for family events.

Because as far as I'm concerned, we may share blood, but we're not family," I said.

Clio looked stricken, and Thalia horrified. Polly was expressionless, her go-to face when she was deeply distressed. It was weird how I understood them so well, but they didn't know me. I rose to my feet.

"After tonight, can we just agree to stay out of each other's way? Especially me and you, Polly, we've nothing in common. If I'm local, I'll let you know, but stop calling and inviting me to events I won't attend. My life is at odds with yours. I think that's pretty obvious."

"When's your next event?" Polly asked me suddenly.

"Two weeks today."

"Can I come? Maybe if I experience what you do, I'll understand," Polly suggested.

Well, damn if that didn't shock me. Polly had actually rendered me mute.

"Callie?" Polly pushed after I failed to reply.

"Okay. But you sign on for two. And they are both weeklong investigations," I replied.

"Fine. I will ensure my team knows, and I'll come with you. I've not had a break since I opened the dojo," Polly said.

Suspicious, I nodded.

Clio beamed at us. “That’s a great start.”

“There’s one condition. You keep your doubts to yourself. My team doesn’t need to know you think they’re all liars,” I stated. The team already knew that, but Polly wasn’t aware of that.

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I watched as Sunny stood talking to Bunny before he caught my gaze on him. He sent me a warm smile, but there was nothing intimate in it. That puzzled me. Was Sunny going to pretend last night did not happen?

He wandered in my direction, and I almost licked my lips. Sunny had what I called a lazy gait, purposeful while relaxed, and he didn’t rush. No stomping for Sunny or primping around, nope, just two hundred per cent, man.

“You okay? I heard what happened earlier?” he asked.

Really, Sunny wasn’t going to mention last night?

“I am fine. Polly will be in for a shock, though. She thinks it’s all mirrors and smoke. I’m going to enjoy her eating her hat,” I said with heat.

Sunny’s eyebrows rose. “You mean that.”

Page 11

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Sure as hell do. Do you have any idea how tiring it is to keep repeating myself and saying that? Polly’s signed up for two weeks, and I’m gonna ensure she learns that my career isn’t a joke!

” Sunny rubbed my arm. “Hey, calm down. I know you’ve been feeling shitty about how they treat you, but you are a professional. ”

“Yeah, well, my sister is about to discover that.”

“Good for you. Can I ask you something?”

“What?”

“Did you see me talking to any women last night?”

“What on earth?” I exclaimed.

“It’s weird. I never get that drunk that I don’t remember what happened. But last night is gone. I vaguely recall Celt breaking out the moonshine and nothing after that.”

“You don’t remember anything?” I murmured as hurt washed over me.

Sunny had given me an evening to cherish, one that would keep me warm when I was old.

And basically, I was so forgettable Sunny couldn’t even remember bedding me.

Wow! What I thought was wonderful, Sunny thought was subpar because he had no memory of the experience.

“Callie? What’s wrong?” Sunny asked, peering at my face with concern.

“Nothing.” I forced a smile. “No, I didn’t see you with anyone last night.”

“Thanks, Callie.”

“No probs. I am heading back to the hotel. As you know, I only came this weekend because Maylene begged me to try and resolve things. And that was because I was in Spearfish investigating Ravenberry Manor. That place is amazing, and Lavender has agreed to let me have more time investigating it. But my schedule is kicking in, so I’m going to have to return only when we get a chance.

However, I came for the meeting, got insulted, and am now taking a non-believer on two investigations. ”

“Callie, did I say something wrong?” Sunny asked with a frown.

“No. Why?”

“You seem standoffish.” “Probably left over from this afternoon. See you around, and stay away from the moonshine.” On that note, I fled.

I was barely controlling the blush that was rising.

How embarrassing! I’d been daydreaming of last night, and Sunny hadn’t even a clue it had happened.

It was a knock for anyone’s ego, but my fragile one was crushed.

I leapt into the car and drove off like the hounds of hell were after me.

Life sucked.

Sunny

Callie was running from him, and he'd no idea why.

Sunny wouldn't say they were best friends, but they were close.

The two outcasts in the club, him and her, had graduated towards each other and become confidants, if not mates.

He hated how everyone took Callie's job as a joke, taking their cues from her siblings.

It seemed only Sunny alone noticed how much effort went into her investigations.

Polly was going to get the shock of her structured, comfortable life. Sunny knew Callie worked damn hard and very long hours. A grin crossed his face, and he quickly wiped it. It's about time the three sisters learned exactly who Callie was.

He liked Callie. Her confidence had grown in the last couple of years.

She remained quiet and unassuming but wouldn't back down and had a stubborn streak.

Polly was confident, overly so, but Callie had a sweetness about her that Polly was lacking.

Clio shared the same trait, while Thalia shared Polly's brashness at times.

Sunny guessed it was the difference between being adopted or having a family and not. Rain also had a confidence about him that Clio and Callie had once lacked. Rain seemed to be the easy-going one, initially stunned by having family but quite happy to have four sisters.

Sunny stared after where Callie had fled.

She'd definitely run from him, but why?

Callie

“Okay. Polly, you're with Phil. He always goes in a day before the rest of us and sets the cameras up. He is in charge, not you. Phil is fully aware of health and safety and also knows what he's doing. Please don't disrespect that and listen to what he has to say,” I said, addressing Polly.

I was amused. She didn't seem to know how to act, and her public persona was severely lacking right now.

“And Phil does...?”

“Cameras—and he monitors them. He'll tell you everything you need to know about them,” I informed her.

Polly nodded.

“Also, get some comfortable clothes. We may end up pulling some twenty-four-hour shifts.”

“Seriously?” Polly sounded doubtful.

“What do you think happens during an investigation? Don’t bother answering that. Whatever you believed, throw it out of the window. Go on, you need to help him set up,” I said.

I walked back towards the car and hid a smirk. Polly was going to get an education.

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Nine hours later, Polly joined us for dinner with Phil. I looked up at the smug look on Phil’s face and the exhausted expression on Polly’s.

“All okay?” I asked.

“Yes. Everything is ready, and the cameras are recording,” Phil replied.

“Nice. Polly?” I inquired, turning to her.

“I didn’t realise you used so many cameras and miles of cable,” Polly said.

“The Erutte Mansion is notorious for its haunting. They have around ten different ghosts reported, all haunting their own areas. In instances like that, we prefer to cover all the rooms they haunt.”

“Those cameras must be worth a fortune,” Polly replied as she settled in her chair.

“Yup. That’s the reason we have the van. Can’t haul twenty-odd cameras in an SUV. Did you set up the infrared ones, too?” I asked Phil.

He nodded. “Yeah, especially in the cellar where reports of cold spots are.”

“Good. Okay, let’s eat and then get some rest. We’ve a long day tomorrow. We’ll be

meeting at seven for breakfast before driving out to the mansion,” I informed them.

“Seven in the morning?” Polly exclaimed.

“Aren’t you usually up at that time?” I inquired.

“Yes, but why are you guys getting up so early?”

“You’ll find out,” I said with a grin and picked up my menu.

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“We’re doing what?” Polly asked.

“This is called an EMF reader. It takes readings of fluctuations in the electromagnetic field. If it picks up a reading, we need to investigate to ensure it’s not a man-made source such as wiring or something.

This other piece of equipment measures temperatures.

If we get an EMF reading, then we check this to see if they match.

A haunting often causes the temperature to drop rapidly,” I explained.

Polly seemed dubious but nodded. “You can hold the EMF reader. Freddie will film us, and Harry is going to look for man-made sources. Jack has the infrared. And Phil has the SLS camera, which picks up any figures in our vicinity.”

Polly looked at me. “Do you usually all go together?”

“Nope. But this way, you know nobody is hiding away and playing tricks. Whatever

happens is genuine. You can't accuse us of bullshitting you."

Polly's mouth opened and then closed. "Fair enough."

We wandered around, taking base readings and checking for cold spots. There were several worthy of note, and they corresponded with the reports of the hauntings. Three hours later, Polly seemed overwhelmed, but she couldn't explain the cold spots or EMF readings. Such a shame... not!

"Okay. Let's log these down. Then, Polly, you're with Harry for the afternoon while we do research. Dinner is at four. We meet back here at ten tonight," I said.

"What?" Polly gasped.

"We're investigating once we've eaten dinner, we get our heads down for a few hours before starting our evening shift," I stated.

Polly looked horrified. "Until what time?"

"Depends on the activity. If there is none, then we'll finish about two. Should we pick up anything, it will be around four," I replied.

"You're kidding me?" Polly exclaimed.

"Welcome to Ghost Seekers. We work hard here."

Polly sent me a long look, and I smiled sweetly at her. "You do this on every investigation?" she challenged.

"No, and yes. It depends on the time we have. We never do less than a minimum three-day investigation. And we've done up to two weeks.

Usually, on shorter jobs, we do not stick together, we each do our own thing.

But because of your scepticism, we're sticking together, so you can't accuse us of fooling anyone or faking footage.

It limits us but doesn't stop us," I replied.

"Callie, I—"

"Please don't, Polly. Since I've started this, you've ridiculed my beliefs and ethics. At the end of these two weeks, you will either believe ghosts exist, or you'll respect the fact we work hard. You'll understand that even if you don't believe, we don't fake anything," I said confidently.

Polly held my gaze. "So be it."

"Indeed. So, when I say rest, get your head down. Or you're going to be sleep-deprived very quickly. And nobody slacks off on an investigation."

Polly nodded. There was a flicker of respect in her eyes. Yeah, she was starting to realise just how seriously we took this. It was about time.

Page 12

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny

“Truly. I couldn’t believe how much work went into their investigations.

Callie was like a machine. They had interrupted sleep, worked hours on research, and sat for hours, sometimes in a room just waiting for a response.

It was interesting and tedious, but I was wrong.

They’re not faking anything. I’ve never been so scared in my life when that spirit box spoke my name,” Polly exclaimed to Thalia, Clio, and Rain.

Maylene sat close to them with Rose, Shotgun’s grandmother.

“So, you’re more appreciative of what Callie does now?” Maylene asked.

“Honestly, Gran, I have to say yes. They work hard. The first three days, they got nothing except temperature and EMF fluctuations. They managed to debunk some of those, but at least half could not be explained. I really didn’t think they were going to get anything until the fourth night, when it all kicked off. I’d been pretty smug until then.

“But those doors opening and shutting couldn’t be faked.

And we were all together when it happened.

And the female figure caught on camera! I can’t say I believe in ghosts, but there is

certainly something out there I can't explain.

And I'll not ridicule Callie again," Polly admitted. "They work damn hard."

"Did you make up?" Rain asked.

Polly scowled. "We're not in the playground now."

"But you were acting like it," Rain stated calmly, not backing down.

"I'm a lot more tolerant of Callie's beliefs, and I've a shitload of respect for her team. I never imagined it would be such hard work. And Harry. Damn, that guy is a powerhouse for research. His mind made connections I'd never have dreamed of," Polly said.

Sunny grinned. Seemed someone had gotten a good dose of Callie's reality and had changed her tune exponentially. His word of the day, and he had used it in the right context.

He turned on his heel from where he'd been lingering and caught Chance watching him.

Despite Chance's open acceptance of him, Sunny knew Chance and Bear were suspicious as fuck of him.

They knew Sunny was holding back, and that Sunny wasn't one hundred per cent with the club.

The fact Sunny's Olivia hadn't been around spoke to that fact.

Sunny headed towards the garage where Fanatic was no doubt working. It was hard

to get the prospect out, and Jinx had taken to ensuring Fanatic ate.

And speaking of Jinx...

Sunny's eyes widened as he saw something falling towards him. "What the fuck!" he bellowed and dived to the side.

He landed and knocked the wind from his body as he lay there, stunned as something smashed into the ground with an almighty bang. Voices rose in alarm, and Sunny shook his head to clear the ringing in his ears.

Sunny rolled over onto his back as Chance reached him first. Chance's mouth was moving, but Sunny couldn't hear him. With a groan, Sunny sat up and stared in shock at what had nearly killed him.

A fuckin' toilet? What the hell?

"Is that a toilet?" Sunny demanded in total disbelief.

"Yeah," Chance's lips formed the words.

"How the fuck does a toilet fall from the sky?"

Chance winced and pointed over his shoulder.

Sunny looked across and saw a mobile crane that was being used to move bricks and stuff over to where the houses were being built.

One of the chains had snapped, and the pallet it had been carrying had tipped to the side.

Clearly, the toilet had been on the pallet.

“Fuckin’ Jinx!” Sunny roared.

Chance bit his lip as Sunny got to his feet.

“What a way to go out, killed by a toilet. What the hell would you put on that gravestone?” Fanatic asked, and Sunny glared at him.

Chance bit his lip harder, trying not to laugh. “Dude, you almost got taken out by a shitter.”

“Shut the fuck up. We need to find a way to neutralise the Jinx effect. That kid is a menace,” Sunny exclaimed.

“Yeah, but he’s a damn good candidate,” Bear said, approaching. He looked completely bemused.

“Do not say a fuckin’ word, Bear,” Sunny warned.

“Spoil my fun, why don’t ya,” Bear complained.

“Fuck the lot of you!” Sunny moaned and walked away.

Laughter followed him as he limped back to the clubhouse.

Jesus, it was bad enough they all kept their head on a swivel, but now they had to look up as well? Sunny contemplated contacting a voodoo witch to try and end Jinx’s curse. Because it had to be a freaking curse!

November 2023

“Need me to come?” I asked Fanatic as he shoved clothes into a backpack and grabbed his wallet.

“No, I’ll be fine, but I need to ride. The hospital didn’t say what was wrong, but it’s an emergency,” Fanatic replied.

“I don’t think you should be heading out alone...”

“Sunny. It’s Willow. I gotta know what’s happening.

I’m not giving Axel half-truths and panicking him.

No offence, but Axel doesn’t need the shock.

Let me find out what’s going on, and then I will inform everybody.

But I’m leaving right now, the plane’s already being prepped.

I’ll call and update everyone,” Fanatic explained and took off.

“Fuck,” I muttered.

“Only one person could drag him away from an important design,” Chance said from behind me as I exited Fanatic’s room and shut the door.

“No shit.”

“You know how he feels about her?” Chance asked, cocking his head.

“Brother, the entire fuckin’ club knows.

Fanatic buried that deep, and I've got a whole lot of respect for him.

Any man who can put aside his personal feelings and embrace the guy who claimed the girl he loved is someone I want to know.

Fanatic is..." Sunny broke off, unable to find the word he wanted.

"Yeah. Kid stepped aside for Grey to claim Willow and then made Grey a close friend. I've got doubts Fanatic will make a move on her because of his love for his dead brother," Chance admitted.

"Gotta have faith, brother," Sunny replied.

"You think shit will happen?" Chance asked, surprised.

"Willow is too young to be alone for the rest of her life. And love has a way of happening when you least expect it." Chance regarded him shrewdly. "Something you want to inform me about?"

A woman's toned body flashed into Sunny's mind, a soft sigh and then a cry of his name. "No."

"Sure?"

"Ain't got no woman. I like Chatter's old way of doing things, keep it simple and short."

"That worked until Chatter murdered a doll and fell for a doll maker and valuer," Chance said, chuckling.

"Only Chatter would fall for someone who worked with dolls." Sunny shook his head

in disbelief.

“Brother’s fucked in the head. That’s for sure. But they’re happy. About time you settled down,” Chance replied directly.

Sunny was startled. “Nah, too old, bro.”

Chance laughed. “Fuck off. Age does not mean a thing. You’ll find someone. She will be sweet and fiery, calm and passionate, she’ll take you to extremes you don’t know about.”

“You know something I don’t?” Sunny demanded. Had Chance seen the woman he’d spent the night with all those weeks ago?

“Nah. Just had faith that all my brothers, even the asshole ones, will find happiness,” Chance said and turned his head.

“Daddy!” Louisa Mae squealed as she rushed towards him. Olivia was on her heels, Chance’s daughter.

“We best refer to my Olivia as Liv,” Sunny suggested as the little girls reached Chance and stared at him with total adoration.

Chance swung down and picked them both up.

“That would help. When is Liv coming by?”

“Your guess is as good as mine. She is taking extra classes, so I won’t be seeing her for a while. But she’s doing great,” Sunny said. Habit made him offer as little information as possible. Liv would always be protected.

“How’s Cherry?” Chance asked, his eyes firmly focused on Sunny.

“Mom’s fine. Don’t ask me what she’s up to because I do not have a clue. Last thing I heard was Pilates and Salsa dancing,” Sunny replied.

“Sounds like her, she never liked being alone or idle.”

“Mom’s been alone since Bullet’s death. If she’s had a relationship, it’s one I’ve no clue about. Says nobody could live up to Bullet, and she’s not going to look,” Sunny stated.

Chance momentarily saddened. “Bullet was a good man.”

“You honour him and the others. That’s all that matters.

” Sunny nodded towards the wall where the cuts of Hellfire’s fallen were framed.

Only the greats were on that wall, not the drugged-up assholes.

Whiskey, Chaser, Bullet, Slash, and Engima, plus two old lady cuts, Willa and Amy.

Their cuts had been hauled out of the wreckage of the old clubhouse.

They hung next to photos of them, all having a good time.

There were even pictures of the children who’d been so brutally murdered.

Clio had once had a pink fit at the number of photos scattered around and had scanned them all into a laptop before putting most away.

It was a lucky foresight by her. It allowed Hellfire to keep hold of the positive

memories.

“They deserve to be remembered,” Chance replied.

Sunny nodded. Pain shone in both their eyes. The night Whiskey and Chaser had died had been when he’d lost Julie at the same time. Sunny had been reeling from her death and then theirs. That had been when Chance finally pulled the trigger.

“Say it,” Chance demanded, and Sunny held his eyes.

“What?”

“You always thought if I’d moved earlier, Whiskey and Chaser would be alive, as would their kids.”

“Ain’t gonna lie. I was about to leave the club. Julie made me swear to put the baby first, and the way you let things drag on did not sit right with me. We should’ve pushed much earlier, but you were determined to play by the rules,” Sunny said honestly.

“The charter was what we lived by.”

Page 13

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Yeah, what we honoured, not them. They didn’t give a shit about the charter.

You allowed filth to infect us while you brought in brothers to win a vote.

You should have pushed for the war a decade beforehand.

Nineteen years Hellfire was filth because you wanted to play by the rules. That was your mistake,” Sunny replied.

“Maybe. But we can’t change the past.”

“No. But you should learn from them. I’m back because you have got a dirty member still.

He is amongst you. That’s the damn truth.

I got a text message from a member of our chat group.

I don’t know whose phone it came from, but I was told to be at that spot.

Zeus wouldn’t have known I was there unless someone leaked it.

You’ve got a traitor, Chance, and he’s hiding in plain sight,” Sunny informed Chance.

Chance looked shocked. “Bullshit!”

“I received a message from a burner. We all had burners, if you remember, but only our group knew the numbers. I headed to that place on the strength of that text. When I was shot, Zeus sneered at me, taunted about how did I like being betrayed by my own? I wouldn’t have been in that spot if one of ours hadn’t asked me to be there.

But I’m not sure who, I can’t remember the number for love or money, and my phone disappeared, which was convenient,” Sunny explained.

Chance schooled his expression. “Are you back for revenge?”

“No. I’m here to clear the last traitor out of our club. How did Zeus know we were meeting the night Whiskey and Chaser died? It wasn’t common knowledge. That was a secret meeting, yet Zeus knew and made his move. We had a rat amongst us, and I want his name. He needs to pay for those crimes.”

“You’re wrong,” Chance stated empathically.

“No, I’m not, and you know it! Do not turn a blind eye to this. Don’t fail Hellfire again.”

Chance reeled back, and Sunny felt a little guilty at that jab, but it was the truth. They’d been at war and at a disadvantage because their commander had wanted to play by the rules. That had cost innocent lives and men, and their families had died because of it.

“I need to think,” Chance said, and then shot him a look. “That’s why you’ve not allowed Liv here.”

“Yup. Not going to have my baby girl caught in the crosshairs of a traitor.”

“If there is one.”

“Bullshit yourself all you want, but you can’t deny the facts. I was set up by one of our own, and so was Whiskey and Chaser.”

Chance finally lost control of his expression and looked troubled.

“Like you, Sunny, I want the truth. Bring me proof, and we’ll deal with the traitor.

These men have been at my side since the war, that’s eighteen years they’ve hidden the fact they betrayed us.

If we’ve got a rat, he’s damn good. And I tell you now, I do not believe we have one.

Someone set you up, but not a brother present today. ”

“I’ll get your proof. I just hope you don’t regret this.”

“Truth always comes out.”

“Chance, I’m fifty-one years old. You think I don’t know that?” Sunny replied. Chance inclined his head and headed out.

“Hey! What about this toilet?” Sunny bellowed, glaring at the offending item.

“Get Jinx to move it,” Chance called back.

Sunny muttered a few threats and went in search of the prospect who was fast becoming the bane of everyone’s life.

A week later

Sunny flung the covers away and sat up. Images of tanned, smooth, soft skin kept

torturing him. They weren't enough for him to identify who the woman was, but there was no doubt in his head there had been one. Her moans and cries also echoed in his mind when he tried to sleep.

All he had was the smell of her perfume, and that had faded now.

He ran a hand over his face and got up. Yanking on some shorts, he didn't bother pulling on a top, and he left his bunk.

He headed down to the rec room and saw it was empty.

Sunny walked into the kitchen and opened the fridge.

He started making a sandwich when Tiny came in.

Tiny paused, surprised to find Sunny here, and then nodded at the food. "I'll take two," he said and grabbed a stool.

"Make your own," Sunny retorted, but even so, began making Tiny his snack.

"I will make the hot milk," Tiny announced, and Sunny paused in layering the meat and looked at him.

"What?"

"Something I always make when I'm having trouble sleeping. A snack and hot milk."

"Ain't we a bit old for that?" Sunny demanded.

"Dude, you are an old man. Hot milk is what old men drink."

"I ain't fuckin' old. Shut your mouth!" Sunny exclaimed, outraged.

Tiny chuckled. “You are six years older than me.” “And you can still shut up! Make me a hot milk, too,” Sunny ordered.

Tiny smirked as he got up and began doing that. A few minutes later, they were eating crammed meat and salad sandwiches and sipping hot milk.

“We never used to eat so good,” Sunny muttered around a mouthful.

“Clio insists on fresh produce every week and keeps everything stocked. They keep going on about hiring a cook, but we can’t seem to keep one. They never last more than a month,” Tiny complained.

“I noticed that. Chance never says why they leave. Is one of the brothers getting handsy?” Sunny asked.

“You’re the lieutenant, one of the top three, you don’t know?” Tiny challenged.

Sunny looked abashed. “This is gonna seem petty, but it’s never occurred to me to ask.”

“They quit for various reasons. Nothing any of us did,” Tiny replied. “Clio’s looking for another cook, as the old ladies are taking it in turns to ensure we have a meal in the evening.”

“They don’t need to be worrying about that.” Sunny felt a bit guilty because he didn’t really bother about shit like that. He should take more interest in that type of stuff.

Tiny took a huge bite of his sandwich and held Sunny’s gaze. “What’s bothering you?”

“Huh?”

“Something’s up. You’re never down here this time of night.”

“And you monitor that?” Sunny teased.

“Dude, I have insomnia. I catch sleep where I can. But that means I’m around a lot down here.” “Sorry to hear that. You had it long?” Sunny asked, deflecting Tiny’s question.

“Since the war. Our one. This latest war just made shit worse. Now speak, you got woman troubles?”

Sunny shot Tiny a look that made the giant laugh.

“Yeah, thought so. Wanna talk?” Tiny offered.

Tanned legs wrapping around him as he buried his head in her pussy flicked into his head. He heard her gasp his name and stiffened. He recognised that voice.

“Nah. Just got a lot on my mind,” Sunny replied.

“Like a traitor?”

“How the fuck did you know that?” Sunny demanded. “Chance flapping his gums?”

“Dude, I think we’ve all figured that out.

You think there’s filth here still. Cherry and Liv haven’t been anywhere near the clubhouse in three and a half years.

Which means you are keeping them away for a reason.

We aren't stupid. It didn't take much working out," Tiny replied. His eyes held Sunny's.

"Shit. The entire club knows?"

"Yup. Just ain't said nothing to ya, not because we got something to hide, but because you're wrong. Time will prove that."

"What if time proves I'm correct, Tiny?" Sunny asked as he finished his sandwich.

"Then Hellfire will do what's right. We'll take care of the rat."

Sunny nodded but couldn't help wondering if Tiny was deflecting attention away from himself. But if the entire fuckin' club had realised his purpose, then it made it harder for Sunny to root the traitor out.

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"What do you mean, son?" Cherry asked.

"I thought I was being clever. I wasn't. The club's aware of why I returned."

"Okay. That just means they know," Cherry replied.

"Mom. It means they may be watching you."

"We expected that. I have the go-bags packed and within easy reach. I also have weapons scattered around the house. Don't worry, I will be fine. But I'll keep an eye out. If I see anything suspicious, I'll tell you."

"Maybe you ought to take Liv and head for the safe house now," Sunny said.

“Oh, can’t do that, son. I just started painting lessons, and the male model is a rather attractive young man who’s very well-hung!” Cherry chirped, and Sunny snorted.

“Mother!”

“Sunny, lighten up, boy. You need to get laid.”

“Mom, worry about your own sex life and not mine!” Sunny retorted, and Cherry tittered.

As he hung up, Sunny remembered those beautiful eyes staring into his. Shit, which sister had he slept with? Polly or Callie?

Page 14

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

I was so damn tired, I needed to hit the sack and get some shuteye.

Luckily, the team had a two-month break before our next investigation.

We'd been non-stop for months, and we were all dangerously close to burnout.

I'd argued and gained a long break for them.

It wasn't as if the network didn't have enough footage to make another three seasons easily.

They had plenty because of our constant filming.

The team had returned to Spearfish with me, and we're hired a house for two months.

It was the first time we had been back since I'd slept with Sunny eight months ago.

That wasn't because I'd been avoiding him, but because we'd booked investigations back-to-back.

My problem was saying no when someone contacted us for help.

But seeing how drained we all were, I'd finally said we were on a break.

We'd arrived in Spearfish this morning and headed for the house.

It wasn't far from the compound but had enough distance for my privacy.

Clio had texted me an invitation for this evening to the clubhouse, but I had refused.

We were so damn tired, all we wanted to do was sleep.

I'd told Clio we would see her this weekend.

Clio had been disappointed but said she understood.

I collapsed full length on my bed and closed my eyes. I didn't even have the energy to get undressed.

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"Are we going to look at Ravenberry Manor again while we are here?" Freddie asked as she shovelled cereal into her mouth.

"We're on a break," I replied as I sipped my coffee.

"Yes, but Ravenberry was fun. And it wouldn't be a formal investigation, you know, for the network," Harry added.

"Seriously? You guys want to work instead of relaxing?" I questioned, eyeing the pool outside.

"Yeah," Phil said.

"We've got all the equipment. Let's take two weeks and then hit the Manor. You think Lavender will open the doors to us again?" Jack inquired.

"You're all insane," I objected.

“Maybe, but that Manor was fun. It would be nice to have something of our own, without the networks breathing down our necks about deadlines,” Freddie said.

I rolled my eyes as the woman picked up her bowl and drank the milk from it.

