



Holly's Valentine Vow (Steel Raiders MC)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Holly

Planning my wedding to the man who has become my everything is a joyous task, made even better by two little girls who adore their new daddy. My business is booming, I'm not working as a bartender all that often, and my nights are positively magical.

Then, tragedy strikes one sunny afternoon, and it turns our lives upside down. Instead of picking out flowers and invitations, I'm learning how to care for someone who is covered in casts, bruises, and healing road rash.

When the culprit of the hit-and-run is revealed, it's no real surprise, but it still hurts. The question is, will we be able to get married with Rebel in his current condition?

Rebel

Having never anticipated either marriage or having an ol' lady by my side, I'm embracing all the things related to a domestic life with my woman and her two sweet girls. The first time they called me 'daddy', it finished melting the heart that was encased in ice until Holly came along.

Now, however, I'm healing from an accident that should've killed me, vowing vengeance on the person or persons who decided to hit me when I was on my bike. Can I just say, thank God for leathers? They saved me, as did Holly's grandpa, Paul.

Still, when we find out who did it, it's gonna be a race between my brothers and the law as to who finds the guilty party first. My bet's on my brothers, but because of the delicate nature of the situation, I may have to let the authorities deal with all of it.

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Chapter One

Holly

“Mama?” Mina asks as I fix their breakfast.

“Yeah, sweetie?” I reply, flipping the pancakes I’m making her and Ruby for breakfast.

“When are we shopping for our princess dresses?” she questions.

“Princess dresses?” I repeat her question back to her.

“For our wedding!” she exclaims.

I start laughing because ever since Christmas morning when Rebel asked me to marry him, the girls have been hounding me about what they’re going to wear, when will we shop, all the things. Honestly, I’m perfectly content to have the wedding here at the farm, then hold the reception at the clubhouse. I don’t need anything fancy at all as long as at the end of the day, Rebel and I are husband and wife.

“Well, I suppose we could go today,” I muse. “But first, you girls need to eat, then get cleaned up.”

I have some work to do for clients, but I’ve gotten used to doing it during the week when they’re at daycare. However, W-2s need to be sent out for those clients, as well as 1099s, so I’ve been tirelessly working whenever I have a spare minute. With tax

season pretty much on top of me, I'll be burning the candle at both ends of the stick, that's for sure. Thankfully, I have awesome grandparents, and Rebel, so at least I'm not alone any longer and can take care of everyone. Except the bar, there's no way I'll be able to work there, so Rebel has one of the brothers taking my shifts for the time being. I enjoy working there, although I've started cutting back a little bit on those hours since Myra is no longer in our lives, and I don't have to worry about her trying to bleed me dry. Still, if I can find a dress today, then the girls will be content to play in their playroom while I get some stuff taken care of before Rebel gets here tonight.

He's been gone for a few days on a club run of some sort; I don't ask because even though they're a legit club, I honestly don't need to know. I trust him and know he won't stray.

"Can Grammy come?" Ruby asks as she takes a sip of her orange juice.

"I don't see why not," I reply.

"Why not what?" Grammy asks as she walks through the back door into the kitchen.

"Grammy! Do you want to shop with us to find our princess dresses?" Mina asks with pleading eyes.

"Well, of course I do! Then I thought you girls might want to come and spend the night with me and Pappy. He bought a movie he thought you two would like," she says, winking at me.

I mouth 'thank you' at her as I quickly cut up the pancakes, add some syrup then put the girls' plates in front of them. "Do you want some?" I ask Grammy as I return to the stove.

“Child, I ate ages ago with Pappy.”

“What’s he doing today?” I question.

“Playing cards with his buddies.” I giggle as she rolls her eyes.

“I’m sure everything that needs doing is all done,” I remind her. “Besides, aren’t the two of you supposed to be slowing down?”

“Psssh, you act like we’re in our dotage or something,” she chides.

“What’s dotage?” Mina asks, stuffing a fork full of the fluffy goodness into her mouth.

“It means your mother thinks Pappy and I are getting old,” Grammy whispers, conspiratorially grinning at me.

“Mama! That’s not nice,” Ruby says, chiming in.

Shaking my head, I fix my own plate and sit down at the table so I can eat. “Y’all aren’t getting old, Grammy, you’re already there,” I coyishly remind her. “Both of you have milestone birthdays this year, remember? Seventy?”

“Child, seventy is the new fifty, haven’t you heard?” she teases.

“In who’s universe?” I question, holding back a giggle.

“Mine, naturally.”

Shaking my head, I look at both girls and say, “Let’s get finished up if we’re going to go shopping.”

“Oh, Mama, you look like a queen,” Mina says, staring up at me with starry eyes in the dress I found for them. “Surrounded by two pretty little princesses,” I reply, praising them.

The girls’ dresses are replicas of the one I found, just shorter. It might be a little chilly for our wedding, but as Grammy has reminded me, that’s what God made tights for. While mine has more embellishments, I find myself getting teary eyed when I look down at their little faces staring up at me. They’re long-sleeved and fall to just above their calves, with a skirt full of tulle so it puffs out.

“Ma’am, we have tiny shrugs they can wear,” the saleswoman says. “Your grandmother mentioned y’all would be having an outdoor wedding.”

“We are, but now I’m wondering if we should find somewhere else,” I reply. “But I’ve always dreamed of getting married at the farm.”

It’s always been my sanctuary, ever since they took me in as a little girl. I learned at their feet how to work hard, and what a good relationship looks like. Granted, I missed the mark with Devin, but I hit it out of the park with Rebel, which makes me smile.

“Holly, your Pappy is already working on that with Rebel,” Grammy states. “The gazebo will be the perfect setting for the two of you to say your vows, and since it’ll just be us, the girls, and his club, it’s not like we have to have a lot of extras. Pappy is running lines to the gazebo, so it’ll be heated for the time we need to stand out there, and Rebel is keeping an eye on the weather.”

Part of me, even knowing it would be too cold for my girls, wishes we’d have a pretty snowfall; that would make it picture perfect. I keep my thoughts to myself, however, and just smile. Looking at the clerk, I ask, “Do you have the shrugs here so they can try them on?”

“Yes, ma’am,” she replies. “I also have a shawl that will work with your dress as well, would you like me to get that as well?”

“Please,” I say, turning to look at myself in the mirror. While the girls have long sleeves, mine are uncovered. As I stare, I find myself unconsciously picking apart every little thing I don’t like about my reflection.

“Holly, stop that this instant!” Grammy whisper-shouts at me, as she catches my eye.

“What?” I ask, trying to sound innocent but failing based on the look she gives me.

Reprimanding me, she hisses, “I know what you’re doing. Don’t give that asshole any more space in your head, do you hear me? Rebel loves you, warts and all.”

I sigh at her words because he does. The poor man had no clue what he was getting into when he decided I was his. I’ve got enough baggage to fill a Samsonite store and then some. Although... he’s worked wonders helping me unpack a good deal of it, something that makes me love him that much more.

The clerk comes back with her arms full, a smile gracing her face as she kneels in front of my babies. “I found these in the back,” she softly says, placing tiny tiaras on each of their heads before she helps them into the fuzzy shrugs.

“Oh, Mama,” Mina whispers, her hands running up and down her arms as she stares at herself in the mirror. “It’s so soft.”

“You both look so pretty,” I tell them, crouching in front of them.

“We have crowns, Mama,” Ruby says, reaching up and lightly touching the one on top of her curls. “Do you think Daddy will like them?”

My heart warms because after Rebel proposed, both girls decided to start calling him 'Daddy'. The first time they did it, I watched his eyes get glassy before he got down in front of them and pulled them into his arms and told them he would be proud to be their daddy.

"I think he's going to love them," I state. Looking up at the clerk, I say, "We'll take it all. Let me get you my card."

Grammy pulls out her wallet and states, "Nope, me and Pappy have this, Holly."

Rolling my eyes, I glare at her, but it doesn't really work since she's never fazed when I try it. "Grammy," I hiss. "I have the money to get me and the girls our dresses!"

"And Pappy and I are covering them for you," she chides. "We're paying for the wedding, Holly, and I won't have you arguing about it."

"Grammy," I drawl out. "Why?"

"Because you're ours, sweetheart. Long ago, Pappy started putting money back for the day his girl got married. Well, that day is here, so let's spend his dough, shall we?"

I start giggling, because Pappy has been putting money back for this and that since I was born, according to Grammy. "Fine, you're going to do what you wanna do anyhow, right?" I tease.

"Always have, always will," she retorts. "Come on, girls, let's get you two changed out of these pretty dresses so we can get them bagged so they don't get dirty and head home. I think we're gonna make homemade pizzas tonight."

“Can we make cookies?” Ruby asks, her little face hopeful.

“Do we ever not make cookies?” Grammy replies. “I have the makings for some oatmeal raisin cookies, as well as peanut butter.”

“I love peanut butter cookies,” Mina says, her voice almost reverent as she follows behind my grandmother to the changing room.

“They’re absolutely adorable,” the clerk says as she follows me to the one I’m using so she can unzip the back of my dress.

“They are, but with all three of them together, I’m definitely being kept on my toes,” I reply, deliberately misunderstanding her as I toss Grammy into the mix.

“Ah, I see what you did there. She’s your grandmother, right?” she asks as she carefully takes the dress and slips it into the garment bag.

“Yeah,” I say, smiling at her. “She’s the best thing that ever happened to me when I was a little girl.”

“Cherish her, because I miss mine every single day,” she states, her face showing her sorrow. “I’ll meet y’all up front.”

Before she can walk out, I grab her hand and squeeze it. “Thank you for your help today.”

“It was definitely my pleasure,” she says, squeezing it back.

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Chapter Two

Rebel

“You heading home?” Ash asks as I stand next to my bike stretching. The past few days, we’ve been checking into possible locations for some new businesses the brothers want to open.

I can’t help chuckling when I think of the arcade that’s on the outskirts of town. The former owner died, and his kids didn’t want it, so it’s been on the market for a bit. The price is right, and we could have a patched brother managing it while prospects do the dirty work. I like the idea of giving the local kids someplace to go and gather so they’re not running the roads and getting into trouble.

Not that it wouldn’t still happen because let’s face it, teens tend to do that without even trying. I may be a grown ass adult, but I remember some of the stunts and other prepubescent shit I pulled when I was a helluva lot younger.

“Yeah, Ash. Holly texted earlier and told me her grandparents are keeping the girls overnight.” He smirks at me, so I flip him off.

I love and adore Mina and Ruby and thank whatever higher power is out there that they were giggling that fateful day when I saw Holly for the first time. But it’s hard to find alone time with my future wife when two little girls are so active. It’s a bonus that they’re still at the age where they enjoy the company of their parents, but from time to time, both Holly and I need a breather and that’s when her grandparents step in. Plus, Holly has an open-door policy of sorts, so most mornings, one or both of

them are crawling into bed in the morning to snuggle. I no longer sleep nude after the first morning when Mina bounced onto the bed and accidentally caught me in the dick. The pain of that unforgettable incident has me cringing and metaphorically cupping my manhood in remembrance, because there was no way I was gonna tell her that she might've shut down any future possibilities of more siblings down the road.

Because that's what I want; Holly and I to add to our family. The thought of her rounded with my baby growing in her belly has my dick growing hard. I need to get home soon so I can show her what she means to me.

"Nice, go spend time with your ol' lady then, Prez," he says. "We'll hold down the fort."

Shaking my head at his ridiculous antics, I settle back into the saddle of my girl and flick my fingers. "Go ahead and give Data the pictures of the arcade so he can do his thing and give me the specs so we can begin negotiations and break down what we'll have to invest before it can get up and running. We'll put in a formal offer for the place once the realtor calls me back and I have that information in hand."

He nods as I turn the switch and my bike roars to life. A lot of the brothers are switching to the electric starter, but I prefer the authentic rumble of my Fat Boy. Revving the throttle a few times, I wave my hand in Ash's general direction and take off toward home.

As the asphalt passes below me, I think about how much my life has changed in such a short time frame. The fact that despite her past and what her ex put her through she still gave us a chance is nothing short of miraculous. I think a lot of that has to do with her grandparents; they're obviously as much in love now as they were decades ago when they first met. I know from talking with my woman that she wants that for herself, as well as the girls when they're grown.

I grin when I recall one of our conversations about Mina and Ruby.

“Rebel, they’ll be allowed to date when they’re sixteen, same as me,” she says.

“And I think they should wait until at least twenty-five,” I insist, thinking of some punk ass boy child wanting to defile one of my girls. Yeah, not happening as long as there’s breath in my lungs and ammo in my gun. Of course, I’m not telling my ol’ lady that fact.

“Twenty-five? That’s... that’s preposterous!” she exclaims, her small hand lightly smacking my shoulder.

I grin down at her where she’s curled against me in bed. “What’s wrong with waiting until then?” I tease, loving how her face flushes in anger.

“Well, for starters, at some point I’d like grandchildren,” she retorts. “I want to be young enough to enjoy playing with them, just like my grandparents were with me!”

“How about we get through their early childhood years first?” I suggest, desire now flaring as I watch her chest heaving in indignation.

Rolling so I’m halfway on top of her, I see her eyes widen when she feels my dick against her thigh.

“Yeah, we can table that discussion for a later date,” she agrees, reaching up to pull my head down before she kisses me.

Slowing down, I turn my blinker on to pull into the driveway when I hear the unmistakable sound of squealing brakes. As I fight to keep my bike upright, which ends up being a lost cause when the force of a vehicle strikes my back fender, my last thought as I fly through the air is of Holly.

I wake up, pain thrumming through my body to hear Paul on the phone. “Get here now, dammit all! I’m telling you, my grandson’s lying in the ditch at my house, his bike’s a mangled pile of metal and there’s blood everywhere.”

As my consciousness fades once again, I whisper, “Holly.”

Sirens and rapid fire talking bring me back to life again and I realize I’m in an ambulance which is going ridiculously fast based on the scenery that’s flashing by through what little I can see out of the back windows.

“You’ll be okay, Jonah,” a paramedic says as she leans over me. “My name is Hennessy, but you can call me Hen.”

“Hen, what’s wrong with me?” I manage to stammer. “Everything hurts and I can’t move my head.”

“You have what’s known as a C-collar on, it’s a neck brace to keep your head immobile until the doctors can get scans or X-rays done to ensure you don’t have any damage in that area. I can see a few broken bones, since they’re compound fractures, which simply means the bones broke through the skin. You also have a lot of road rash,” she states.

I’m impressed that as she lists off my known injuries, she keeps treating me and checking the machine that I can hear beeping behind my head. “Who hit me?”

She shrugs and says, “Your grandfather didn’t see who hit you, just found you when he pulled into the driveway. But he told the cops that he was gonna pull the camera feed or something, so hopefully, they caught whoever hit you since they fled the scene.”

Some spineless motherfucker hit me and ran like the pussy they are? That pisses me

off, I was looking forward to a quiet evening at home with Holly. Our wedding is right around the corner, she's going to be upset that her dream day was ruined because someone had the gall to try and take me out. I have no doubts that this was done on purpose seeing as I was already turning into the driveway and wasn't in anyone's path.

I don't correct her as far as mine and Paul's actual relationship because in a few short weeks, he will be my grandfather by marriage. It doesn't bother me one bit that he's decided to claim me as his now.

As the darkness begins to close in once again, I ask, "Does Holly know?"

"She's going to meet you at the hospital," she replies just as a monitor goes nuts and everything fades to black.

I wake up to an antiseptic smell and wetness on my shoulder. Somehow, I know even without looking, that Holly's as close to me as possible. "Babe?" I call out, my voice hoarse. My throat hurts like hell, which makes me wonder what happened the last time I passed out.

"Oh, Rebel," she says, now sobbing. "You almost died on me!"

Died? What the fuck? I can hear beeping machines in the background, but they're not blaring an alarm tone like I vaguely remember hearing just before darkness fell. "What do you mean?"

And why the fuck does it feel as though I swallowed shards of glass?