“That remains disgusting,” Harry pointed out.

Freddie shrugged. She didn’t care. “Waste not, want not.”

“I’ll contact Lavender. I know the museums opened this March, but I also know she’s still got a ton of items to value. However, the rooms should all be cleared by now,” I said.

Everyone nodded and finished eating breakfast.

“I’m hitting the pool,” Harry announced and headed outside with Phil and Freddie on his heels.

“If you want a longer break, I can speak to the others,” Jack offered.

“No. I am good. Two weeks of rest and relaxation is what I need. I’m surprised they want to work.”

“They’re not working, though. This is fun for them. No cameras on them, just doing what they love to do, Callie.”

“Fair do, if that’s what you want, I’m okay with it. But remember, we’ve a two-month break. Make the most of it,” I said.

“Are you hitting the pool?” Jack asked as laughter came from the outside.

“Not with those animals in it. I don’t need to be dunked a hundred times. I’m going to hit the shops, I think. There’s a really cool soap and incense shop in town.”

“Enjoy yourself,” Jack replied and headed out.

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I was taking a selfie with a fan when I felt eyes on me. Glancing around, I couldn’t spot anyone. I exchanged a few words and carried on into the shop I’d planned to visit.

“Hi there, are you looking for something in particular or just browsing?” a woman asked, and I turned with a smile.

“Browsing, thank you,” I replied.

“Let me know if you want anything,” she responded, and I nodded. I picked up a basket, and wandering around the shop, I began filling it.

“I think I need another basket,” I said as I approached the woman. She looked at me and chuckled.

“Looks like it. I’ll hold that for you.”

“Thanks.”

After I filled a second basket and paid, I headed out with my bags.

When I’d arrived, I parked at the old Hellfire clubhouse, which was now their garage.

They also had a carwash and a parking lot there.

I'd parked next to the garage and left before anyone had seen me.

At the clubhouse was a second garage, one that Fanatic built his designs in.

Due to the high costs of the vehicles Fanatic worked on, they'd decided to keep that one close in case of theft.

My understanding was: originally Fanatic's workshop was supposed to be with the main garage. But as said, when you're building cars that sell for six figures, you don't have them open to John Q Public. As I reached my car, I felt like I was being watched again and spun around.

What I saw made my mouth run dry.

Keen eyes watching me as he lounged against a wall, his ankles crossed, and a look on his face I couldn't describe was the man who haunted my dreams. Sunny. He straightened up and headed towards me.

Fuck. I had not spoken to him in eight months, and looking at him now, it hurt. He had fucked my brains out and given me more orgasms than I'd had in my entire life. And then forgotten he'd done it.

"You good?" Sunny asked as he approached.

"Yeah, just shopping. We are taking a two-month break, our schedule has been hectic, and we're close to burnout. I thought I'd buy some scented stuff as I love the things that woman makes. Are you okay?"

Sunny blinked at my babble.

"Take a breath, Callie."

“Sorry. My mind’s just ticking over constantly. I got to learn to relax,” I muttered.

“You seem nervous. Did I do something?” Sunny murmured, stepping closer to me.

I wanted to back up and escape him. I wanted to yell, ‘You fucked me senseless and did not even remember. The best night of my life meant nothing to you.’ Instead, I said, “I’m fine.”

“Liar. When a woman says she’s okay, she isn’t. Talk to me.”

“Nothing to say. I’ve got to go, lots of shopping to do!” I chirped happily and hoped Sunny didn’t catch the falseness in my voice.

By his narrowed eyes, I’d failed. “See you soon, sweet girl,” Sunny said softly, sending shivers down my spine.

Sunny

It was her. That scent was burned into his nostrils, and she was wearing it again. Fuck, Callie was the mystery woman, and Sunny didn’t remember their night together. There was panic in Callie’s eyes as she looked to escape him.

He stepped back, and Callie literally fled with a half-hearted wave goodbye. Sunny watched her go.

“Run, Callie,” he muttered. “You and I are going to have a reckoning soon.”

Callie

Even that encounter had weakened my knees.

Before I'd slept with him, Sunny had attracted me.

He might have been fifty-one and me twenty-eight, which left a twenty-three-year age gap, but it didn't bother me.

He was fitter than most men half his age.

I knew from exploring his body he still had defined muscles, and he took care of himself.

Chance was older than Clio, and Bear older than Thalia. Age was just a number.

Sunny had held my attention because of the quiet way he conducted himself. I knew he was watching his brothers for a traitor. And I hoped he was wrong. But I was drawn to him like a moth to a light. Sunny was irresistible. At least he was to me.

"Hello," a voice said, and I glanced up and smiled.

"Hey, what are you doing here?" I asked Madisen, who looked fantastic as usual in her nineteen-twenties dress.

"Shopping. I escaped my nutcase cousins for the day," Madisen snickered, and I laughed.

Madisen had raised some real self-worth issues for me. The daughter of a now-dead mobster, Madisen marched to the tune of her own drums and was incredibly confident. Levi doted on her and her cousins. Madisen ran a nineteen-twenty speakeasy, which was set over a couple of levels.

Her cousin Brandy was in a relationship with Madisen's other cousin, Camille.

Brandy had an office in the building where she operated the family's charitable donations.

Meanwhile, Camille owned a dance studio in the same building as The Midnight Hour.

Madisen's cousin, Camille's sister Tamsin, owned a nineteen-twenty clothes shop in the same building as well.

The four of them were a force to be reckoned with.

"Callie, are you okay? You look a little flustered," Madisen asked as her gaze flicked to the figure of Sunny walking back to the garage.

"Fine. Perfectly good. Where are you headed now?"

"I was going to get a coffee and a snack. Do you want to join me?"

"That would be wonderful. I planned to hit a steampunk clothing shop that opened recently here. I love their clothing," I said.

"Yeah, but you don't go full steampunk," Madisen murmured as she studied me. "You know, I think Tami had some items you'd like. It's not your usual style, but come see what she has."

"Sure, why not?" I replied as she linked her arms with mine. "Let's head to Clio's tearoom for a coffee and lunch."

"Perfect," Madisen agreed.

???

I winced at the bags piled at my feet. Tami was laughing as she placed three more down.

“How am I going to get them back to the car?” I demanded. The clothes had been amazing in Tami’s shop, so I had spent a small fortune.

“I’ll call for a candidate,” Madisen said.

“No, don’t. Some of them I do not like,” I replied. Shocked that the words had left my mouth, I clapped a hand over it.

Madisen and Tami started to laugh.

“No, a couple are assholes. But I know one who isn’t, have you met Jinx? He is adorable, if he’s at the garage, he’ll come help.”

“Not in my shop!” Tami gasped and began grabbing bags.

“He is danger-prone, isn’t he?” I agreed, grabbing bags, too.

“I swear to God, that boy was cursed with bad Juju,” Madisen said as Brandy entered.

“Hey, Cuz, grab some, please. We’re going to call for Jinx, but Tami doesn’t want him in her place,” Madisen called.

Page 15

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Hell to the no,” Brandy exclaimed and grabbed the remaining bags. The four of us, laden down, carried them to the entrance of The Midnight Hour, and Madisen phoned Levi for Jinx.

“Levi’s sending him,” Madisen said, hanging up.

“Good. I’m heading out for a meeting, catch you all later,” Brandy stated and waved goodbye.

I wished the pavement would swallow me when I saw Jinx coming, but he wasn’t alone. Sunny was with him. Madisen sent me a knowing glance but didn’t say anything.

“Thought I’d come because of the Jinx effect,” Sunny stated. He picked up two bags, and the handles broke. Tami gasped and caught them before they hit the ground.

“Stay here and don’t touch,” she ordered as Jinx winced.

Tami returned moments later and doubled all the bags up.

“They should survive,” she said and hugged me before leaving.

“I’m going to head to The Midnight Hour, I need to check a few things. You know, we’ve been here a few hours, Callie probably wants a drink, Sunny,” Madisen suggested and skipped off.

That wretch!

“Let’s get these back to the car,” Sunny said with a glint in his eye. What did that mean?

I followed along as they carried the majority of the bags and couldn’t help appreciating how well Sunny’s jeans fit his tightly muscled ass.

As we approached the parking lot, butterflies erupted in my stomach.

Sunny was up to something. I didn’t know what, but I knew I had to escape whatever he’d planned.

I popped the trunk and allowed them to place the bags inside, and I headed for the driver’s seat. Sunny reached out and gently snagged my arm.

“Where you going, kitten? We’re getting a coffee.”

“You don’t have to! Madisen shouldn’t have put you in an awkward position,” I stuttered, trying to figure a way out of this mess.

Sunny smirked. “Nobody makes me do anything, Callie, you know that. And we’ve got to talk.”

“We have.”

“I do not remember much of that night. Ain’t gonna lie. That moonshine kicked my ass. But I do remember a beautiful pair of eyes and soft moans.”

“Let’s go!” I squealed as I glanced in Jinx’s direction. To his credit, he’d already begun walking off and was ignoring our conversation.

“Where would you like to go?” Sunny asked as he fell into step with me as I scurried

away.

“Somewhere private,” I hissed as I felt butterflies in my stomach. My wonderful day was turning into a nightmare.

Sunny took my elbow and turned me towards Clio’s tearooms. “Come on.”

“They ain’t private!”

“No, but they do the best coffee around, and we can get them to go. We’ll head to the park,” Sunny said.

“Okay.”

Sunny smirked at my tone; he fully knew I wasn’t fine with any of this. I waited outside as Sunny grabbed two coffees and was surprised when he came out with a bag as well.

“Come on, Callie,” he said, and we began walking in the direction of the park. The silence between us felt awkward, although it didn’t seem to affect him. We turned into the park, and he led me towards a bench.

“What is this about?” I demanded.

“Callie, take your coffee and food,” Sunny ordered, pulling out a sub and handing it to me.

I glanced at it and swallowed the urge to throw it at him. His infuriating smirk appeared again as he read my thoughts.

“Eat, you know you’re grouchy when you don’t,” Sunny said and bit into his own

sub.

In response, I viscously bit into it and chewed.

“Wonder if you bit me like that that night. Didn’t check for teeth marks,” Sunny mused, and I nearly choked on my food.

I glowered at him as I swallowed, and Sunny chuckled.

“I’m sorry. That moonshine did a number on me, I have never in my life been so drunk I couldn’t recall my actions. I am embarrassed that I didn’t.”

“Sunny, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I murmured as I fought the blush on my cheeks.

“Don’t do that. Do not lie to me, Callie.

I know you and I spent the night together, and I’ve flashes of memories, smooth skin, your smile, your eyes holding mine.

Kitten, I am sorry I forgot it. Believe me, I want nothing more than to remember because I bet it was fuckin’ fantastic,” Sunny said as he put a hand on my leg.

“Couldn’t have been that great if you forgot it, Sunny.”

“Callie, I was totally off my head. My question is, I don’t believe you were.” “Why couldn’t I have been?” I demanded. I placed the sandwich down and wrapped it back up. My gut was so tied in knots I could not eat.

“Because you never lose control. Never.” “Are you saying I’m uptight?” I gasped, offended.

Sunny's eyes narrowed. "Stop trying to pick a fight with me."

I sighed. Sunny was right, I was being belligerent because of the hurt I still felt.

"Okay. The truth is, I do remember that night. Why did I sleep with you? Because I've been attracted to you for a while.

I thought you had no interest in me, so when you kissed me, I took the opportunity to grab a memory for myself.

What I didn't expect was that memory to become tarnished when you didn't remember our time together. "

"I hurt you."

"Yes. No woman likes to be forgotten. And worse? You then asked me if I had seen you with anyone. That kicked me in the teeth. That night was amazing. You made me cum more times in one night than I'd had with my previous boyfriend.

He never made me orgasm. So yeah, Sunny, that night was special, and you spat on it," I said honestly.

The blush rose on my cheeks, but I held Sunny's gaze even as my embarrassment showed.

"You were attracted to me? Callie, there's over twenty years between us."

"And? I like you, and age doesn't matter to me. Seems to be a thing in my family as Clio and Thalia picked older men." I realised what I'd said as Sunny blinked and scrambled to clear it up. "I don't mean I'm looking for a relationship."

“Callie, calm down before you have a panic attack. Shit, I wish I could remember that night, but I only recall snatches, images. That is going to be my biggest regret. I’d no idea you felt like that about me.”

“Sunny, you mean that you’d no idea I was attracted to you. I don’t feel anything else.”

“Stop scrambling. Fuck. A beautiful, stunning, fuckin’ amazing woman spent the night with me, and I don’t remember.

The scent of your perfume has driven me wild.

I didn’t wash my pillow for weeks. I’ve smelt every woman around me, trying to discover who it was until I had a flash of your eyes.

Then I knew, and I was filled with regrets.

Callie, I wish to high hell that I could remember because I am sure I’m forgetting something wonderful. ”

“Well, I felt like crap after you didn’t remember. I was nothing to you, just a random lay, and you couldn’t even remember me. It deeply hurt me and has made me incredibly wary. That night meant everything, and you brushed it off. Even asking me if I knew who you’d slept with.”

“Callie, I never meant to upset or hurt you. Don’t let one drunken idiot ruin it all for you,” Sunny said.

“I have trust issues. This just exacerbated them. I get it, okay, you’re not looking for anything, and neither am I.

But that night went from a dream to a nightmare.

And can we please finish with this conversation?

It's causing bad memories and making me feel hurt all over again.

You forgot me, like everyone else in my life.

The truth is, I'm so unforgettable than I should be used to it. "

"Don't say that! You're anything but forgettable, Callie!" Sunny exclaimed, leaning towards me.

Sadly, I got to my feet. "But I am... because even you, who I thought was a friend, forgot you slept with me." I walked away as Sunny called my name. "This is done. Let's forget stuff happened and go our own ways."

Sunny

He stared after her. If Callie thought he was going to let shit slide, she had another thing coming.

Sunny didn't know what to call his feelings towards her; it wasn't love, but he liked her a fuck load.

He was not prepared to walk away from her and let her hurt in silence.

Nor was Sunny going to let her wallow in self-pity.

Callie was a fighter, or she wouldn't be where she was today.

Sunny had watched Callie grow and had enjoyed the experience. And now she'd admitted she was attracted to him despite their age difference? Yeah, she was in his crosshairs and was going down.

Page 16

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Callie

That conversation had been so embarrassing.

I wanted to crawl up my own ass and die.

Sunny had been kind but to the point. I drove back to the house and allowed my angst to drain away.

Keeping hold of negative feelings never worked, and all it caused was drama and grief.

When I had been a child, I'd learned to let go of what most people held onto.

Unwanted, I might have been, but I was a quick learner.

The truth was, deep down, I wanted to belong to someone or something.

Ghost Seekers had filled a part of that longing, but being the centre of somebody's world was a dream that wouldn't come true for me.

Hell, I wasn't looking to be Sunny's old lady, but I'd hoped he'd appreciated that night as much as me.

And it turned out he didn't remember it!

I shook myself. I had to stop harping on about it.

Reality was, I was not the only woman who'd slept with a man and then been forgotten.

That shit hurt, but not as much as being lashed with chains or some of the other physical punishments I had received.

Sunny had forgotten about our crazy sex, wit-woo, so be it.

I'd move forward, being careful who I let into my life. Lesson learned.

Sunny

He sat on his bike, trying to drum up the courage to walk up the path and knock.

Sunny had no idea how this would go down, but knowing Chance, it wouldn't be easy.

He scratched his stomach as he tried to figure out the right approach and jumped as the front door opened and Chance filled the entrance.

"You coming in or what?" Chance demanded.

"Yeah. I need to talk to you about something," Sunny replied, swinging off his Harley.

"Kids are here, so we'll speak outside. Won't get any privacy if we go in," Chance said and motioned towards some Adirondack chairs. Sunny took one as Chance disappeared and reappeared, holding two bottles of beer.

"How does it feel knowing you're that much older than Clio?" Sunny asked as Chance sat and handed him a bottle.

Chance looked surprised, but considered his answer. “Truth is, it doesn’t matter. She’s Clio. My woman. I worship the ground she walks on, and it does not bother me who knows.”

“Did you have doubts?”

“Nope. Well, not at first, but sure, I did consider the gap. Especially when I realised I could die, and she might have twenty years left before she joins me. When Clio hits fifty, I’ll be seventy-five.

That’s a scary thought. If I live to eighty, Clio will be fifty-five, young enough to get with someone else.

Yes, sometimes the age gap does a number on me, but then I remember the love Clio brought me, and I’d not swap that for nothing. ”

“I see.” Sunny turned Chance’s words over in his head as Chance gave him space. “I like Callie,” Sunny blurted.

“Callie?” Chance asked, surprised.

“Yeah. We’ve gotten close over the last few years and developed a friendship. But I want more, and I believe Callie does as well. I’m here to ask permission to date her.”

Chance chewed his lip as his gaze raked Sunny’s face. Sunny tried to hide the guilt but knew he was failing.

“You slept with her?” Chance growled.

“A one-night stand eight months ago. I want more.”

“Is that why Callie hasn’t been around?”

“No. She genuinely overbooked her schedule,” Sunny replied confidently, even though he wasn’t sure. Had Callie done that to escape the embarrassment she’d felt and to avoid facing him?

“You are going to meet me in the ring. Callie is a sister to me,” Chance snapped.

“Guessed that was coming. I still want permission to date her,” Sunny pressed.

Chance studied him. “Know you’re a good man. Also aware you do not mistreat women. But you got this suspicion hanging around you, and you ain’t resolved it yet. Don’t know if I can give my agreement on this, Sunny.”

“Oh, shut up,” Clio exclaimed from behind. “Will you treat Callie right, Sunny?”

“Fuck, yeah!”

“You’ll make her feel a queen like Chance does me and ensure she doesn’t go without?”

“I’m not sure what’s in our future, but know this: I want to get to know Callie better and make something with her. I can see a relationship, but Callie’s feelings need to be considered, too,” Sunny answered honestly.

Clio smacked Chance around the back of his head. “Give Sunny permission.”

“Clio,” Chance said, pained. “I’m the president.”

Clio slapped him a second time. “She’s my sister, give him freaking permission or no sex tonight.”

“You have permission,” Chance exclaimed quickly.

Sunny began laughing. “Wow, that’s all it took?”

“Thalia and Bear are having the kids overnight. Chance is going to get loud and dirty sex, but if he withheld permission...” Clio left the threat hanging. “Of course, he’s still gonna beat the crap out of you in the ring.”

“Naturally,” Sunny muttered as Chance beamed.

“Tomorrow,” Chance said.

Sunny nodded, resigned.

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Chance could’ve hit harder but didn’t, and Sunny knew it.

Even so, he’d still have bruises, and Sunny’s ribs hurt.

He was sure they were bruised. Funnily enough, Chance had left his face alone.

Chance had stated that he did not want Callie getting with Sunny out of sympathy for his poor, injured features.

Nor did Chance want Callie embarrassed if Sunny took her out by the marks Chance would’ve caused.

Either way, Sunny knew he could be in a lot worse pain. Chance had taken his pound of flesh and walked away happily. Sunny didn’t blame him. Family members were off limits, and they all knew it. You had to get permission to date someone related to

a brother. Sunny had that now.

He headed for a flower shop and looked around, bewildered. He'd not really bought flowers before. Cherry liked glittery things, and Liv preferred a book or Punko Pop.

"Who did you upset, and how much do you want to spend?" the woman behind the counter asked.

"Not upset anyone that I know of," Sunny responded, bemused.

"Wow, a Hellfire brother in my shop for a reason other than pacifying their old lady?" she teased, and Sunny laughed.

"Guess my brothers give you a lot of business?"

"Yup, me, the jeweller's a couple of doors down, and the soap and candle shop," she replied. "I'll say this, when you guys apologise, you do it properly."

"Thank you. This isn't an apology. This is I want to date you," Sunny said.

The woman blinked. "Well, thanks, but this is the first time we've met, and I don't know you."

"Oh shit. No, I do not want to date you, but the lady I'm sending flowers to."

"Ah, that makes sense. I was about to hit the panic button then." She laughed. "So, this is a woman you want to date?"

"Yup. And I've no idea what to buy her. She's also younger than me."

"No old lady flowers then."

“Is that a thing?” Sunny asked, and the girl laughed again.

“No. I was teasing you. How big do you want to go?”

“Enough to attract her attention, but not too big it frightens her,” Sunny replied.

“Okay. Would you like to wait?” the woman—her name badge said Lilac—inquired as she rounded the counter and began picking flowers.

“No. Do you deliver?”

“Yes, if you want to pop to the soaps and candle shop, it’s called Heavenly Delights and add a gift bag to your order, we’ll deliver that too,” Lilac offered.

“Thanks,” Sunny replied and headed in that direction.

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One hundred and fifty bucks lighter, Sunny hoped Callie would enjoy her gifts. He’d signed the card with a simple message. ‘See you soon, Sunny.’ That would get Callie wondering.

As he walked to his bike, he paused as he saw a man watching him.

Sunny’s eyes narrowed; the guy looked familiar, but Sunny couldn’t place him.

He turned away and disappeared into the crowd.

Sunny frowned but carried on toward his Harley.

He switched his mind to the problem of the traitor. It was time to check in with his

team.

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“You can rule out Chance, Bear, Big Al, Rooster, Diesel, Chatter, and Celt,” Solace stated.

“Sure?”

“Yeah, we’ve followed them for several months, they ain’t dirty,” Acker’s replied.

“We haven’t cleared many,” Sunny mused.

“Nope. But you’ve got us focussing on one person at a time. And we’re taking it in shifts to watch them. They might not do anything illegal at once, which is why we guessed we’d need at least four to five months watching them,” Diaz explained.

“Acker, have you picked any scuttlebutt up as a candidate?”

“No, but some of them are fuckin’ assholes. If Hellfire vote for them to prospect, you’re idiots,” Acker’s replied.

“Give me names at the end of the meeting. I’ll make sure I vote nay,” Sunny said.

“We’re getting there, Sunny, but you knew it would take time,” Diaz added.

“We’ve got Shee, Levi, Pyro, Tiny, and Shotgun left,” Solace mused, tapping her finger on the list.

“Still too many to point the finger at.” Sunny sighed.

“You got a gut feeling or something?” Acker’s asked.

“They all know why I am back. I’m feeling the pressure,” Sunny admitted.

“If we speed up the surveillance, we risk missing something. I’m pretty sure we can clear Pyro from the list, but boy does he have a fucking secret,” Solace muttered.

“He has an alter-ego called Justice? Figured that one out myself.” Sunny shook his head in disbelief and discovering that little gem.

“The man is fucked, but if he weren’t messing with the guilty who the law let off, I’d have a problem. As it is, justice is being wrought, not got a problem with that,” Diaz commented.

“Do we keep going? You’re paying us for this, and it’s costing a fortune,” Ashford asked.

“I got money. That ain’t an issue. This has been hanging over my head for twenty years. I just need to know who it is,” Sunny replied.

“Then we will keep watching and digging. We’ll get him,” Diaz said reassuringly.

“Yeah, and he’ll pay when I find out who,” Sunny promised.

“Amen to that,” Ashford muttered.

Callie

Page 17

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

I stared at the huge flower arrangement in bemusement. It was beautiful, and I'd never got one before.

"Who's it from?" Freddie demanded as she picked up the card.

"Probably one of my sisters, but I don't know why," I replied.

"How about Sunny?" Freddie said, and I turned to her in disbelief.

"What?"

"He sent them, and he says, I quote, 'see you soon.'"

"Pardon?"

Freddie giggled as she repeated it as I opened the gift bag from Heavenly Delights. I pulled out some candles, incense sticks, body lotion, and shampoo.

"Someone has an admirer," Freddie teased.

"Shut up," I replied, but there was no bite to it.

Freddie grinned at me and took off, yelling about my secret boyfriend. Wonderful, there'd be no end to the teasing.

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Next day, I woke up to Harry bouncing on my bed.

“Harry!” I mumbled, rubbing my eyes.

“Get up, Sunny sent another present,” he declared.

“Huh?”

“Callie, get the hell up, we wanna eat and can’t, as it’s your gift.”

“I shall kill you if you don’t disappear,” I warned.

“Is she up?” Freddie screeched, and I sighed. There’d be no going back to sleep now. I glanced at my phone as I tried to wake up and saw it was eight in the morning. Great, no lie in today.

“I’m coming!” I yelled irately as Freddie screamed for me to get up.

“Give me five minutes, and you better have coffee on!” I hissed at Harry, who grinned and disappeared. I stumbled out of bed, hit the toilet, and washed my hands and face before brushing my teeth.

Incredibly grumpy, I headed downstairs and into the kitchen. There, a delightful aroma greeted me.

“Doughnuts?”

“Pastries, I think, but we can’t be sure. None of us wanted to be so rude to open it without you,” Jack said.

“What a load of bull,” I replied and opened the huge box and sniffed at the smell. My

stomach growled in rebellion at the scents.

“Wow,” Phil gasped.

Inside the box was a selection of pastries, but Sunny had been clever. Nobody would have to fight over who wanted what. He’d included five of each type.

“And here you go,” Phil said, handing me a huge cup of coffee. I noted it was from one of my favourite coffee shops.

“Sunny sent one for each of us, but two for you.” Freddie giggled. She had frosting around her top lip as she tucked into a doughnut.

Phil had a bear claw in hand while Harry was chomping on a croissant, and Jack ate an almond pastry. I sipped the coffee and closed my eyes in ecstasy.

“Wow,” I murmured.

Freddie offered me a sly look. “Still think he’s not interested?”

“Shut the fuck up. I’m not caffeinated,” I growled, snatching a doughnut. The others laughed and ate the very generous breakfast Sunny had bought.

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I was in the garden, relaxing by the pool the next day. Everyone had been disappointed because no breakfast items had arrived. I had texted Sunny thank you for his gifts and asked why he had sent them, but he’d not replied.

“Nice!” Harry said, coming out of the house holding a box. I opened an eyelid and frowned as I sat up.

“Did I miss a takeout order?” I wondered. I’d been dozing on and off as today was warm, and I was soaking up the sun.

“Nope. Sunny got lunch,” Harry stated and placed the box on the table. To my surprise, each bag was named, and when they opened theirs, they each had their favourite subs, chips and a cake. Coffees had also been sent.

I was amused at what Sunny was doing but had no idea why. Was this his way of apologising? Yanking my phone out, I texted him.

‘Sunny, thank you for lunch, but please stop. I accept your apology.’

I placed my mobile down, and opening my bag, drooled at the sub. Yup, Sunny knew my favourites. My phone dinged in reply.

I peered at it, and my mouth dropped open.

‘This ain’t an apology. This is me saying I see you and like what I see.’

What on earth? I put my phone down and considered what Sunny was telling me. Was he acting out of guilt? In this situation, I was unsure of what to say and do. While everyone joked around me, I pondered the quandary I found myself in. My phone pinged again, and I picked it up.

‘Don’t shut down on me, Callie. I mean what I say. This is me stating my interest in you. But I know you’re gun-shy. So, I’m going to court you the old-fashioned way. The way my dad taught me.’

Holy cow. I tried to stop the smile hitting my lips but failed as Freddie whistled.

“Is that Sunny?” she demanded.

“Yeah.”

“What did he say?”

“He said he wants to court me the old-fashioned way,” I answered, bemused. Freddie whistled again as the others cheered a little.

“Why, though?” I asked, and they quieted.