"You went into cardiac arrest while on the way to the hospital," she replies. "The paramedic had to intubate you and then perform CPR to kickstart your heart after it stopped beating. They have a machine or something that she used too to shock your

heart back into a viable rhythm. The doctor says it's because your body went into shock from the pain or something. I don't really understand all of the medical jargon he used, though. You've had surgery on both legs and your shoulder, plus they debrided the road rash to get all the dirt and rocks that were in the ditch. I need to let your nurse know you're awake, honey."

She reaches over me with a trembling hand and pushes a button. When a disconnected voice answers she says, "He's awake."

"We'll be right in, I'll call his doctor," the nurse replies.

"Thirsty," I mutter, my voice barely above a whisper. Any louder and the shards get worse. Since everything hurts, including the hair on my head, I don't want to add to my pain level. I know they have some chart they use to evaluate how much agony I'm in and right now, I think it needs to be redone, because I feel like I went a few rounds with a pissed-off bear or something.

"You can have a few ice chips," she says, her voice soothing my tattered soul. She gently places a couple of them at my lips and as the icy goodness coats my mouth and slides down my aching throat, I sigh in relief.

"The girls didn't see me like this, did they?" I ask. The last thing I wanna do is scare my sweet girls; they may not have been created by me, but they're mine, through and through.

"No, honey, they didn't. While Pappy waited for the cops and ambulance to arrive on scene, he called Grammy, told her what happened, and that he'd get me to the hospital once you were loaded up and on the way. The girls don't know anything just yet," she states.

"Thank God," I murmur just as my hospital room door opens and two men in white

coats enter, along with a nurse who's holding several bags of fluid. Truthfully, I hope that one of those bags has something for the unrelenting pain that's thrumming through my damaged body.

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Chapter Three

Holly

My eyes fill with tears as I remember Pappy walking quickly into the house with downcast eyes. I had been diligently working to get the tax documents to my clients so that Rebel and I could enjoy a little adult time. Okay, a lot of adult time, since life had been so crazy lately that our intimate forays were put on the backburner.

As it all comes back to me with crystal clarity, I get lost in the memory of finding out the man I love more than life itself had his life hanging on the scales.

“Pappy? What’s wrong? Is it Grammy? The girls?” I ask in succession, quickly standing and going to where my shoes sit on the mat that’s just inside the door. I wasn’t sure what had happened, but with the way he was avoiding looking at me, I knew it had to be tragic.

“It’s Rebel,” he whispers. I look closer at him and realize he’s covered in blood.

“Pappy?” My mind is racing feverishly as I scan him from the top of his head to the bottom of his boots all while trying not to collapse at his feet. His chest, arms, hands, and the front of his jeans are soaked crimson red. My pappy, the man who’s been a constant in my life for as long as I can remember, is drenched in my man’s life force.

God, please, tell me he’s okay, my mind screams.

“Holly... there’s no other way to tell you this, but someone hit him when he was

pulling into the driveway. He's on his way to the hospital, and I need to get you there," he says. I find myself engulfed in his arms, and I don't give that first fuck that I'm now covered in Rebel's blood as well. I need this connection to my grandfather and from the look on his face, he needs it as well.

"Then let's go," I decree, pulling back to grab my purse and coat. I can put it on once I'm situated in his truck, but I don't wanna wait to put it on.

I jerk out of my memories and look at the doctors as they introduce themselves to Rebel and begin to detail his injuries. I should probably take notes or something so there's no confusion later down the road when it comes to all of his injuries and diagnoses, because I know he's still pretty drugged up from his extensive surgery, but I need to be touching him to assure myself he's alive. If they weren't either bandaged or covered with IVs and those plastic bracelets the hospital puts on their patients, I'd hold his hand, but right now, it's out of the question.

The waiting room is full of his club brothers clamoring for me to come and update them, but until now, I haven't had anything to tell them. We're all in the same boat, praying that whatever damage he's sustained won't be detrimental to his future.

"All of this information I'm about to share with you can be found on the patient portal," the first surgeon kindly says when I look at him in confusion. "I know it's a lot to take in right now, but I must say, Mr. Sherman, you're fortunate to still be alive."

Rebel's eyes meet mine and then he turns back to the doctor and says, "I know. Thank you both, as well as whoever helped keep me on this side of the grass."

Despite the seriousness of the situation, I giggle then say, "That's something Pappy says all the time."

Rebel's lips quirk in the smile I've grown to love as he replies, "Sounds like Paul."

Squeezing his shoulder, I look at both the doctors and ask, "Can his club brothers come in and see him? They won't stay long, but they need to put their eyes on him for themselves. Simply going out there and telling them won't be good enough."

The doctors look at each other and nod before the taller one looks at the nurse and states, "Go inform the bikers who are in the waiting room that they can come in for ten minutes. Mr. Sherman needs his rest, but I know it's important for family members to see for themselves." When she goes to protest since we're in ICU and there are limitations on visitors, he holds up his hand and says, "We're bending the rules. We only have one other patient up here and I don't foresee them breaking into a party atmosphere."

"Fine, I'll go get them," the nurse huffs out, tossing a glare over her shoulder as she walks out the door.

"We'll wait to see if they have any questions for us," Doctor Number Two says.

I really should focus better to get their names, especially since they're embroidered onto their coats, but my mind is ping-ponging all over the place and I can't think straight. The door opens and I watch as Rebel's MC brothers quietly walk in. Well, as quietly as a bunch of hulking, muscular men can move when they're wearing motorcycle boots.

Ash, his VP, walks over next to me and leans in then says, "We're checking into it, Rebel. Paul already gave Data the feed from his cameras." Rebel nods but doesn't say anything, probably because the doctors are still in attendance.

"Does anyone have questions for us?" Tall Doctor asks, looking around the room.

“How long will he have to be here?” Ash questions. “And what kind of accommodations do y’all think he’s gonna need for home when he’s discharged?”

“We’d like to keep him for about a week for observation and to ensure no infection shows up and hinders his recovery. Plus, there’s a slight risk for blood clots to form because of where the breaks in his legs were as well. We do have him on IV antibiotics as a precaution, of course, but if something shows signs of becoming infected, we’ll culture that area to make sure we’re giving him the correct medications,” Doctor Number Two replies.

“As far as accommodations, he’ll likely go to rehab for a few weeks after he’s released while he undergoes physical and occupational therapy to strengthen his muscles and stabilize his ambulation so he can single-handedly support himself where his legs were fractured. He’ll still have the casts to protect his bones as they and his tissue heals, but they’ll teach him how to properly use a wheelchair, make sure wherever he lives has certain items to assist him with his independence as well as safety, and develop an at-home plan. We’re also going to have home health care, physical therapy, and occupational therapy added to his orders once he’s released from rehab.

“Holly, your house has wider doorways than the clubhouse,” Ash states.

“And we can add a temporary ramp to your front and back porches so he can get in and out of the house for a change of scenery, since he’ll probably only leave the premises while he’s healing when he has doctor appointments to follow-up on shit,” Data adds.

“Sounds like you’ve got a good support team in place, Mr. Sherman,” Tall Doctor says.

What impresses me the most is neither of the physicians are showing any signs of

discomfort with being surrounded by a group of bikers, nor are they treating them in a condescending manner. I ask, “Is the nurse who just left the only one on staff up here?” When Doctor Two raises his brow at me in confusion, I continue. “I don’t like how she treated Rebel’s brothers a few minutes ago and her hesitancy in bringing them to the room, so I don’t want her taking care of my old man. He needs people who don’t care who he is or the fact that he wears a patch on his back, they just want him to get better.”

“We can arrange that for you,” Doctor Number Two states as he looks down at his tablet and makes a note. “Consider it done. If there’s nothing else, we’ll leave you to visit but remember, ten minutes. Holly, we’ll get a recliner in here that’s more comfortable than the chair since I don’t expect you’ll want to go anywhere.”

I grin then reply, “Nope. My grandfather is bringing me a bag in a little bit so I can get cleaned up.”

Once the doctors leave, the rest of the brothers crowd around. Ash looks at me and says, “Normally, you wouldn’t be involved in a church meeting, but I’m not gonna ask you to leave his side. However, you cannot repeat anything you hear, Holly. Do you understand?”

I briefly wonder if these men have a secret handbook on how to change the tone of their voice to one of sheer power and authority, because Ash normally doesn’t sound like he does right now. Instead, I nod then follow it up with actual words. “Not gonna say anything and I appreciate that you’re letting me stay.” Rebel gives me a proud grin. By now, he knows that my loyalties are to him and his brothers. The fact that I just reiterated that to the men he surrounds himself with is a prideful moment for him.

As if they could’ve really made me leave my man’s side. Pssh. Don’t they know I’m the granddaughter of a woman who taught me how to stand my ground?

“Prez, like I said, we’ve got the camera feed downloaded and Data’s going to sit down in his cave and go through the reels one minute at a time. Once he gets a lock on the vehicle that hit you, he’s gonna check the town’s CCTV cameras to see if he can pick up anything else, like the driver, the license plate, that sort of thing. We should hopefully have some information pretty quickly.”

My mind conjures up the thought that it’d be nice if he could track the vehicle through town and find out where the person lives. But since I’m not a member of the club, I keep my lips sealed and let them discuss things. After all, they have more experience with these situations than I do.

“Good,” Rebel rasps out, his throat still gravely from being intubated. “Not that I don’t already suspect the answer, but how’s my bike?”

“Fucking toast, Pres,” Red replies. He’s the club’s Road Captain if memory serves, and I think he also oversees the auto and bike repair shop the club owns. “The only thing salvageable was your gremlin bell, believe it or not.”

Rebel chuckles but the movement jostles him and he’s soon groaning in pain. “Shit, need to figure out if it can be transferred to another bike or not.”

“Well, it didn’t fail you per se, because nothing was mechanically wrong with your bike,” Red states. “So, you can move it to a new ride, or put it on your keychain and Holly can get you another one.”

“What’s a gremlin bell?” I ask, never having heard that term before. I mean, I saw something hanging from part of Rebel’s bike, but I didn’t think to question him as to what it meant.

“A gremlin bell is typically gifted to a biker from a friend or loved one, they don’t buy their own. It’s placed on the ride to protect the rider and bike against mechanical

issues. There's no special magic about it, exactly, it's more a superstition that many bikers adhere to, is all," Data explains. I grin because since he's taken the time to say hello to Rebel, he's had his face stuck in his ever-present laptop. Mine is sitting on the small table the nurse brought in for me to use so I could work whenever Rebel was asleep.

"What do you do with the old one?" I question. "Does it get moved to a new bike if the bike it's on is totaled?"

As horrified looks come my way from all the brothers, I briefly wonder why I opened my mouth. I guess my innate curiosity should've paused. I mean, I could've always done some research on it once they left. But I'm so exhausted at this point, I wasn't thinking.

Because right now, I feel like I could sleep for a week, and I know in my heart of hearts I need to get some rest. I'll be no good to Rebel or even the girls if I get worn down. Especially if I do so and end up getting sick since he's going to be prone to infection. I refuse to be separated right now, so I make a mental note to order myself a supplement that Grammy swears by. The woman rarely gets so much as a cold, which might have more to do with the fact that she cooks everything from scratch instead of using processed products, but with me eating hospital food, I need every advantage possible.

Prophet, the club's enforcer, clears his throat then says, "If the bike is totaled, you put it in a mason jar, then cover it with a quarter of a gallon of motorcycle oil, seal it up and put it on a shelf. Legend says the oil will continue to keep the gremlins away, while the one that was on the bike will get its peaceful resting place. Or, like Red said, you can move it to a new bike or put it on a keychain."

Hmm. I kind of like the mason jar idea. The girls and I will go buy him a new one for his new bike. "Well, it's better than what was running through my head." At

Prophet's raised brow, I say, "I thought you might have to bury it or something." When several of the brothers start chuckling, I shrug. "Listen, y'all, I'm still learning stuff."

"If a brother passes, it's usually buried with him, along with his cut if he belonged to a club," Prophet states.

This honestly doesn't surprise me at this point; bikers are some of the most superstitious people I've ever met. But I guess, at the end of the day, we all have those idiosyncrasies we abide by, so who am I to say anything? If they think it keeps them safe, I'm personally invested since I never want to see my old man like this again.

"You're doing good, sweetheart," Rebel rasps out, looking at me with a smirk on his face.

"Pres, we're gonna get out of your hair but me and Data will be back in the morning. Holly, if you need anything at all, you let us know," Ash says.

"I should be good, but thank you," I reply.

"Fox and I will be swapping out guarding your door, Pres," Prophet states. "Figured since we have no clue who did this to you, we needed to protect our president and his first lady."

A blush stains my cheeks at his words. I'm still adjusting to being part of their world, but all of the brothers have been kind as well as patient with my countless questions. In fact, I've developed a special bond with Psycho since he's their club treasurer, and I work with numbers every single day. I gave him a few programs to use which has made his life easier and in turn mine since I'm now doing the books for all of their businesses. No more chicken scratch receipts for me to decipher; now I get printed

spreadsheets and documents to input into the master workbook I have set up for each of the club's businesses.

"Appreciate it, brothers," Rebel rumbles. "I think my ol' lady needs to get some sleep and I'm about to push this button here to try and numb the pain a bit."

"Road rash is the worst," Prophet mumbles. "But tossing in some broken bones including a few ribs and I definitely understand. We'll get the bastard who did this, Pres," he promises.

"Y'all watch your backs," Rebel advises. "We don't know if this was directed solely at me, or the club as a whole."

"Already on it," Ash tells him. "Let's ride, brothers. Holly, we'll see you two in the morning, and we'll be bringing breakfast because I know hospital food sucks."

"You're my hero," I reply, grinning at him. "I think Pappy plans to bring some food up to me, but it's not like I have a mini-fridge or microwave I can store it in. Oh, and I guess I need to find out if you have any restrictions, Rebel. Because hospital food sucks."

"We have a refrigerator you're welcome to use," a new nurse says, coming into the room and hearing my last words. "Just put your name on it."

"Really?" My joy must be evident on my face because she grins and nods while making her way to Rebel's side.

"Okay, gentlemen, unfortunately, your time is up," she tells the brothers. None of them argue. Instead, both Rebel and I get chin lifts as they leave the room, Ash closing the door behind them. Once they're gone, she puts on a pair of gloves and says, "This won't be pleasant, Mr. Sherman. I have to change and clean the

dressings.”

“Call me Rebel,” my old man says. “I just hit the pump for the pain meds. Holly, maybe you should go wait outside or something.”

“Not leaving.” I give him a narrow-eyed look, daring him to argue with me. He simply chuckles and falls back on the bed, closing his eyes. Yeah. That’s what I thought.

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Chapter Four

Rebel

Despite the pain wracking my body, I smirk at my ol' lady. She's normally laid back and calm, so this feisty side is something to behold. While I have a huge blank spot after I passed out in the ambulance the last time, with what the doctors said, I've managed to fill in the blanks a little. I'm fucking lucky to be alive.

"I'm Tonya, by the way," the nurse says, her voice perkier than the last nurse who was full of condemnation. "I'll be your nurse through the night. You won't see Alison again."

Thank God. I thought Holly was gonna rip that woman's head off for how she treated my brothers and I'm even more grateful that she's my partner for this ride we call life. A smirk crosses my face when it dawns on me that Mina is just like her mama, while Ruby is a little bit hesitant. Granted, she's two years younger, so I suspect she'll grow into her sassiness and sense of right and wrong. Especially with Holly as her mother, and Esther as her great-grandmother. Those two women alone have the ability to move mountains on sheer will alone.

"That's good," Holly murmurs as she intently watches Tonya remove the largest bandage on my left arm. I can't help the hiss that passes my lips as the tape pulls at my skin, but when I see what's underneath, I moan then close my eyes.

How is it that I can handle pretty much anything, and have during my years as a biker, but seeing my arm look like a raw chicken breast, complete with a yellowish

gook that covers it has me wanting to puke my guts out?

“God, Rebel, that looks terrible,” Holly whispers, silent tears streaking down her face. She’s not directly over it, but it’s big enough that she can see it rather well from where she’s perched next to me. “And that’s with you having your riding leathers on?”

I nod, then wince because even that slight movement hurts like hell. “I imagine they’re toast as well,” I mutter once I can do so without screaming like some kind of pussy.