“Why what?” Harry inquired.

“I don’t get why he wants to date me.”

“Seriously? Callie, you’re beautiful, inside and out,” Freddie exclaimed.

“Yeah, somehow I doubt that,” I replied.

Freddie gaped at me as Jack stared at me with narrowed eyes.

“Well, now, I didn’t see that coming,” he said, surprised.

“What?”

“You lack self-confidence. You are so confident while on investigations, I never noticed. Callie, I’m aware of your past, we all are, honey, it is not something you’ve ever hidden from us.

But it’s done a number on you. Honestly, I had a crush on you for ages at the start.

However, you were so focused on the tasks facing us I realised you’d never date a member of the team,” Jack replied.

“Really?” I asked, pleasantly shocked.

“Yeah.”

“Jack wasn’t the only one,” Phil spoke up, and I turned to him with wide eyes. “I fancied the pants off you, but you had an unapproachable air to you. Now, I know it’s because you’re guarding your heart, but that little trait was attractive because I wanted to be the man who breached your walls.”

“Damn,” I muttered, more than a little shocked by their admissions.

“Not me, though,” Harry admitted cheerfully. His gaze flicked to Freddie, who didn’t notice. “I liked someone else.”

“Sunny is being genuine?” I asked.

“Yeah. Callie, the man is sending you personal gifts, but when sending something that can be shared, he covers all of us. That’s a guy with a mission. Sunny knows how important we are to you. By including us, he’s covering all bases into winning you over,” Freddie explained.

I frowned, trying to understand. “Sunny’s using you to get me?”

“Not quite. Sunny knows buying you food and not us would make you feel bad. To neutralise that, he sends to us all. That means we like Sunny and say nice things about him. Which means you absorb our good feelings about him. It’s a clever plan,” Freddie continued.

That gave me food for thought. Sunny was honestly courting me, according to the others. I still didn’t know if this was his way or apologising and trying to make amends. As much as they ate at me, I hated my self-doubts and wished I could read

people better.

I had dated a couple of times, but they'd not been men like Sunny.

Adam had done a number on me, and the guys I'd dated after him had been few and far between.

Trust didn't come easily to me. Sunny had hurt me more than Adam, though, and if I was honest with myself, it was partially my own fault.

I knew Sunny had been drunk; I had to take ownership of that.

But Sunny, the sexy man, was courting me, and in earnest, it appeared. I wasn't sure what to make of that.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny

Every day for a week straight, Sunny sent Callie gifts.

Chance looked confused at what he was doing, which appeared to be nothing.

Chance wasn't aware of his slow courtship of Callie.

However, Freddie had spilled the beans to Lavender, and Lavender had told Clio, who was ecstatic.

Clio kept dropping hints of things that she knew Callie liked.

Thalia wasn't much better, but Polly regarded him suspiciously.

Let her. The bitch had been taken down several notches after her two weeks with Callie.

There was even talk of the five quints doing a special episode for the network, which would be interesting.

But that was up in arms at the moment. Right now, Sunny was watching Callie from a distance as she received his latest gift.

She was outside Ravenberry Manor, and her team were milling around as usual.

Callie unwrapped the parcel, and a squeal left her lips.

“What is it? Holy damn, how did he get hold of that?” Phil exclaimed.

Callie was holding a prototype of a new spirit box.

It hadn’t even been released for commercial use yet.

With Phoe’s help, he’d tracked the inventor down and invested some money to get Callie one.

It was the buzz item in the paranormal community, apparently one of the clearest and most powerful boxes created. And now my girl had it.

Sunny watched Callie’s face light up as she opened the box it came in and yanked it out.

The team all crowded around her as she examined it.

Callie’s face was alight with sheer pleasure, and Sunny smiled.

He had scored a winning goal with that. Callie passed the spirit box to Phil as she read the card.

He’d signed it and told her to be ready for seven tonight and to dress nice. Callie blushed as Freddie snatched it from her hand and squealed. Callie laughed as Freddie began babbling at her and shook her head.

A warm feeling flooded Sunny as he realised that was what Callie looked like happy. It was rare, as she kept herself tightly locked down. But for a brief moment, Callie shone. Sunny wanted to see more of that and would break his back ensuring Callie was always content.

Knowing he'd see Callie tonight, Sunny turned away. He had a mission.

Sunny hit his Harley and disappeared before Callie realised he was there. He headed into the Black Hills and left his bike in a parking lot. For an hour and a half, he hiked into them before turning to where Zeus was buried.

Today he wanted to tell the asshole's remains that he'd not only survived but thrived.

Even though Zeus had been killed after Sunny had left, Bear had brought him out here when he had returned.

Sunny had needed to know where Zeus laid, and Bear had understood.

The bastard had caused so much pain, Sunny needed to see the unmarked grave.

The route had been burned into his brain, and Sunny found it easily enough. He stood and looked at the slight depression in the ground where the body had decomposed and the dirt had resettled.

"I won, asshole. I'm still standing," Sunny murmured.

Naturally, there was no answer. If he'd received one, Sunny would have died of shock.

"You thought you beat us when you killed Engima, Bullet, and Slash. Stingray wasn't a loss, he was as dirty as you. But you were wrong. I thrived in the army and had a beautiful daughter and rewarding career. And now I'm back in the club you perverted.

"Hellfire is clean, it's a wonderful thing.

Yeah, I know you've got someone in there still, and I'll find and deal with them.

But you'd not recognise the club. It is stronger than before, and Chance is a great president.

All you are is a cautionary tale. Shit, you don't even have a legacy, Zeus.

Hellfire has legacies, it has princesses, and it has love and loyalty. Something you never understood."

Sunny paused and drew in a deep breath. Around him, birds chirped, and the sun shone. It was quiet here and far too beautiful a spot for Zeus to be buried in. He deserved to have been melted in lime.

"Asshole, you're nothing but a bad memory.

One that caused pain and grief to many, but we came through it.

Hellfire is so strong no one will break us again.

And I stand here knowing I won, and you lost. Motherfucker.

You took your best shot, and it wasn't enough to put me down.

How does it feel? Does it make you burn in hell?

"I bet having no legacy hurts even more. There's nobody to grieve or mourn you.

No one who gives a shit that you're no longer breathing and are worm food.

Thought you were something you weren't, all your attitude and asshole ways.

And what's left? Nothing. Hellfire has nothing of yours except a harsh lesson.

Nobody will ever take over the club again like you did, the charter has been amended for that.

I hope your evil soul is rotting in hell because that's where it belongs. ”

Sunny grew quiet and looked at the grave. There was nothing to state a body was buried here. Not even a stone marker, Zeus had been left to rot—to be forgotten. Sunny's head snapped up as he heard movement, and he faded away into the overgrowth. His eyes widened as he saw several uniforms appear.

“What the fuck?” he muttered.

“Are you sure these are the right co-ordinates?” a state trooper asked.

“Yes. These are what were sent to us.”

“Don't see any sign of a grave,” the first trooper replied.

“I do not imagine we would. It's been twenty years. We need the cadaver dogs up here,” the park ranger said, turning to the trooper.

Sunny stiffened. What the hell? Quietly and with an ease his bulk belied, Sunny slipped away. He needed to inform Chance now. They had a rat, and the motherfucker had just given state troopers Zeus's body.

Chance

Chance stared at Sunny in disbelief. “They found Zeus?”

“They are about to dig it up,” Sunny confirmed, looking pissed. “Somebody gave them the coordinates from what I heard.”

“Fuckin’ lucky we bleached the body before burying it,” Chance muttered.

“They’re going to identify it as Zeus. They’ll come here asking questions. You need to move the other bodies,” Sunny insisted.

“Shit.”

“The cops got a tipoff. That means someone here told them. We have a rat,” Sunny exclaimed.

Everything in Chance screamed a denial. These men had been by his side nearly twenty years. They’d fought to get the club clean. He trusted them all implicitly. But he could not deny Sunny’s evidence.

Chance’s stomach knotted up and twisted. He couldn’t imagine which brother was betraying them. And why now? Sunny had been back a few years, so that couldn’t be the trigger. Chance had missed something, but he’d no idea what. He shook his head, wanting to deny Sunny’s words, but he couldn’t.

“I’ll contact Drake. He’ll send some brothers to move the bodies. They’ve got that crematorium. This is an order, you don’t tell anyone about Zeus being found. You watch and listen,” Chance ordered.

“Bear?”

Chance felt a stab in his heart, but he had to protect the club. “Not even he is to know.”

Sunny looked at him as if he wanted to say something else. Whatever it was caused Sunny difficulty.

“You’re gonna hate me, but understand, I did this for Hellfire.” “Did what?” Chance bit out and wondered what new shock was heading his way.

“Bear, Celt, Big, Al, Rooster, Diesel and Chatter are all clean. They’re not the traitor.”

“How the fuck do you know that?” Chance demanded.

Sunny looked around them. They’d met in the Hills, away from the club and anyone listening. Chance could bellow, and nobody would hear, and he’d a gut feeling Sunny was going to send him nuclear.

“I had a team when I left the army. They quit after me and contacted me,” Sunny said.

“Yeah?”

“I put them on the club. They have spent the last couple of years watching brothers to find the traitor. They’ve cleared those I just mentioned,” Sunny admitted.

Chance felt his temper rise, and he was sure he’d turned red with anger. “You did fuckin’ what?”

“We’ve got a rat, today proves it. I acted to protect the club and hunt him down. My team is also sure Pyro is clean, although they found out he’s Justice,” Sunny snapped.

Chance stepped back because every single fibre of his body was screaming at him to put a bullet in Sunny’s head. Pyro’s alter ego was one only a few knew of, namely

him, Bear, and Bunny. Now Sunny knew, and so did others.

“How many on your team?” Chance ground out through gritted teeth.

“Four. Two watch the brothers, one does part-time as she also watches Liv and one...” Sunny broke off and flushed.

“One what?” Chance roared.

“Is a candidate,” Sunny admitted.

Chance blinked as a whole new level of betrayal hit him. Sunny had snuck a spy into his MC.

“He is out. I want his name,” Chance bellowed.

“Nope. Not giving you it.”

“Then I’ll get rid of them all,” Chance replied angrily.

“You can’t fuckin’ do that to Jinx! The club means everything to him!” Sunny exclaimed.

“Watch me. A name Sunny, now.”

“Sailor. He has been helping eliminate brothers,” Sunny admitted.

“He’s gone.”

“Chance, Sailor really wants to join the club. He started undercover, but he’s grown to love the lifestyle. And with nobody knowing who he is, Sailor is an asset,” Sunny

argued.

“He. Is. Gone,” Chance gritted out.

“Fuck you, asshole. This is the war all over again. You doing what you want and ignoring the bigger picture,” Sunny exploded.

Chance reeled back at the venom in Sunny’s voice.

“Chance fuckin’ Michaelson. King of Hellfire.

Always gotta be right and does not listen to advice.

This is why the war went on so long to get clean.

Because any opinion other than your own doesn’t have merit.

If I didn’t have a team on the club, we’d be watching all of them.

Hear me? But we know nine of us are good thanks to me setting my people on them.

Page 19

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Diesel, Bear, Rooster, Celt, Chatter, Big Al, and you and me are in the clear. That leaves Tiny, Shee, Shotgun, Levi and Pyro. You wouldn’t be looking at five to whittle down but fourteen.

You might not like my methods or the fact I held back information, but we’re in a better spot for it.

Sailor is the one who’s almost ready to eliminate Pyro, thanks to his efforts.

Go ahead and shit on what we’ve done. But fuck you, Michaelson, without my planning, you’d be blind,” Sunny roared at him.

Chance snapped, and his punch caught Sunny on the jaw.

Sunny didn’t hesitate this time and came at Chance with pent-up emotions.

The fight was brutal, and they pummelled each other as they allowed their negative feelings to take over.

Finally, they were on the ground where Sunny had Chance in a headlock and was about to choke him unconscious.

Chance tapped out, and Sunny froze.

Sunny snorted and released the hold.

“You hit harder,” Chance muttered, collapsing on his back. Sunny fell backwards and

stared at the blue sky.

“The army ain’t for pussies,” Sunny replied.

“Feel better?” Chance asked. He certainly did. All the pent-up emotion at Sunny’s death, lies, and hidden lots had leached out of him. All the angst that had built up against Sunny since his return was gone, and Chance could think more clearly where his brother was concerned.

“Yeah. You used to tap out as a kid,” Sunny said.

“You watched too much wrestling. I should have remembered that was a favourite hold of yours,” Chance muttered, rubbing his neck.

They lay there in silence.

“I had a date with Callie tonight. Not sure what she’s gonna say about the bruises on my face. Can’t take her to a restaurant like this, and I told her to dress up,” Sunny complained.

Chance snorted and began laughing. After a few seconds, Sunny joined in.

“Clio’s going to freak the fuck out on me,” Chance said through his laughter.

“What you going to do about Sailor?” Sunny demanded.

“Leave him in place for now. You’re right. Without your suspicious nature, we’d be up the creek with no paddle. It’s hard to admit we’ve got a rat, but we have. It is even harder to consider it’s one of those,” Chance finally replied.

“Fuck me, a day of miracles. Chance Michaelson admits someone else is right other

than him!”

“Get it right. It’s Chance Fuckin’ Michaelson,” Chance retorted, and Sunny began roaring with laughter again.

Chance joined in. The tension and bad feeling between them was fading rapidly, and Chance finally felt like he had his brother back.

He hadn’t wanted to admit it, but Sunny’s alleged passing had cut Chance deeper than he had realised.

They’d grown up as brothers, him, Drake, Bear, and Sunny.

Losing one had nearly destroyed Chance, and he was just realising it.

He’d bottled Sunny’s death up and never dealt with it.

“Yeah, we’re in the shit,” Sunny agreed and sat up.

“Keep your plans in place. But we don’t discuss them in the clubhouse or anywhere near it. I can’t see any of those four being a rat, which means there is possibly something else at play. But your plan is the only we’ve got. And what I said stands, only us two to know for now,” Chance explained.

“No comeback on Sailor?” Sunny pushed.

“Oh, he’ll face the ring with me, but other than that, no. Heck, if he genuinely wants in, I’ll vote for him to hit prospect. Let’s head back. I wanna be around when the cops come calling,” Chance stated.

“Doubt it will be today. They gotta ID him first.”

“Even so. I gotta be on Hellfire.”

“Come on, old man,” Sunny said, jumping to his feet and hauling Chance up. He winced as he took in Chance’s face.

“If I look like you, Clio’s going to freak out,” Chance muttered, taking in Sunny.

“Yeah, I need a back-up plan for Callie. Can’t take her out like this.” Sunny flinched as pain shot through his ribs. “Fuck, I think you broke a rib.”

“I’ll call Doc Paul,” Chance said and limped to his bike. “You kick like a mule.”

“I excelled in hand-to-hand fighting,” Sunny replied smugly.

“No shit,” Chance snapped with amusement.

Sunny

Bear gaped at them as they pulled into the clubhouse and parked. Sunny and Chance were ribbing each other as Chance groaned when he swung his leg over.

“Were you fuckin’ jumped?” Bear thundered, approaching at speed.

“Only by each other.” Sunny chuckled as Diesel and Tiny appeared and walked towards them with worry in their eyes.

“You did this to yourselves?” Diesel demanded, skidding to a stop.

“Yes. Fucker kicks like a mule. My leg is going to be a mass of bruises,” Chance complained.

Shotgun headed out of the clubhouse and blinked as he saw them.

“Asshole broke a rib,” Sunny whined.

“You were fighting with each other?” Shotgun asked as Diesel’s eyebrows rose.

“Yup. We finally cleared the air between us,” Sunny replied and winced as he touched his split lip.

“Painfully so,” Chance added and began chuckling as Sunny crossed his eyes, checking his nose. “Fuck, don’t make me laugh!” He held his ribs as Sunny continued to stare at his nose.

“Did Chance break it?” Sunny demanded.

“Nah, it’s just bent,” Tiny stated and reached up. With a snap, he straightened it as Sunny howled.

“Chance!” Clio screamed.

“I’m fine, baby, Sunny, and I worked a few issues out!” Chance called and winced at the dark look Clio offered as she ran towards him.

“You did this to each other?” Callie exclaimed, appearing.

“Ah shit,” Sunny muttered.

“Yeah. We had some problems to work out,” Chance said, grinning at her.

“Oh my God!” Clio and Callie shrieked together.

Clio, infuriated at them for fighting, kicked Chance in his leg. Chance howled and collapsed to the ground.

“You two are imbeciles!” Clio raged and stormed off.

Callie looked at Sunny and shook her head. “I guess our date is off tonight.”

“Hell no! I am picking you up at seven, and wear something nice,” Sunny exclaimed. He wasn’t losing his time with Callie, not for love or money.

“I’m not going out with you looking like that! You look like a reject from a boxing match,” Callie snapped.

“We’re going out. Trust me, please,” Sunny begged. If he had to wait for the bruises to heal, he might cry. He wanted this date with her and had planned everything perfectly. Okay, the restaurant was out, but he’d come up with a Plan B.

“Fine. But smarten yourself up. And clean those wounds. I’m not dating a thug,” Callie snapped and followed after Clio.

Sunny grinned and winced as that hurt his split lip.

“You’re dating Callie?” Bear demanded, looking angry.

“Don’t fuckin’ hit me!” Sunny roared, stepping back. “I’ve asked Chance’s permission and got it.”

“That is why you were bruised last week,” Diesel realised.

“You didn’t ask mine,” Bear growled out.

“I asked Pres. That’s what counts. He’s head of your family,” Sunny retorted and was amused when Bear paused at what he was going to say. Chance, getting to his feet with Shotgun’s help, began laughing.

“Never considered that. Ha!” Chance snorted as Bear shook his head.

“Why me?” Bear wondered out loud.

“Doc Paul’s here,” Jinx called, heading over to them.

“Back away, Jinx!” Sunny roared, but too late. Chance, who’d been limping towards the clubhouse, went head over heels on thin air and smashed his face straight into the ground.

“Bow, by bosen is boken,” Chance shouted.

“Aw shit, sorry, Pres,” Jinx replied and backed up slowly.

Chance glared balefully at him. Sunny looked skywards.

“What are you doing?” Shotgun demanded.

“Looking for falling toilets.”

Everybody began laughing, including Jinx, as they headed into the clubhouse. Sunny knew everyone felt it, the oppressive atmosphere between him and Chance had lessened. That boded well for the club, and he knew his brothers were relieved. For now. Until he and Chance discovered the rat.

Callie

I was as nervous as hell as I waited for Sunny to pick me up. Sunny had mentioned a restaurant, but that was off the menu after taking one look at his face today. I smoothed the dress I was wearing down my thighs nervously. Then I jumped as there was a knock.

I opened the door, ignoring Freddie and Jack peering around the corner of the living room at me.

Sunny stood there holding a wrapped gift box.

My mouth dried as I took him in. He wore black jeans that clung to him lovingly.

A navy-blue button-down was under his cut, which surprised me, and his hair and beard had been trimmed.

The top two buttons of his shirt were undone, giving me a peek of sparse chest hair.

“Hey,” he rumbled, and I smiled shyly.

“Hi,” I replied.

“This is for you,” he said and handed me the box.

I frowned, unwrapped it, and broke into a huge grin. “Who told you?” I asked as I pulled out a Blackhawk’s hockey top.

“Turn it around,” Sunny ordered, and I did and gasped.

“Tye Michaelson signed it!” I squealed.

Sunny laughed at my joy as I hugged it to me. “Tye is Phoe’s son, I’m sure you realised.”

“I do, but I’d never ask her for a jersey,” I cried.

“Come on, kitten, let’s go eat,” Sunny suggested as I stroked the jersey.

“Here, I’ll take that,” Freddie interrupted and took it from me. For a moment, I wanted to snatch my treasure back, but Sunny grabbed my hand, and my attention focused on him.

Sunny led me down the path to a black Ford Ranger. He helped me up into it and climbed into the driver’s seat.

“You’re beautiful, Callie,” he said, facing me. His hand cupped my face. “Breathtaking, actually.”

“Thank you. You’re handsome yourself,” I replied, not mentioning the bruises and cuts.

“Apart from my war wounds from Chance. I’m happy to say he looks worse than me.” Sunny chuckled as he pulled away from the house.

“Should I say good?” I asked.

“Yeah, asshole can hit, that’s for sure. Old age ain’t slowed him down,” Sunny said with a chuckle.

“I can’t believe you two got into a fight,” I replied.

“Oh, Callie, it was a total knock-down and drag-out. But we finally cleared the bad air between us. That is something positive. Shit’s been building up ever since I returned from the dead.”

“I’ve got bits and pieces of that.”

Sunny glanced at me. “Would you like to hear the full story?”

“Yes, please.” I honestly did because it would help me understand him and Hellfire.

I listened for twenty minutes as Sunny drove, and he explained how the club had gone bad and the people who’d died.

Sunny didn’t hold any of the ugliness back, and the story was horrific.

Innocent people and children had been killed, and the whole thing was nasty.

I was saddened at those children’s needless deaths and horrified such evil existed.

I had my own nightmares to deal with, but I’ve never felt death close to me. Even when beaten with a chain. When Sunny finished, he fell quiet and allowed me to assimilate everything. I was startled when I saw Sunny parked up.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“Spearfish Falls. Stay there, Callie,” Sunny said, getting out. He walked around to my door and opened it. Sunny held his arms out, and I slipped into them, sliding down his body as he helped me out. A blush started at my cheeks as I felt every inch of his muscled body.

“Wait a sec, kitten.” Sunny headed for the back of his truck. He pulled out a picnic basket, and I smiled.

“This isn’t what I had in mind, but it’s perfect,” I murmured as he took my hand.

Sunny winked at me and led me into Spearfish Canyon Nature Area.

As we approached the Falls, I could hear the roar of water, and then suddenly, I saw twinkling lights.

Beside the falls was a table and two chairs, and fairy lights had been threaded through the trees.

I gaped in total surprise as Sailor turned towards me and smiled.

“Everything’s ready,” he said to Sunny. “I’ll be back at my truck.”

“What’s this? Are we allowed to do this?” I gasped, struck by the beautiful scene in front of me. The setting sun glistened off the water, and reds, yellows, and oranges gleamed on the trees and surroundings.

“I know it’s not dark yet, but it’ll soon be, and the fairy lights will light up the water,” Sunny said.

“And I got permission, don’t worry, Callie.

We’re not breaking any laws and won’t get kicked out.

” Sunny walked over to a chair and held it out for me.

I smiled as I sat down, and Sunny sat opposite me.

He opened a cooler near the table and pulled out a bottle of white wine and a beer.

“Freddie told me your favourite wine, and as I’m driving, this is non-alcoholic.” Sunny indicated his beer.

“That is thoughtful of you.”

“I don’t drink and drive, Callie. That’s something I heavily frown upon.”

Sunny opened the wine and poured me a glass as he pulled two bowls from the cooler.

“I asked your team for your favourite foods. So, if this is wrong, I’m kicking their asses,” Sunny declared.

I laughed as he unwrapped them, and I found a crayfish and prawn cocktail with rose marie dressing.

“Oh, I do love this!” I exclaimed.

Sunny grinned as he placed a bowl in front of me. “Freddie said you can make a huge bowl of this and just sit there eating it with some bread and butter.”

“This is perfect, you’ve even got the chopped-up cucumber and spring onions in it, too!”

“Anything to make you happy,” Sunny said, and I smiled at him.

“This does,” I replied.

Sunny produced some rustic bread and chilled butter, and we talked as we ate. Sunny

wanted to know more about what we found at Ravenberry Manor, and I was excited to tell him some of our discoveries.

“How does Aunt Aggie, Lavender, Ronnie, and Chatter feel?” he asked.

“They’re bemused, but Aunt Aggie says she knew the Manor was haunted. She says that she used to see the ghosts a lot as a child.” “You got any on camera yet?”

“We’ve caught a few things,” I answered cautiously.

“Like?”

“Are you really interested?” I wondered if Sunny was humouring me.

“I believe in spirits, Callie. Several times, I have sensed Bullet watching over me. Stupid as it sounds, that has offered me comfort. And I’ve smelt whiskey, cigars, and his aftershave all together a few times. I’m sure that’s why Mom never moved on. She senses Bullet, too,” Sunny said solemnly.

“Bullet was your step-dad, right?”

“Lawfully, yeah. But emotionally, that guy was my dad. Blood didn’t mean anything to him. Bullet claimed me as his son, and that was all he cared about.”

“Tell me about him.”

“He was bigger than life,” Sunny began, and I listened as he described with love the man he’d lost when he was fourteen. “Bullet was someone I strive to be every damn day.”

“He would be proud of you,” I offered.

“I’ve tried to be the father to Liv that Bullet was to me. He was taken far too soon, but his lessons stuck with me,” Sunny stated. He collected our bowls and placed them back in the cooler, and then he pulled two empty plates out.

I watched as he opened the picnic basket and started laying finger foods on them. I began giggling as Sunny piled them high.

“Did you bring enough?” I teased as he fished out hummus and pita breads.

“Hope so, I eat a lot. This ain’t quite a steak, but it’s good fun.” Sunny grinned.

As we ate, we watched the sun set and the moon rise. The lights twinkled and helped the moonlight create a different scene of stunning beauty.

“This is far better than a restaurant,” I murmured, and Sunny beamed at me.

“Good.” “Nobody has ever done anything like this for me. Hell, I didn’t even get to go to prom,” I muttered.

“That’s sad. My senior prom was a disaster.”

“Tell me,” I begged.

Sunny looked embarrassed but proceeded to make me laugh as he described the nightmare his prom had been.

Chance and Bear had crashed it alongside Drake Michaelson, and his girl had ended up kissing Drake, and they’d got into a fight.

Big Al had collected all five of them from the police station, where the girl’s father had banned her from ever having contact with Sunny again.

“And have you?” I asked, giggling.

He made a face. “I saw her when I moved back. At first, she didn’t recognise me. Boy, did I have a lucky escape.”

“Tell me!”

“You know those women who wear grubby nineteen-eighty shellsuits?”

“You mean those brightly coloured nylon tracksuits from the eighties?”

“Yeah.”

“No!” I squealed.

“Oh, yes! She wore one of those in faded purple and yellow. Her hair was unwashed and yanked messily back in a ponytail, and she’d piled on weight. I’ve got nothing against women with curves, in fact, I love curves, but this was unhealthy. Well, she caught sight of me and... yuck.”

“You can’t stop there!” I exclaimed, giggling.

“She hit on me. In that outdated shellsuit, she squealed and babbled like a breathless teenager again. It was nasty,” Sunny shuddered as I cried with laughter.

“Stop laughing, woman, it was a nightmare. I couldn’t escape her either, she grabbed hold of me, and she’d a grip Hulk Hogan would appreciate. Seriously, I nearly called the club for an extraction.”

I howled even harder at the anguished look on Sunny’s face, and he began laughing with me.

“Do you have any dating disasters?” he asked.

“No. Not really. I got screwed over by my first boyfriend and rarely dated after him. Adam did enough damage to my ego,” I replied and wished I kept my mouth shut as Sunny scowled.

“Tell me what happened, please, Callie,” he said softly.

I explained about Adam and how I had been taken in, and while Sunny kept it from his face, I felt his anger.

“Good for you taking that company to court.” Surprisingly, Sunny seemed proud I’d done so.

“Yeah, it would have been nicer to get a bigger payout, but I survived.”

“Shouldn’t have been forced into the position to survive, and those fuckers blacklisted you.”

Page 21

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Yes, but look at what I have now, Sunny. That career pales into comparison. A few times, I’ve been scared the Adam scandal might raise its head because I’m a public figure now, but it hasn’t yet.”

“Callie Dixon, you’re fuckin’ amazing,” Sunny murmured as he reached for my hand and ran his thumb over my knuckles.

I blushed at his compliment as Sunny continued questioning me about Ravenberry Manor and what my future schedule looked like.

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I wriggled awkwardly in my seat as we pulled up outside the rental house.

The date had been amazing. And as we left, Sailor had appeared to collect the table and everything we’d left behind.

That was pretty decent of him. Sunny and I had walked along the Falls, and Sunny had kissed me lightly there, but now we were home, and I wasn’t sure what to do.

Once again, Sunny made me wait until he opened my door. This time, he pressed me back against it.

“The moment we hit your porch, those nosey fuckers will be watching,” he murmured.

Sunny’s hands cupped my face, and his head descended towards me. I gripped his

shirt and stepped into him as Sunny's lips touched mine. His hand slid to my nape, and he angled my head and destroyed kissing for any other man.

Sunny kissed me as if he was drowning, and I was his life saver. Heat pooled between my thighs, and I pushed against him blindly.

Sunny made a noise, lifted me up, and placed me on the hood and stepped between my legs. I wrapped them around his hips as his cock nestled against my pelvis, and I groaned at the feel of it.

"Sunny," I gasped as he broke the kiss and nibbled my bottom lip.

"I feel it, Callie, but no. We're not sleeping together, not until you realise you belong to me and you own me."

"Sunny!" I cried. He bent his head again and kissed me stupid. I was seeing stars when he finished, and he looked as smug as all-out.

"We've got time, kitten," Sunny drawled as he held my gaze.

"When I take you to bed, you are going to understand that it's not a one-night stand or that because you're unimportant.

You gonna know that I'm crazy about you, and I want to savour you.

Callie, the last thing you are is forgettable, and you'll realise that.

Be a good girl and stop grinding against me before I forget my promises and take you on the hood of the car. "

"No fair," I pouted, but did unwrap my legs from his waist.

“Yeah, my cock is cursing me right now. But this isn’t a one-off thing. This is a future we’re building,” he stated.

“We are?” I asked, bemused.

“Yes.” Sunny’s firmness left no doubt that he meant it. I was glowing when I walked inside.

Sunny

“You can clear Pyro. I’m pretty damn sure he’s clean,” Sailor announced.

Sunny nodded. “That leaves four. Tiny, Shotgun, Shee, and Levi. Solace and Ashford are looking at Shotgun. You need to keep an eye on him here. I know it’s hard as a candidate, but do your best, brother.”

“The end is near, Sunny, we’re closing in on your traitor. Once you have him, you can leave the past behind you,” Sailor said.

“Can’t thank you enough for this.”

“You’re owed justice. Someone sold you out.

And they are here in this club right now, even betraying you as we stand here.

Diaz has kept an eye on the cops. They identified the bones yesterday.

You’ll have troopers or detectives here any day.

Apparently, they’re arguing over bones because it officially came under SPD jurisdiction. ”

“And because the troopers dug them up, they want the case,” Sunny surmised.

“Exactly.”

“Okay. You keep your eyes open. Shotgun is the one we’re investigating, but the others may slip up. Especially as now Zeus has been found.”

Sailor nodded, and then his eyes went wide.

Sunny turned around, and a hammer of a fist caught him on his chin. He reeled back as a second followed up. Sunny ducked the next one that Bear threw at him.

“You dirty fuckin’ rat!” Bear growled, and Sunny realised Bear had heard everything.

“Don’t know what you think you heard, but you got the wrong idea,” Sunny said, putting his hands up placatingly.

“Know exactly what I heard,” Bear yelled and lunged at Sunny. He took him down, and they began struggling on the ground. Sailor tried to separate them and caught a blow that sent him flying back.

“Bear!” Thalia shrieked.

“Sunny!” Callie screamed, and Sunny’s gut sank. Callie didn’t need to see this. He was trying not to hurt Bear, but Bear had no qualms about hurting Sunny.

“Break it up!” Chance boomed as Bear got in a particularly nasty shot.

Fuck that! Sunny drilled Bear in the ribs twice and smashed his head on the floor. Hands grabbed at them as Chance, Tiny, Shee, and Pyro separated them.

“Let me fuckin’ go, we got a backstabber amongst us!” Bear roared, swinging wildly. Thalia had been rushing in, and his fist connected, and Thalia collapsed to the ground. Bear stared at her, horrified, before trying to reach her.

“You hurt my woman!” he roared at Sunny, who shook his head.

Tiny got him in a headlock and shook him.

Callie screamed and headed towards Thalia.

“Get him into a cell,” Chance ordered. Bear was going berserk as he tried to break free.

Bear glared at him.

“Keep your mouth shut. Whatever you think you know, you don’t!” Chance shouted.

Tiny began dragging Bear away. Bear was shouting and cursing as Chance knelt next to Thalia.

“Are you okay?” he demanded as Thalia blinked at him.

Callie held her tightly, and Sunny headed for his woman.

Pyro went to grab him, and Sunny sent him a death stare. “Touch me and die, that’s a promise. I’m barely contained right now.”

Pyro held his gaze before nodding. Sunny crouched down next to Thalia, who was dazed and holding her chin.

“Pyro, relieve Tiny. Stay with Bear,” Sunny ordered. Pyro glanced at Chance.

“Your lieutenant gave you an order. Do it,” Chance snapped.

“Sweet girl, talk to me,” Sunny urged Thalia.

“I think I’m lucky that was a glancing blow. What the hell happened?” Thalia asked.

“Bear was listening in on private conversations, and he took offence to something,” Sunny explained.

Chance’s expression lit up with understanding.

“You have more bruises,” Callie muttered with tears in her eyes.

“I’m fine, honey, let’s get Thalia to her feet and get her some ice.”

“We need to deal with Bear. Shee, take care of the women, and Sailor, get some ice on that eye,” Chance ordered. “Sunny, you’re with me.”

“Chance!” Thalia called in panic. “Bear didn’t mean it. He was trying to get to Sunny. He’d never hurt me on purpose.”

Chance’s expression softened. “I know Thalia, and he’s going to be beating himself up you got hurt. Let us go calm him down.”

“I don’t know if taking Sunny is a good idea,” Thalia muttered, but let Shee help her up.

“We won’t be long. Just going to get Bear’s head straight,” Chance promised and headed inside the clubhouse and towards his raging VP.

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Bear pounced on Chance the moment he saw him.

“You let me out. My woman’s hurt, and that motherfucker isn’t what he says,” Bear roared.

“Shut the fuck up, Bear.” Chance looked at Pyro. “He said anything?”

“Nope. Kept his mouth shut until he sees you.”

“Go upstairs, brother,” Chance ordered. Chance turned to Bear as Sunny closed the door and locked everyone else out.

“He’s spying on us,” Bear spat.

“I know,” Chance replied.

Whatever Bear had been about to shout died. He looked between them, and a frown descended. “You’re allowing him to spy on the brothers? I’m gonna call a vote. That’s a huge betrayal of trust. I’ll have both your cuts.”

“Shut your fuckin’ mouth,” Sunny snapped. “And listen.”

Bear sent him a look that would have killed a lesser man.

Chance began explaining, and slowly, Bear calmed down and listened. He was still angry when Chance finished, but he wasn’t nuclear anymore.

“You’re condoning this?” Bear snarled.

“We’ve got a rat—or a leak,” Chance replied.

“Impossible,” Bear refuted.

“The cops have Zeus’s bones, and he’s been ID’d. They’ll be here any moment,” Sunny said, and Chance sent him a sideways glance. “That’s what Sailor was telling me. Diaz had just received the info.”

“Fuck,” Chance cursed.

“I buried Zeus, he can’t have been found,” Bear stated.

“Who’d you bury him with?” Sunny demanded.

“Big Al, Diesel, and Celt,” Bear replied.

“They’ve all been cleared,” Sunny said, frustrated.

“It’s got to be somebody they told, after all, Bear informed you,” Chance mused.

“Who?”

Before they could say anything else, someone banged on the cell door.

“We got SPD at the door, and it isn’t a friendly visit,” Tiny shouted down to them.

“Keep your temper and mouth shut, that’s a direct order,” Chance ordered Bear.

“For now, I will. But this meeting ain’t done. Tonight, I want a proper chat with both of you. And I don’t fuckin’ trust you, asshole,” Bear hissed at Sunny as he let Bear out of the cell.

“Fine by me,” Sunny retorted.

“Let’s deal with this shitstorm,” Chance muttered and headed upstairs first.

Sunny

He glanced over at Callie and saw she was shielding Thalia from the police. Clio was also present with Tati, and the women had formed a clique. Two officers stood in the entrance of the clubhouse, and Sunny narrowed his eyes. He didn't recognise either of them.

"Can I help you?" Chance inquired, approaching. Bear headed straight for Thalia and lifted her into his arms, keeping her face hidden from the cops.

"Chance Michaelson?" the first asked.

"Yup."

"I'm Martin Cross from Spearfish Police Department,"

"New in town?" Chance inquired.

"Yes. What happened, Mr Michaelson?"

"Huh?"

"Your face and those two men. You've clearly been fighting," Cross said.

"Yeah, what business is it of yours?" Bear demanded.

"Gratuitous violence?" Cross asked.

“We were keeping fit. We have a private boxing ring, and we don’t pussy around. Nothing gratuitous about it.” Chance stared at them.

“A way of keeping anger under control,” Cross suggested. Chance sent him an expressionless look.

“No offence, I doubt you’re here about our exercise routines. What can I do for you?” Chance challenged them.

“You had a member called Zack Smith?” the second man asked.

“Who are you?” Bear interrupted.

“I’m Officer Edwards with the state troopers.”

“Good to know,” Bear responded.

“Zack Smith?” Cross pried.

“He was a member here, even held president position once. His club name was Zeus,” Chance answered calmly. “Whatever he has done isn’t associated with us.”

“He’s dead,” Edwards replied.

“Can’t say I’m sorry to hear that. Man was darker than Hades and had the devil in him. What’s it got to do with us?”

“Not interested in when he died?” Cross asked.

“Nah. Told ya. The guy was evil incarnate. He was kicked from the club for illegal activities, and we ain’t had dealings with him since,” Chance responded calmly.

“Would be a bit hard to have dealings when he died soon after leaving your club,” Cross said.

Sunny almost laughed when surprise crossed Chance’s face. “He did? Damn. I think I’m missing something, though. Unless... you are accusing us of killing him. In which case, we want a lawyer.”

Edwards scowled and glanced at Cross.

“When was the last time you saw Mr Smith?” Cross asked.

“Do I need a lawyer?” Chance demanded.

“Do you think you need one?” Edwards inquired.

“Yeah, considering you’re here questioning us in relation to a death. Do you even know how he died?”

“Painfully by the condition of his bones. When was the last time you saw Mr Smith?” Edwards pushed.

“I just told you. We kicked him out of the club and haven’t seen him for years. If you’re asking me for a specific date, can’t tell you. None of us have thought about that asshole for years,” Chance stated.

“It’s local legend your gang was at war with his,” Edwards pressed.

“And we are done. Hellfire is a club, and you’re here on a fishing expedition.

If you want to talk to anyone from here, make an appointment, and we’ll bring a lawyer.

Hellfire has worked with SPD for years, we're clean and intend to stay that way.

Can't say I'm sorry that useless asshole is dead, and ain't gonna pretend to grieve.

Zeus was one of the nastiest bastards I've ever come across.

The door's there, gentlemen, please use it," Chance said, folding his arms.

Edwards and Cross stared at them before offering a nod, and turning on their heels, they left. Sunny walked to the door and watched them go.

"Call church for tonight, Sunny. Bear, my office," Chance ordered as Sunny walked out.

He followed the cops to the car, and they stopped and looked at him. "Sunny, isn't it? If you need help, we can protect you," Cross said.

Sunny frowned. "What are you talking about?"

"Dude, those bruises on your face are several days old, and you also have new ones. You've been in a fight today. We can protect you and get you free of them if you want it," Edwards answered.

Sunny blinked before laughing. "You think they're beating on me? You couldn't be more wrong. A bout in the ring caused this. Nothing more, nothing less. Trust me, you're barking up the wrong tree."

"Just remember our offer," Cross said and climbed into the driver's seat.

Sunny watched them pull out and nodded as Sailor closed the gates behind them. He spun on his heel and walked inside to Callie. Fuck knows what she was thinking, and

he was worried.

Callie headed for him the moment he stepped into the clubhouse.

“Are you okay?” she asked, wrapping her arms around him.

“I should be asking you that. I’m sorry you witnessed all that shit,” Sunny replied, drawing her in close and inhaling the scent of her shampoo.

“Why did Bear flip out?” “I’ll tell you later, just not here, Callie,” Sunny murmured in her ear.

“Something bad is happening, isn’t it?” Callie whispered.

“Please trust in me.”

Callie studied his face, and Sunny nearly squirmed. He needed Callie to believe him.

“I do,” Callie replied finally.

Sunny dropped a kiss on her head and squeezed her. “I’ll explain after church.”

“Okay,” Callie muttered.

Callie

I watched as Sunny disappeared for church and turned to Thalia. Bear was beside himself as he held an ice pack on her chin. Despite Chance calling church, Bear wasn’t rushing. Bear kept stroking Thalia’s arms, and I could see her getting irate.

“Bear, for fuck’s sake, it was an accident. I stepped in the way, and it was a glancing

blow,” Thalia muttered as she winced in pain.

“Baby, I hit like a sledgehammer,” Bear whined.

“Yes, you freaking do, but I’m okay,” Thalia insisted.

I wasn’t going to keep my mouth shut. “If you hadn’t attacked Sunny, Thalia would never have been hurt. You have temper issues.”

Bear looked crestfallen, while Thalia sent me a dark look. “Callie…”

“No. Whatever issue he had with Sunny, your stupid husband caused this. He clearly was lacking information and lashed out without knowing the full story. Chance made that very clear,” I pressed.

“This is club business,” Bear snarled at me. Fuck, no. I wasn’t standing for that. I shoved my face in his.

“You punching my sister is my business, asshole,” I hissed, and Bear flinched physically.

“I would never hurt Thalia on purpose,” Bear muttered as he hauled Thalia in closer to his body.

“That I don’t think I can believe. Honestly, you were so riled up you had no idea Thalia was heading to you! If you lost your temper at home, you’d kill her,” I snapped.

“Callie! Shut up! It was a damn accident!” Thalia exclaimed.

“Yeah. Take the side of the man who just punched you. Typical.” With that, I walked

away.

Thalia and Bear may be right. But at the end of the day, Bear had been so incensed he'd not known who was in the vicinity. My blood ran cold at another thought.

"You know, you were so blinded with temper, you didn't know who was around you. What if it had been one of the kids?" I demanded. "One blow from you and it'd lead to real damage."

Thalia and Bear paled, while Clio sent me an admonishing look. With that final say, I headed out and got into my car and drove off.

Sunny

He winced as he heard Callie's parting shot. It would make Bear doubt himself, and Sunny didn't want that. There was no doubt in his mind that Bear would ever deliberately hurt Thalia, and Callie was severely mistaken there. But he could see shit from Callie's side.

She'd not been close enough to hear what had happened, and all she had seen was Sunny talking to Sailor and Bear attacking them both. From Callie's point of view, it looked bad. Then Thalia got hit.

Sunny remembered someone mentioning that Callie had been abused as a child. She'd never mentioned much around him, but an odd comment or two had slipped out of her.

The violence must have taken Callie by surprise, and she'd naturally reacted against it. He'd explain everything to her later, and hopefully, Callie would calm down. If Callie was going to be in his life, she deserved to know it all. Sunny owed her that.

He sat in the office as Bear entered; the man a much quieter version of himself than an hour ago.

“Any doubts now?” Chance demanded without preamble.

“No. But I can’t imagine who it could be,” Bear replied.

“Sunny is going to explain once more. You’ll listen, Bear, and pay attention. We’ve got a rat,” Chance ordered.

Sunny glanced at Chance, who nodded and began explaining to Bear again. This time Sunny could tell Bear was taking shit in.

Finally, Bear sat back and shook his head. “No one stands out, and I mean nobody.”

“I agree, which is why Sunny’s research is vital,” Chance replied.

“That’s why you two have been fighting,” Bear realised.

“The first time was because of Callie. The second, yeah, because of this. Sunny’s now had three ass-whoopings in a few weeks,” Chance said.

“Attempted... get it right. I held my own against you both, and you can’t deny it,” Sunny interrupted, his pride stung.

“You had to make that point because...?” Chance asked dryly.

“Facts needed to be corrected. But we’re getting off the subject. We have got a traitor, one who helped Zeus try to murder me two decades ago,” Sunny replied.

“Seriously, I can’t see it being someone in the club now,” Bear denied.

“Can’t say I’m happy about it, but we’ve a rat, and that’s a fact.

No way would the cops just randomly hit on Zeus’s burial ground.

Plus, he was there when they arrived. He’d have been arrested if they’d caught him a few minutes earlier.

Ain’t no secret that Sunny thinks we have a dirty brother still,” Chance said.

“Someone tried to get Sunny banged up to avoid him prying,” Bear realised.

“Yup. That’s my take on it, too. Hate to say it, but we gotta start paying attention to who’s doing what,” Chance agreed.

“Sailor’s cover can’t be broken. That might put a target on him,” Sunny stated.

“He’s gonna have some tough questions to answer when it comes out who he is,” Bear muttered.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“And we’re going to take his back. Sailor enjoys the lifestyle; it gives him something he has been missing since leaving the army. It would be a shame to lose him,” Sunny said strongly.

“Agreed. But he might lose the trust of everybody. I can’t force people to vote for him,” Chance replied.

“We vote first, they’ll follow our choices,” Sunny suggested.

There was a knock on the door, and Chance shouted out for them to enter.

Diesel opened the door, his face stern. “Everyone is here.”

Chance nodded, got to his feet, and they headed for church.

Once seated, Chance opened it with a bang of his gavel.

“We’ve called church for a reason,” Chance began.

“Zeus’s body was found. Which means we have got a rat,” Diesel stated from where he sat.

Chance and Sunny turned to him in surprise. Bear’s eyes narrowed.

“What?” Chance asked.

“It’s fuckin’ obvious. Don’t take us for fools. Sunny’s own actions the last few years

gave away he thought we had a dirty brother. We all thought he was paranoid from his time in the army, so let him be. But events lately? I say we've a rat," Diesel announced.

"And I believe Sunny is investigating us. Who you eliminated?" Big Al demanded.

"Fuck," Sunny muttered, swapping glances with Chance. Their brothers were too clever by half.

"That's confidential," Sunny retorted, and eyes narrowed on him.

"Bullshit. You've been investigating us for how long? Pried into our private lives and spied on us? Those aren't the actions of a brother," Pyro snapped.

"How long have you known Chance?" Rooster growled out.

"This is on me, not him. He's not known for more than ten days. I'm the one who investigated you." Sunny took the heat.

"I call for a vote of no confidence in Sunny," Banshee said, startling them all.

"I second that," Tiny agreed.

Sunny felt his gut knot.

"That fight today, that was Bear discovering your lies. Which means that candidate is involved somehow," Chatter drawled, his eyes narrowed.

"Leave Sailor out of this," Sunny defended his brother.

"Before you vote, you need an explanation," Chance interrupted.

“Don’t push your luck. I’m in two minds whether to call a vote on you as well,” Banshee warned.

“Call it, Shee. I ain’t got nothing to hide. But before you vote blindly, you need to hear the truth,” Chance retorted angrily and leant forward.

“His version of the truth?” Levi sneered.

“The truth. None of you can deny we just received a visit from SPD and the Troopers about Zeus’s body. We’ve a fuckin’ rat, and he’s been amongst us since Sunny’s shooting.” Chance folded his arms. He held Levi’s gaze, and Levi stared, angry as hell.

“Start talking,” Big Al said to Sunny.

Sunny sighed and began explaining everything from the night of Olivia’s birth. When he mentioned the text messages sent to trap him, everyone present back then swapped glances. Finally, Sunny wrapped up with present day. But he never mentioned who he’d cleared.

“That don’t make sense. We all hid our burners,” Big Al spoke.

“Someone sent me that message. Why the fuck would I have been in that spot? I had Liv at home, and none of us went anywhere alone. One of you present stabbed me in the back and left me for dead. Then you tried to set me up to be found with Zeus’s body,” Sunny snapped.

“How could anyone have known you’d visit that asshole’s grave?” Banshee shook his head. “Sounds like excuses to me.”

“The cops said someone called in coordinates. And several people here knew I was

heading to spit on his grave. I could easily have been overheard,” Sunny replied.

Big Al was shaking his head. “What you’ve got is flimsy.”

“Then vote. But I won’t stop until I discover who it is. I don’t need to be part of Hellfire for that. But when I find the culprit, I’ll expect an apology while I take care of your business,” Sunny responded irately.

A bang on the door made them jump, and before anyone could call out, Sailor barged through. His eyes met Sunny.

“Someone just attacked Cherry, she’s okay but has a dead body in her yard,” he announced.

Sunny leapt to his feet and headed out.

Fuck this, this proved he was right.

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Sunny arrived at his home and raced around the back. He hissed as he saw the masked man lying on the grass and searched for Cherry. He noticed her standing by the patio doors. Running, Sunny caught his mom up in his arms and held on tight.

“Shit. Are you okay?”

“I am fine, Sunny. I’ve called the cops. The gunshots would have been heard,” Cherry answered.

“Don’t worry. Fuck... Mom, your face! I need to get you to hospital!” Sunny gasped as he got a good look at her.

“Sunny, I’m standing on my own two feet,” Cherry replied.

Sunny heard pipes roaring towards him and sirens blaring simultaneously.

“Sit down,” he ordered, leading her towards a chair. Cherry obeyed, her hands shaking as Big Al rounded the corner first. He took one glance at Cherry and the scene and whipped his phone out.

“Tati’s coming, Cherry,” Big Al said seconds later as he hung up.

“That’s mighty kind of you, but I don’t need anyone,” Cherry replied. Her hands shook badly, and Sunny grasped them as he knelt at her feet.

“Mom, you need someone. Did he...?” Sunny was unable to force the words from his throat.

Cherry’s face was bruised and bloody, there were scratches on it. She’d clearly been assaulted. Those marks carried on down her shoulders and neck, and Sunny saw where her blouse had been ripped open. There were scratch marks just above her breasts.

“No. No. That didn’t happen,” Cherry assured Sunny, but he felt she was holding back on something. Her eyes were flicking to those arriving behind Big Al.

“Cherry, you need to go to the hospital,” Chance suggested.

“Chance Michaelson. I wiped your ass, boy. You don’t command me,” Cherry bit out. “He had a message for you, Sunny. Stop looking, or Liv will be next.” Sunny stiffened. “This attack was because I was investigating Hellfire?”

“Yes, he laughed and said by the time he’d finished with me, you’d either back off or

bury me or Liv. The message was quit searching for the rat. He was a hitman for hire and said it wasn't personal," Cherry whispered, looking over Sunny's shoulder.

Sunny glanced behind him and saw everyone present who'd known Cherry. The newer brothers had stayed behind. He held Big Al's eyes.

"Now tell me this is fuckin' flimsy!" Sunny roared. He yanked his phone out. "Diaz, get Liv somewhere safe. Cherry was attacked."

"Already in motion. Deal with the situation there," Diaz replied and hung up.

"Whichever one of you is the traitor, I'm going to take great pleasure in gutting you," Sunny swore.

The sirens wailed outside his home as two uniforms came around the corner with their guns out.

Luckily, it was the regular officers who recognised Hellfire.

"I think he's dead," Cherry cried with a tinge of hysteria in her voice.

"Okay, Ma'am. We'll call for a detective and an ambulance. Can someone get her a drink?" Officer Jagers asked.

"I will," Bear replied and headed inside.

Chance and Sunny swapped glances. If they had needed further proof, they'd just been handed it. Banshee caught Sunny's gaze as Sunny embraced Cherry and held her tightly. It was minimal, but Banshee acknowledged that Sunny hadn't lied. There was a traitor in Hellfire MC.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny

“Just do as the doctor’s say,” Sunny growled, exasperated, as Cherry began arguing.

“I don’t need a bed. I’m not that badly hurt, and someone else needs this more than me,” Cherry argued.

“Do as you’re told, Mom, for once in your life!” Sunny demanded tiredly.

Cherry gazed at him and nodded sharply. “I am not staying, though.”

“Fine. I just need to know you’re okay,” Sunny said as the nurse put the blood pressure cuff back on Cherry’s arm.

“Grandma!” Liv cried as she entered the cubicle with Diaz on her heels. Diaz looked every inch the bodyguard she was.

Liv hugged Sunny briefly and then turned to Cherry and took her hand.

“I’m fine, Liv, don’t fret,” Cherry stated, patting Liv’s hand.

“I need you to get undressed, Mrs Barlow,” the nurse interrupted.

“On that note, I will leave. Mom, I’ll be right outside,” Sunny said and left.

Sunny headed for the waiting room, idly noting night had fallen. There, he was surprised to see his club brothers.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded, not in the mood for bullshit.

“An old lady is injured, we’re here,” Chance replied from where he sat.

“Mom’s not been an old lady for a long time.”

“She was Bullets. That means Cherry is Hellfire’s,” Big Al retorted.

“Fuck me, now you bother with her? You didn’t for twenty years.” Sunny laughed bitterly.

“Sunny, we sent her yours and Bullet’s cut from the profits.

We reached out several times but were rebuffed, and when Cherry fled, we guessed it was too painful for her.

Sure, we didn’t know where she was, but the money went into her bank every month.

Just like it does for Samantha, Slash’s widow,” Chance explained.

“Can’t deny that,” Sunny said. He couldn’t. The money had arrived on the first of every month, although Cherry never touched it. She put it into an account for Liv. Liv would be incredibly comfortable when Cherry turned the account over.

“What now?” Diesel asked.

Sunny noted how antsy Diesel was being and realised the SAA was recalling the last time they were all up here. The cult bombing.

“Go home, relax,” Sunny ordered Diesel, who managed to look affronted.

“Ain’t running,” Diesel replied.

“This has bad memories for you, get out of here,” Sunny ordered.

“I’m cool. How’s Cherry?”

“Fighting mad,” I answered with a smirk.

“Was that Liv?” Bear asked.

“Yeah.”

“She’s beautiful,” Big Al said. Sunny wondered if that was a peace offering.

“We’ll have church tomorrow. That dead asshole and Cherry’s attack just threw a spanner in the works,” Chance announced.

Sunny nodded. He watched as some of the brothers exchanged grim looks. This was proof. Before, all they had was Sunny’s word. That was easily dismissed. Not now. Diesel held his gaze.

“No way would you sanction an attack on Cherry, not if Liv could have been harmed,” Diesel added.

“Good of you to recognise that,” Sunny responded sarcastically. “Thanks for coming, but she won’t want a fuss,” he said in a more genuine tone.

“If you need us, call,” Pyro replied and left. Most of the brothers followed him out.

“I’m staying,” Tati stated from behind Sunny and made him jump.