“It looked far worse when he arrived in the emergency room,” Tonya advises. At my look she grins and says, “We have initial pictures on your chart, so we know what to look for with respect to any infection trying to set in. While it does look bad to y’all, it’s already starting to heal a little. I do have to debride it, as well as the others, but I’m hoping your pain meds will kick in first before we begin that process. I will put some lidocaine on the areas I have to clean and dress to help numb them as much as possible.”

I close my eyes as Tonya sets to work, the conversation between the two women flowing around me as I mentally go over the events of the accident. I remember seeing a vehicle behind me, but it was far enough away that even though I signaled because I always do, I really didn’t need to do so because the car wouldn’t have had to slow down when passing the driveway. The club really doesn’t have any enemies per se since we’re legit, although we’ve had a few skirmishes with low-level gangs wanting to come into our town and set up their meth labs and dealer corners. But what happened to me isn’t really their style. They’re more apt to shoot someone in the back then run into the darkness like a cockroach. Plus, the car I saw in my mirrors was more in tune with a family vehicle, not a gangbanger one. They tend to soup up their rides with fancy paint jobs, rims, and they’re usually jacked up with hydraulics as well. Definitely more flash than common sense as far as I’m concerned.

Still, it's been at least six months since the last time we saw them nosing around, and since then, Prophet and Fox have spread the word around town that the Steel Raiders will not tolerate drugs hitting our streets. It doesn't mean the counties surrounding us aren't experiencing issues, but ours isn't, since we shut that shit down.

"Fuck, that hurt," I yell out when Tonya hits a particularly sensitive area.

"Sorry, Rebel," she murmurs. "I was hoping the lidocaine would help dim some of the more painful parts."

"It must be because I haven't really felt anything until just then," I admit through clenched teeth.

"It's because I was working on the edge so there's no tunneling."

Do I want to know what tunneling is? I muse. No, no, I do not, because it sounds unpleasant as hell.

"What's tunneling?" Holly asks, speaking my thoughts even though I'd made up my mind that in this case ignorance is bliss. "Is it bad?"

Despite the electrical shocks still emanating from the area, I smirk. Leave it to my woman to pose the question I was too much of a pussy to ask. I'm not the kind of man who needs to know every little detail, especially when it comes to what happened to me. My brothers will investigate, my ol' lady will make sure she knows what's going on, and her grandmother will make sure we eat.

"It's when a wound forms passageways under the surface of the skin. Sometimes, they're short, others they're long and they can end up taking twists and turns. What I'm doing is cleaning out any dead tissue I find, as well as the exudate, which is the fluid that's excreted during wound healing. It's definitely not pretty to look at, but it

comes out during the inflammatory phase of healing due to the vasodilation of the blood vessels. Rebel's wounds were thoroughly cleaned and debrided during the surgery to repair his fractures, so the area is heavily irritated," Tonya explains as she continues working. "Just so you know, you had some of the best trauma surgeons working on you, including a visiting plastic surgeon who kept you from losing your leg."

Yep. I was right, that information could've stayed hidden from me. I'd like to remain in my bubble of ignorance and not know the finer details of what they're doing to me.

Pretty much everything she just said flew over my head, probably because of the pain meds coursing through my IV, but Holly just nods. It takes everything in my power to not let my gag reflex kick in. I have a reputation to maintain and my woman knowing that I'm skittish when it comes to my injuries, that'd ruin my badassery.

"So, it's a good thing even though it kind of looks like chicken fat," she says. "Is that what you call exudate?"

Medical terms are flying around my brain so fast, I have no hope in hell of keeping up at this point. I just know I'm fucked up from my head to my toes and gonna be recovering for some time, which sucks. How am I supposed to marry Holly in February if I can't even walk on my own two feet?

Tonya laughs and nods. "Pretty much. Honestly, if they had been deeper, the doctor would've probably used a wound vac to help close them up."

"Okay, now that sounds like a painful process," I mutter, wondering why my pain medication has failed me. Why I'm not passed the fuck out is beyond my comprehension. It's like the abyss is taunting me at this point.

"Truly, it's not too bad," Tonya admits. "I had to have one after I had a C-section

with my youngest. A hematoma developed and I went in for emergency surgery to evict it. It helps heal the wound from the inside out by using negative pressure and keeps it in as close to a sterile environment as possible while doing so.” Still don’t want one which means I need to take every piece of advice they give and follow it to a T.

“How old’s your baby?” Holly questions.

“She’s three now and a holy terror,” Tonya says, giggling.

Holly glances at me then says, “I’ve got two little girls, the youngest, Ruby, is that age, so I can confirm your statement.”

Despite the pain that wracks my body, I can’t help the laugh that bursts free. Because Ruby is a spitfire. She might be a little hesitant at times, but she definitely gives Holly a run for her money.

“Ooow,” I moan. “This is gonna suck.”

“I’d say in about a week or so, the pain will lessen,” Tonya states. “As long as you don’t decide to go off script, Mr. Sher... I mean, Rebel.”

Smirking, I ask, “What’s off script?”

“Oh, you know, developing blood clots, an infection, or even a hematoma at the surgical sites,” she says, moving to the next bandaged area.

“I’ll do my best,” I promise. The last thing I want is to have one of those vac things attached to me sucking my soul from my body.

“That’s all we can ask for,” Tonya replies.

It takes another thirty minutes for her to clean each of the wounds and by the time she's done, she's upped my pain meds slightly after consulting with the doctor, which has me drowsy as fuck.

"Get some rest, Rebel," Tonya says as she throws away the used medical supplies. "Holly, they're bringing in a recliner that'll be far more comfortable for you to sleep in. It's not our normal procedure, but the doctors have made it clear that you're okay to stay with him since he's so heavily medicated. That way, if you notice something's off, you can come and get one of us. Not that we won't be watching the monitors from the desk, but I'm a firm believer that sometimes, family will see something wrong before the machines alert us. Right now, we only have one other patient up here, but that can change on a dime."

"I'll make sure he rests," Holly promises, giving me her best motherly look that brokers no argument. My mind secretly likes this role play thing we've got going on but with the amount of pain I'm in, we'll have to pick up those roles when I get home and can enjoy the moment.

"And of course, you're welcome to use his bathroom since he's got a catheter right now." My nose wrinkles when she says that so nonchalantly. Can't a man keep his pride intact without it being announced that I have a tube in my dick?

"Fuck," I drawl out. At least that explains why my dick hurts so fucking bad! I still would've liked it if it hadn't been revealed so casually to the woman I plan on spending the rest of my life with. Looks like me and nurse Tonya need to have a discussion about secrecy. Not that Holly wouldn't have figured it out at some point, but sheesh, I'd rather it have been a discovery than for my dick to be the center of attention. At least like this, anyway. I mean, if we were at home in bed, I'd want him to be the main attraction. But right here and now? Not so much.

Holly snickers then says, "He's probably a fall risk right now anyhow with two legs

encased in bandages.”

That raises one question and I ask, “Why don’t I have casts?”

Tonya’s face turns serious as she replies, “It’s so we can keep an eye out for any swelling that might indicate blood clots are starting to form. The surgeons are putting you on heparin to hopefully avoid that happening, but we still use visual cues since your pain levels are so high.” At my quizzical look, she says, “When blood clots form, they’re typically very painful. Because you have so many fractures that had to be surgically repaired, as well as major road rash, you’re already in pain, which would make it next to impossible for you to differentiate whether or not it changes.”

“Okay, makes sense. Sweetheart, give me a kiss before I completely conk out.”

I can hear their laughter as the room begins to fade and I briefly wonder what they’re giving me for pain, because it’s fucking awesome.

I wake up and see Holly sleeping in the recliner. She looks so uncomfortable; I softly call out her name.

“Are you okay?” she asks, practically falling as she gets tangled up in the blanket they brought her.

“Babe, crawl in with me,” I say, patting the side of the bed where the injuries aren’t as bad. Fuck that, I need her next to me right now. She soothes something deep inside and if I have to, I’ll pull the wounded patient card.

“Rebel, I can’t, what if I hurt you worse?” she asks, her hands placed securely on her hips.

“You can’t hurt me any more than I’m already hurting, sweetheart,” I state. “Now,

get in here so you get some real rest. Otherwise, I'll insist you go home."

She gives me an exasperated look before lowering the side bar, crawling in then pulling it back up. She then curls on her side so she's able to look at me. "Is this okay?" she whispers, her hand on my chest.

"Perfect," I murmur. "Now sleep, Holly."

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Chapter Five

Samuel

“God, I hate having to come here,” I grumble to myself as I pull into the driveway of my former home that I shared with my wretched ex-wife.

While I’m still on the deed for both the land and the house built on it and have every right to be here, the last thing I want to do is run into Myra. The thought of such an encounter makes my skin crawl. She’s definitely not the woman I met and fell in love with all those years ago, and it breaks my heart to see how far she’s fallen. Because she managed to ruin our son, God rest his soul. Although... finding out how he was treating Holly and by proxy, my sweet granddaughters, has me realizing he wasn’t the man I thought I raised. He had no honor in his soul and his heart was blacker than tar.

I blow out a sigh of relief when I don’t see her car parked in the driveway. I just have the last of my tools in the garage to grab, then I never have to return since we’re going to be selling the house then splitting the proceeds. At least that’ll help me start my new life. I honestly didn’t think I’d find myself single at my age, but better that than the alternative of being married to a vicious, mean-spirited shrew.

I hit the garage door opener and am momentarily stunned when I see a vehicle, covered by a tarp, sitting inside.

Mumbling to myself, I say, “That’s strange, we’ve never used a tarp before.”

Shaking my head, I back in and park my truck, shut it off, then head into the garage to grab my tools and several totes. I'm not sure what to do with the garage door opener since I won't be needing it again after today, then figure that I'll just give it to the realtor for the new owners.

It doesn't take me long to get my stuff sorted and loaded into the truck so once I'm done, I decide to appease my curiosity and see what's resting under the tarp. When I lift it, I see the car that Myra normally drives, only it's got some major front-end damage. It looks almost as if she had a run in with a wild animal, but I haven't seen any strays in the area recently.

What on earth did she hit? my mind whispers. I don't see any fur that would indicate she struck a deer, and the damage is a little too low for that, there's a huge dent in the fender going onto the hood, the headlight area is broken with pieces missing, and there's paint transfer as well. Shrugging, I replace the tarp and head to my truck, grateful I didn't see her. She's probably using the second car we owned, which reminds me that one of the cars needs to be sold. Although, her personal car would be better off sold to a scrap yard for parts. It won't give us much income to split, but it'd be one less thing I have to deal with when it comes to the insurance company. I've got my truck and it's a dually, so I've got the space inside for my granddaughters.

I hit the garage door opener for the last time to close it, then toss it into the glovebox, since I have one for my new place and don't want to confuse the two since their casings are similar. I'll put it and the house keys in an envelope for the realtor and drop them off since the house is up for sale already.

My stomach growls as I head to my new house, so I decide to detour to the diner to ease the rumbling. I'm not much of a cook, so I've been eating there rather frequently. At least for dinner, but I can always grab a meal to go and reheat it later this evening.

“Grandpa!” Turning, I see Paul sitting with Mina and Ruby and head to their table, my smile so wide I feel like my face will split in two.

While I haven’t seen the girls as much as I’d like, I decide to change that fact, especially when I see how excited they are to see me.

“Hey, my sweet girls, how are you?” I ask, scooting into the booth where they’re both sitting.

There’s something about a grandchild’s hugs and kisses that humbles a man, that’s for sure. Once they’ve both had their turn and I promise to come over and see them soon, I look over and see the expression on Paul’s face.

“Paul, you okay?”

He looks like he’s aged ten years and it was only a few weeks back since I last saw him at a card game we were both at; neither of us won, but we had a good time shooting the shit and drinking a few beers.

He sighs then says, “Been a few weeks since I saw you last, Samuel.”

The tremble in his tone has my head canting to the side with curiosity. I can tell he’s trying to hold it together for the girls’ sake, but we’re both their grandfathers and need to present a united front whenever possible. “Yeah, it has. What’s going on, old friend?”

Because despite Myra’s shrewish behavior toward both Esther and Paul, I developed a structural friendship with them both. The three of us have the same goal; protect Holly, Rebel, and the girls as much as we can. At first our friendship was founded due to our love and commitment to Mina and Ruby’s welfare, as well as Holly’s, but then it was because I genuinely enjoyed their company and being with both of them.

“Daddy had an axdent,” Ruby states. “Pappy and Grammy sad.”

“Mama’s sad too,” Mina chimes in, before picking up her cup of milk and taking a drink.

“Rebel?” I ask Paul, needing clarification. At his nod, I add, “When did this happen?”

“About two weeks or so ago,” he replies. “Someone hit him from behind as he was angling to pull into the driveway.”

My mind immediately flashes to what I saw under the tarp, and I know my face pales by several shades. Surely Myra wouldn’t hit Rebel, would she?

“Is he okay?” I question, my body shaking as I anticipate his answer. I know he might have to censor some of what he’s gonna tell me because of the girls, but I need to know if my suspicions are correct.

“No, he’s not. He’s got a long road ahead of him since both legs were broken and he’s covered in road rash. Both of them do, actually since Holly’s been staying with him. But they just moved him to rehab, and they won’t let her stay at the facility with him overnight, so she’ll be coming home tonight to be with the girls. Esther and I’ve been taking care of the girls for her while she oversees Rebel’s medical care.”

I glance at the girls, then pull out my phone and send Paul a text, not wanting either Mina or Ruby to hear what I’m about to tell him.

Out loud, I ask, “Which rehab center?” Then I send him a message.

Me: I think I may know who hit him.

I watch the bubbles as Paul glances at me while he says, “Sunnyside Rehab. It’s got

assisted living there too, but they've got a top-notch physical therapy program."

Paul: Who?

Me: Myra. Went to the house to get the rest of my stuff and found her car in the garage covered with a tarp. It's got a bunch of front-end damage.

"We need to let Rebel know," Paul states, his voice quiet so the girls don't pick up on the tension.

"I'll head over there. I may or may not have pictures of the damage."

Right now, I'm glad I thought of taking them as a precautionary measure. But, after seeing what was underneath the tarp, I chose to pull out my phone, take a video of the car, then quite a few still shots. Maybe it was instinct, I don't know, but if Myra ends up being involved in this heinous act, I'll have the proof they need to nail her to the wall. Once again, my heart drops thinking about how much she's changed over the years. It's almost as if she's a completely different person these days. She was always a bit high strung, but over the years, that slowly morphed into a controlling persona which got even worse when Devin died.

"Good, I'm sure the police will want to see them as well," he replies. "Girls, your mama is coming home tonight."

"I've missed her and Daddy," Mina says, her lips quivering.

Leaning over, I pull her into my side and kiss the top of her head. "He's in the best place he can be so he can get better, and I know your mama misses you both very much, but he needs her right now."

I can't explain the pride that wells inside me when I see that Holly is prioritizing her

relationship with Rebel. While I wish my son had been that man for her, I'm so happy she's found her forever in him. I'm sure there are those people out there who would think she should put her children first, and for the most part, she does, but right now, Rebel needs her.

"We got to see Daddy today," Ruby says.

"He's in rehab," Mina adds, nodding her head wisely. "Mama says he gets to come home soon, though."

"I'm sure you're being good girls for your grammy and pappy," I reply.

Both girls nod, still eating their food. I've lost my appetite which is good seeing as I didn't order anything except for coffee when the waitress came over to the table right after I sat down. Still, that's sitting in my stomach churning violently and I have to swallow back the bile that's threatening to rise and expel across the table.

"We are!" Ruby exclaims, clapping her hands.

"Grammy says we can color some pictures today to give to Mama for his room," Mina adds.

Paul, seeing the girls are finished, asks, "Are you two ready to head home? I'm sure Grammy would love some help making dinner for when your mama gets there later on."

I toss down enough money to take care of the bill that the waitress left, ignoring Paul's quiet huff, then help him get the girls' coats on, before I walk out with them. After hugging and kissing both girls, I get Mina in her car seat while he buckles Ruby into hers, then tap both of their noses before closing the door.

“Paul, I’ll keep y’all posted,” I promise.

“Good. I hate to think that she’d do something like that, but after the hell she put Holly through, nothing would surprise me at this point.”