“Not sure how Mom would feel about that,” Sunny muttered.

“Don’t really care. Cherry and I were close once,” Tati retorted and sat her ass down. Big Al took his place next to her.

“I’m staying too, Bear. Go back to the clubhouse. Keep your eyes open,” Chance murmured, but Big Al sent Chance a look.

“I need to call Callie,” Sunny muttered and headed outside.

The phone rang twice before Callie picked it up.

“Are you okay? How’s your mom? Clio called me,” Callie asked in a rush.

“Calm down, kitten, Mom’s going to be fine. I am sorry our plans this evening got messed up,” Sunny said.

“Don’t even worry about that. But I’m owed an explanation. Still, your mom comes first.” Callie’s tone was soothing.

“Come to mine tonight. I want you to meet Mom and Liv.”

Callie fell silent. Sunny waited.

“Are you sure?” Callie asked in a small voice.

“Definitely. She will be excited to meet you. Wait, shit, my house is off-limits as a crime scene,” Sunny said.

Cherry would actually be shocked as fuck to meet Callie because she’d no idea Callie existed. Sunny hadn’t told anyone about her, not wanting to jinx himself. Liv would

also be surprised.

“Okay. Come to mine, we have a couple of spare bedrooms, and your mom and Liv can stay here. I’ll cook dinner,” Callie replied. Before Sunny could tell her not to worry, Callie hung up.

With a brief smile, Sunny made his way back into the waiting room. When he got there, he discovered Liv with Diaz on her heels, staring at Chance, Big Al, and Tati.

“Dad,” Liv cried, looking relieved.

“Baby girl,” Sunny murmured, laying an arm across her shoulders.

“Nana’s going to be okay. They’re releasing her and giving her some pain relief. The doctor said she might be stiff and sore in the morning. He suggested lots of Epsom salts and heated pads to ease her muscles,” Liv reported as she eyed the three in front of her.

Chance and Big Al were doing their best to seem non-threatening, but Tati had her head tilted and was studying Liv carefully.

“You’ve got Julie’s nose and eyes. But fuck, girl, you’re a beautiful version of your father,” Tati said.

“I’ve seen pictures of Mom. Dad says the same,” Liv replied.

“Well, kid, I’m your Aunt Tati. You might be a bit old for princess dresses and sparkling shoes, but there’s other shit we can do to bond,” Tati stated.

Liv looked at Sunny with wide eyes, and he nodded at her. “Tati is cool.”

“We will make a date. Pick something fun because Diaz hates shopping,” Liv said.

“Come to the clubhouse tomorrow. We’ll get to know each other,” Tati ordered.

Liv glanced at Sunny before nodding.

“Don’t be bossing my grandbaby about Tatianna,” Cherry announced from behind them.

Sunny turned and reached for Cherry, drawing her gently into his embrace. “You okay, Mom?”

“I’m fine, son. Tati, you seem well,” Cherry declared, turning to face Tati, Chance, and Big Al.

“Thank you, you look wonderful,” Tati replied with a genuine smile.

“I got old, but thanks. Chance, Big Al.” Cherry held their gazes.

“Can I?” Chance asked. Cherry cocked her head, and Chance reached out and hugged her. Big Al did the same.

“Is this bullshit going to end soon?” Cherry questioned as Sunny wrapped an arm around her waist and began leading her out.

“Hopefully,” Chance answered.

“Find the filth. Bullet is owed justice, and so is Sunny. They shot my son, your friend and brother. It’s time to end this, Chance. Let them rest in peace now,” Cherry said.

Chance held her gaze and nodded. Sunny was surprised that Chance didn’t hit back

by telling Cherry it was club business and to stay out of it. Sunny appreciated the respect Chance was showing his mom.

“Take care, we hope to see you soon at the clubhouse,” Big Al murmured as he hugged Cherry goodbye. He reached out and held Liv, who stiffened but returned the hug.

Sunny watched them leave.

“We are not going home. Um, the house is a crime scene, and we’re not allowed in. But we’re going to... my girlfriend’s,” Sunny said awkwardly.

Sunny was grateful they were outside the hospital as two pairs of incredulous eyes turned to stare at him.

“I didn’t hear that correctly,” Cherry stated, her arms crossing over her chest.

“I’ve been dating someone. Clio’s younger sister. Callie is the fourth of the quads,” Sunny stumbled over his words as Liv arched an eyebrow.

“Sorry, Dad?”

“Callie’s younger than me by over twenty years. Let’s not make a big deal of shit. Her sisters are Clio and Thalia, Chance and Bear’s old ladies. Don’t make her age an issue.”

“Fuck that, I’m shocked that you’re dating,” Liv exclaimed.

“You’ve never brought a woman home. Not since Julie. This Callie must be pretty special. I can’t wait to meet her.” Cherry grinned.

“How did you meet?”

“Does she know about Liv?”

“What does she look like?”

“Did you say her name was Callie?”

Sunny bit back a groan as the questions came thick and fast. This was his worst nightmare!

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Liv squeaked. Sunny couldn't call the noise anything else.

Cherry stared at Callie wide-eyed and gripped onto Liv's arm. She mimicked her granddaughter's squeak. Callie began shuffling her feet.

“You didn't say she was Callie Dixon!” Liv managed to find her voice.

Sunny drew Callie in closer and wrapped an arm around her waist. Callie leaned into him for reassurance as she held their gazes.

“Nana and I make it a night in to watch your programme. We get coke, hot chocolate with marshmallows, popcorn and chips with pizza and binge your linked episodes at once,” Liv announced in a rush.

“It's wonderful to meet you,” Cherry said, recalling her manners.

“You too, I've heard so much about you,” Callie replied softly, looking to Sunny for reassurance.

“Wow. Callie Dixon! You’ve upped Dad’s cool factor by ten gazillion!”

“Thanks!” Sunny chuckled.

“Come to the kitchen, I’m just finishing up dinner,” Callie suggested and led the way into the rear of the house. Sunny pulled out stools for Cherry and Liv to sit on and headed for Callie’s fridge.

“Wine, kitten?” he asked.

Callie nodded shyly and turned to check the pans on the stove.

“Dad calls her kitten! That’s so cute!” Liv whispered loudly.

Sunny faced her and rolled his eyes, and Callie finally laughed.

“I’m a normal person, Liv, nothing special. I hope you like chicken carbonara?”

“We’re perfectly fine with that,” Cherry said. “Can I do anything to help?”

“Nope, please sit there and relax. It’s been a trying day for you. Everything is under control, thanks,” Callie replied.

“Where’s the salad?” Sunny asked, opening the fridge and pulling ingredients out.

“Why bother asking?” Callie demanded with a roll of her eyes.

Sunny grinned and grabbed her tee, hauling her close and kissing her. Callie was flustered when he broke it off, and Sunny tapped the tip of her nose. “So cute.”
“Sunny! Liv and your mom are watching,” Callie cried.

Page 25

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny turned and saw Liv and Cherry with a soft expression on their faces. Callie blushed when she caught them staring at her.

Cherry smiled gently. "I'm so glad my son met you," she murmured, and Callie grew redder.

"Thank you."

"Liv, Callie keeps her plates and stuff there, go lay the table, it's in the next room," Sunny ordered as he put the salad together.

"Been here often?" Cherry questioned, sipping the diet cola that Sunny had poured her.

"Just once. A couple of days ago, Callie cooked dinner for me. I've been taking Callie out on dates," Sunny answered.

"Oh?" Cherry perked up, and Liv paused in laying the table.

"You've been dating a while?" Liv asked.

"A few weeks. Callie has trust issues, and honestly, I did her wrong at the beginning, but we got over it," Sunny said.

Cherry reached up and slapped him around the back of the head.

"What was that for?" Sunny demanded.

“For being an idiot,” Cherry retorted, and Liv began laughing.

Callie was unsure of herself, and Cherry winked. “Sweet girl, he is a good man, but he can be bull-headed. A slap every now and then reminds Sunny he is human and mortal.”

“He’s okay,” Callie agreed.

Sunny felt insulted. “Okay?”

“Yup. How about fine?” Callie teased, and Sunny lunged and tickled her. She squealed with laughter as Cherry and Liv looked on in approval.

Callie

“That was amazing. You added something to it?” Cherry asked.

“Most people use a crisp, dry white wine. I use a lighter wine, a fruitier one. I discovered a wine that worked really well and haven’t digressed from it since,” I answered.

“You need to share the brand because that was wonderful,” Cherry replied, smiling. She winced a little and shifted.

“Mom, you okay?” Sunny asked immediately.

I liked that. Sunny was obviously very close to his mom and Liv.

Before he ate anything, he made sure the three of us had our plates full.

Sunny got our drinks, brought the breadbasket and salad, and generally ensured we

were happy before he ate himself.

That level of consideration I was unused to, although Liv and Cherry took it in stride.

“I’m fine,” Cherry replied, but she clearly wasn’t.

“Let’s move into the living room,” I suggested.

Cherry looked relieved. “That would be nice.”

“I made cheesecake, we can eat in there,” I said, and Cherry glanced at the stove.

“There’s so much left over,” she murmured, stricken.

“Ah, no. That’s for the others when they come home. They were out doing some checks on an investigation and should be back in an hour or so,” I replied.

“You’re on an investigation?” Cherry asked, looking excited.

“Yes, but a private one, not for the programme,” I answered as Chance helped Cherry up.

“I didn’t realise you did that,” Liv responded as she began gathering the dirty plates.

“I’ll do that,” I said, and Liv shook her head.

“Go talk to Nana. You cooked so we clear. Come on,” Liv cocked an eyebrow at Sunny.

“Hey, I made the salad,” Sunny protested.

Liv screwed her face. “That ain’t cooking, Dad. Move your ass!”

I chuckled as I led Cherry into the living room. She sat down gingerly, and I placed cushions around her for comfort.

“Would you like coffee or another drink?” I asked.

“Sit down, Callie, Sunny will do all that.”

“I don’t mind,” I replied.

“Relax. That was a wonderful meal, thank you. It made a nice change not to cook,” Cherry said as she relaxed back with another wince.

“Do you need some medication?”

“No, sweet girl, I’ve got a couple of hours before I can take more. Tell me about you and Sunny,” Cherry urged, and I paused.

“We’re dating,” I finally responded, somewhat lamely.

“Which means you’re pretty special. He hasn’t dated anyone since Julie died,” Cherry informed me.

That gave me pause for thought. “Really?”

“Yes. Sunny didn’t love Julie, but he did care for her.

When he joined the army, he was away, so it never gave him time to develop a real relationship.

It was something that saddened me. Sunny has a lot of love to offer someone, and he aimed it all at Liv and me, prioritising our needs.

I can't say how happy I am that Sunny's finally found somebody he can take a risk on.

"I considered Cherry's statement. Her words touched me but also scared me.

Sunny and I had been progressing in our dating, and he claimed he wanted me, but I wasn't used to being wanted.

Hell, even my relationship with my siblings was strained.

Rain was just easy going, but my sisters were anything but.

"What is it?" Cherry asked softly, sensing my worry and stress.

"Did Sunny tell you anything about my life?"

"No. He said it was your story and nobody else's," Cherry answered with curiosity. "I am aware that you and your siblings were separated."

"Thalia stayed with my grandmother as she was ill, but Clio, Rain, me, and Polly were given up. Good families brought Rain, Polly, and Thalia up. Clio and I weren't so lucky, although Clio did end up finding the man she calls Dad.

I was shunted from foster family to foster family.

People hear stories of abuse happening in foster places, I was a victim of that.

Not every home, but there was a lot of neglect, and I did suffer abuse. "

"Callie..." Cherry looked horrified.

“Please, let me finish. I survived but became used to being unwanted. That’s a feeling that haunts me. Cherry, I was truly not wanted, nobody cared if I lived or died, if I needed hugs and comfort. Desolation is a terrible emotion. Then my sisters found me, and we went on to find Rain.

“Sunny and I were friends before we became anything else. Our friendship is important to me. We had a blip, something happened, and I cut him out of my life for a bit. But when Sunny makes his mind up, he can be rather determined. Our beginning was messy, but I’m hoping the future won’t be.

” I took a deep breath and hoped Cherry wasn’t judging me.

Cherry stared at me for several long, drawn-out moments.

“Foster care was rough. I was also unwanted. And I understand... even all these years later, I hold physical, mental, and emotional scars. It’s how Primal was able to abuse me and leave me pregnant with Sunny.

It was how I recognised real love when Bullet offered me it.

Sunny is much like Bullet, he feels deep and loves hard. ”

“Sunny has spoken a little about Bullet.”

“He loved that man as much as I did. Sunny did not know Primal as a father at all. Primal showed no interest in Sunny and didn’t even care when Bullet and I got together.

The only thing Primal said when Bullet stated his claim was not to go to him for child support.

Not that he'd paid it, anyway." "I'm sorry to hear that. "

"Don't be. Bullet loved me, I've never had another relationship after him. Nobody could love me as much as him. Do not let fear take away your chance at happiness, Callie. Sunny, despite his ornery ways, is a good man. My son will worship you if you allow him," Cherry said.

"I already care for Sunny a great deal." And I did. Sunny was wriggling his way into my locked-up heart. It wasn't just the gifts; it was the way he spoke to me and how he treated me. Little things like spending time with me and simple picnics meant more than a fancy meal at a restaurant.

A knock at the door startled me, and I excused myself, glad to have a few moments to compose my thoughts. I heard Sunny coming from the kitchen as I opened the door and stared at the stranger on it.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"I need to speak to Sunny and Cherry," he announced as Sunny approached.

"You!" Sunny hissed in pure hate, and I spun in fear. Whoever this was, Sunny hated them, which meant they were a danger.

"I gotta talk to you," the guy demanded, looking pleadingly at Sunny.

"The fuck you do," Sunny spat as Cherry called out.

"Stay there, Mom. It's just a piece of trash that needs taking out," Sunny replied.

"I have information... son."

Page 26

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Callie

“I ’m not your son!” Sunny spat.

For a brief moment, I was confused as Sunny pulled me gently away from the door and placed himself between us.

“That’s okay. I don’t deserve to call you that. But I have information the club needs,” the guy pressed.

I studied him. Was this the guy we’d just been speaking about?

Primal? He was about six feet, but his shoulders were stooped, and he seemed to have a frailty about him.

Once, he would have been a big man; his frame showed that.

Instead, his skin was wrinkled and his face worn.

There were pock marks on his cheeks, but his eyes were clear.

“Get the fuck away from this house now,” Sunny growled out.

“Sunny, you need this information I have,” Primal repeated.

Sunny placed a hand on the man’s chest and shoved him back.

“This is my girl’s home. How dare you?” he demanded. I heard the fury rising in Sunny’s voice.

“Callie, come here,” Cherry called, and I turned and saw her in the doorway. She had Liv behind her, and her eyes were focused on the stranger. But he wasn’t so much a stranger, after all.

“I’ve seen you watching me a few times,” I exclaimed. That was the wrong thing to say. Sunny’s whole body went tense.

“What?” he asked, not taking his eyes off Primal.

I began backing away. This entire scene was beyond my comfort zone. Cherry had just told me Primal had abused her. That meant, despite his age, this man was dangerous.

“Sunny, Cherry, we need to talk,” Primal said again. He was almost pleading.

“Not here. You want to talk, go to Hellfire,” Sunny snarled. “Not that you have anything I want to hear.”

“Zeus didn’t kill Enigma like you all assumed,” Primal announced, and Sunny froze.

Cherry gasped, and her hand flew to her throat.

“What?” Sunny ground out.

“Zeus wasn’t behind Enigma’s death,” Primal stated again.

“Sunny?” I whispered, and he turned and looked at me.

“Meet me at Hellfire. Whatever bullshit this is, you’re not doing it here,” Sunny ordered, and Primal nodded.

“Sorry for bothering you at home, miss. It was the safest way to contact Sunny,” Primal said. “I will go straight there, but I am only talking to you.”

“I’ll meet you there,” Sunny snapped and shut the door in Primal’s face.

“If that man is back, trouble is coming,” Cherry exclaimed, leaning against the doorjamb.

“My thoughts exactly, Mom. I’m going to have to head to the clubhouse. Will you all be okay?”

“Yes, we’ll be fine,” Cherry insisted, but she looked shaken.

I stepped forward. “Sunny, I don’t know what’s going on, but we will be fine. Look, the team’s just arrived. As soon as they’re inside, we’ll lock up and wait for you.”

Sunny was grateful and yanked me close and kissed me. “You’re amazing.”

He left quickly, and as soon as the team was in the house, I shut the door.

“Okay. Guys, dinner’s in the kitchen and then we’ll watch our favourite bitching session?”

” I asked. We loved watching another so-called paranormal investigator and complaining about how fake, how full of bullshit and drama he was.

All he cared about was ratings and not helping the people or the spirits he was investigating.

“What’s that now?” Liv questioned.

“Oh, you’ll love this,” I said and led her and Cherry back into the lounge.

“Nana, was that Primal?” Liv demanded.

Cherry hesitated before nodding.

“Shit’s about to hit the fan again, isn’t it?” she continued.

“Looks that way, honey. Come, put it all out of your mind. Let’s see what this bitching session involves.”

I grinned and set stuff up as the team wandered in with full plates. Liv was as overwhelmed as when she met me, and she and Freddie bonded instantly. Cherry was polite, but I could see she was distracted. And truthfully, so was I.

Sunny

“You’re kidding me?” Chance demanded as I rode towards Hellfire.

“Nope. Primal is on his way to the compound. He claims he had information.”

“About fuckin’ what?” I could hear Chance moving about and guessed he was getting ready to head over to the clubhouse.

“What’s the likelihood of Primal raising his butt ugly head now?” Chance snapped.

“Meet you there.”

Chance cut the phone as Sunny considered Chance’s last words. Chance wasn’t wrong. What were the odds of Primal returning? Pretty damn low. No sooner than

Sunny had been outed for investigating the club, one of the black spots in Hellfire's history raised his ugly fuckin' mug.

Primal was a drunk, addict and abuser. He'd got with Cherry and slept with her.

When Cherry had informed him she was pregnant, instead of claiming her and doing the decent thing, Primal had beaten her.

Bullet had stepped in and put a stop to shit.

Then Bullet had gone on to claim Cherry just before Sunny was born.

Enigma, Bullet and Slash had tried straightening Primal out, but the man was out of his head.

When Sunny was two, Primal had flipped the fuck out and gone for Sunny.

Enigma had stopped him, and Primal attacked him instead.

For that, Primal faced the gauntlet and the patch on his back was blacked out.

Nobody had seen him since. Now Primal had appeared once again, and Sunny had a sickening feeling in his gut.

???

He rode through the gates that Harlequin opened for him and parked up with the other bikes there. From the looks of it, most of the club was present. Sunny looked for a strange bike or car and didn't see one.

Chance walked out, looking pissed. "Where is he?"

“Fucker ain’t here?” Sunny snorted. “Typical.”

They both heard a car and peered over their shoulders. A car—about two years old—pulled up, and Harlequin spoke to the driver before letting him in.

“What the hell?” Sunny muttered as Primal parked and got out.

“Chance. Sunny,” Primal said, approaching.

“You ain’t welcome. You’re only here because you told Sunny you had information,” Chance stated as several brothers came out.

Hellfire surrounded them as Primal nodded. “Not here to cause trouble. But I’ve heard things and decided it’s time to help.” “What makes you think we need an addict and drunk asshole’s help?” Sunny sneered.

“Probably don’t, but I know some shit that you guys do not. And for the record, I’m sober and have been twenty years.”

Sunny blinked. “That is meant to mean something?”

“To me? Yeah. To you? No. But that’s the truth. I got straight.”

Sunny regarded him. Primal’s eyes were clear, and he held Sunny’s gaze calmly. Honestly, Sunny had to admit life had been hard on Primal, but there was a calmness around him. The raging asshole seemed to have faded, but that could be a ploy, and Sunny was watching.

“What truth?” Chance demanded.

“Like Sunny was set up. Enigma wasn’t killed by Zeus.”

Primal dropped his bombshell. Neither was a surprise to Sunny, but Chance didn't take the second statement well.

"What do you mean Enigma wasn't killed by Zeus?" Chance gritted out. Chance was stiff with anger and warning.

"You all believed Zeus had taken Enigma out. He hadn't, but he capitalised on it," Primal replied.

"Who shot my father?"

"An..." a loud shot rang out, followed by three more. A searing pain hit Sunny's arm as he dropped to the ground. Bear tackled Chance, taking him down as blood sprayed them both. Chance was cursing up a storm as Sunny glanced about. He couldn't see a shooter, but his eyes met Primal's.

Primal lay near him and was trying to talk. "Who killed my father?" Chance yelled from under Bear's massive bulk. Primal spat a glob of blood out as his mouth formed words. They could only make out one.

"Sunny..."

Primal's eyes rolled up, and Sunny scrambled over. He yanked his belt off and used it as a tourniquet to cut off the bleeding in Primal's leg. Sunny applied pressure on the wound in Primal's chest.

"Ambulance is on its way," Diesel called.

"Anyone else hurt?" Bear demanded, sitting up carefully.

"A Harley sped off," Harlequin cried, running towards them.

“Are you injured, candidate?” Chance asked.

“No. The shooter was a man on a black Harley with a gun. I couldn’t see his face as he wore a mask.”

“Did the bike have any distinguishing marks?” Diesel inquired.

“No.”

“Sunny’s shot,” Bear said, and Sunny blinked. He was?

“Shit, Chatter, take over from Sunny. Sunny, sit your ass down,” Chance ordered as he got up.

In the distance, they could hear the police and ambulance rushing towards them. Sunny looked down at his shoulder and cursed. The bullet had skimmed the top of it, and he’d need stitches but nothing else.

“He alive?” Sunny asked hoarsely.

“Got a pulse, but it’s weak, and he’s unconscious,” Chatter replied.

“Make sure he stays alive,” Chance ground out. “I want his information.”

Sunny was looking around. He was taking note of who wasn’t present. His jaw locked. Levi and Shotgun were missing from those suspected of being traitors. Sunny’s eyes locked with Chance, and Sunny saw suspicion in them.

Sunny was already considering Banshee and Tiny out of the running. But then again, they could be working with someone. Shit. He hated this, but it was necessary. None of them could be ruled out, but Shotgun and Levi had made it to the top of his list.

Bear

He watched as Sunny and Primal were loaded into ambulances, despite Sunny's protestations.

How convenient that just as Primal was about to spill the beans, he was shot?

Fuckin' convenient. Even stranger was Primal giving Sunny's name.

Anyone else would think it was a father calling to a son. But Primal had never been Sunny's dad.

"What are you thinking?" Chance asked as he watched Edwards and Cross approach.

"Sunny might be dirty," Bear murmured, and Chance nodded.

"I agree. No reason for Primal to call out to Sunny. Sunny may have returned to cause trouble in the club and tear us apart," Bear added.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“Yeah, I’m starting to think that way, too. We only have Sunny’s word on all this, including him nearly being caught at Zeus’s grave. Watch your tongue,” Chance warned as Edwards came close enough to hear their conversation.

“Seems Hellfire is having some trouble. A dead body turns up linked to Hellfire, a woman was attacked, and now someone’s shot at you, and we’ve a severely injured ex-member. Hellfire’s past seems to be in the present, right now,” Edwards stated.

“We wanna know what’s going on as much as you,” Chance replied, looking bored. “But the problems are finding us, not the other way around.”

“Maybe if your past wasn’t so...” Cross said and left the sentence hanging.

Bear snorted. “Dude, we are clean, we’re the good guys.

You might not think so, but where were you a year ago when Rapid City was under attack?

Didn’t see either of you there defending the city or its people.

You were hiding under a table, praying we did your fuckin’ jobs for you. Don’t come here shit slinging.”

Edwards scowled. “That has nothing to do with this situation. One of you here is a murderer. I have the body. Someone needs to pay.”

“And where is your proof a Hellfire brother killed him? You’ve got nothing,” Chance

retorted.

“And how do you know that?” Cross demanded.

“Because you’d have arrested us. You’ve got one body and no idea who killed him.

Take your scaredy cat asses and get the fuck off my land.

I’m tired of your baseless accusations, and I’ve got an injured brother.

Sunny is my priority right now. Next time I see either of you, have a warrant, and I’ll have a lawyer,” Chance said dismissively.

Bear turned and began heading for the clubhouse.

“One body? Sorry, didn’t you hear? We’ve got two. Jason Blackwood, Zeus’s cousin, known as Grinder,” Edwards declared. “Coroner has some interesting shit to say about him.”

“I’m sure he does,” Chance agreed and walked away.

Bear held Edward's gaze.

“Anyone who helps will be given amnesty,” Edwards offered.

Bear snorted. “Bring a warrant. You ain’t got anything linking us because there isn’t a link.”

Edwards smiled coldly. “We’ll do that.”

“While you do, consider who you’re getting justice for. Kiddie fuckers, addicts,

woman-beating assholes, rapists and literally the scum of the earth. Ain't nobody mourning their deaths and probably plenty of victims celebrating them," Bear said and followed after Chance.

Sunny

He'd been stitched up and discharged himself by the time the club began arriving. Sunny was waiting for news on Primal.

"Injury?" Chance asked.

"It tore through the skin, nothing major. A couple of stitches. Primal is in surgery. His chances of survival are low," Sunny said.

"How'd you feel about that?" Bear questioned him.

Sunny looked puzzled. He certainly felt the same way. Why would he care about Primal's chances?

"Frustrated. I think that fuck had answers, and someone shot him to shut him up," Sunny replied.

Bear and Chance exchanged glances.

"Only you and I knew Primal had returned?" Chance clarified.

"Yeah. I didn't call anyone else. Did you?" Sunny challenged, his gut tightening.

"No. Just us two were aware," Chance stated.

"What you saying, brother?" Sunny demanded. He guessed exactly what Chance was

hinting at. Chance was trying to turn this back on him. Why? Had they made a mistake clearing Chance?

“Seems suspicious. Primal arrives with information and is shot to keep that quiet. What revelations could Primal have offered? And only two of us knew,” Chance declared.

“If you’re calling me dirty... that’s your mistake. Turning this on me won’t make me stop looking. Bullet, Whiskey, Chaser, and I are owed justice. I intend to get it. If he wakes up, let me know,” Sunny said and walked out.

He was struggling to control his temper.

Maybe Chance wasn’t clean after all. Had Chance decided he wanted the club and murdered his own father?

It happened, Cutter had killed Slash. Sunny shook his head as he hailed a taxi.

He was without wheels and had never felt so naked.

On the trip back to the clubhouse where his Harley was, Sunny considered his options. Sunny was going round in circles.

He would organise a meeting with his team tomorrow and talk shit through. Sunny needed to clear his head and get some clarity. Everything was becoming foggy and mixed up. Sunny hadn’t expected it to be clean cut and simple, but this was worse than he’d imagined.

Callie

It was late when Sunny arrived home. Way past midnight, but I’d waited for him.

Cherry had fallen to sleep on the sofa, and Harry had carried her to her room.

He'd been careful not to jostle her. Liv had gone to bed about two hours after Cherry, and I waited alone with a book for Sunny.

I knew Sunny would be back and didn't want him locked out or knocking someone up.

His bike's engine cut as I headed for the front door and opened it. Sunny got off looking tired.

"Kitten, you shouldn't open the door," he said.

"I checked it was you through the peephole," I responded, and Sunny nodded.

"Did you get business resolved?"

"No. Somebody shot Primal. He's in surgery."

"What?" I gasped as Sunny dropped a kiss on my lips and shut the door.

"Is everyone in bed?" he asked.

"Yes. I will make you a coffee," I replied and headed for the kitchen.

"Babe, I need to shower, do you mind?"

"Go ahead, I'll make drinks."

"Great, I'll make the sofa up after I've showered. You got blankets and pillows?"

“I was thinking you’re too big for the sofa. Why don’t you share my bed?” I asked shyly.

Sunny blinked before drawing me into his arms. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah. I’m not saying we need to fuck each other, but you won’t get a good night’s sleep on that sofa,” I replied.

Sunny offered me a slow grin. “Whatever makes you happy.”

“I’ll fetch you a couple of colas, do you want anything to eat?”

“If you’ve got leftovers, I wouldn’t say no. Dinner seems hours ago.”

I chuckled. “It was. Use the bathroom in my bedroom.”

Sunny nodded and grabbed his backpack from where it was beside the sofa.

“Thanks, Callie, for trusting and believing in me. Thank you for giving me a second chance,” he replied.

With that, he disappeared towards my room, leaving me with a warm glow in my belly.

It faded quickly as I headed to the kitchen. Someone had shot Primal. That meant Sunny had been close to getting his answers. Somebody out there was very dangerous and clearly watching Sunny. Otherwise, how would they have known that Primal had come here?

I was plating up Sunny’s food when he returned. He wore shorts and was bare-chested. My eyes flew to his shoulder, which was bandaged.

“What happened?” I gasped, flying around the island to peer at it.

“I caught a glancing bullet. Callie, I’m okay. It merely sliced my skin.”

Nausea rose as I understood what he was saying. Sunny had been shot. A chill ran down my spine. Was this what life was going to be with Sunny? Waiting for him to come home at odd hours and wondering if he’s even coming home alive?

“Stop!” Sunny said, reading my thoughts.

“This is an extreme situation, kitten. Once it’s done, we move on.”

“What does that look like?” I wondered aloud.

“Whatever you want it to. Tell me your plans for your future. What do you foresee?”

I bit my lip. Would Sunny agree or approve of what I’d planned?

Callie

“Do you really want to know?”

“Yes. Or I wouldn’t have asked,” Sunny said and took a mouthful of food.

“I’ve been thinking about buying a home base. The problem is, I’m hardly ever home, and I do not see that changing for the foreseeable future. My career is hot. The team and I are in demand, and Ghost Seekers is winning awards, and we’re top of the game right now.

“I like travelling, Sunny, and don’t have a reason to stop. The team and I have worked damn hard these last couple of years for me to throw it away. Even if we lose our contract with the network, we’d still continue. Our podcasts were very popular, and I can fund us indefinitely.”

I straightened my shoulders and wondered what Sunny thought about that. Just because we were dating, I didn’t want to change my plans. Would Sunny insist I do?

“How far booked in advance are you?” Sunny inquired as he ate.

“Eighteen for investigations. That includes network and private,” I replied.

“Fancy another member? I could either be security or gopher?” Sunny asked, and my jaw dropped.

“There’s so much to unpack in that statement,” I murmured as my brain raced ahead.

“Like?”

“Are you serious? What about the club?” I demanded.

“I’m lieutenant. It’s not usually a position in Hellfire, that’s why we have two enforcers. Honestly, Hellfire doesn’t need my position or my skills. I can go nomad,” Sunny replied as he picked up his now empty plate and carried it to the dishwasher.

“Do you believe in ghosts and spirits?”

“Callie, honest answer is, I believe there is something out there. Too many people have experienced things for there not to be. Have I seen a ghost? No. Would I like to? Yes.” Sunny turned and faced me and held my gaze.

“I’m kinda lost for words,” I admitted.

“Because no fucker has ever put you first. Now someone is you don’t know what to do.

Callie, I want us. Yeah, I do not deserve you, I forgot our first time together.

That haunts me, kicks me in the gut. If you need to travel, then we will.

Whatever you want, need, or desire, I’ll break my back to ensure you get it,” Sunny stated.

Those words hit me deep, and I sensed tears welling. Swallowing hard, I choked them away.

“Do you mean that?”

“Callie, I’d never lie to you. The club means a lot, but it’s not you. After I catch this traitor, I don’t think the brothers will be as welcoming. Because the rat is someone they trust implicitly. I’ll be great on the road with you,” Sunny replied.

Before I knew what I was doing, I tackled Sunny and knocked him backwards. His hands caught me as I jumped at him and claimed his mouth.

Hands full of my ass, Sunny hauled me closer.

I let everything inside me that I’d pent up escape in that kiss. Sunny turned us and placed me on the island as he took over. His dominant streak came out, and I was only too happy to see it.

“Callie...”

“Sunny. Shut up and take me to bed,” I murmured.

“Ain’t gonna make it,” Sunny growled as he yanked my top off. I was braless underneath, and Sunny didn’t hesitate in palming my breasts roughly.

“Rougher,” I demanded, and Sunny obeyed instantly. I arched my back as Sunny pinched my nipples, making me cry out. My head tipped, exposing my throat, and Sunny latched onto it.

Need shook my body, and desire raced through my veins. My pussy clenched and grew damp in anticipation of Sunny’s cock. Sunny feasted on me as I leaned into his attentions. I remembered how his body felt against mine, his dick pumping inside me, the hoarseness of his voice as he called my name.

“Sunny,” I gasped, just before he claimed my mouth. A knot in my stomach loosened as Sunny gathered me to him like I was his lifeline. Any doubt I had faded with the

hungry way Sunny kissed and touched me.

“You’re fuckin’ beautiful,” Sunny muttered as he lifted me and yanked off my bottoms. My legs parted for him, and Sunny gazed at my glistening pussy.

“Shit,” Sunny growled and shoved me backwards. He dived between my legs like he’d found nirvana and sucked my nub into his mouth. I moaned as Sunny licked like his life depended on it.

“Sunny, I’m coming,” I cried as he pushed a finger in me. My walls clamped down on him as I shifted my hips. Sunny inserted another finger and fucked me while he licked me. I came loudly, and Sunny continued his attentions, spreading my wetness around.

Before I knew what was happening, he’d flipped me over and bent me over the island.

Sunny’s jeans hit the floor, and his cock slapped my cheeks. His hand descended, and I jumped in surprise, but the pain was good. Sunny kept spreading my wetness even as his cock slipped inside me. One hand pushed me down while his other slipped between my ass cheeks as Sunny began fucking me.

Slowly, a finger was pushed into my ass, and I cried out as Sunny groaned.

My pussy was clenching around his cock as he let go of his control and hammered into me.

I couldn’t move, and all I could do was take what Sunny was giving me.

My head felt like I was going to explode as I panted for breath.

Sunny thrust hard, and I felt him spill in me as his finger in my ass pushed deep and sent me spiralling into my second orgasm.

I lay there dazed as I blinked and saw stars. Sunny pulled his finger out and rubbed my slap mark.

“Like the look of that redness,” Sunny muttered as he leaned over me. His cock remained inside, and Sunny kissed my neck.

“Umm,” I murmured. My body felt boneless and relaxed.

“This is me claiming you, Callie. Make no mistake, you’re mine.”

A smile crossed my lips. I liked the sound of that.

???

As we ate breakfast the next day, I found it hard to contain my blushes. Cherry had sent us several knowing looks, and Liv seemed to be aware that something had happened last night. Sunny was on the phone to the hospital, seeing if Primal had survived while his mother and sister stared at me.

“What?” I finally demanded as I sipped my coffee.

“I hoped you thoroughly cleaned the worktop,” Cherry said.

I choked on a sip and turned wide eyes on her. “Of course I did!”

Cherry broke into a peel of laughter as Liv peered at the island and wrinkled her nose.
“Yuk.”

“It’s okay, baby, I bleached it earlier, no cooties to be caught,” Cherry teased, and I glowered and wished Sunny would hurry up with his call.

“What do you have planned today?” Cherry asked.

“I thought I might take a hike. I like to escape when there’s a lot going on, I don’t want it overwhelming me, being with nature clears my mind,” I replied.

“Do you do that often?” Liv questioned.

“Once a month or so.”

“I’d like to cook dinner tonight as a thank you for having us,” Cherry said.

I bit my lip. It was obvious by the way that Cherry was sitting and moving she was still in pain.

“I’ll cook or get takeout,” I suggested.

“Oh, honey. I’m going to sit my ass on a stool and make Liv prepare everything.”

“Hey!” Liv exclaimed, but she laughed. “We’re cool. I’ll make sure Nana relaxes. Dad bought us enough clothing for a few days, so we don’t need to go shopping. Relax, Callie. Enjoy the sunshine.”

“Are you sure?” I asked as Sunny came back in.

“Definitely. Liv’s going to pop out for what we need, and then we’ll get cooking. I might even make my strawberry and cream cake,” Cherry said.

Sunny perked up as he wrapped an arm around my waist and dropped a kiss on my

forehead.

“I’ll pay you one hundred bucks to make that, Mom,” Sunny stated, and Cherry laughed.

“It’s that good?” I asked.

“Perfection.”

“Any news on Primal?” Cherry inquired.

“He’s alive and made it through surgery. But the asshole’s unconscious, and they don’t know if he’ll wake,” Sunny growled out, looking angry.

“Do you really think he has information, or is this a ploy?” Liv interjected.

“Who knows, baby girl, he only ever brings strife and anguish. Let your dad deal with him,” Cherry said. “Now, fetch me a pen and paper, you’re going to be my legs today.”

“In the side table next to the settee,” I told Liv, who nodded and left.

Cherry turned a beady eye on Sunny. “Watch Primal. The man is a snake.”

“I’m well aware, Mom.”

Liv returned with a pen and pad, and Cherry began listing what she needed Liv to pick up. Pot roast sounded perfect.

Sunny

“Any update, Doc?” Sunny asked the doctor, who met him outside Primal’s room.

“None. Your father—”

“He may be my sperm donor, but he’s not my dad. His name is Primal,” Sunny interrupted.

“Um... Primal is unconscious, the next twenty-four hours are critical. Primal’s not stable, and his chances are pretty low,” the doctor said.

“I see. Thanks, Doc, for the update.” Sunny opened the door and stopped when he discovered a woman sitting by Primal’s bed.

“Who are you?” Sunny asked, surprised.

“Hi, Sunny. I wish I could say it’s a pleasure to meet you, but not under these circumstances. I’m Belinda, Jed’s wife, and your stepmom,” she answered with a smile.

Sunny stepped back in shock as he gazed at her. No way was she married to Primal. Belinda was beautiful.

“I don’t believe you. Who sent you?” Sunny demanded.

“Here, take a look at the photos,” Belinda said and tossed Sunny her phone. “It’s unlocked, and I’ve no reason to lie to you.”

Sunny caught it and began scrolling through the pictures. Suspiciously, he also checked her text messages and nearly threw up. They were sickeningly loving, and Primal clearly wasn’t abusive.

“What’s a woman like you doing with a washout like him?” Sunny finally asked.

“Jed’s been sober thirty years. I met him twenty-eight years ago, and we’ve been together twenty-seven years.” “Bullshit,” Sunny spat.

“Jed changed. He hit rock bottom and got help. Since then, he’s not touched a drop of alcohol or drugs.

Jed is clean and has quarterly checks up to prove it.

We also have four children,” Belinda said gently, dropping another bombshell.

“They’re not his but mine from a previous relationship, but Jed’s been more of a dad to them than their own father. ”

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

“You expect me to believe this? Are you looking for congratulations on the fact he was able to be a good father to your kids but an abusive cunt to my mother and me?” Sunny snapped.

“Jed thought about reaching out to you a lot during the years. He kept tabs on you and was so proud of your army career,” Belinda said softly.

“Lady, you seem nice. Might be wrong, but that’s my first impression.

My mom and I have scars from your loving, wonderful husband.

Physical ones. He beat my mom with a fuckin’ belt buckle.

I don’t care what shit you come out with, I know how evil that asshole is.

And more fool you for exposing your kids to him. ”

“Why are you here then, Sunny?” Belinda asked.

“Because I want the information that cunt proclaims to have, and then he can slink back under whatever stone he crawled out from,” Sunny spat.

“You’re mistaken. He is a good man.”

“Yeah, whatever you need to sleep at night. What type of guy beats a child with a plank of wood? Or pours whiskey down a baby’s throat because he’s six months old, teething, and the asshole wants it to shut the fuck up.

How about picking the kid up by his arm and throwing him, breaking it?

That's the man you let into your kids' lives.

Don't talk to me what a good man he is because I've got many more stories about what he did. "

Belinda shook her head. "That was the drink and drugs, Sunny. They change a person. Jed is different."

"Sorry, you seem a good person, but you are deluded. You ain't my family anyway, nor are your kids. All I want is the information he claims to have. After that, he can rot in hell," Sunny said. "Have a nice life, Belinda, and I wish you the best. Because you're going to need it."

On that note, Sunny walked away and didn't look back.

???

"Have you spoken to Callie?" Cherry asked Sunny.

"No, Mom. She still out?" he replied, feeling a hint of concern.

"Yes. Does Callie usually stay out this long?"

"Don't know. This is the first time Callie's gone on a hike since we got together," Sunny answered, glancing at the clock on the clubhouse wall. It was five; surely Callie should have been back.

"Can you call her?"

“Yeah. I’ll get off the phone now.”

Sunny punched Callie’s number in and listened to it ring. When it went to voice mail after ringing out, he frowned and repeated his actions. After a second voicemail message, Sunny glanced around the clubhouse.

Spotting Thalia, he headed over. “Hey, how long does Callie usually go on her hikes for?”

Thalia looked surprised. “I didn’t know Callie hiked.”

“Thanks,” Sunny said, thinking that Thalia was no help whatsoever. Clio crossed his line of sight, and Sunny walked over to her.

“Clio, how long does Callie usually hike for?”

“Usually a couple of hours. Why?”

“She left at ten this morning and hasn’t come back yet. Should we be getting worried?”

“I’ll call her, hold on, Sunny.”

“I’ve already tried,” Sunny replied as Clio dialled Callie. It rung out just like his did.

“Callie’s probably on her way home, she might be stuck in traffic. And if she’s driving, she won’t answer the phone. Not even on hands-free as she believes it’s a distraction,” Clio said.

“Thanks.”

Clio walked away, but Sunny had a gnawing feeling in his gut. Callie would have checked in, surely? Actually, Sunny had not heard from her at all today, which was unusual. Something was wrong.

???

Four hours later, Sunny rode out to the spot where Callie had said she was hiking.

He'd still not heard from her, and her phone was going straight to voice mail.

Chance hadn't wanted to pull the trigger on Callie being missing, which pissed Sunny right off.

Sunny had stormed out of the clubhouse and hit his bike.

Sailor rode behind him... brothers always.

They parked in the car park, and Sunny began searching for Callie's car. It wasn't hard to spot, as it was one of three left. He headed over to it and discovered it locked. As he peered through the window to see if her phone was inside, a voice surprised him.

"Can I help you?"

Sunny turned and saw a ranger. "My woman owns this car. She has not been in contact all day. I think she's still out in the hills and possibly injured."

"The park closed two hours ago, and I've been watching for someone to come back. Are you sure she's not broken down?"

"Damn, sure. Dude, you've got cameras here, could we check them?"

“I can, you can’t. Come to the reception room, and I’ll contact SPD and my supervisor,” the guy said.

Sunny ran his hands through his hair. “You need me to ID Callie. Look, call Detective Emilio Hawthorne, he’ll vouch for me.”

“You’re still not law enforcement,” the ranger replied apologetically.

“I’m ex fuckin’ special services. Don’t let the cut fool you. I fought for my country for four terms. My woman is missing, and we need to find her!” Sunny exploded.

“Sunny, calm down. He’s doing his job. Comply, and things will get done quicker,” Sailor said, putting a hand on Sunny’s shoulder.

Sunny looked lost, his fear written all over his face. The park ranger’s face softened. “Come on. Let’s see if we can find her and what route she took,” he relented. “But I’ll call Detective Hawthorne first.”

“Do it, it’s getting dark, and Callie might be seriously injured,” Sunny agreed. His gut told him Callie was not okay, that she was hurt. The problem was, she could be anywhere.

???

Sunny hit the trail that Callie had taken with Sailor on his heels.

They’d watched the footage and tracked Callie’s route.

She’d set off at ten-thirty this morning and had a backpack and sensible clothing and shoes on.

Callie clearly was an experienced hiker.

Once he'd seen her, Gary, the ranger, had called in to his supervisor and notified Lio they had a missing person.

Search and rescue were being brought in, but Sunny set off once he flashed his own credentials.

He wasn't going to wait for reinforcements, especially since Hellfire was a part of S and R.

Sunny and Sailor had taken a radio with them and a backpack with essentials.

Gary had tried to stop them, but Sunny had merely cocked an eyebrow, and Gary backed down.

While Gary waited for reinforcements, Sunny wasn't prepared to.

Callie was out here somewhere, and everything screamed at him she was injured.

He and Sailor scanned the path as they walked, looking for any sign of Callie.

Two hours into the trek, night had fallen, and the rangers were discussing bringing the search parties back.

Sunny had no intention of leaving until Callie was found. He and Sailor continued walking, shouting Callie's name every few minutes. Their torches pierced the blackness, and it was Sailor who caught sight of something.

"Sunny, here!" Sailor called. Sunny hurried over to him.

“That’s Callie’s backpack. Callie!” Sunny bellowed.

Sailor swung his torch around on the ground. They were dangerously close to a steep drop.

“Sunny.” Sailor pointed.

Sunny gritted his teeth. There was damage to the undergrowth as if someone had slipped and yanked at the grass and growth to stop themselves falling. Sunny slipped a rope around his waist and handed the end to Sailor. Deliberately, he inched forward, wincing as the dirt moved under his feet.

“You better have me, asshole,” Sunny ground out.

Sailor snorted. “Try considering a diet.”

Sunny leaned over the edge, trusting Sailor not to let go, and spotted something that made his blood run cold.

“Callie!” he yelled at the crumpled figure below.

Callie didn’t move. Sunny could see a dark pool around her head and knew it was blood.

“She’s badly hurt. Head wound. I need to get down. Pull me back, and we’ll set up a rappel,” Sunny called to Sailor.

Slowly, Sunny was pulled into an upright position. They headed for a tree and wrapped the rope around it several times. Sailor braced and held on to the end as Sunny threw the rest over the slope. It just reached Callie.

“Go,” Sailor said.

Sunny nodded and, holding on tightly, swung over the cliff. He bounced his way down and landed next to Callie.

“She’s alive!” he called with relief.

“I’ve informed search and rescue. They’re sending a chopper, as they won’t be able to get her up any other way,” Sailor shouted back.

“Tell them she has got severe injuries,” Sunny replied as he stabilised Callie’s neck. He winced as he took in her uncomfortable position. Callie had broken bones, for sure. Sunny couldn’t do anything but sit with her and tell her all the things he loved about her.

A bright light pierced the darkness as the helicopter raced towards them with lifesaving equipment on board. Sunny prayed it wasn’t needed.

Sunny

He followed the paramedics into the hospital as Callie remained unconscious. The helicopter landed on the roof, and Callie was lowered to the floor and rushed away. Sunny rushed behind.

They passed through the emergency doors, and a nurse stopped him.

“You can’t go any further,” she said, and Sunny attempted to push past. “Hey! Let the doctors work. You need to book her in, what’s her name?”

“Callie Dixon,” Sunny replied and ignored the nurse’s startled look.

“And you are?”

“Her fiancé.” Sunny had no qualms about lying. It would get him her information quicker.

“Okay, Sunny, is it? Go and book Callie in and let the doctors do an initial assessment. Then someone will come for you,” she said, and Sunny hesitated before nodding.

As good as her word, twenty minutes later, the nurse reappeared.

“Sunny. Miss Dixon is awake but confused and has a bad headache. She has badly dislocated her left shoulder, and it will need popping back into place. She has a nasty gash at the back of her head, and Dr Patrick is sending her for a cat scan. Miss

Dixon's right wrist is broken, and she's dehydrated. " "Jesus, anything else?"

"Sunny, was she hiking alone?"

"Yes."

"There are marks on Miss Dixon that were caused by a struggle. Dr Patrick believes Miss Dixon was also pushed. There are bruises on her shoulders, and the knuckles on her right hand are swollen. We believe that when she was pushed, she grabbed hold of something, and her hand was stamped on, which broke her fingers."

Sunny's jaw clenched tightly. "Some fucker tried to kill her?" he ground out.

"That's our belief. We'll be contacting the police."

"Don't bother. They should be here soon, I reported Callie as a missing person when she didn't return from her hike. They'll be here, I came with the chopper," Sunny replied.

"I'll keep an eye out," the nurse said and disappeared.

Despite his neutral expression, inside, he was boiling.

Someone had attacked Callie, one of the most beautiful women he knew.

Sunny didn't mean just her looks; Callie was beautiful in and out.

Sunny had failed to protect his woman, and now she was injured.

This was the rat. It had to be. They were trying to set him off balance and had succeeded.

They'd lit a fire under Sunny's ass. They'd made a swipe at someone he cared about, and that was their final mistake.

Sunny was going to get Callie, Liv, and Mom safe and end this.

If he had to, Sunny would torture every fuckin' member of Hellfire to get to the truth.

At the same time as he swore this, a traitorous little voice asked if it was worth it? What was Sunny fighting for?

Sunny originally wanted justice. He wanted the brother who betrayed him named and dealt with.

But was the price of that name worth it?

The rat was so deep in the club now Sunny was beginning to doubt if Hellfire, when the traitor was caught, would even act.

Sunny had seen Chance's face when he realised who hadn't been eliminated.

Chance had been against the idea that those left had set Sunny up to die.

Was all this worth it? Sunny wanted to say yes.

His peace of mind was relevant and important.

But he could easily up and leave the club for good.

As much as that stuck in his throat, Sunny recognised being happy and safe was more important.

His mind whirled with possibilities as he waited for further updates.

Sunny desperately needed to see Callie, to touch her and hear her voice. Every fibre in his body urged him to seek her out and assure himself she was alive. But Callie needed medical help, and he could not interfere with that.

Sunny glanced up and spotted Lio as he entered the hospital. “Any news?”

Sunny quickly updated Lio with what the nurse had told him, and Lio nodded.

“I’ll try and get an update. Chance and Hellfire are on route.”

“I don’t care,” Sunny retorted.

Lio looked shocked.

“I told them hours ago that something was wrong. None of them listened, and they all just passed Callie’s lateness off, kept telling me she was okay.

If I hadn’t gone looking for her, Callie would still be out there right now.

So, fuck Chance and the rest of them. If this had been their fuckin’ woman ten minutes late home, they’d have called in the cavalry. ”

“Shit, Sunny,” Lio murmured.

Sunny wasn’t finished. “Think it’s clear they don’t consider me a real brother. They didn’t care about Callie, she’s just a piece of pussy to them. Clio breaks a fingernail, and Chance calls for an ambulance.” Sunny let his bitterness show.

A cough from behind made him turn around, and Sunny held Chance’s eyes.

“We made a mistake.”

“Screw your mistakes. Tell me if what I said was wrong,” Sunny demanded.

“I love my sister,” Clio defended herself, her eyes wide and shock on her face.

“The fuck you do. Callie’s the weird one, you tolerate and indulge her. None of you really respect her, not even you, despite the fact that you attempted to work with her,” Sunny said to Polly.

“We get you are upset, but you’re out of line,” Tiny interrupted.

“No, I ain’t. How many times have we scrambled when the old ladies have been in trouble? Callie was missing, and not one of you was concerned, apart from me. I don’t wanna hear anything you have to say,” Sunny boomed and walked away from them.

Chance

Chance winced as tears welled in Clio’s eyes. He hauled her in close and wrapped his arms around her.

“I do love my sister,” Clio insisted, and Chance rubbed her back.

“Yeah, I know. Sunny is having a hard time, babe, it’s not personal.”

“I saw the look in his eyes. Sunny honestly believes that,” Clio argued as her fingers fisted in Chance’s tee.

“Sunny’s angry, confused and a whole shitload of negative emotions right now.

Callie, Liv, and Cherry are his girls. He'd take anything concerning them personally.

He's like me, babe, loves his woman, doesn't know how to show it and takes her hurt as his own.

Sunny would break his own back to keep Callie from harm.

"Chance hoped Clio believed his words because, no lie, he wasn't as confident as he made out.

Sunny was a different guy from the brother Chance had once known.

He was secretive, cagey, and suspicious.

Sunny did not trust easily and watched everyone with an expressionless face.

Sure, he'd taken part in events, including the war, but Chance felt and noticed a distance.

Sunny was looking for a traitor, and Chance didn't know what would happen if and when he found him.

And, sadly, after all Sunny had thrown at him, Chance couldn't say he believed there was a rat in Hellfire still.

No way could he point a finger at a brother and claim he was dirty.

Chance implicitly trusted every man in his club, and for one to be traitorous...

it would make Chance question everything.

He continued to rub Clio's back as she sought comfort from him. Chance knew the distance between Callie and her sisters hadn't closed. Even after Polly's two weeks with Callie's team, Callie still held back. Chance didn't know how to close the breach and hated it caused Clio upset and pain.

Somehow, Chance would make everything right again in their world. They had earned peace. They'd bled for the war and protected innocents. They had the right to live as they wished and not be judged.

He looked up as Lio approached Sunny and watched as they exchanged words. Sunny's jaw tensed, and Chance had a sinking feeling that it was bad news.

Sunny

"When she due back?" Sunny demanded.

"She's down in scanning now. Callie should be half an hour. Do you recognise this?" Lio inquired and showed Sunny an item in a protective bag.

Sunny took the bag and frowned. "No. Should I?" he asked as he studied the gold cross.

"That's not Callie's?"

"Nope. It's large and tacky, definitely not something she'd wear."

"It was found in her tee. I think Callie pulled it loose during the struggle, and it fell down inside it. Sunny, evidence is showing Callie was attacked. She's awake but disorientated, and the doctors have recommended to give her time to come around. She is asking for you," Lio said.

“What’s that?” Chance asked, approaching.

“Something we needed Sunny to identify,” Lio replied, going to put it away.

Chance reached out and stopped him. “Can I see?”

Lio handed it to Chance and clearly didn’t expect anything. When Chance stiffened, Lio and Sunny did, too.

“What is it?” Sunny demanded.

“I know this. It was bought as a gag gift,” Chance murmured.

“Who does it belong to?” Sunny snapped.

Chance shook his head. “Nah, I must be mistaken.”

“I said who!” Sunny roared, his temper igniting.

“What the hell is going on?” Tiny asked, approaching. “People are staring.”

“Chance, I need a name,” Lio pushed.

Tiny looked down at Lio’s hand. “Wow, that’s a blast from the past.”

“You recognise it?” Sunny turned to Tiny.

“Yeah. It’s mine.”

The words had no sooner left Tiny’s mouth when Sunny launched at him. Before anyone knew what was happening, Sunny had knocked Tiny into a wall and had an

arm to his throat.

“Thought you’d hurt my woman and get away with it?” Sunny snarled.

Tiny choked, but Sunny was too irate to listen. He was seeing red and drew back his fist to pummel the cunt who’d harmed Callie.