I nod because I agree. She virtually kicked her own granddaughters out of the only home they’d ever lived in when our son died, then went after Holly for money for so-called ‘renovations’ even though there really wasn’t anything wrong with the house outside of normal wear and tear. Holly, who is an absolute sweetheart, wouldn’t let me pay it for her, nor would she let her grandparents take care of it.

Instead, she got a part-time job at the bar the club owns, which is how she ended up meeting Rebel.

As I walk to my truck, I murmur, “At the end of the day, that was the best thing Holly could’ve ever done. She’s got a good man in her corner, one who loves her with every breath in his body, and he loves those girls like they’re his own.”

What more can I honestly ask for? Once in my truck, I start it up then input the rehab center’s address into my GPS, since I’m not familiar with where it’s located.

“Time to let the chips fall where they may.”

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Chapter Six

Holly

“Oh, hello, I’m your aide, Tina,” the woman says as she walks into Rebel’s room and turns to talk to him. “Today’s your day to get a shower. We give them three times a week,” Tina announces as she sets a stack of fresh towels on the counter that’s against the wall.

Thankfully, Rebel has a private room here, but it’s not very big so every square inch is utilized with medical equipment, chairs, and a cabinet, as well as a bedside commode, a wheelchair for when they take him to physical and occupational therapy, and a wardrobe of sorts.

Not that he’s really wearing clothes, per se. Both legs are now in casts; the left leg cast stops in the middle of his thigh, while the right one stops below the knee and is actually more of a walking boot style since he can bend his knee on that leg. Granted, both of them are covered in signatures, some of the words and illustrations are cruder than others thanks to his brothers, but before those heathens got a hold of a sharpie, Mina and Ruby drew some pictures. So, my badass biker has hearts and flowers on one leg, and not-safe-for-work designs on the other. He keeps that one covered whenever Pappy and Grammy bring the girls to visit though since they’re way too young to discuss what a penis is.

“I’ll be helping him with that,” I advise Tina, giving her a scowl. I brought his shower wash, shampoo and conditioner, and other personal hygiene products from home already, along with a bathing suit for myself so I could step into the stall and

help him in the shower.

God bless the man; he hasn't had one since the morning of the accident. I mean, the hospital used wipes and what-not to freshen him up, but his hair still has dried blood in it, and anywhere they used the cleansing clothes has an orange tinge. Now that his road rash has scabbed over, his doctor has given him the nod to get a shower.

"Oh, that goes against our policies," Tina replies. Since I can see the mercurial gleam in her eyes as she gazes at my man, I know I need to shut that shit down now before she gets the notion that he lives by the idealisms you find in a biker book. My man is not a cheater and if he did have a side piece, it'd be a Glock not a woman.

"We'll see about that, Tina, was it?" I ask, pulling out my phone. I pull up the doctor's personal number, which I insisted on getting 'just in case' and hit the button, then put it on speaker. When he answers, I say, "Hello, Dr. Brown, this is Holly, how are you today?"

"I'm doing well, how is Rebel?" he questions. "I know he was moved to rehab today, is he settling in okay? I'll be out tomorrow to see him after I do rounds at the hospital."

"He's doing well, but I have a question for you," I tell him. "An aide is here wanting to give him a shower and she's told me I'm not allowed to assist him with this task."

A low chuckle comes through the phone's speaker before he says, "I'm not sure which aide is there, but I'll be sure to put in his orders that you will handle those tasks for him. Is she listening now?"

I glance at Tina to see she's glaring at me and smirk. "She is, sir. Anything in particular I need to watch out for?"

“They’ll wrap both casts and the PICC line to prevent any water getting in, but just remember, the casts are waterproof if you do manage to get them slightly wet. We don’t recommend it, because it’ll irritate the skin, but if it happens it’s not a big deal. The PICC line, however, needs to stay as dry as possible. Just be careful washing around the scabbed areas. We want them to fall off naturally to prevent any secondary infections from showing up. Outside of that, I’m sure he’s going to enjoy feeling clean after all these weeks.”

“Absofuckinlutely,” Rebel growls out. “And just for the record, I don’t want anyone besides Holly touching me so intimately.”

“Noted, Rebel,” Dr. Brown says, chuckling. “Now, which aide is there with you?”

“Tina, Dr. Brown,” I reply.

“Tina, please wrap Rebel’s casts thoroughly, then let Holly bathe him. That’ll allow you to make sure his bedding is changed while his fiancée helps him get the grime off his body.”

“But he just got here this morning,” Tina says, protesting. “His bedding is clean.”

“Would you want to get back into a bed once you were freshly clean that you’d been in all day after not showering for two weeks?” Dr. Brown asks. “Change his bedding.”

“Yes, sir,” Tina grumbles, stomping out of the room.

I can’t help the giggle that escapes but say, “Thanks, Dr. Brown.”

“Anything else?” he questions.

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Enjoy your shower, Rebel.”

“Babe, I need to take a piss,” Rebel says once we’re in the bathroom. His legs have been wrapped in some plastic stuff, as has his PICC line. While he has a bedside commode as well as a plastic urinal, I know he just wants to feel normal in some way. Since the bathroom has bars around the toilet itself, I push the wheelchair so he’s facing it, lock the brakes and make sure he’s able to hold himself up.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” I warn. “I’ll get ready and be right back in, okay?”

He grins at me and despite the dark bruises under his eyes, the scabbed areas from the road rash that cover his arms, shoulders, chest and back, he’s still the most handsome man I’ve ever seen.

“I’ll behave, sweetheart. Don’t have the energy to do too much else,” he teases.

“More’s the pity,” I reply, winking at him before I leave the bathroom to slip into my bathing suit. Grabbing his personal hygiene bag, I knock and ask, “You good for me to come back in?” When I hear the toilet flush, I step inside to see him sitting back in the wheelchair naked.

Quickly setting the things he’s going to need in the shower on the ledges that are built in, I then release the wheelchair brakes and turn him around so he’s facing the shower itself. It’s actually quite ingenious and made to hold a plastic wheelchair if needed, but right now, it has a sturdy shower bench along with a wedge kind of thing to prop up his left leg since it doesn’t currently bend.

“Alright, how are we gonna do this?” I ask.

“Put me sideways, then we’ll drop the arm of the wheelchair on this side. I can use my upper body strength to slide over, just stay behind me and help,” he says.

It takes a few minutes, but finally, we have him on the shower bench and the water is warming up while I peruse his body. Tears well up in my eyes but I push them back as I gaze at each and every inch of his bruised and battered skin. That’s part of the reason why Pappy was covered in blood, because of all the areas of road rash, plus the compound fractures. I briefly wonder just how fast that damn car was going to cause so much physical damage to Rebel, because his riding leathers were in tatters. Some of that was because the paramedics had to cut them to get to the injured areas. When I realize that if he had been wearing just a T-shirt and jeans when he was hit the outcome would’ve been far different, I can’t help the guttural moan that escapes.

“Babe, you okay?” he questions, glancing back at me. When he sees my face, he reaches out a hand and grasps mine. “Sweetheart, I’m gonna be just fine, I promise.”

“I... I know,” I manage to stammer. “It just dawned on me that if you hadn’t had your leathers on, you probably would’ve been dead.” Or skinned like a rabbit, but I keep that thought to myself.

“But I’m not. We’re going to find out who the fuck did this and make them pay, I promise,” he replies, squeezing my hand. “Now, will you please wash my hair? I swear I can’t handle it any longer. It feels like a mop of grease.”

“Definitely,” I say, grinning. I take the hand-held shower and test the water to make sure the temperature isn’t too hot nor too cold then tell him, “Lean your head back and close your eyes.”

Right now, I’m grateful that we’ve taken a few showers together. Not many, because my shower at home isn’t exactly that big, but we managed to make it work. He groans as the warm water flows down his back while I use my hand to make sure his

hair is wet. Once I'm satisfied, I put the shower head where he can reach it and grab the shampoo. As I work it into a lather and finger it through his strands, he moans, which sends shivers of desire coursing through me.

Now's not the time, Holl, I remind myself. "Feel good, handsome?"

"You have no idea, babe," he replies. "I've missed having your hands on me like this."

So have I, I mentally say since I don't want him to feel guilty about something he wasn't responsible for whatsoever.

"Well, enjoy, Rebel, because I think I'm gonna wash it twice, toss some conditioner on the ends then wash around the scabbed areas," I say out loud. "I'll let you do the front, of course."

"You don't wanna touch my dick?" he teases. I glance down to see said appendage has woken up and is standing stiff against his abdomen, every thick, girthy inch and bite back a moan of my own.

"I don't think your aide, or your doctor would appreciate me giving you that kind of shower," I primly reply.

"Spoilsport," he says, mock pouting.

"There's nothing that says you can't do it, though."

It would at least give me something for my spank bank, right? Naughty girl, my brain whispers.

"This is true," he muses, smirking at me. The rat knows what I'm thinking, I just

know he does, especially when he grabs the washcloth, squirts some of his body wash on it, then slowly starts washing his chest, moving downward.

And... now I'm wet in a way that has nothing to do with this damn shower! Ugh. I shake my head and focus on what I was doing, grabbing the shower head and rinsing out the suds before I lather up more shampoo and do it again.

Meanwhile, Rebel is giving me a show, slowly stroking his dick and I wonder if I can orgasm without him even touching me. It's something to ponder, especially as my nipples grow taut and my breasts get heavy. "Rebel," I moan, my voice low.

"Come closer, sweetheart," he whispers.

I move to the side and his hand slips up my thigh until he's able to access my pussy. "I think someone's missed me," he says, his voice still low and husky even though I don't think anyone could hear us over the pounding water.

As I grip his shoulders to hold on, he starts his sensuous assault on me while he continues to stroke himself. I watch as precum oozes from the tip, my mouth salivating as I remember his zingy taste. "God, handsome, I'm so close already."

"Same, sweetheart," he replies, his voice sinking to a deeper octave.

I don't know if it's because we've been denied this for several weeks now, or not, but when I feel my pussy pulsing, I lean down and nip his ear lobe while calling out his name in a whisper-shout just as cum spurts across his abdomen and chest and he hisses out my name.

"God, I needed that," I manage to finally say once I can stand upright again.

"Same, Holly, same," he pants out. He proceeds to clean his chest and privates while

I start the arduous task of washing around all the road rash.

Once I've rinsed his hair for the last time, getting out the conditioner, I say, "Your hair's gotten long, but I kind of like it."

"Yeah, it has," he agrees with a bob of his head. "They have a salon here, believe it or not so I might take advantage of that service and get it cut."

My eyes widen at his words. "Can you wait? I mean, until you're home, because I'm liking it right now. But if it bothers you too much, by all means, cut it."

He's had so many decisions taken away from him, I don't want to add to that list. "I'll leave it for now, Holly. Kinda wondering how it'll feel when I'm eating out your pussy and you're pulling on it to be honest."

"Rebel!" I exclaim. "You're killing me here."

He snickers as I rinse all the soap from his body. "Trust me, this has been hell for me too."

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Chapter Seven

Rebel

Holly has no fucking clue how good I feel right now. The shower was just what I needed, of course, but being able to stand even though I had to hold myself up using those fucking handicap bars, and take a piss? That was just as freeing to me. I know I've got a long road to recover but it hasn't escaped my knowledge that I probably should've died. So, no matter what struggles I face as I move forward and progress, I'll do it with my head held high. If Paul hadn't come along when he did, I likely would have met the reaper. I owe him for my life right now, and I always pay my debts. I just don't know how I'll do that when push comes to shove.

Freshly clean in a new pair of boxer briefs and basketball shorts, my teeth brushed, and my hair combed, I'm now ensconced in my bed, Holly tucked into my side. I'm sure the aide will have something to say about that, but she can fuck right the hell off. This woman has been with me every step of the way, showing me a strength of character that I suspected she's always had, but having now witnessed it firsthand? I'm beyond impressed.

Considering I never thought I'd have an ol' lady, I'm feeling decidedly blessed and grateful right now. A light knock at the door has me glancing down to see her sleeping against me so soundly that I quietly call out, "Come in."

When Samuel walks in, I'm shocked. He comes around frequently to see the girls and Holly, but right now, he looks as though he's got the weight of the world sitting on his shoulders. He goes to say something, then sees Holly sleeping so instead, he grabs

a fuzzy throw that's spread out at the end of my bed and covers her up, then he picks up a chair and brings it to 'my' side of the bed.

"I ran into Paul and the girls at the diner, and they told me about your accident," he says, his voice low in order not to disturb Holly.

"Yeah, but I'm on the road to recovery, thank goodness," I reply. Harrumphing, I say, "The hardest part is these fucking casts. They make me so damn dependent on everyone, especially Holly."

"She looks tired," he remarks, his gaze roaming her face.

She's lost weight that she really couldn't afford to lose, and even with makeup, I can see the dark circles under her eyes. She's been burning the candle at both ends; staying with me at the hospital, helping to take care of me, working on her laptop constantly, and then, spending time with the girls whenever she can.

"She is, but since I'm here now, she'll go home because they won't let her stay overnight," I admit. Part of me is sad because I've grown accustomed to her sleeping next to me, but the other part knows she'll sleep better when she can stretch out.

"I uh, I think I may know who caused your accident," Samuel says.

I feel Holly lightly flinch and realize she's now awake, even though she's feigning sleep. Squeezing her gently, I ask him, "What do you mean?"

"I went out to the house to get the last of my things that were out in the garage," he replies. "When I opened the garage door, I saw a car covered up with a tarp, which isn't something we've ever done before. After I had the truck loaded, I took it off and found Myra's car. Rebel, it's got some massive front-end damage. I snapped some pictures plus took a video of it."

He pulls his phone out and cues up the video then hands it to me. I can feel Holly shaking now and realize her eyes are open as she watches with me. Once it's done, I flip through the pictures then stop on one and zoom in. "That looks like... that looks like a piece from your leathers," Holly whispers, sounding horrified.

"Fuck me," I growl out. "What did I ever do to her to cause her to do this to me?" Nothing. That's what. The vindictive bitch is going to face a jury of my brothers unless the cops get her first. Still, we'll enact our own brand of justice. It might take some time, but she'll get hers... eventually.

"I don't know, Rebel, but I'm heading to the police station and will turn it over to whoever's handling your investigation. Do you have a name?" Samuel asks.

"I do," Holly replies, maneuvering herself out of the bed. She pulls her wallet out of her purse then fishes out a rectangular business card with a shield logo on it and hands it to Samuel. "The case number is on the back, can you just take a picture of it so I can have the card back?"

"Definitely," Samuel says. He takes the pictures then hands it back.

"Let me forward that shit to Data," I demand, holding out my hand for his phone. "And you should probably call your insurance company and file a claim, Samuel."

"Whatever you need me to do, Rebel," Samuel promises. "I'll get all the details from the cop and call it in so they can handle all of your medical bills and of course, any damage done to your bike due to her negligence."

"It was totaled," I tell him, my jaw grinding to hide my ire, so I don't inadvertently take it out on him. It's not his fault his ex-wife is a psycho.

"Myra's unhinged, Samuel," Holly adds. "I don't understand why she'd target Rebel

though.”

“Because you’re happy now,” Samuel replies. “Plus, since she pulled her shit, she hasn’t seen the girls.” I want to snort because that’s her fault, not Holly’s, not mine, and not the girls. She made her damn bed and now she has to lie in it.

“And she definitely won’t now that she’s done this,” I state. “I don’t want our girls exposed to her brand of crazy. Life is hard enough as it is right now.”

“I agree. Okay, I’ll head over to the police department and give them the evidence I captured on my phone so they can do what they need to with respect to the investigation and pressing charges, then call my insurance company and give them y’all’s information,” Samuel advises. “Holly, I’m sorry I woke you up.”

“It’s okay,” she says.

“No, it’s not. You’re exhausted and need your sleep,” Samuel states as he stands to leave. “As soon as I have a claim number from the insurance company, I’ll pass it along, but I suspect they’ll call you for your statement.”