Hands pulled at him, and suddenly, Sunny’s feet were kicked out from under him. He struggled against whoever pinned him and discovered himself in cuffs.

“Carry him out,” Lio said, panting.

Sunny was picked up even as he kicked out and fought to get free.

“Dump his ass there,” Chance ordered, and Sunny was carried outside the hospital. He was placed on his feet and automatically headed for Tiny.

“You fucker! I’m going to kill you, you fuckin’ traitor,” Sunny seethed.

Page 31

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Tiny was rubbing his throat, but his own temper was also up. “Come on, I’ll beat the shit out of you. I ain’t no rat!”

“Liar, you just admitted that was yours! It was found on Callie’s body. You attacked her!” Sunny hollered.

“It was lost years ago! Banshee, Chatter, and I bought them as gag gifts, and mine went missing. I recognised it because mine had the red stone, Chatter’s had blue and Shee’s had green. I’ve got no idea how it ended up on Callie!” Tiny shouted back.

Sunny was beyond reasoning. “You would say that! You’ve been caught. That’s our damn rat!”

“Sunny, we need to ask—”

Sunny turned to Chance in hate and fury, and Chance stepped away in surprise.

“We need to ask Shee and Chatter to confirm his story. I always fuckin’ knew you didn’t believe me, and when confronted with the truth, you’d falter.

Take my cut because I am nothing to do with Hellfire anymore.

You are a traitor, too, Chance, to Enigma, Bullet, and Slash.

That cunt there is the man who set me up to be shot, and you’re automatically protecting him,” Sunny raged.

“Tiny, I’m going to have to ask you to come to the station. You’ve identified this as belonging to you,” Lio said.

“You arresting him?” Chance demanded protectively.

Sunny snorted in disgust.

“Not yet, but I will if Tiny doesn’t make his way there. This was found on an assault victim. Tiny needs to answer some questions,” Lio replied.

“Bullshit. Uncuff me, Lio. My woman’s unprotected. And as her fiancé, Hellfire is not allowed near her. Am I clear? That includes your bitches too,” Sunny stormed. His gaze swapped between Chance and Tiny. There was no denying the hate and anger he felt.

“You calm now?” Lio demanded.

“Let me out of the bracelets, Lio. Callie needs someone watching over her. One of these cunts might decide to shut her up permanently if she fingers Tiny,” Sunny snarled.

Lio studied him for a bit and nodded. No sooner than the cuffs were off, Sunny spun on his heel and ignored everyone. As he walked away, Lio called out to him.

“I’m her sister, you can’t stop me seeing her!”

“Watch me. Your fuckin’ dumb cunt of a husband believes a man whose cross was found down your sister’s top.

Unless Callie is cheating on me and fucking Tiny, there is only one way that got there.

So, fuck you all, you're all a danger to her, and none of ya is allowed to be admitted.

Jesus, to protect him... I wouldn't put it past you to bully, blackmail and threaten her not to identify Tiny," Sunny seethed and left them behind.

He approached the desk as the receptionist stared at him wide-eyed. "I'm Callie Dixon's fiancé. Her life is in danger from those people. Do not allow anyone to visit her. Just the police."

The woman nodded.

"What room is Callie in?"

"I'm not sure if I should give her number out."

"Lady, I am having a real shit day. I want to see if my girl is okay. Do not push me," Sunny growled.

"I'll take him," Lio said from behind.

"Thanks. But you got a traitor to investigate."

"Gold is meeting Sunny at the station. Sunny, the allegations you just spat out there need investigating. Callie needs protection."

"Yeah, and my team and I will provide it."

"Your what?" Lio asked, confused.

"My team. The team that's been looking into finding the rat. They're all ex-army and perfectly capable of protecting my family," Sunny retorted. He was in a hurry to

reach Callie.

“We’re gonna talk,” Lio promised.

“Whatever. Get me to her.”

Callie

I woke up snuggled in two strong arms and red hot. I tried throwing the covers off and instead hit a chest. What the hell? Confused, I opened my eyes and stared into Sunny’s worried face.

“Hey, kitten,” he murmured as he kissed my forehead.

“Where am I?”

“Hospital. You were hiking, do you remember?”

“Yes. I went to clear my head. It was a beautiful day... what happened? Did I fall?” I asked, puzzled. I rubbed my temples as a headache pounded at me.

“What do you remember?” Sunny inquired carefully.

“Just hiking. Sunny, you’re scaring me,” I murmured as I tried to recall the hike. As soon as I did, pain shot through my head, and I cried out.

“Hey,” Sunny pressed a button, and I sighed in relief as the pain faded.

“Something happened, didn’t it?”

“Callie, you were injured in a fall. You dislocated your shoulder and have a bad

concussion and laceration to the back of your head. Your wrist is broken, and you sprained an ankle.”

I frowned. Flashes of looking at a waterfall came to me, followed by sitting down and taking in the view.

“Someone else was there,” I muttered.

The room door opened, and Detective Lio entered.

“Callie remembered something,” Sunny said to him.

“Hey, how you doing?” Lio announced as he sat on a chair. He looked relaxed, but his eyes and shoulders betrayed his tenseness.

“I hurt. What happened to me? I wasn’t alone, was I?” I asked, worried.

My memories seemed fragmented, but something was bothering me.

“Can you tell me what you remember?” Lio asked.

“You’re both scaring me. Sunny, please...” Please what? I didn’t know what I was begging for.

“Callie, the doctors have found injuries consistent with somebody pushing you. They’ve also discovered finger bruises on your arms,” Sunny replied, drawing me in close.

“Someone did this to me?” I asked.

Sunny rubbed his hands up and down me, trying to soothe me.

“We believe so, do you remember anything, Callie?” Lio questioned, sending Sunny a warning glare.

“Somebody else was there, but my memories are scattered. Sunny, did something else happen?”

“Evidence was found on you leading to a Hellfire member. Callie, I can’t tell you who, because that could affect what you remember. We can talk tomorrow as it’s very late. Maybe you’ll be able to make a statement then,” Lio said and rose to his feet.

“Okay.” I didn’t feel secure and clung to Sunny. A terrible thing had happened, I guessed that, but I was unsure what.

“Sunny, do not put words in Callie’s mouth.” On that, Lio took his leave.

“What does that mean?”

“Callie, it means Lio doesn’t want me to explain what we do know. But I’ve banned all of Hellfire and their old ladies from being allowed near you. Shit’s hitting the fan, and I have to protect you,” Sunny replied.

“Even against my sisters?” I gasped, horrified.

“Against the damn world, Callie. I love you, woman, and I won’t lose you.

Whatever it takes to ensure your safety, count on me to do it.

When this... asshole was confronted, Chance immediately moved to take his side.

That means we can’t trust Chance. If we can’t trust Chance, the same goes for the rest

of Hellfire,” Sunny elaborated.

I heard his words, and a part of me took them in, but I was stuck on his I love you. The words hit me deep in my heart, and a small smile crossed my lips.

“I love you too,” I replied, and Sunny squeezed me.

“You had better. Because you’re stuck with me,” Sunny teased. He kissed my forehead again. “Close your eyes, kitten. I am guarding you. Rest is important right now.”

I did as ordered, but my eyes flew open moments later. “Cherry and Liv!” I exclaimed.

Sunny’s face softened. “They’re safe. My team is with them.”

“I’m so sorry it’s come to this. I never doubted you, but I can’t believe none of Hellfire trusted you.”

“The club and I are done. Chance doesn’t have my confidence or trust. He automatically jumped to... the brother’s defence, despite the evidence. Chance is blinded, and that’s only going to lead to further trouble. Don’t worry about shit, woman, just go to sleep and heal.”

Callie

Sunny smuggled me out of the hospital the next day. He'd had a few shitty messages through the night, which really pissed me off.

I was surprised when Sunny picked me up in an SUV and drove me back to his rented house.

"We're going to collect Mom and Liv. Someone tried to get into the house," Sunny said. He sounded calm, but I knew he was anything but.

"Are they okay?" I asked immediately.

"Mom's furious, and Liv's shook up, but yes, they're good. My team was with them. Whoever it was got a nasty shock. And funny enough... a certain person was released last night," Sunny snarled, and I saw his temper.

"But I thought evidence was found leading to him?" I was frightened. Someone at Hellfire had attacked me. I hoped Clio and Thalia were safe. Actually, they probably were. It was Sunny that this traitor wanted dead.

"Yeah, seems the fucker has an alibi, which Lio checked out and confirmed. What a fuckin' surprise," Sunny bit out.

"I'm scared," I admitted, and Sunny's face twisted.

"You didn't sign up for this shit, Callie. If you want, I can drop you at Chance and

Clio's, and I'll walk away until this is over," Sunny offered.

Anger welled up inside me. "That isn't what love or a relationship is about! We're in this together!"

Sunny sent me a worried look. "Kitten, someone tried to seriously harm you. It is not acceptable. It's hard enough living with what happened to you, and you've got relatively minor injuries. If you got hurt badly, I couldn't handle that."

"Learn. Because I feel the same way about you. Sunny, you're the only person who actually gets me and wants me for myself.

You don't want to change anything about me or hide me away.

Or even worse, poke fun at me to make yourself feel better.

Nobody cared to search for me, how do you think that makes me feel?

You and the team are my family. And one day, I hope your mom and Liv will also encompass part of that as well. "

Sunny reached out and squeezed my leg hard. "I am fuckin' proud to be on your arm. You wanna call me Mr Callie Dixon, go right ahead."

That forced a reluctant laugh out of me. "I'm quite happy with you being Sunny Barlow. I know you're distracting me from what happened to me and your mom. Start talking," I demanded.

Sunny sighed and sent me a sideways glance. "They took a brother into custody yesterday after finding an item of his on you. It had slipped down your tee..."

“A cross, a tacky-looking thing,” I murmured, interrupting. “It hit me in the face.” I touched my cheek and winced at a bruise there.

“You remember?” Sunny asked, stiffening.

“That, yes. But I can’t see a face. I don’t know who it was.” My head hurt as I tried to see past the fog and who it was.

“Do not force yourself, kitten. Stop thinking about it. It will come to you eventually,” Sunny said, squeezing my leg again.

“I need to know.”

“Tiny, he was the one who identified the cross as his and was asked to speak to Lio at the station. But Lios says he has a solid alibi, even though I doubt it. Tiny claims he lost the cross years ago.”

“I thought you couldn’t tell me,” I said dryly.

“Yeah, I shouldn’t have, but I could not handle that look of fear on your face,” Sunny replied.

“What else happened?”

“I believe that the rat approached you on the trail, and you fought back. You have defensive wounds on your hands, Callie. I reckon he pushed you over, and you ripped the cross from his neck. When you weren’t home by five, I began to get worried.

Sailor and I looked for you when nobody else seemed bothered.

Finally, a park ranger sounded the alarm. ”

I made a mental note to send Ranger Gary an expensive bottle of alcohol. At least he had taken my disappearance seriously.

“You came for me?” I asked, and Sunny remembered her saying that once before.

“I will always come for you. Not even the devil could stop me.”

“That is a promise I’ll expect you to keep,” I said.

“Not a hardship that Callie,” Sunny promised.

“Why didn’t my sisters send someone out looking for me?” I murmured. That was one of the burning questions.

“They just believed you were out hiking.” Sunny’s jaw clenched.

“That’s not the full story.”

Sunny sighed. “They did not appear that worried. They thought I was overreacting.” The words were dragged from him reluctantly.

The pain I expected to surface didn’t. I searched my feelings, and while I loved my siblings, I accepted they had major faults.

Where Sunny had accepted me completely, their lack of consideration and courtesy concerning me didn’t bother me now.

Sunny had filled all my empty spots alongside my team.

A smile crossed my lips despite my situation, and I honestly felt loved.

“What happened with Cherry and Liv?”

“Diaz intercepted a prowler last night. He broke the glass in a window and was trying to force his way in. Diaz did not get a good look, but she said he was tall and built. He dropped a gun. The police now have it and are checking for fingerprints, but I doubt they’ll find any.

Although, any idiot that drops his piece and runs might just be stupid enough to leave evidence. ”

That didn’t quite tell me anything, but I recognised deflection when I heard it. “Sunny.”

Sunny blew out his cheeks. “Whoever it was only had one thing in mind. They were armed. They meant to kill Mom and Liv. We’re moving all of you to a safehouse, and I’m ending this tomorrow.

I am going to leave the club, and they can all fuckin’ hang for all I care.

Chance wants to protect a traitor over a brother, then fuck him.

Kitten, I won’t ask you to stop seeing Clio, Thalia, and the kids, but I do ask you don’t do it on Hellfire land. ”

“With the amount of travelling planned, we will not be around a lot anyway,” I said. While I didn’t want to lose contact with my sisters, not seeing them as much didn’t bother me. Grandma, on the other hand, travelled frequently, and we met up often.

As we approached Sunny’s house, I saw three cars outside and frowned. “Sunny.”

“That’s the team. Don’t worry, they’re here to protect us.”

I nodded as Sunny parked. He hunched his body over me as we entered, and I was engulfed in a warm embrace.

“Callie, my dear!” Cherry exclaimed.

I hugged her back and winced.

“Mom, remember Callie’s injured,” Sunny chided, and Cherry relaxed her grip on me.

“Oops, sorry. Come sit down,” Cherry said, guiding me into the living room.

“How are you?” I asked, remembering that Cherry had also been attacked a few days ago.

“Don’t mind me. Son, Liv and I have packed our cases, and Ashford has taken her to the safehouse already. I’ve not done your case, lord knows what I might find in your drawers! The fridge and freezer have been emptied, and everything is turned off.

“Do not hang around. Pack and get Callie to the safehouse. I know every instinct in your body is screaming to make someone pay. You have to fight that and put her first,” Cherry said.

Sunny nodded. “We won’t be far behind,” he promised as he pulled me in close.

“Callie, I know you’re probably scared and shocked.

But trust in him, sweet girl, and he’ll get you safe.

Liv took liberties earlier and went to your house and packed a case for you.

Freddie helped her, and the team knows Sunny's taking you away...

supposedly to recover from your fall," Cherry explained.

I nodded as Cherry kissed both Sunny and me and hurried out the door.

"Callie, let me grab a bag, and we'll head out," Sunny explained.

"I'll come with you," I said and followed him to his bedroom.

Sunny packed in silence. It didn't take him long.

Jeans, tee's, a couple of hoodies and a jacket.

There was a telling moment as he fingered his cut, and I thought for a moment he was going to leave it behind.

Instead, he picked up his duffle and walked downstairs.

Sunny headed into the lounge and put his head up the fireplace.

"What are you doing?" I asked, confused, as he pulled a small bag out.

"No safe in this place, and the fireplace isn't exactly the best hiding spot, but it did its job. This contains money and my spare weapon."

"You had a run bag," I said.

"It's called a go bag, but yes, baby, I'm taking you off the grid, and we won't be using cards for the next few days. Come on, kitten, let's get you to the car," Sunny replied.

“It feels like we’re running.”

“Yeah, and we are. For good reason. Whoever the traitor is, they have no qualms in hurting the women in my life. The priority, Callie, is getting you safe and the team around you. Then I can handle Hellfire.”

I decided there and then not to cause Sunny further strain. It was clear he was severely stressed out and needed to do what was best. Allowing Sunny that wasn’t a hardship.

Sunny – four days later.

Sunny was using a burner phone to stay in contact with people. Callie, Cherry, and Liv had all turned their phones off, and Sailor was using a burner, too.

“The club is freaking. Clio is furious and hysterical at the same time. She’s not talking to Chance and making his life hell. Thalia isn’t much better. Chance has called in allies to find you, and I’ve been questioned several times,” Sailor updated Chance.

“Do you need an extraction?” Sunny demanded.

“Nope. Chance has spoken to me, but no threats have been made. They are also asking questions about the team, like how many of us there are, what are our skills, and so on?”

“Fuck, they are not really worried about Callie at all. Are they even looking for the traitor, and who hurt her?”

“Tiny has a cast-iron alibi. I checked it myself, brother. He was in front of people all day teaching a self-defence course.”

“Doesn’t clear him. Tiny could have hired someone,” Sunny responded.

“Sunny, I’ve searched his financials. Tiny is clear of the attack on Callie. Trust me,”
Sailor replied.

Page 33

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny sighed. “We’re no fuckin’ closer, and Primal has information that I think we need.”

“Maybe call in today and see if there’s any change with that asshole?”

“Yeah. Thanks for the heads-up. If you need an extraction, let us know. We’ll come, guns blazing.”

“Take care of Callie.” Sailor hung up.

Sunny punched in the hospital number and requested Primal’s ward.

“Mr Barlowe, how are you? I’ll call Mrs Rogers for you, she has news,” the nurse replied, and the line went quiet.

“Sunny?” Belinda asked.

“Yeah, it’s me.”

“Jed has been stirring. Not much, but they think he is coming out of the coma. He has said your name,” Belinda stated.

“How long before he’s awake?”

“Anytime today. Someone called Chance wanted to visit from Hellfire MC. I denied him access as I do not know him, but Jed was once part of their club, should I let him in?”

“Shit, no! Don’t tell anybody from Hellfire anything.

Listen, Belinda, Primal was an asshole. A total cunt, you might know a different man from me, but the rest of us remember how he was.

Hellfire has a problem with him. Don’t let anyone from Hellfire visit.

It could impact your safety as well. You seem a nice lady despite who you married, I would not like to see you get harmed. ”

Belinda stopped talking at Sunny’s words. After about thirty seconds, she spoke. “Come to the hospital, Sunny.” Sunny wanted to tell her to get fucked, but his manners wouldn’t let him. Sure, she’d made a colossal error in who she married, but she was nice.

“Soon.”

“I’ll be here,” Belinda replied and said goodbye.

“Will you be okay?” Cherry asked from behind him.

“Didn’t hear you approach, Mom.” “No, I can be quiet when I need to. How do you think I snuck Santa’s presents past you as a kid?”

Sunny chuckled. “First me, then Liv. Don’t deny you did not love playing Santa.”

“I loved seeing the look on your faces at Christmas. Liv still has a sack at the end of her bed.”

Sunny laughed even harder. “That doesn’t surprise me. You made Christmas magical. Thank you for that and the memories.”

Cherry smiled and then sobered. “You didn’t answer my question. Will you be okay visiting Primal?”

“Yeah. Gonna have to be, Mom. Somehow, that asshole may have information I need. If he’s playing me for a fool, then I’ll deal with him. And no new fuckin’ wife will stop me putting a bullet in that man. I don’t care how much Belinda claims Primal might’ve changed.”

“How do you feel about Belinda?” Cherry asked, leaning against the doorjamb.

“I’ve no feelings for her. Woman might be nice, but she’s nothing to me but a stranger. Ain’t going to be playing happy families with her,” Sunny growled.

“Primal has a whole other family. That makes them yours too,” Cherry pushed.

“The fuck it does. They’re his victims, too.

Primal will never be family to me, nor will his new one.

They’re strangers, and Belinda seems to be in denial with what he did.

And if mentioned, she excuses it. I don’t want that in my life.

I have pity for her and a sense of obligation to warn her, and that is it.

Primal was nothing more than my sperm donor, and Bullet was my dad. That’s all I need to know.”

Cherry glanced at Sunny for several long moments before nodding. “Okay, son. I’m going to take Callie fishing.”

Sunny looked at Cherry, aghast. “After yesterday?”

“Today can’t be worse.”

“How much do you want to bet on that?” Sunny asked, thinking of the previous day’s shenanigans.

“Dinner tonight,” Cherry shot back.

“You’re on!”

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Sunny parked at the hospital and looked around.

Diaz had driven around several times before he chose a parking space and hadn’t seen anything relating to Hellfire.

Sunny headed for the ward and the room Primal was in.

There were doctors and nurses bustling about, but nobody questioned him as he let himself into Primal’s room.

He saw the reason why when Belinda and another man turned to look at him.

“Sunny! Thank you for coming, this is my son, Ronnie,” Belinda said softly.

“He awake?”

Belinda looked a little disconcerted at his abruptness. “No, not yet, but the doctors think anytime soon. Jed is restless, and his eyelids keep fluttering as if he’s trying to

wake up. He will be glad to see you.”

Sunny shook his head. “Belinda. I know what you’re attempting.

But that man is an abusive cunt. He’ll never be a part of my family or anyone I spend time with.

You seem a nice lady, and I’m sorry for you.

One day, his true colours will rear their head again, and you’ll be on the end of it.

My advice is, run now. While he is unconscious, get away from him.

He’s a piece of shit and will always be.”

Ronnie stiffened, and his face turned angry. “Dad’s a good man, he has flaws, but he is the best dad in the world.”

Sunny snorted in disbelief. “Dude, you don’t know anything. I suggest you shut up and worry about your mom.”

“What would you know about him?” Ronnie wouldn’t stop.

“What do I know? I know Jed burned my mom with cigarettes for shits and giggles.

Mom has the scars to this day. Jed beat her with a buckled belt, leaving scars on her back.

In front of an entire clubhouse, he shaved her bald and knocked her unconscious.

He also forced her to get on her knees and give him a blow job in front of a crowd of

people.

When Mom refused, Jed punched two teeth out and fucked her mouth anyway.

“Jed broke several of my bones before my real dad could get to me. He locked me in a cellar for days as a baby and nearly killed me. My mom was in hospital unconscious, as he’d beaten her black and blue beforehand.

Jed also burned me with cigarettes, I was three weeks old at the time.

And another incident I have the scars from is where he rode his bike around the clubhouse grounds and dragged me behind him.

An hour after that, he attacked the president of the club and Primal was removed for good.

“Actually, he wasn’t. He ran like the coward he is.

If my dad had got hold of him, Primal would have been dead.

Don’t stand there and tell me the guy you idolise is a good man.

My mom and I have far too many scars from Primal to ever believe that.

I am not here to play happy families. I’m here to get the information he has, and then Primal can slink back under whatever stone he crawled out of,” I snarled.

Belinda and her son had gone pale as I recited some of the injuries Mom and I had got.

“It was the drink,” Belinda muttered.

“Dad doesn’t drink anymore. He has been sober for years,” Ronnie added.

“Fuck the excuses. You’re telling me that booze was responsible for his actions.

Jesus, take the rose-coloured glasses off.

I know plenty of alcoholics who don’t abuse people.

The fact he did is because he is evil, and he got off on it.

I can give you a long line of witnesses to his level of depravity.

Booze might have been the trigger, but those actions came from him. ”

“He’s never touched me,” Belinda muttered, her face still pale. “And he told me about how he treated you and your mom.”

“And you exposed him to your kids? Lady, what the fuck is wrong with you?” Sunny exclaimed, horrified.

“Jed wanted to make amends,” Belinda argued.

“What could he possibly do to make things better for my mom? Take away her scars? Her nightmares? How about her sense of failure that she did not protect me? We’re never going to see eye to eye on him, and the truth is, I pity you all.

Because he’ll blow, that’s the man you married.

Primal has information he claims I need.

Once I have that, you’ll not see me again. ”

Belinda shook her head, but Ronnie looked concerned. “I didn’t know the circumstances. Dad admitted he was very abusive but never told us that. I’m sorry.”

“Watch your mom carefully. I don’t believe for one second that the evil in him is gone.”

Ronnie nodded, his face still pale, but he was listening. That was all Sunny could ask for. As much as he wanted to believe Primal had changed, the memories were hard to deny.

“Sunny...” Primal muttered, and their heads turned to the bed.

“Jed?” Belinda said hopefully, and her face lit up. Sunny shook his head. There was no helping some people.

“Sunny.”

“Dad, wake up,” Ronnie urged.

Primal’s eyelids fluttered, but his eyes remained closed.

An hour passed, and Sunny waited patiently. Finally, Belinda and Ronnie headed out to get some lunch.

“You are the biggest piece of shit I knew, and considering we just fought Fury and his cronies, that’s saying something,” Sunny said to Primal.

“It takes a special kind of cunt to do the stuff you did. I would love to say I don’t feel anything for you, but there’s a load of hate.

That will never fade. You might have your new family snowed, but not me, I know

what resides in your heart, I've seen it too many times.

You're nothing but a cunt, Primal, the lowest of the low, and if you were on fire, I'd pour gasoline on you. ”

Primal's eyes fluttered opened. “Hate... me.”

“I fuckin' loathe you,” Sunny agreed.

“Who shot Enigma? Who is behind my shooting? Tell me who the last traitor in Hellfire is,” Sunny demanded.

Primal blinked, and his mouth worked as he tried to form words.

“Who is it!” Sunny repeated.

“Sunny... Levi...” Primal's eyes closed, and Sunny stiffened.

Levi. Sunny had a name.

Page 34

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Levi

He was chuckling as he rode his bike back to the clubhouse. Madisen had been telling him about a customer who thought the speakeasy part of the club was code for strip joint. Madisen was furious, and Levi had gone to calm her down. The guy had been totally embarrassed, which amused Levi.

Levi saw an SUV appear on his tail and noted that it was approaching fast. He moved over to one side in case the asshole decided to overtake. Things happened too quickly. Levi wouldn't remember them fully.

The SUV hit his rear tire, and Levi spun out of control. Levi headed down an embankment and slid off his bike. A brief thought of thank fuck he was wearing a jacket crossed his mind, and then his head clashed with something, and he blacked out.

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Levi opened his eyes and blinked. It was sheer darkness around him, and he was hanging from a hook in the ceiling.

"You're messing with the wrong person," Levi called out as he winced in the pain in his shoulders. His feet just barely touched the floor, but his shoulders ached from being hung above his head.

"The army teaches you a lot of shit. How to fight, survive, and win. We also learn how to keep a guy alive despite him being wounded." "Sunny? What the fuck, man?"

Let me down now.”

A bright light was switched on, and Levi blinked as a punch hit him hard in the kidneys. He cried out in pain and tried turning his head.

“Tell me why you betrayed us,” Sunny demanded.

“I didn’t.”

A second blow landed. Levi winced. “Stop this shit. I haven’t betrayed you.”

“Where’s your old burner?”

“Long gone, brother! Jesus, we did not need them afterwards,” Levi hissed. Why the hell had Sunny fingered him as the traitor?

A belt hit his back, and Levi yelled out.

“Why did you betray us?” Sunny demanded.

“I fuckin’ didn’t! Why do you think it was me?” Levi demanded.

Sunny didn’t reply. His only response was to yank on the chains holding Levi’s arms above his head and lift Levi so his arms and shoulders took his full weight.

“I’m your brother,” Levi said desperately.

Madisen had just discovered they were having a boy. He wanted to be around to see his child born. Sunny had evidence, but it was the wrong evidence. Levi had to reach him.

“Sunny, speak to me. Why do you believe it was me?”

Sunny did not answer but blows hit Levi’s body as he swung back and forth, helpless to defend himself. Levi was terrified. He didn’t want to die. He had a family and everything to live for.

“Fuckin’ talk to me. I’m not the rat,” Levi screamed with real fear.

Sunny had been mid-swing and paused at the terror in Levi’s voice.

“That’s how I felt when I was shot.”

“Sunny, Madisen’s having a boy, he deserves a father!”

“And Liv deserved hers! And you nearly took me from her. You attacked Cherry at home and tried to harm Callie. Your kid deserves better than you!” Sunny roared and hit Levi again.

Levi’s cheek burst open, and he winced.

“Who fingered me? They’ve set me up to escape their own punishment. Fuck, we were close back then. I’m not your rat!”