I briefly wonder whether or not I should get the club attorney involved. There’s so much I don’t know when it comes to shit like this, premeditated or otherwise, it might not be a bad idea. I’ll ask Holly once Samuel leaves though. He leans in and kisses Holly’s forehead and reaches over to shake my hand once again.

After he leaves, I look at her and she says, “We need to talk to the club lawyer, Rebel. This is more than I know how to deal with, that’s for sure.”

“Do we share a brain cell or something?” I tease. “Because I was just thinking the same thing and was waiting for Samuel to leave so we could discuss it.”

“I mean, think about it, you have unforeseen expenses heading your way. You’ve spent two weeks at the hospital, had multiple surgeries, there was an ambulance ride, and now rehab. Plus, your bike, the therapies that will have to continue for some time through home healthcare, especially once your casts come off. I’m sure, too, that there’ll be medical supplies we’ll have to have on hand at the house even though you’ll have home health nurses. Oh, and the renovations to my house to make sure you’re able to maneuver around without any problems.”

“What renovations?”

“Pappy and your brothers are working with a contractor to redo my master bathroom,” she admits. “You’re not going to be able to step over the side of the bathtub, so they’re putting in a walk- in shower with a wide bench in the back, complete with handicap bars and a handheld shower.”

“Holly, no,” I drawl out.

“Too late, they’ve already hired a contractor to do the majority of the stuff, but they’ll handle the smaller details such as painting,” she replies. “They’re doing the ramps on the front and back porches, though, and because Pappy held out hope that the police would find out who was responsible, they’ve kept every receipt of the items they’ve purchased, plus a log of the time they’ve put in while doing everything so they can be reimbursed.”

Shaking my head, I grab my phone from the rolling tray that’s beside my bed. “Let me call the club attorney and see what he says we need to do, sweetheart.”

“Well, that was enlightening,” Holly says once Bruce Newman, the club's legal advisor, leaves. “I didn’t even think of the fact that you’d have to report it to your insurance company since it wasn’t your fault. But it makes sense because unless she has decent policy limits, your underinsured motorist coverage will come into play. It

might anyhow because of the depth of your injuries.”

“He’s a shark, that’s for sure,” I reply, exhaustion suddenly hitting me. Today’s the longest I’ve been awake, and it’s been quite busy. First with getting me moved from the hospital to rehab, then the shower, followed by Samuel’s impactful revelation. Ever since then, it’s been one phone call after another, plus the visit from Bruce. I’m having a hard time keeping the yawns held back.

“As much as I hate to do it, I have to leave, handsome,” Holly says, regret ringing in her tone.

“Go spend some time with Mina and Ruby. I’ll be perfectly fine right here, babe.” My eyelids grow heavier as the seconds pass by.

She leans in so our foreheads are touching and says, “I love you so fucking much, Rebel. You’re the one who completes my soul, and I can’t imagine my life without you in it.”

I feel emotion welling up at her words, something I don’t want to deal with, so I wrap my hand around the back of her neck and kiss her instead. As our tongues duel, I pour every ounce of what I’m feeling into the interaction until we pull apart, both of us breathless and panting.

“I love you too, Holly. This is just a speed bump on our journey.” She giggles which was my intent and gives me a quick peck on the lips.

“I’m grabbing your dirty clothes and will bring them back once I do some laundry. Is there anything else I can bring you?” she asks.

“Can’t think of a thing. Text me when you get home and let me know you got there without any issues. I’ll call you later this evening once the girls have gone to bed,

okay?" I query.

"That sounds good to me. Be prepared for their artwork to come with me tomorrow," she warns, grinning at me. "A little birdy told me they were going to be drawing with Grammy today. You'll probably have homemade cookies included too."

Before I can answer, another yawn bursts free. "Sorry, Holl."

"Nap, Rebel. Rest is just as important for your body to heal," she says. "I'll see you in the morning."

My sleep is so deep, I don't even wake up when they come in to hook up the IV antibiotics I'm still getting to ward off any potential infections.

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Chapter Eight

Holly

“Sweetheart, if you don’t start getting some rest, you’ll be no good to Rebel once he’s released from rehab,” Grammy says, chastising me as I help her clean the kitchen after dinner.

She’s already bathed both girls, who are in their pajamas, just waiting for Pappy to carry them over to our house so they can go to bed. “Grammy, I promise, once the girls are down, I’m only going to call Rebel really quick then I’m going to sleep myself.” Like the dead. I’ve never felt such an emotional toll as I have since Rebel’s accident.

The clients can wait since the only accounts I’ve got left to work on are the club businesses. I’m sure they’ll understand the delay seeing that Rebel’s their president. Psycho has already sent me the spreadsheets for each of the businesses so all I have to do is plug them into the software for payroll. He’ll print off the checks and he and Ash will sign them since they’re on the business bank accounts then distribute them to the employees. Each business now has its own checking account which has made life so much easier for all of us. Initially, it was a hot mess and I thought I’d never get it all sorted. Nowadays, it runs like a well-oiled machine. Even with this situation with Rebel, the brothers have been able to handle shit for the most part.

“Come on, Holly, let’s get these girls to bed,” Pappy says. My smile is tired looking, I’m sure, but seeing both girls curled into his strong arms makes me remember when I was a little girl, and he did the same thing for me. Cuddling with my pappy was the

highlight of my day. Wish things were still that simple and his arms could fix anything that'd gone awry in my day.

“Good night, Grammy. And if I haven't already said it, thank you for all of your help with the girls,” I say, leaning in and giving her a kiss and a hug.

“Child, there's nothing your pappy or I won't do to help y'all as long as we've got breath in our bodies,” she replies, patting my cheek. “Now, you get a good night's sleep, then bring the girls over for a hearty breakfast. What time are you planning to go over to the rehab facility?”

I stop and think then say, “He's got his therapies first thing in the morning, so I'll probably wait and go closer to lunch time.”

“Then I'll be sure to make plenty of food so you can take him some good home cooking,” she replies, solidifying her words with a hefty nod.

Both girls are lightly snoring before I get three pages of their latest book read. The bedtime story is a classic. It's one I remember as a little girl and I know they'll enjoy it once we get further into the story itself. Setting it on their bedside table that sits between their twin size beds, I lean over and kiss both of them, check their covers then turn out the lamp. On my way out the door, I click on their nightlight. They don't ask for it anymore, but it makes me feel better knowing they'll be able to see where they're going if they need to visit the restroom in the middle of the night.

Ever since Rebel's accident, they've insisted on sleeping in the same bed. Rather than argue with them, I'm rolling with it because I know they're scared. It's something that gives them solace, and as their mother, I'd do anything to help them sleep peacefully throughout the night. Even if it's a habit that we've broken over time.

Unfortunately, I can't divide myself in two, so if they can get comfort from each

other, I'll allow them to do so, and we'll worry about any repercussions once Rebel's home. I know they'll end up in my bed at some point, but at least there's plenty of room for all of us to spread out.

Yawning, I make my way around the house, checking to make sure all the doors and windows are locked before I double check the alarm. I grin because I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Rebel will ask me if I did it since he's not here to ensure it's done.

Since my bathroom's out of commission, I grab my pajama set and clean underwear then head into the other bathroom the girls use that's in the hall. Pulling up my hair into a knot on top of my head so it doesn't get wet, I make quick work of showering, then I brush my teeth, clean my face, then apply my nightly moisturizer before I head into my own bedroom.

"Ah, bed," I murmur as I set my alarm on my phone then toss it onto the mattress so I can call Rebel once I get nestled beneath the blanket. When it rings, I see it's from a local number so I answer it, thinking it may be someone calling from the front desk of the facility Rebel's at.

"You were supposed to be on that bike," Myra hisses. The venom in her tone has my back subconsciously going ramrod straight.

"What?" I ask, shaking my head to clear the sleepiness trying to pull me under.

"I thought you'd be on the bike with him," she states.

Confusion wraps around my brain, so I ask the only question that comes to mind, "Why?"

"Because you're the reason my boy is dead," she tells me, sounding so hateful.

“Where are you, Myra? The police know it was you,” I reply.

“That’s for me to know and y’all to find out,” she sing songs, her words are maniacal and have goosebumps erupting across my skin.

Jesus, she’s batshit crazy! Deciding to record the call, I hit the button on my phone, thankful that the last update gave me that option.

“So, because you think I’m responsible for Devin’s death, you decided to hit Rebel?”

“You were supposed to be on the bike with him!” she yells, repeating her earlier statement.

“No, I wasn’t. I was at home, working. Do you know you almost killed him?” The anger radiating from me has my body shivering in response. If she were in front of me, I’d wrap my fingers around her neck and squeeze the life from her. I’m that mad!

“Good, you don’t deserve to be happy.” Fuck. Her. She has no idea what monster she unleashed by trying to take away the one man that makes me and my girls feel happy.

“So, you’d willingly let your own granddaughters become orphans? What kind of sick person does that?” I question. “Myra, I’m hanging up now. Just know, your time’s coming.”

“As is yours,” she sneers before disconnecting the call.

Shudders wrack my body as her words replay in my head. I don’t know what to make of her last statement either, it almost feels like a threat or maybe even a prediction of sorts even though I know I’ll never be in a position to where she can get her hands on me, but now I’m worried that she’s going to make me her sole target since it appears that was her original plan to begin with, only she ended up hurting Rebel instead.

What if I have the girls with me when she decides to strike? Tears spring to my eyes as everything from the past two weeks crashes down on me and tries to swallow me whole. As the sobs pour out from my soul, I realize I can't call Rebel in this morose condition. There's nothing he can do, and I won't put this additional strain on his shoulders to carry. Pulling up our text thread, I decide to go that route tonight.

Me: Hey, handsome! I'm wiped out so figured I'd just text you tonight.

Rebel: Miss your voice, Holly.

Me: And I miss yours, but Grammy scolded me on how tired I look. I think she's expecting me to go right to bed.

Rebel: LOL. Did you lock up the house and set the alarm?

Me: Yes, sir.

Rebel: I like that, we'll explore that when I get home.

Me: No, we will not. I'm not calling you sir or daddy. That's just...ew...no. I don't mean to yuck on someone else's yum, but that does nothing for me at all Rebel.

Rebel: ROFLMAO. I love you, Holly. Get some sleep and I'll see you tomorrow. Don't forget, I've got my physical and occupational therapies first thing.

Me: I remember. I'll get there close to lunch time since Grammy's sending food for you.

Rebel: Thank God. If you saw what I had to choose from for breakfast, you'd probably be hauling your ass up here to bring me that too.

Me: That bad, huh?

Rebel: Put it this way, you and the brothers will be supplementing my food unless y'all want me to drop a lot of weight.

Me: Yeah, we'll make sure you've got food, handsome. Don't want you losing any of your physique. I mean, the hospital food wasn't too bad.

Rebel: The food here is toddler food, Holl. Not even lying.

Me: Don't forget, there are a lot of elderly people there on the assisted living side. I bet they base their menu on them and their appetites.

Rebel: Well, they need to revamp that shit.

Me: LOL. Go to sleep, handsome. Dream about me and I'll see you tomorrow. I'll be the one bearing food gifts.

Rebel: Don't forget the cookies and the pictures from the girls.

Me: Those are already packed.

Rebel: Good. Now, put your phone on the charger because you always forget and remember how much I love and adore you.

Me: Night, handsome.

Rebel: Night, beautiful.

"Where's the road?" I mutter, my eyes constantly veering to the rearview mirror where a car is bearing down on me. If I can just get to Pine Street, it'll take me right

to the police station.

I feel the impact and scream as the car swerves to the side, skidding on the loose pebbles on the road before I can correct it, both Mina and Ruby yelling as well. Calling out my name. But I can't do anything to comfort them since I'm concentrating on not crashing.

"It's okay, girls, we're going to be okay," I tell them, sounding calmer than I am. "Siri, call 9-1-1."

"Calling 9-1-1," the robotic voice responds.

As the call connects with the precinct, I feel another jar, only this one has me fishtailing, even though the roads are clear and dry. "Help me!" I scream. "Someone is hitting me from behind!"

"Ma'am, can you tell me where you're at right now?" the dispatcher asks.

I quickly relay what I'm driving as well as which road I'm on. I can't really speed up too much since there are substantial curves ahead and if I'm not careful, we'll nosedive off the side of the cliff. I won't risk my daughters' lives because some demented bitch is gunning for me.

The third impact sends me toward the guardrail, and I scream as I fight to regain control of my SUV. "My daughters are in the car too!" I tell the dispatcher, hoping the urgency in my voice will have the police arriving sooner.

"Are they safely secured?" the dispatcher asks. "Police are enroute, ma'am, and are about a minute out from your location."

"They're both in age-appropriate car seats, but we've already been hit three times and

we almost just hit the guardrail.”

“Stay calm,” she encourages. What the hell? I’m as calm as one could be when someone is attempting to murder them. It’s not like I’m at the nail salon waiting on one of the technicians to come and give me a pedicure.

Tears continue to stream down my cheeks and fear radiates throughout my body as I inform her, “I’m trying, I promise, but we’re coming up on the curves.”

Her tone changes at my words and I feel my heart drop as it dawns on me, we might not make it out of this alive.

“Mina, Ruby?” I call out.

“Yes, Mama?” they reply in unison.

“I love you girls so very much,” I tell them, swallowing back my sobs.

“We love you too, Mama, and also Daddy,” Mina says.

“Ma’am, just before the curve, to the left, there’s a runaway truck lane, do you think you can aim for that?”

“I can try if it’ll keep me from going over the cliff and rolling down the embankment,” I grit out. My teeth are clenched so hard my jaw is aching at this point.

“I’ll stay on the line with you until the police arrive, ma’am,” the dispatcher states. “Now, as you go up the runaway ramp, make sure you take your foot off the gas. It’s meant to help stop your vehicle.”

I see it ahead and turn the wheel...

Gasping, I wake up, my breath shuddering in my chest as my heart races a mile a minute. I'm covered in sweat from the realistic nightmare I just had. Throwing the covers to the side, I get out of bed and start pacing. Is this what Myra meant when she whispered those last words to me? Do I have to fear for mine and my daughters' lives? Maybe they need to just stay at the farm and not go anywhere with anyone until Myra's caught and put behind bars. I realize I'll never get back to sleep, so I strip the sweat-sodden sheets from my bed and head to the laundry room. Might as well take care of a few household chores until it's time for the girls to get up.

So much for a restful night's sleep.

Chapter Nine

Rebel

My night isn't all that restful since an aide came in around four in the morning and woke me up to ask me if I needed anything. Fucker. After I threatened to beat his ass, he never came back to see if I needed anything else, so I guess it's a good thing I have one of those plastic urinals sitting on my bedside table. It takes me a little bit of time, but I'm finally able to sit up on the side of my bed to use it, although only having hand sanitizer to use afterward to cleanse the germs from my hands has me grumbling a bit. I manage to get myself resituated so I'm somewhat sitting up and flip through the television channels until I find an old movie. While it plays, I think of the information Data sent me last night after Holly went home.

He caught enough of the vehicle on Paul's cameras that he was able to follow it through town, hacking into the CCTV cameras that are in use, until he was able to get a clear still shot of the license plate. Then, he got into the DMV's database and found that it was registered to Myra McAfee.

If I had to hazard a guess as to why she hit me, it's because she thought Holly was with me. But if the crazy bitch had used her eyes, she could've seen there was only one rider on my bike. It's the only thing I can come up with, as far as conclusions go, seeing as I've never met the fucking woman, and at this point, I never want to. While I have no problem with Samuel coming around to see Holly and the girls at all because he genuinely loves his granddaughters, what little Holly has shared with regard to Myra tells me she's a spiteful, vindictive hag. There's no way I want her poison to pollute those two little girls; God knows they've already suffered enough,

losing their father at such a young age. Not that he sounded like he was such a peach, but he was their dad and kids tend to love their parents regardless of how shitty they are.

Samuel also called and told me that he gave all the information he gathered to the detective handling my hit-and-run case. He mentioned that they were going to request a search warrant so they could lawfully seize the vehicle and have their crime scene technicians go over it with a fine-tooth comb. I know that Paul picked up all the small pieces and debris of my bike, along with the rest of the detritus that ended up in the ditch that day, so I'm hoping he held onto it in case it's needed to put all the pieces back together again. Like motherfucking Humpty Dumpty.