A heavy blow to the head stunned Levi, and two more knocked him unconscious.

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Levi had no idea how long he’d been out when he came to, but his body hurt all over. Sunny sat in a chair, playing with a knife.

“Tell me the truth, Levi, why me, what did you get from being a traitor? I’ll make it

quick for you. Keep the bullshit up, and you'll be in far worse pain."

Levi shook his head. Hope was fading, and he was losing his dreams. "It wasn't me. The rat has set us both up. I didn't betray you or Hellfire."

"Primal gave me your name." "He wasn't around when I joined. How the hell would he know?" Levi blurted, seeing what Sunny hadn't.

"What?"

"How the fuck would Primal know what was happening in the club? Think. He was long gone. He couldn't have known who the traitor was."

"Maybe he stayed in contact with some of the other traitors, hoping to get back in," Sunny retorted.

"You are grasping at straws. I'm not the rat, and you're going to kill an innocent brother," Levi hissed.

"None of us are innocent, Levi."

"Of being a traitor, I am!"

Levi held Sunny's gaze even though one eye had swollen shut. He hoped Sunny could see the truth on his battered face. Sunny held his eyes, and then everything went dark again. Levi hung alone in the darkness as Sunny moved away.

Hopefully, he had given Sunny something to think about.

Chance

“His bike is mangled. Someone hit him and took Levi from the scene,” Lio reported to Chance.

Not somebody... Sunny, Chance realised. For some reason, Sunny had gone after Levi.

He had taken a call from Sunny’s step-mom, who said that Sunny had stormed out of the hospital after promising someone was dead.

Belinda had told Chance that Primal had muttered the name Levi, and Sunny had left immediately.

Chance had reached out, but Levi hadn’t answered his phone. That had been three hours ago. Levi had been in Sunny’s grasp since then.

Chance rubbed his brow. They’d only just found Levi’s bike.

“There’s blood on the ground. Levi was hurt,” Lio added.

“Thanks.”

“Who do I put an ABP out on?” Lio asked.

Chance balked at telling him, but he needed Sunny finding quickly. Chance hesitated, and Bear shook his head.

“Don’t know. If we find information, we’ll inform SPD,” Chance replied. He hoped he was making the right decision, as Levi’s life was on the line.

“If you’re holding back and Levi dies...” Lio let the words hang before cutting the call.

“Get me Sunny!” Chance roared at those around him.

Boots hit the floor as those present left. Over half the club had been searching for him already, but Chance needed everyone out there. Bear swapped a glance with Chance.

“Sit down. You know Sunny. Where would he head?” Bear said.

“I don’t know. Sunny’s not the guy he used to be,” Chance answered.

“Sailor is missing as well. Is he in on it?” Bear asked.

“Possibly. I do not believe it’s Levi. Levi can’t be the traitor.”

“No, I don’t see it being Levi either. Why would Primal finger him? If we can figure that one out, we might have the real rat,” Bear replied.

Chance nodded as his brain scrambled. There was something; there had to be.

Sunny

It didn’t feel right. Something was off with the entire scene. Levi had rightfully pointed out something he’d not considered. Primal had left by the time Levi joined the club, so why finger him?

Sunny paced. He was convinced there was a traitor, and Levi’s name had been given to him. But Sunny had a feeling Levi would die proclaiming his innocence, and he didn’t want to kill an innocent brother. Levi had answers that Sunny needed.

He walked to where Levi was hanging and turned the lights back on. Sunny grabbed a bottle of water and held it to Levi’s mouth. Levi drank deeply from it.

“Sunny, you gotta listen. I ain’t the rat. I don’t know why Primal fingered me, but I’m not the traitor.”

“He gave me your name for a reason.”

“Ever thought Primal was behind this shit? That he’s come back to cause trouble? Turn brother against brother? That’s his mojo, isn’t it? Betrayal, backstabbing and pain. Is Primal capable of this?” Levi demanded.

Sunny was in the process of lowering Levi, so his feet touched the floor and paused. What Levi had suggested was true. Primal was capable of this shit. Primal would revel in the chaos caused by his lies.

“Possibly,” Sunny admitted.

“I am not the traitor, brother. Torture me all you want, even kill me, but that won’t make me the rat. But I pity you because you’ll have to live with the knowledge I’m innocent,” Levi ground out. His face screwed up in pain, and Sunny paused again, thinking.

“You could be mind-fucking me.”

“I can’t control your thoughts. But I have never targeted you. I don’t know who the snake is, but I think you’re being set up. Kill me, and Hellfire will take you out, too. They’ll do the traitor’s job for him,” Levi said.

Sunny nodded thoughtfully. His gut was screaming Levi was innocent, but he couldn’t be sure.

“If I trust you and this is a mistake—”

Whatever Sunny had been about to say was cut off as the door was kicked in, and Pyro barrelled through it. He took Sunny down to the floor as Sunny fought back.

No! Not now.

Sunny fought with everything he had, but Tiny joined in as Banshee also arrived. The three of them quickly subdued Sunny, tied, and gagged him as Tiny lowered Levi.

“Tell Chance we need Doc, Sunny has done a job on Levi,” Tiny said with hate and kicked Sunny in the ribs.

Sunny’s eyes narrowed. He would remember that. Tiny hauled Sunny up and slung him over his shoulder.

“For what you did to Levi, I’m going to pay back tenfold,” Tiny promised and carried Sunny out.

Callie

I shouldn’t be listening, but I was. And I was devastated. Sunny had gone after Levi and tortured him. But he had been stopped by Tiny, Pyro, and Banshee and was being held at Hellfire. Sailor had reported to the others, and now they were discussing how to get Sunny back.

Without catching their attention, I slipped past and grabbed some keys. I could get into Hellfire and free Sunny. They’d not deny me entrance.

Cherry caught my gaze and nodded. “Bring my son home,” she said.

“I’ll do my best,” I promised.

“Thank you.”

I headed for the car and slipped in. Hands shaking, I started the engine and allowed the car to roll down the dirt track. We were hiding out at a house surrounded by woods. There was only one way in and out, and this was it. But if I started the engine, the team would be on me before I could blink.

Once the car was rolling merrily along and I deemed myself far enough from the house, I started the engine and drove off. Silently, I prayed for Sunny to hold on; I was coming for him.

Chance

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

He looked around church as he waited for his brothers to arrive.

They were coming from all over as they'd been out searching for Levi.

Sunny had literally been ten minutes from Hellfire.

Chance had put himself in Sunny's shoes and had known where Sunny would have taken Levi.

The one place they wouldn't search. Hellfire's old wet room.

His gut feeling had been correct, and Tiny, Pyro, and Banshee had brought Sunny in. Levi was in with a doctor, and Sunny was in the cells. As soon as Chance had Levi safely home, he'd called everyone in. They now had a decision to make. Sunny had overstepped the line.

He heard a commotion and opened the door and saw Clio sobbing on Callie's shoulder. Callie looked awkward and was rubbing Clio's back. Thalia stood, hugging them, too, and Chance's gaze narrowed.

For a brief moment, Callie's eyes met his and held hate. Then it cleared quickly as Callie offered him a weak smile.

Chance assumed she was mad because Sunny had turned out not to be what she believed. He walked over to her and hugged her briefly.

"I'm glad you're back," he said, and she nodded. She hesitantly returned his hug.

“Me too,” she murmured.

Chance felt there was a lot that needed to be addressed, but this wasn’t the time.

He turned as Bear came into the room. “Levi’s resting and will be okay. A couple of broken ribs, some cuts and bruises. Sunny hadn’t hurt him too much, he was just getting started.”

“That’s good. I’ve called church, let’s talk,” Chance said and tilted his head in the direction of church.

Bear nodded, his eyes lighting on Callie with suspicion. She held his gaze for a few seconds before dropping hers. Bear stared at her for a few more minutes, and Chance wondered if he was going to say anything. But Bear turned on his heel and walked towards church.

Callie

It took an hour for every fucking brother to arrive and head to church.

Whatever was going on in there was loud as people shouted over one another.

The old ladies had headed to see Levi with Madisen upstairs, which left me with Jinx.

Jinx was busy doing stuff behind the bar, so it didn’t take more than a few seconds for me to slip away.

I knew where the cells were. Clio had once let their location slip, and I found them easily. Sunny lay on a bed behind the first cell, and his eyes widened as he saw me.

“I hope you can pick locks,” I said and handed him a hair clip.

Sunny started laughing. “You never fail to surprise me!”

He got up and, grabbed the clip from me, and began working on the lock. It took a couple of minutes, but he got the door open.

“Now what?” I asked as he kissed me.

“We get Levi. Somehow, he has the answers.”

“He’s surrounded.”

“No, he ain’t!” Levi said from behind me, and I spun around.

“You can’t have Sunny,” I hissed.

“I do not fuckin’ want him. But Sunny’s correct. Primal gave my name for a reason. I must have knowledge of something. However, we need to get out of here. The club is voting on what to do with Sunny, and I don’t see it going his way. I’ve got an SUV outside,” Levi said.

Sunny and I exchanged glances, and Sunny shrugged. “Ain’t got nobody else to trust.”

“Damn right,” Levi ground out as he winced.

Together, Sunny and I followed Levi up the stairs and out into the open. An SUV was parked outside.

“Sunny, you drive. Just getting here fuckin’ hurt.” Levi tossed Sunny the keys and got in the back, where he slumped down.

I hurried around to the passenger side and climbed in as Sunny jumped in.

“Let’s figure this shit out,” Sunny said as he started the engine.

“Yeah,” Levi agreed and closed his eyes.

“Do you need anything?” I asked, worried. Sunny drove away, but not towards the gates. “Where are you going?”

“There’s a back way out of here, it connects with Lavender’s property,” Sunny replied.

I nodded and repeated my question to Levi.

“I need this shit to end. We gotta figure out who the traitor is and why. The suspicion is killing us all,” Levi muttered.

“Agreed,” Sunny said. Sunny hit the highway, and I pulled out some money I’d taken from his stash.

“I gathered you wouldn’t want to return to the safehouse, so I brought cash,” I stated.

Sunny tossed me a grin. “Clever girl. We’ll book into a hotel and figure this out.”

“Get a fuckin’ king-size, I need to lay down,” Levi griped.

“Ain’t apologising until we work this out.”

“Didn’t expect you to because you’re an asshole,” Levi shot back. “Sunny, I want answers, too. Clearly, Primal believes I have information I’m unaware of. Fuck knows what.” “We’ll figure it out.”

“You believe it’s not me?” Levi asked, and I stared at Sunny.

“Be pretty fuckin’ stupid of you to place yourself in my hands if it was. Then again, it could be a genius move to throw me off the scent. Who the hell knows?”

“Jesus, your mind is fucked, brother,” Levi muttered.

“His mind is fine!” I defended him, and Levi chuckled.

“Madisen’s going to kill me,” he complained.

“Probably,” Sunny replied, and the conversation fell dead after that.

???

Sunny picked a motel on the roadside and paid cash for a room. We weren’t staying; it was somewhere they could figure shit out.

I was hungry, and so was Levi, so Sunny ordered food. Levi fell to sleep while we waited, and we spoke amongst ourselves. Forty minutes later, the food arrived, and we woke Levi to eat. Levi winced in pain, swallowed two tablets, and finally ate his food.

Once done, we looked at each other.

“Let’s figure this shit out,” Levi said as I placed pillows behind his back.

“Yeah,” Sunny agreed.

Two hours later, they were as frustrated as fuck. Despite a multitude of questions, they weren’t any closer. Sunny pried, and Levi responded, and nothing come out.

Finally, as tempers began to flare, I asked a question that stopped them both in their tracks.

“What if Primal didn’t say Levi, could you have misheard it?”

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 12:40 pm

Sunny

Callie's question made me think. "No, I'm sure he muttered Levi."

"Could he have said something else? Remember, Primal's throat was dry. What about a word that sounds like Levi? Skivvy, Libby, Livvy..."

"Livvy!" Levi sat up and winced.

"That mean something?"

"Shit, I never considered it," Levi cursed.

"What?" Sunny demanded.

"It wasn't something talked about. But I've got an Aunt Livvy. Her name was Lithana, and she hated it and shortened it to Livvy. My family doesn't talk to her. She got in with a biker by the name of Carnage, ring a bell?" Levi questioned.

Sunny let rip as he got to his feet and paced.

"Sunny?" Callie asked.

"Nobody had much to do with Carnage. He was dark even for Zeus's lot. Carnage was killed just before the war, and trust me, he was no loss. His woman was your aunt?" he asked Levi incredulously.

“Yeah, according to my family, Livvy was a nasty piece of work. I’ve never met her, hell, I don’t know what happened to her.”

Sunny wracked his brains. “She was pensioned off after Carnage died.”

“Pensioned off?” Callie inquired.

“If a brother dies when wearing a cut, then the club pays his cut to his old lady. It’s our way of looking after a fallen brother’s family. It reassures us all that our families will be looked after.”

“Pretty decent idea,” Callie said begrudgingly.

“What happened to Livvy?” Levi answered.

“She took the money and ran. I think she stayed in the region a few weeks after Carnage’s death. Nobody that I know from the club is in touch with her,” Sunny replied.

“What has Livvy got to do with the traitor? No offence, this doesn’t help your innocence,” Callie asked, and Sunny had to agree.

“I ain’t sure. Is Primal not awake yet?” Levi questioned.

“He was stirring when I left him before. Primal might be up now,” Sunny said.

“Then let’s go visit him. Primal must have answers,” Levi insisted.

Sunny sent him a look but saw only genuine honesty reflected at him.

“Sunny, I do not want to be looking over my shoulder for the rest of my life. I ain’t

the traitor, but someone clearly is. Hellfire is going to be searching for you. Let's get them some answers before the club makes another mistake," Levi stated.

"Okay." Sunny knew they were close.

Callie.

I stared at the man who had sired Sunny. There was little to say he was Sunny's sperm donor. They didn't look alike, and Sunny had clearly taken after Cherry.

Primal's wife and son watched them closely.

"Has he said anything else?" Sunny asked.

Belinda sent him a dark glare. "He's still not stable, thank you for asking."

"I don't have time. Lives are at stake, and that asshole has answers we need."

"Like a guy called Levi's life?" Belinda demanded.

"I'm Levi, ma'am, and Sunny's right. Callie here was attacked and nearly killed because we do not know who is trying to hurt us.

I know this is a difficult situation all round, this is the man you love, and Sunny hates.

But Primal has important information. We think Primal said the name Livvy, not Levi.

" "You'll harm a woman?" Belinda asked, aghast.

"No. Stop twisting our words. I can see what you are doing," I snapped. "I don't

know why you're trying to delay us, but it's obvious you are. If you answer their questions, we can get out of here and out of your life."

"Jed hasn't said a word apart from your name," Belinda explained, and I realised what was wrong.

"I'm sorry he has not asked after you or your children," I murmured, and Belinda sent me a nasty glare.

Sunny looked surprised, and then realisation crossed his face. That was why Belinda was being a bitch.

"What would you know of pain?"

"I know it intimately," I replied, and Belinda snorted.

I swapped a look with Sunny, turned around, and pulled my top up at the back. Belinda's gasp echoed through the room.

"Jesus!" Ronnie exclaimed.

"As I said, pain and I are old friends." I faced Belinda.

"What happened to you?" she whispered.

"My foster mother liked beating kids with chains. This is meant to be my beautiful life, but it's not. Someone is hunting Sunny, and Sunny's hunting a ghost. This shit needs to end. Primal is the key to everything." "You're Callie Dixon," Ronnie said. "I didn't know you were a foster kid."

"It is not important to what I do now. Are you going to help us, or, I repeat, keep

delaying us?”

Belinda and Ronnie swapped a glance before Ronnie spoke again. “We were asked to call Chance if you arrived here. I sent him a text a couple of minutes ago.”

“Fuckin’ wonderful,” Sunny complained.

“Primal hasn’t said anything else.”

“Church... bugged,” a croaky voice announced.

“What?” Levi exclaimed, spinning to check on Primal, who was watching us. His mouth worked as he tried to form words.

“Bugged. Livvy... revenge.”

“You’re saying Livvy is behind this?”

“Yeah... I’m sorry, Sunny...” Primal wheezed.

His body shook, and Ronnie headed for the door and called a nurse.

“I... love you...” Primal stated, his gaze on Belinda.

“Jed,” Belinda sobbed with relief in her voice.

Sunny stepped back as she moved forward and held his hand.

“My... life... you and the kids... best thing.” Primal said, and his eyes closed.

“Jed? Jed! ” Belinda screamed. Alarms sounded as the door flew open, and nurses

rushed in with a doctor and Ronnie behind them. Sunny moved Belinda to one side as doctors and nurses began working on Primal frantically.

“Get out of here,” a nurse ordered, and Sunny walked the sobbing Belinda out of the room. She fought him at first, but when Ronnie took her in his arms, she collapsed in them, clinging to him.

“Don’t mean to be rude. But this is a time for family, and you’ve made it clear we’re not yours. Please leave,” Ronnie said, his eyes on Sunny.

“If shit had been different, I’d have been proud to call you brother, I think. You have my condolences.”

With that, Sunny took my elbow, and we hurried from the ward. Sunny didn’t even glance back as the man who’d helped create him died.

Sunny

“We need to resolve this,” Sunny said. “Primal gave us what he had. I reckon he had more, but it’s no good. He’s dead. How could the clubhouse be bugged? Chance has it scanned once a week.”

“That would mean there is a traitor in the club. How could Livvy be behind this?” Levi replied with a frown.

“There’s only one way to resolve this. Where is this blasted woman?” Callie said as she bit into a burger.

It was hitting late evening, and we’d stopped for a bite to eat.

“The only person who’d know is Tati. She kept an eye on all ex-old ladies.” Levi

shoved a fry into his mouth.

“Didn’t know that.”

“Oh, yeah. Tati had issues with most of them, so kept a beady eye on them. She’d know where Livvy is,” Levi said. He yanked his phone out and dialed.

“Tati? Can you tell me where Carnage’s Livvy is...? Really...? Okay, thanks... no, I’m fine, don’t worry.”

“Seems Livvy runs a flower shop that Tati orders from weekly.”

Sunny felt a sinking feeling. Had he been buying Callie’s flowers from a woman who was trying to sabotage Hellfire?

“Where?” he demanded. Relief hit him when Levi told him, and it was a different one to what Sunny used.

He sat up straight. “Tati always has fresh bunches delivered every Saturday for church. She says we all stink, and something should smell nice in there.”

“So, Livvy could be bugging the flowers each week,” Callie drawled.

“No. Chance’s sweep would find one. He does it just before church,” Sunny refuted his own idea.

“Not if the damn thing isn’t switched on. If it is remote-controlled, Livvy can turn it on as church starts. And it’s always started at six on a Saturday.” “Sorry, but doesn’t this seem a bit far-fetched for a woman who’s a florist?” Callie asked, and Sunny nodded.

“You’ve got a point, but it all makes sense,” Levi agreed.

“Then let’s head to church and scan for one,” Sunny suggested.

“No offence. You set foot there, Chance won’t be letting you go. I will go and call you with the information,” Levi said.

Sunny hesitated before nodding. “I’ll trust you. In the meantime, I’m going to pay Livvy a visit.”

“Okay, we’ve got a plan.”

“Sure as hell have.”

Callie

There’d been a fight, but Sunny eventually agreed to take me with him. It was doubtful that the shop would be open this late, but we’d discovered Livvy lived above it. As we pulled over and parked, Sunny’s phone rang, and he answered.

Levi spoke, and Sunny said thanks before hanging up.

“A bug was found when Levi scanned church. He’s explaining everything to Chance and Bear right now. Let’s see where Livvy fits into all this.”

We had pieces of the puzzle, and things were becoming clearer, but we didn’t have all the answers. Hopefully, this wicked bitch would fill the gaps. Sunny checked the shop, and it was locked, so we headed down the alley and up a flight of stairs and knocked on the door.

It took a few moments, but a woman opened it, and Sunny shoved in. “Long time no

see, Livvy.”

I followed Sunny inside and kicked the door shut.

“Sunny?” Livvy sounded surprised, but also worried.

“Wanna tell me why you’re bugging Hellfire?” Sunny demanded without preamble. Okay, then, we were heading straight for the jugular.

“Because she does what her old man tells her,” a guy said, and there was the sound of a shotgun being primed.

Sunny’s face took on a disbelieving look. “Doesn’t any cunt stay dead?”

“Seems not. Throw your weapon down, Sunny.”

“Fuck you, Carnage. Why don’t you tell me what’s going on?” Sunny hissed.

I blinked as Sunny stepped in front of me. Carnage? Wasn’t he meant to be dead?

“Always slow to understand shit, you and Chance, two fuckin’ peas in a pod. Not anymore, though, I did you both damage,” Carnage crowed. “Livvy, take his weapon.” Livvy moved forward and took Sunny’s gun from his waistband.

“Move into the living room and sit down,” Carnage ordered.

“That ain’t happening,” Sunny stated.

“Because your little lady would be exposed. Pretty dumb of you to bring her. This time, she won’t survive me,” Carnage promised.

“You pushed me?” I exclaimed, trying to get around Sunny. Sunny held me back.

“Yeah, you fought, but I was stronger. I’ll have my cross back,” Carnage said.

“The cross you stole from Tiny to frame him?” Sunny demanded.

“That what you think? I took that cross because I liked it,” Carnage replied.

“Sounds about right, but the police have it,” I muttered. Tacky likes tacky.

“You were behind my shooting?” Sunny asked.

“Jesus, boy, ain’t you worked anything out?” “I’m missing pieces of the puzzle,” Sunny admitted.

“Number one, weren’t Zeus who killed Enigma. I did that because he was a sanctimonious prick.” He lifted a hand and swiped at the air. “Livvy, get me a beer. Seems I gotta explain shit to clueless here.”

“Why did you kill him?” Sunny ground out.

“Because I did not like him or the way he ran the club. The fucker ran me off and told me to black my ink. Instead, I faked my death. When Zeus took over, I contemplated coming back to life, but I’d started a new career,” Carnage said as Livvy handed him a beer.

“As what?” Sunny asked.

“I was a hitman. Didn’t care who I hit, just as long as I got paid.

I’ve blood on my hands, boy, and I couldn’t give a fuck.

I let Livvy have the pension, and she saved it and opened her shop.

Perfect cover for her. And Tati, bleeding heart she is, placed an order every week for years.

She'd no idea I was watching her from the back.

That bitch aged like fine wine." Carnage smacked his lips together, and I shuddered.

Livvy sent him a dirty stare but didn't say anything.

"So, you killed Enigma for shits and giggles?" Sunny said.

"Yup."

"Why me?"

"I fuckin' hated you and Michaelson. Snotty-nosed kids.

Seriously, boy, you thought you were better than everyone else.

I proved you wrong. Hurt both you and Michaelson.

I shot you because I wanted to. Simple as that.

I took Tiny's phone. He never learned how to hide things properly, and I sent you the text. "

"For nothing other than the fact you didn't like me?" Sunny sounded incredulous. I could understand why. Sunny was shot for no real reason?

“Yup. Ain’t hard to understand. Hated your fuckin’ spoiled guts, so killed Enigma and set the ball rolling on a world of pain for you both. Really thought you were dead, though, that was a good deception,” Carnage said, amused.

“And you’ve been spying on Hellfire? Why?”

“Didn’t bother until you came home. I wanted to know what you’d been up to and what your story was. Of course, I missed the initial explanation, but I pieced things together over time.”

“You told the cops where the bodies were,” Sunny stated, and Carnage nodded.

I squeezed Sunny’s waist, and he stiffened slightly. I think he’d forgotten I was there.

“Why come after me again?”

“Because you wouldn’t stop prying. Dig, dig, dig.

You were like a fuckin’ mole. I knew you’d find out the truth in the end, but you weren’t that clever.

Fuck me, you nearly tore Hellfire apart, which is something I’d not succeeded in doing.

You set brother against brother. Had everyone looking at each other. Congrats on that.”

“Ain’t something I’m proud of. So basically, this was just a game to you?” Sunny spat.

“Yup. Even shooting your pa was fun. Primal sure straightened himself up. Got

himself a good life, but the man kept an eye on the club. Seems he knew shit I wasn't aware of.

As soon as Chance got your call saying Primal had returned and had information, I got my ass over here and shut him up.

” “You didn't succeed. You failed. Now what? ”

“You think I'm going to let Hellfire take me in? I know what you boys do to those who piss you off. One thing, Sunny, this ain't the end. My son will come for you,” Carnage said.

With that, he turned and blasted Livvy in the head. I screamed as blood splattered me. Then, using Sunny's gun, which Livvy had passed to him, Carnage ate a bullet.

I stared at their bodies in shock.

“Fuck!” Sunny roared as the front door blew open, and Chance rushed in.

“Are you okay?” he demanded. He grabbed me roughly and checked me over.

“He killed her and then himself,” I babbled. “Sunny!” his name escaped me in a wail.

Sunny hugged me tightly. He turned my face away from the bodies. “Did you hear it all?” he asked Chance.

“Yeah, and Rooster recorded it. You were both right and wrong.”

“It's over,” Sunny said.

“You got repercussions to face,” Chance announced.

“I ain’t got shit to face. I was correct, you had dirt in Hellfire still.

It just wasn’t a brother. You can have my cut, this shit was not worth it, and I don’t feel the same way as I did about it.

” Sunny kissed my forehead. “Callie is the life I want, and that’s final.

When the cops get here, give them Callie’s address, and they can talk to me there.

For now, my girl needs looking after. Chance, the club is truly clean. ”

Sunny

He winced as Jack screamed and raced through the house.

“Something touched me!” Jack bellowed.

Sunny tried not to laugh, but it escaped, and Phil swung a camera on him.

“Sunny!” Callie hissed.

He winked and hugged his woman. He knew that footage would make it into the episode. Sunny had joined Callie as security and a general dogsbody.

Callie grabbed his cut, and he yanked her forward for a kiss. The fans had loved watching them as the episodes progressed, and Sunny had become a firm favourite.

“Love you, but I ain’t going in that room. Some creep touched Jack up,” Sunny replied.

Phil snorted, and Callie whacked his chest.

“I wasn’t,” Jack yelled from outside.

“That’s not what you said,” Sunny retorted.

“I am going in,” Callie announced.

“Love ya, babe, and good luck,” Sunny replied.

Callie stared at him in disbelief. “You’re gonna let me go alone?”

“Nope. I’m sending Freddie with you!” Sunny answered and called for Freddie. “I’ve seen enough weird shit around you guys that I ain’t going anywhere near a handsy ghost.”

“Coward!” Callie growled and marched off.

“Too damn right and proud of it!” Sunny shouted at her back.

He swapped an amused glance with Phil. They both knew he’d chase after Callie in about thirty seconds.

Life couldn’t be better. Chance hadn’t accepted his resignation but instead made him nomad. Lieutenant remained his position for when he was home, but the role was not an important one in the club, so he wasn’t really needed.

Cherry and Liv had made their home in Rapid City while Sunny toured with Callie at her haunted locations. Her show was stronger than ever, and Sunny had developed his own fan base.

Carnage’s threats of his son getting revenge hadn’t materialised. Still, Sunny kept an eye out but wasn’t too bothered. That was Chance’s problem.

For now, he had to go rescue his pregnant woman from a ghost who wanted to touch her. Only Sunny was allowed to do that!