I just hope like hell that the cops get her before my brothers do. We might not be one percenters, but absolutely no one fucks with us and lives to tell the tale. Still, she's a woman, and we don't usually mess with them. A soft knock at my door has me calling out, "Come in," as I glance up at the wall clock.

Seven in the morning? What the fuck? Don't these people believe in sleep around here?

"Hey, I'm Chris, the morning aide, I've got to take your vitals for our charts, and hang a bag of your antibiotics," she says.

"This is rather early, isn't it?" I ask, a slight grumble to my tone.

"You're the first person who's been awake."

"Lucky me," I reply, smirking. "Wouldn't have been if the night guy hadn't come in at four this morning, woke me up to ask if I needed anything, then left when I yelled at him. I mean, if rest is so important to healing, why is it so impossible to get?"

She shrugs then lets out a little giggle. “Yeah, Alec wasn’t too happy about that.”

“Tough shit,” I grumble. “I mean, I get checking the patients and totally understand the need for doing so. But if you walk into a room in the middle of the night and see someone peacefully sleeping, I think it’s safe to presume that as long as you can tell they’re still breathing because their chest is moving up and down as they inhale and exhale, they don’t need anything.”

“That’s what the charge nurse told him. He’s been booted back to the day shift because that’s not the first complaint he’s gotten against him from other patients. Not that I should be telling you that,” she hastily adds.

“Trust me, Chris, the only one I’d even consider telling what you said is my ol’ lady, and as long as I can assure her that it’s been handled, she’s not going to make a huge fuss,” I reply.

“Is she the one who called your doctor yesterday about your shower?” Chris questions, her brow raised. “Boy, did Tina raise a ruckus about that! ”

“She sure the fuck did,” I state, smirking. “Hell, even at the hospital when I couldn’t take one, she took care of giving me modified sponge baths and while it’s highly irregular, the nurse walked her through removing my catheter. No one touches me intimately except for her.”

“Your file says that very thing,” Chris says, assuring me that Dr. Brown wasn’t just blowing smoke up my ass.

“Good. How long will this take?” I ask, motioning to the bag she just started that’s now running in my PICC line.

“It takes about two hours or so, give or take.”

“So, I’ve got time for a nap before my therapies start?” I question.

“Maybe an hour or so because they’ll bring you breakfast around eight.” She sounds apologetic and I hold up my hand.

“No, it’s okay, I’m just up far too early for my liking is all.”

She releases a short laugh in commiseration before stating, “Well, I imagine after therapy, you’ll probably be able to get a nap in before lunch at least.”

“God, I hope so.”

“I know this is important, but damn, Pedro, I hurt worse now than I did after the accident,” I grumble as my therapist wheels me back to my room.

“It’s because you’ve been pretty much stationery for the past two weeks while you were in the hospital,” he explains, “so your muscles and tendons have tightened up. Once you start moving more, it should ease up.”

“From your lips to God’s ears,” I retort, causing him to smirk.

“At least you participated, Rebel,” he says as he maneuvers into my room. Once he has the chair next to the bed and the brakes locked, he continues. “Now, show me how you transfer.”

“Are you this bossy with your wife?” I question.

He bursts out laughing while watching to make sure I don’t do anything stupid and hurt myself. “How familiar are you with Hispanic women?” he asks. “Okay, from the look on your face, you have no clue what I’m talking about. Suffice it to say, they rule the roost when it comes to the house, the kids, the cooking. In short, all the

things.”

“Ah, so in order to keep your man card, you come to work and tell patients what to do. I see how it is now,” I tease, snickering.

“How does it work for you?” he queries, moving the chair away from the bed so it’s not in the way and pulling the commode chair closer. Hate to tell him this but when it comes time to take a shit, I’ll be getting into the actual bathroom. Even if I have to crawl on my hands and knees to get there. Hell, I’ll Army crawl since one of my damn legs has a cast up to the middle of my fucking thigh. Whatever it takes is my new motto. Ain’t no way I’m sitting on a glorified port-a-potty where anyone can just walk in while I’m going. No fucking way. A man needs to have some pride through this process, and I’ll claim it where I can.

The sweetest voice I know says, “Why, we talk things through. Rebel handles all car-related stuff, I deal with anyone if they’re sick, and we tackle the housework together.”

“Hey, sweetheart,” I say to my ol’ lady.

“Hey yourself, handsome,” she replies, leaning down to kiss me. Turning, she looks at Pedro and asks, “Are you his physical therapist?”

“I’m one of them, but it’s highly likely he’ll work mostly with me,” Pedro replies.

“Why?” Holly questions.

“Because the other three therapists are women who are petite like you. If Rebel starts to fall, not only he but they could be injured,” Pedro states.

“Well, that makes sense, I guess.” She turns and looks at me and says, “No falling on

the female therapists, Rebel.”

I crack up laughing because she’s trying to look stern and failing miserably. My smile slowly slips off my face when I see that her eyes are red-rimmed, and she doesn’t look nearly as rested as I thought she would.

“I’m Pedro,” he finally tells her.

“And I’m Holly, his ol’ lady and fiancée,” she replies, holding out her hand. “Thank you for making sure he didn’t fall today.”

“He’s in a bit of discomfort right now,” Pedro advises her.

“He’s right here,” I chime in, disliking his attention being directed on Holly.

Yeah, I’m a jealous fucker, sue me. I mean, it’s not like the guy’s single, either. He’s got a wide gold band on his ring finger and a slight paunch so at least he’s eating well at home.

“Do you need me to ask for anything for pain, Rebel?” Holly asks, her attention now solely focused on me.

“I’ll be okay, sweetheart. Same time tomorrow, Pedro?” I question.

“Same bat time, same bat channel,” he teases. “Y’all enjoy the rest of your day.”

Once he leaves, I rub my hands together and ask, “What did Grammy make me?”

She giggles as she starts pulling containers out of the huge tote bag she carried in and sets them on the rolling table. “We have fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, and apple crisp. Oh, and buttermilk biscuits too.”

Reaching over, I start opening everything and am amazed that it's all still nice and warm. "How did you manage to keep it hot?"

"It was Pappy's idea. He has a friend that does a lot of cross-country driving who hates to always eat fast food. He found this insulated bag that heats up and Pappy borrowed it from him so I could make sure it stayed warm."

"Damn, remind me to thank him later."

Chapter Ten

Holly

Once I have the food all set up, I give him a plate and some utensils so he can get whatever he wants, then hang the pictures the girls colored for him on the front of the wardrobe. I feel like my tote is a Mary Poppins bag today because I just keep pulling things out that shouldn't otherwise fit. His clean clothes, along with a few more pairs of shorts go inside the wardrobe, while the sodas he occasionally drink go on the counter so he can reach them easily, along with an insulated cup for him to get ice when he wants one of his drinks chilled. His plastic cup is full of water, and that's what he typically drinks most days, but the girls insisted which is what I tell him when he raises his brow at me.

"Come, sit and eat with me," he says, patting the side of the bed.

I make myself a plate, taking smaller portions than he did and lean back with a sigh. "God, Grammy's a saint for doing this," I murmur after taking a bite of my buttered biscuit.

"Definitely. Tell me why you look like you've been crying," he demands.

"What makes you say that?" I question.

Deflect, Holly, deflect! Defcon alert.

"Well, for starters, I didn't expect you to miraculously look as though you'd slept for

a week, but you look as tired if not even more so than you did when you left yesterday evening. Plus, your eyes are red-rimmed, sweetheart. You know you don't have to come every day," he says.

"I'm not just gonna leave you all willy-nilly in someone else's care," I huff out.

"Willy-nilly?" he teases, making me giggle.

"Yeah, willy-nilly," I reply. "I had a nightmare last night, so I woke up at a ridiculous time and couldn't go back to sleep. I did what little housework there was to do seeing as Grammy and the girls pretty much did the bulk of it. They even cleaned out the refrigerator for me!"

"What was the nightmare about?" he asks, eyes narrowed in my direction as if he's preparing to slay all of my dragons.

Without even thinking, probably because he didn't really push the issue, I pour it all out, the heart-pounding fear I had, hearing the girls' screams, every last thing. "I think my mind just twisted everything that happened to you is all, Rebel," I state, finishing up my long-winded story. "Because there's no way me and the girls are in any kind of danger."

I don't tell him about Myra's phone call; that's still a bit too... raw for me to think about right now. But I suspect it was that combined with everything from the past two weeks swirling in my brain to create the nightmare to end all nightmares.

He's quiet for so long, I glance at him to see his eyes are closed, his jaw is clenched, and his hands are balled into tight fists. "Rebel?"

He shudders then says, "Heard from Data after you left last night. The person who hit me was Myra McAfee. It's been confirmed and is no longer a suspicion."

“What? She was actually responsible?” Even after her phone call last night, I was still wishful that she was just talking shit and she didn’t actually do anything so nefarious. “I mean, I know what Samuel found at their house, but I was hoping he was wrong, and there was another explanation for why her car was damaged. Devin would be so disappointed in his mom. Well, the old Devin would’ve been. I’m not sure the man he was before he died would’ve cared. What’s gonna happen now, Rebel?”

“The detective is getting a search warrant so they can go and pick up the car and examine it. I need to see if your grandfather kept the stuff he got out of the ditch in case any of those pieces match up,” he replies.

“Jesus Christ, she’s off her rocker,” I murmur, briefly wondering if I should tell him about the phone call. Then I realize that we don’t keep secrets from each other, so I tell him that as well, totally unprepared for his reaction.

“Dammit, Holly! She all but threatened you and she admitted that she was hoping you were on my bike with me! How could you think that wasn’t important?”

“I... I’m sorry.” My voice and lower lip quivers. “Does it help if I tell you that I hit record on the conversation?” I manage to stammer out.

“Fuck yeah, it does.” He picks up his phone and calls the detective. “Detective Chesterfield? Rebel Sherman here. I know Samuel McAfee came to see you yesterday, but that’s not why I’m calling. Myra called my fiancée last night and not only did she admit to hitting me, but she also issued a thinly veiled threat toward her as well. Holly managed to record the conversation, but I don’t know how much of the conversation was taped.” He looks at me and I shrug. “Okay. Okay, that’s fine, we’ll see you soon.”

He hangs up and looks at me and says, “He’ll be here shortly since he’s gotta go and pick up the signed warrant.”

I pull out my phone and cue up the recording, then press play. After listening to it, I watch my man lose his mind. When one of the aides steps in, he throws up his hand and growls out, “Not. Now.” She hurriedly leaves while I try to calm him down.

“God, I could use a nap,” Rebel says, yawning so loudly his jaw cracks.

“Me too,” I admit. Detective Chesterfield has come and gone so now, it’s a waiting game as to when Myra is arrested.

“Then get your ass over here and let’s take one,” he says.

I set my laptop down, grateful that my early morning allowed me to take care of several tasks for my clients and crawl into the bed with him. He covers me with the fuzzy throw, and I snuggle into his arms and sigh. “I love you. Remind me that this is just a speed bump, pretty please?”

He leans in and kisses me and whispers, “And it’s one we’re gonna conquer, sweetheart. Now sleep, babe.”

I don’t nap for long because Ash and Data come into the room. “Hey, Pres, how you feeling today?” Ash asks Rebel, grabbing one of the chairs. “You look better at least.”

“Sore as hell from physical therapy and I look better because I finally got a fucking shower,” Rebel replies.

“Holly couldn’t take it any longer, huh?” Data teases, making me giggle.

“I think he couldn’t deal with himself, Data,” I reply. “I mean, would you like to have caked blood and dirt plus God knows what else embedded in your scalp for two weeks?”

Both men shudder at the thought, making me laugh harder. Maybe I've finally gone over the edge of sanity, but it honestly feels good to expel some of this pent-up emotion and I'd rather laugh than cry. Heaven knows I've done enough of that in the past few weeks to last me a lifetime.

"So, you want the latest update?" Ash questions. "Seems the police served the search warrant and picked up one very badly damaged vehicle with a tow truck. Also, she's now in custody and currently sitting in jail waiting for her attorney to show up before they begin the interrogation since she asked for legal representation before they could get a word in edgewise."

My arm flies in the air as I yell out, "Yes!" At their looks, I shrug. "What? She's hated me since I was a teenager, y'all. A scrawny, gawky girl with braces no less. All because 'her precious son' liked me! That should've been my first clue, I guess, but I had never heard of red flags before."

"Well, now that we have that sorted, how long before they spring you from this place, Pres?" Ash asks.

"I think another week, since that's how long I have left on the IV antibiotics," Rebel replies.

"Figured you'd want to take a look at this," Data says, handing Rebel a Harley-Davidson brochure.

I watch my ol' man's eyes gleam as he takes it, knowing he's got to replace his bike. Hopefully, her insurance will handle that because as far as I'm concerned, nothing should come out of his pocket because of her actions! He glances at me and grins which makes me shake my head. Boys and their toys, I swear.

"Yeah, I mean, I have another bike, but she's getting older now and has to be babied

a lot. She's not good for long runs or anything. Not that we have a lot of those, but I'd worry about riding her during a poker run."

"Might be time to retire her then," Ash states.

"She was my first bike, Ash," Rebel growls, setting the brochure on his rolling table. I know the man, though, and after they leave, he'll be pouring over the pages while he figures out which model he wants to buy.

"So, keep her and make sure she's road-ready, of course, in case the girls want to learn when they get older." My heart jumps in my chest at Data's words picturing Mina or Ruby riding a motorcycle on their own. Especially after what happened to Rebel, for heaven's sake.

Rebel must realize where my head's at because he says, "Naw, she's got too much power for a new rider. If any of our kids ever want to ride, I'll start them on something with less juice behind the throttle."

I release the breath I was holding, which comes out as a high-pitched gasp, and all three men turn to stare at me. "What? I don't expect Rebel to quit riding by any means, but right now, the thought of my babies riding on two wheels with an engine and experiencing what he did is something that gives me the willies."

"They won't get on one until they're ready, and not only will I teach them if they want, but the local Harley store has classes as well, sweetheart," Rebel promises. "Before any of our kids ever take to the road, they'll be able to handle themselves as well as a bike without hesitation whatsoever. You have my word."

"Good. Next topic?" I ask, eager to change the subject. "Do we know if she'll get bail?"

Ash shrugs then says, “It’s anybody’s guess, to be honest. Depends on the judge, of course, but y’all have a wedding to finish planning, which is more important than that bitch. Because she’ll get hers even though it might not be at our hands.”

“Oh, I can ruin her life with just a few clicks of the keys if y’all want me to,” Data advises, smirking at us. “Or we can let the justice system handle her because I suspect with everything they’re going to charge her with, she won’t see the light of day anytime soon. Not to mention, but she literally has nobody in her corner.”

“She’ll end up dying a bitter woman,” I murmur, my heart hurting slightly for her. I know she’s brought all of this on herself, at some point in her life something switched off in her brain, her empathy for others all but bit the dust... but then again, at the end of the day, she is Mina and Ruby’s paternal grandmother so my feelings for the woman are somewhat skewed. “I feel bad for Samuel, though. I know he divorced her, but she made his life a living hell for years. I often wonder if she was like the way she is now throughout their whole marriage or if something chemical caused her to change.”

I don’t want to ask him, though, because that seems too intimate of a question to ask the man I’m very fond of, especially since he’s still grieving the loss of his son, plus his marriage, of course. Still, at the end of the day, his willingness to go to the police with what he discovered says a lot about who he is as a man. He’s full of integrity down to the marrow of his bones.

“Regardless of what made her do what she did, actions have consequences, Holly,” Rebel reminds me. “If not for your grandfather, I’d be dead, because I was bleeding out in that fucking ditch.”

Shuddering, I say, “I know, handsome. The horror of that moment when he walked into my house covered in blood replays on a loop inside my head. I’m just glad the girls weren’t there at the time.” Poor Grammy, the self-professed stain removal

queen, finally had to give up with Pappy's clothes and throw them away, that's how bad they were.

"Alright, Pres, we'll get out of y'all's hair, just wanted to stop in and give y'all an update," Ash states, standing and motioning to Data. "If y'all need anything, and I mean anything, y'all better reach out."

"We will, brother," Rebel says before doing a weird handshake thing with both men. I bite back my smile because there are probably always going to be things they do or say that I don't understand.

Chapter Eleven

Rebel

“Fuck, it feels good to be home,” I say as I settle against the headboard. Granted, even though I’m now home, I still have a home health nurse, as well as a physical therapist and occupational therapist keeping me tethered to this ongoing nightmare, but at least I’ll get a full night’s sleep without anyone interrupting to ask me if I need anything!

It was definitely a process to get me home, thanks to all the things Holly brought to the rehab facility to make me as comfortable as possible, but thanks to my brothers, it didn’t take as long as I originally feared. Holly’s already got everything put away while I ‘relax’ as she puts it. The thing is, my woman is wound so tight right now, I’m worried she’s going to snap in half.

“Mama says that’s a bad word, Daddy,” Mina informs me, grinning from the other side of the bed where she and Ruby decided they’d sit so they could ‘help’ me.

I grin back because she lost a tooth during all of this and now has a cute little lisp going on. I won’t tell her that though, because I’m sure she’s sensitive about how she sounds, but it endears her to me that much more. “I know, pumpkin, which is why you and Ruby shouldn’t repeat some of the things I say.”

“Good idea,” Holly adds, having walked in while I was talking. “Girls, how about we get your baths out of the way, then maybe we can watch a movie with Daddy?”

“Wish I had their energy,” I say as they bounce their way off the bed and toward their room to get their pajamas.

“Me too,” Holly replies, coming closer to lean in and kiss me. “So, what did you think of all the changes?”

“I’m fucking impressed at everything the brothers and your grandfather managed to get done,” I tell her. “Not to mention the renovation on the bathroom itself.”

Paul had bought Holly a top-of-the-line manufactured house, so the primary bathroom was rather large already. They expanded the shower stall and added a bench as well as a handheld shower head. She still has a soaking tub, although they did trim a bit of the walk-in closet to rearrange where everything was in the bathroom. Still, it looks fantastic, and will give me a bit more independence, although Holly has already told me I won’t be showering alone for the foreseeable future.

“Yeah, it all looks great to me too,” she replies.

“So, you still gonna marry me next week?” I ask. “I’m not exactly in the best condition right now.”

“Rebel, I’d marry you if you were in a full body cast,” she says. “I’ll be right back, gonna get those two girls of ours bathed so we can relax and watch a movie with them. Any particular snacks you want?”

I smirk because my girls take their movie time seriously. I know there’ll be popcorn liberally coated with real butter, candy, and sodas. “Maybe some of the peanut butter cookies your grandmother made?”

She rolls her eyes but grins. “Got it. Don’t do anything silly while I’m otherwise occupied!”

“Who me?” I ask. Okay, so I might’ve done a few things outside of what I was allowed to do when I was in rehab. But when a man’s gotta go, he doesn’t have time to wait for an aide. Besides, I was able to maneuver into my wheelchair without any problems and make it into the bathroom. It was close, but I did it and at the end of the day, that’s all that mattered to me.

“Right now, I wish I was able to help you,” I mutter as Holly carefully picks Ruby up to carry her to bed. She’s already taken Mina and tucked her in, then it’ll just be the two of us.

No nurses, no machinery, no late-night aides popping in to check on me. I transfer to my chair so I can hit the bathroom before she’s back. Hell, who am I kidding? She’ll likely have the girls both tucked in, the remnants of our movie night taken care of, and have herself ready for bed by the time I’m done. Still, I’m home.

“You’ll be back to your old self soon, handsome,” she replies. “Besides, I have years of experience doing this, remember?”

I snicker, because both girls play hard and sometimes, they crash out for a power nap to recharge or something, so it’s not surprising to find them in unusual places. At least tonight, they were both on the bed as we watched a movie about emotions. For an animated film, it wasn’t too bad, plus Holly lets them ask questions. They were both able to tell us that they were mad and sad that I got hurt. But then, Mina popped up and said she was excited because of the pretty dresses they get to wear when we get married.

As I manage to go through my nightly routine, I think about the gazebo that Paul, Samuel, and the brothers built for us to stand in during the ceremony. They built in heaters since the weather is still iffy this time of year, plus there’s a modified stool for me to lean against since I refuse to sit in a wheelchair while the pastor marries us. My right leg’s now in a walking cast with minimal weight bearing allowed, and the

cast on my left leg is now from the knee down so I can at least bend it, even though I'm not allowed to walk on it just yet. Still, the orthopedic doctor said I could stand on it for a brief period of time, which is what I'll do next week.

Finally finished, I roll back into the bedroom and transfer into bed just as Holly walks into the room and closes the door. "I made it just in time," she teases, seeing my sweatpants on the chair. I have boxer briefs on because of the girls, but now that I'm home, I can sleep far more comfortably than I did in rehab at least.

"Why, you have plans I'm not aware of?" I joke back, my eyes never leaving her as she moves around the room, gathering her nightgown.

"Maybe?" she asks, before walking to the bathroom. "Just have to grab a quick shower. I feel all buttery thanks to the spilled bowl."

I can't help chuckling as I remember Ruby getting excited over a part in the movie. She flung her arms up and popcorn went flying everywhere, but mostly on Holly. Still, it says a lot about my ol' lady that she didn't get upset or yell; she just told Ruby that she'd get it cleaned up later and to keep watching the movie.

"Take your time, sweetheart, I'll be waiting," I reply. Part of me hopes those plans involve the two of us getting reacquainted in the biblical sense, because while the hand and blowjobs have been nice, of course, I miss being buried inside my ol' lady.

Granted, she's gonna have to do most of the work right now, but I smirk as I remember how much she enjoys the ride. While I plan to get my licks in, so to speak, Holly's going to be in control. Since she doesn't get to do that very often, I'm sure she's going to enjoy herself, which means I will as well.

I'm so lost in thought that she takes me by surprise when she straddles my waist, leans in and kisses my chin. "I'd ask what's up, but I can feel it," she whispers.

“You’re not too tired, are you?”

“Absofuckinlutely not,” I rumble, pulling her closer so her bare breasts rub against my chest hair. I can feel the turgid points pressing into me and smirk, knowing she had the same thoughts I did while she was in the shower. Even with the sheet between us, the heat coming from her pussy is damn near scalding.

“Good, because it feels like it’s been forever,” she replies, her hands lightly stroking my face.

“Trust me, sweetheart, it has been, considering how active we are normally.”

“I think the worst of it was, when I knew you were going to be okay, we couldn’t even really celebrate the fact you were alive,” she murmurs against my lips. “Stupid, huh?”

“No, not really, Holly. How about we do that now?” I ask.

With that, I use my upper body strength to drag her up my body until I’m breathing in her scent. Thankfully, she didn’t bother with any underwear because they would impede my progress as I need to get reacquainted with her pussy a-s-fucking-p!

“Rebel,” she breathes out as my tongue moves through her glistening folds.

“Better hold on, babe,” I warn her, chuckling when she does a full body shiver and plants her hands against the headboard. I make a note that we might want to consider getting a new one because the one she has is awesome with a tall back, but there’s really nothing for her to grip. That’s okay, I’ll just hold her hips a little tighter.

Since I’m making sure she doesn’t topple over, I can’t add my fingers to the mix, but from the noises coming from her, it doesn’t seem to matter all that much. In no time

at all, I see her back arch as her thighs tightly squeeze my face and she keens out my name. Slowly, I gentle my ministrations then slide her back down my body so she's once again straddling my groin.

"You've got too many clothes on," she teases, her face flushed and sounding breathless.

"Let me fix that for you," I reply, smirking up at her. She gets a little bit redder when she can see the evidence of her excitement on my lips and in my beard. Once I manage to remove my boxer briefs, she shimmies a bit then rises up on her knees before she slides down onto my dick.

"Fucking hell," I hiss out, the heat from her tight, wet sheath fully encompassing me and making me see stars. "I suspect this might go faster than normal."

As her hands caress my chest, she begins undulating up and down, swiveling her hips when she's completely impaled. "Does it matter? Because it doesn't to me, not one fucking bit," she huffs out, punctuating each word with a rhythm that's older than time.

"Just saying, sweetheart, this is killing my street cred," I reply, my own hands roaming her delectable body. She's lost weight, which I don't like one single bit, but now that I'm home, hopefully that'll change because she won't be running herself as ragged as she was doing.

"Rebel," she growls, which makes me laugh because she tries to be fierce, but she's like a tiny kitten who's playing with their littermates. All hiss and no real claws. "Not worried about any alleged street cred you might have as long as we both always get there with each other. Doesn't matter if it takes us five minutes or five hours. Although five hours might be a bit rough on the lady bits."

And... this is another reason I love this woman. Even in the midst of us reconnecting the way we've both needed to since the accident, she still makes me laugh. I can feel my spine tingle as my balls draw up just as her pussy puts a chokehold on my dick. With one hand stroking across her nipple, I slide the other to the apex of her thighs and begin circling my thumb around her clit.

She explodes around me, milking every ounce of cum out of me as her head lowers and she kisses me while we both ride out our releases. Once the aftershocks subside, she leans down and says, "I love you, Rebel. Thank you for coming home to us."

"I'll always come home to y'all, Holly. As long as there's breath in my body," I promise. "It just took a little longer this time."

Chapter Twelve

Holly

The girls are ‘watching’ Rebel as I run a few errands today. I’m going by the Harley-Davidson store to pick up a new gremlin bell for the bike he’ll get to replace the one that was totaled. The insurance company is still handling all that bullshit, but as far as I’m concerned, it’s a done deal. He’s a biker, he needs a new bike, plain and simple. I’m also picking up my bouquet, the girls’ flowers, and the boutonnieres for the pastor and Rebel. Outside of Pappy walking me down the aisle to Rebel, we’re only having the girls as our attendants.

Personally, I would’ve been just as happy going to the courthouse since it’s not like I’m a blushing, virginal bride, but Grammy reminded me I always wanted to get married on the farm. The property itself is sprawling with wildflowers and the surface itself is relatively flat, so the area where Pappy, Samuel, and Rebel’s brothers built the gazebo is perfectly situated. In fact, I think Pappy plans to build an outdoor kitchen nearby after they put in an inground pool.

I nearly fell over in shock when she told me while we were sorting through seeds for this year’s vegetable garden. She said that she and Pappy talked about it and they both felt it would help Rebel in his recovery. They’re going to make sure it’s heated, and it’ll have a hot tub in one of the corners. When I protested, she reminded me that someday, the property would belong to me, so they were investing in our future.

I just wish I felt better. With Rebel being home for almost a week now, my running back and forth is minimal at best. In short, I’m getting a good night’s sleep every

night, and eating far better than I was during his hospital and rehab stays. Still, I'm exhausted to the marrow of my bones, even though Grammy thoroughly cleaned the house once the contractor, Pappy, and the brothers were finished with the things they renovated, swapped the girls' clothes out since Spring is around the corner, made me a list of what they're going to need to supplement their wardrobes, and she made meals and put them in our freezer! So, all I've had to do is stay out of the way of his therapists and his home health nurse when they show up. I'm all caught up with my clients' work for the time being as well.

Sighing, I haul my ass out of my SUV and head into the store. "Hey, Holly!" the clerk, Piper, calls out when she sees me walk in the door.

"Hey, Piper, how are you today?" I ask once I reach the counter.

"Good, good. Hold on, it just came back from the engraver," she replies, reaching underneath the display case and pulling out a box. She opens it up and pulls out a tissue-wrapped item, then carefully unwraps it to hand it to me.

I take it and turn it back and forth, a small smile on my face. My man and his superstitions about his bike had me doing a deep dive on the internet, especially with what his brothers shared. When I found out that I could get one engraved, I jumped on that with both feet. Tilting it carefully, I see, Near or far, wherever you are, I'm always with you. Holly.

"This is perfect, Piper," I tell her, handing it back. I watch as she wraps it once again, puts it in the box, then she quickly and efficiently wraps it before she puts it in one of the store's Harley-Davidson bags.

"I hope he likes it," she says, giving me the bag.

"I'm sure he will. I already have the mason jar so we can take care of his old one."

She shakes her head, grinning at me. “You’re a good ol’ lady, Holly.”

“Appreciate you saying that because I still feel like I’m learning on the fly most days.” I take out my list and cross that task off. “Okay, now to go grab flowers and some sparkly barrettes for the girls’ hair.”

“Congratulations to you both.”

“Thank you,” I reply. “See y’all soon, I’m sure.”

In fact, I know they will since I saw quite a few cute tops I need to add to my wardrobe, as well as Mina’s and Ruby’s. I mean, Grammy did say they both had to have some new shirts.

It doesn’t take me long to pick up the flowers, which the florist has in a temperature-controlled box. “Holly, just have your grandfather drop this off when y’all are done with it,” Mrs. Hester says. When I go to hand her Pappy’s credit card, she shakes her head. “No, ma’am, Samuel came by and took care of paying for your flowers.”

“He did?” I whisper. I mean, I know he loves me and the girls, but I wasn’t expecting anything like that at all!

“Yes, he did. Told me you were the daughter of his heart and with Paul covering everything else, he wanted to try and sneak in and pay for something,” she replies, giggling.

I shake my head because the two of them have been doing that since all the preparations went into high gear. Hell, when Grammy went to the bakery to get the cake so we could put it in her refrigerator, she found out the brothers paid for that, as well as the food we’re having catered for the reception! I think Grammy said that Ash and Data were going to pick all the food up later, along with the warmers, and that

they'd paid two of the waitresses from the bar to come and serve. Oh, and... the club picked up the tab for the booze as well.

"What do I need to do to keep the flowers fresh?" I ask.

"Not a thing. The box is insulated, and I put the stuff we use inside that'll keep them from wilting," she replies. "Congratulations to you and Rebel, and those precious girls of yours!"

"They're so excited," I confess. "Not that I'm not, because I definitely am, but they're running me ragged because they're so worried about everything being 'just right', you know?"

"I'm glad you've got a good man now, Holly," Mrs. Hester says. "Samuel is too, just so you know."

I nod then say, "He's told me. I don't know how a man as kind and loving as he is could have been so unfortunate with his wife and even his son."

I mean, I don't mean to speak ill of the dead, but looking back, Myra's inability to allow her son to grow up meant he was irresponsible in all things. While I hate it that the girls no longer have their birth father, Rebel is more of a daddy to them than Devin ever was as far as I'm concerned.

"There's no telling, hon, but he's a good man," she reiterates, blushing.

Hmm... Mrs. Hester has been a widow for a very long time. Who knows what'll happen down the road?

"Well, I have one more stop to make before I head home. Mina and Ruby are keeping an eye on Rebel with help from Grammy, of course," I tell her, grinning.

Thank goodness for that because he'd manage to talk my two girls into just about anything, knowing him. I've already had to take all the keys for every vehicle and put them up, so he doesn't try to sneak out since he's not allowed to drive yet.

"Congratulations again, sweetheart."

"Thanks, Mrs. Hester."

I sing along to the oldies station as I think about my last purchase. I found a gorgeous silky baby doll length nightgown in a blue satin for our wedding night. It's probably silly since we've been having sex for months, but it'll be our first time as man and wife, and I wanted something special. I need to take it over to Grammy's to wash it, of course, but that won't be a problem. She and Pappy are going to take the girls on a trip for a few days to give us some privacy since we can't exactly go anywhere for our honeymoon just yet. I think that's why she made sure there were so many meals prepped and frozen, so we could be together.

As I pull into the driveway, I stop and grab the mail, wincing when I see the torn-up grass where Rebel's bike ended up landing. Pappy's used his small bobcat to try and regrade the area, but it's a ditch and that's not easy to do. Still, every time it rains, he goes out a day later and while the ground is soft, he works on it, so it's not as bad as it was when it first happened. Unfortunately for me, I saw pictures of the scene after it first happened, complete with the dark stains that I know were my man's blood. Shaking off the negative thoughts, I thumb through the mail, separating it into piles of ours and theirs.

Getting back into my SUV, I pull up under my carport, park and shut it off, then grab all the bags I can before heading into the house.

"Mama!" Mina exclaims, running toward me. "Guess what?"

“What, sweetie?” I ask, trying not to drop anything as I make my way to the kitchen.

Grammy’s fixing lunch so Ruby and Rebel are already at the table. “Got the mail,” I state, placing Grammy and Pappy’s stack to the side. “Let me wash my hands and I’ll help.”

“Child, I’m almost done,” Grammy replies.

“Now, Mina, what did you want to tell me?” I question since she’s now bouncing up and down like she’s got jumping beans in her britches.

“Daddy took us for a ride!” she squeals.

I glance over at him to see his smirk as he shakes his head just a little bit, so she won’t notice. “How did Daddy take you for a ride?” I ask.

“On his chair!” Ruby shouts.

I start giggling when he bursts out laughing. “Sweetheart, you shoulda seen your face. Priceless, I tell ya, absolutely priceless.”

“All I could think was I had all the keys to everything I could think of in my purse except for Pappy’s truck, because he’s got that while he runs errands,” I admit.

“Babe,” Rebel says, in that tone I’ve come to understand and interpret.

I mean, who knew that one word could mean so many different things? Right now, he’s telling me he thinks I’m hysterical. Whatever. I’m a bride-to-be, I’m allowed a little bit of being a ditz, right?

“So, Grammy? Guess what?” I question, sitting down at the table as she brings over

lunch. We're apparently having homemade chicken and dumplings which is perfect since it's a bit cool outside.

"What?" she asks.

"Samuel paid for the flowers," I reply. "And Rebel? The brothers took care of the cake, the catering and hiring two of the waitresses from the bar to serve at the reception!"

He grins. "Yeah, Ash might've mentioned something like that," he says, before helping Ruby with her plate.

I love how gentle he is with them. He doesn't baby them, precisely, but treats them at the age they're at, something I love because Devin would get so frustrated with them when they'd act their ages. He's currently making sure her food is bite sized, cutting the pieces of chicken so she won't choke, while Grammy helps Mina. Which leaves me to tuck into my food.

"Okay, so here's how tonight's gonna go," Grammy announces while we're eating. "It's bad luck for the bride and groom to see each other before the wedding. Now, I know y'all have been living together, but tonight, Paul is gonna stay here in case you need anything, Rebel, and all the girls are coming over to our house."

I can see from Rebel's expression that he's not quite down with that prospect, so I say, "Honey, think of it like a gremlin bell for our wedding. We know there'll be good times and bad, and if this is something that can potentially bring good our way, what's the harm?"

"You're right," he finally says. "The brothers were coming over early to set up the chairs and shit, so if I need any help, I'll have Paul or one of them here to give me a hand."

“Mama’s gonna make our hair pretty, Daddy,” Mina says, grinning at him.

“You’re already pretty, baby,” he tells her. Then he looks at Ruby and adds, “You are too, pumpkin.”

Once lunch is done, the girls and I clean up the kitchen while Rebel heads into the living room for another of his therapy sessions. I can hear him grunting and groaning as she puts him through his paces and grin while on my way to the bedroom to pack my bag for the night, as well as gather what I’ll need to get ready tomorrow.

Chapter Thirteen

Rebel

“Holly’s going to be so excited,” Paul says as I roll into the kitchen the next morning. He carries a mug of coffee to the table and asks, “Whatcha want for breakfast? I’m no Esther, but I can scramble up a couple of eggs and fry some bacon.”

“That sounds perfect,” I reply, taking a long sip of my coffee. I didn’t sleep as well without Holly beside me, and I hope she didn’t suffer the same. I look out the window and gasp. “Holy shit,” I murmur. The backyard looks like a winter wonderland with several inches of freshly fallen snow.

“Yeah, it’ll be a bit chilly outside but me and the boys’ll make sure we get the heaters going good and early.”

“Holly got the girls warm tights and something she called a shrug,” I tell him. “I don’t know if she’s got anything though.”

“You can bet my Esther thought of that already. This time of year is always sketchy with the weather, which is why we built the gazebo the way we did,” Paul says. “Got some of Esther’s biscuits too. She ran them over this morning so I’m gonna pop them in the oven to warm them up.”

“I’m gonna need to go on a diet when I’m more ambulatory,” I admit.

“I think you’re expending plenty of calories with all the exercises your therapist has

you doing,” Paul retorts.

“Thank y’all for everything you’ve done for all four of us,” I say.

“You’re family, Rebel. You and them brothers of yours are mine and Esther’s now, too.”

I’m a fucking badass. Been through hell and back, especially with this fucking accident. But his words nearly bring me to my knees. Not only have they raised Holly to be a strong, independent woman, but they have so much love to give, they are taking on me and my crazy-ass brothers. I hope like hell they know what they’re getting into.

“You nervous?” Prophet asks as we stand inside the gazebo. We’re not too far inside, and the rest of the brothers and Esther, as well as Samuel, are close enough they can hear what’s being said. Before Prophet became a patched member of the Steel Raiders, he was a pastor at a small church. He became disillusioned when he found out that his deacons were corrupt and doing a bunch of sketchy shit that hurt a lot of people. When he found out Holly and I were getting married, he made sure his license was still good and offered to marry us, which we gladly accepted.

“For the first time in my life, yes,” I admit. “I mean, I know I’m the president of the club, and those responsibilities are tough at times, but we’ve got a tight group of brothers, solid businesses, and have our shit straight. What if I fuck something up as a parent? These are the most impressionable years if I remember correctly.”

Prophet’s face gets serious, and I know he’s probably going to pull out something from his background. “Rebel, Proverbs says children are a blessing from the Lord. All I can tell you is if you and Holly stand together in all things, whether it’s admonishing them when they’ve done something wrong, praising them when they’ve done well, and loving them no matter what, you won’t mess anything up.”

Even though he barely managed not to say ‘fuck’ which I am totally impressed by, what he says sinks deep into my soul. Those two little girls, as well as any kids we might have in the future, are blessings. While I may not share Prophet’s beliefs, I do know there’s a higher power of sorts, so once I finally process his words, I can do nothing except nod in agreement.

“Yeah, you’re right,” I admit.

Music starts to play, and I turn slightly, grateful for the weird seat that the brothers crafted for me. I’m able to stand without putting pressure on my left leg. My chair is nearby, but with the snow, they’ll probably use the side-by-side to get me back to Esther and Paul’s house. My breath catches as I see Ruby walking down the aisle, tossing out birdseed from the tiny basket she’s carrying. Behind her is Mina, doing the same thing between waving at every person she passes. Low laughter permeates the air as both girls end up standing in the middle.

“Hi, Daddy!” Mina and Ruby exclaim in unison.

“Hey, babies,” I reply, leaning down to kiss both of them.

They have on identical dresses that fall almost to their calves. I can see the tights Holly insisted on, along with the ‘fairy princess’ shoes as Mina called them, covered in a light sheen of snow. Their hair has been curled and is falling around their shoulders, and they both have tiaras on their little heads, with matching wrist corsages on their wrists, just below the shrugs that I’m glad Holly bought, since it’s cold outside.

“Mama,” Mina whispers, having turned to face where Holly will be walking.

My eyes move in the same direction, and I feel my heart start to pound as she gracefully strides toward me, her arm in Paul’s. She looks like a fairy princess, and I

can't believe she's marrying me. Her hair is down but has been curled and I can't wait to tangle my fingers in it as I show her how much she means to me. While the top of her dress is fitted, from the waist down, it's huge. My gaze never leaves hers as she and Paul finally reach me.

"Who gives this woman?" Prophet asks.

"Her grandmother and I," Paul responds, placing her hand in mine. I tighten my grip and get an answering squeeze.

"Us too!" Mina exclaims, causing me to chuckle.

"Before we get started, Rebel has something to say," Prophet announces.

Turning to look down at Mina and Ruby, I say, "Today, I'm marrying your mother and that'll make her my wife. What I want to know, and this is very important, so you need to pay attention, okay?" At their nods, I continue, "Can I adopt you two and give y'all my last name?"

"Yes," Ruby says, without hesitation. "Will we be... will we be legal then?"

At that, laughter rings out, which makes her look at her mother. "Did I say something wrong, Mama?"

Holly leans down and whispers, "No, sweetie, you didn't. Mina? What about you?"

"Will you be my daddy forever then?" Mina asks me.

"Absolutely, Mina."

"Then I say yes, too. Can we go sit with Grammy now and watch, Mama?" Mina

questions.

“Yes, girls.”

With that, Paul takes both the girls’ hands and they go to sit by Esther and Samuel, who is also sitting on the front row while we turn to face Prophet, still holding hands.

“You both chose to write your own vows, so Holly, ladies first,” Prophet says.

She turns to me and grasps my other hand. “Rebel, the day we met, I wasn’t expecting it at all. Never in my wildest dreams, especially in the situation I was in then, did I anticipate that talking to you in the grocery store would lead to us being here right now. I’m not sure exactly when I fell in love with you, but for the first time in my life, outside of my grandparents, I felt safe and secure. You knew from the start that I had two little girls and was a package deal, yet you didn’t run. In fact, you jumped in with both feet, despite my crazy work schedule and made it to where I didn’t really remember a time you weren’t there for me or the girls. I love you with every fiber of my being and will be proud to be your wife and ol’ lady as long as I have breath in my body.”

I can feel the wet in my eyes, an emotion that isn’t exactly foreign, but it’s been so long, I’m not sure what to do with it if I’m being completely honest with myself. I can feel myself shaking a little bit, but it has nothing to do with the cold and everything to do with the commitment I’m currently making.

“Rebel?” Prophet asks.

Clearing my throat, I lean in and kiss her forehead, hearing Ash say, “Hey, we’re not at that part yet!”

“Holly, the day I heard a little girl’s giggles in the produce section of the grocery

store, I was hooked. Seeing you there as the three of you tried to figure out what you were buying, I had no choice but to come closer so I could be a part of what you had. You've taken me as I am, a biker, a businessman, a little rough around the edges. Yet, you accept me as I am, flaws and all. Not only that, but you've embraced a world you knew nothing about, except for what you've read in those romance books you like." She grins at me as a blush stains her face. "There are so many qualities about you that I love, from your work ethic, to how you love your girls, to the way you treat everyone with kindness and grace. You're my end game, Holly. You, Mina, Ruby, and whatever children we're blessed with down the road. You're my forever and I'll love you for the rest of eternity and beyond."

I'm lost in her eyes as Prophet goes through us exchanging rings and I know Holly is as well, since we're both answering without tearing our gazes from each other. Finally, finally I hear him say, "By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss your bride."

As our lips touch, our first kiss as man and wife, I can hear my brothers cheering and stomping their feet. When we finally pull back from one another, I wipe the tear that escaped when I was reciting my vows to her.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, may I introduce Mr. and Mrs. Jonah Sherman, also known as Rebel and Holly," Prophet announces.

Mina and Ruby come running toward us and I pull them into our family hug. A content feeling overwhelms me when I stare at my family.

My family.

Mine.

I'll protect them with everything I have.

Every fucking thing.

“Let’s get a few pictures out here then get inside,” Ash suggests. “It’s cold and I know the bride and groom don’t want to get to the sickness part of the marriage vows.”

Snickers erupt from my brothers but Jacki, one of our club girls who does photos from time to time for club events, quickly gets us in position and before I know it, Holly and I are in the side-by-side, the girls on our laps as Paul drives us to their house where we’ll have our reception.

The party is a lot different than my brothers are used to, but with plentiful food and flowing alcohol, everyone is relaxed and having a good time.

I’m on the couch with Holly plastered to my side when Mina and Ruby come running over to us. “Daddy, I love you so much!” Mina exclaims, wrapping her arms around me. It’s not easy with the two casts, but she somehow manages to do it anyhow. “When can we be adopted?”

“I love you too, Daddy,” Ruby adds, climbing onto Holly’s lap to hug my neck.

“What am I, chopped liver?” Holly teases.

“Mama, you know we love you, but Daddy doesn’t know it yet,” Mina states.

“I love you girls too,” I tell them. “We’ll check with the attorney to see when we can get that done, okay?”

“Yippee!” Ruby screeches.

“I think it’s time we head home,” Holly whispers. “They’re getting sugared up.”

I can't stop chuckling. "So, you're just gonna leave them with your grandparents, huh?" I ask.

"Absolutely. Take me home, husband, and make me yours," she demands.

"Your wish is my command, wife," I reply.

Chapter Fourteen

Holly

After the noise and excitement from the reception at Grammy's, the quiet after the snowfall as I ride on Rebel's lap over the path that Pappy put in between their house and mine is magical. The snow started falling again, putting another pristine layer of sparkles on the ground. I'm still not sure how I managed to fit on the motorized wheelchair because the bottom of my dress is very poofy. I start giggling which has Rebel looking down at me.

"What?" he asks as he motors us toward the ramp that's coming off the back porch, since that's the area that's got the covered pathway.

"Explain to me again why I'm not walking alongside you?" I manage to say between giggles.

"Because if I could walk on both legs, I'd have you curled into me. This is kind of the same," he replies, smirking at me.

"If you say so."

I'm not going to begrudge being in his arms no matter how he accomplishes that fact, but when we finally reach the sliding glass door and I attempt to get up, he stops me by gripping my hip. "Nah, babe, gonna carry you over the threshold," he states.

"Rebel, you're not supposed to walk yet!" I exclaim. I know it's one of 'those'

superstitions and as I've discovered, my man definitely has a boatload of them, so it would make sense he'd latch on to any of them that predict a long and happy marriage.

"Who said anything about walking, Holly? Hold on, this might get bumpy," he advises as he pushes the door wide then hits the button, so the wheelchair goes over the slight hump that Pappy put a guard over for just this reason and I find us in the area that's between the kitchen and the dining area.

He spins us around, closes and locks the slider, all while grinning at me. "Let's grab some drinks then head into our room," he murmurs, which sends a full-body shiver through me.

God, his deep voice alone can practically make me orgasm. Humming a bit, I open the refrigerator door once he gets us there and gasp. "I wonder who did this?" I ask as I pull out a bottle of chilled sparkling wine and two fluted glasses that have been engraved in fancy script with our names and our wedding date.

"I suspect Paul did it earlier," he admits. "He wouldn't let me get anything out of the fridge this morning when I was thirsty. In fact, he insisted on 'manning the kitchen' until it was time to get ready."

"My Pappy can be sneaky, that's for sure," I advise, grabbing two bottles of water as well. "I'm glad they got sparkling wine though, because I'm not much for champagne unless orange juice is involved."

"I'll keep that in mind for the future," he teases as he spins us around then heads toward the bedroom.

Once we're in there, I carefully maneuver out of the chair, then place all the drinks on Rebel's nightstand. Turning, I see Rebel just staring at me, so I ask, "What? What's

wrong?”

“You’re so fucking beautiful, Holly. You always are, whether you’re in work clothes, cleaning clothes, or even your pajamas, but today, you outshine even the brightest star in the sky.”

Tears fill my eyes at his words, and I briefly wonder why I’m so damn emotional lately. Every little thing turns on the waterworks, from seeing how pretty the girls looked today to how happy Grammy and Pappy looked when we turned after Prophet announced us as husband and wife. “Thank you,” I whisper.

“You’re welcome, but there’s no need for thanks, sweetheart. I’m speaking the truth. Do you need me to unzip anything before you get into something more comfortable?” he questions.

“Yes please. It looks like it’s buttoned, but there’s an invisible zipper underneath it with the pearl buttons on top,” I tell him, moving closer so he can help me get undressed. I feel his hand as he moves my hair so he can reach the zipper tab, then slowly, so damn slowly that I can feel my skin breaking out in goosebumps, he pulls it down.

Feeling the combination of the air from the ceiling fan plus his warm breath against my skin adds to the sensation and by the time he has it at the end and the front of the dress is gaping, I feel like I should be panting, my desire is so close to the top, it’s probably evident to Rebel. Not that I care, of course, but still... it’s like everything has been amplified for some reason.

“I like what’s underneath the dress as well,” he murmurs. Then I feel his lips against the base of my spine, which sends my thoughts down a very pleasurable road that ends with us both sated and exhausted.

“I’m glad,” I admit. “But I’ve got something else in mind. I do want to take a quick shower first if that’s okay?”

“Whatever you want, sweetheart,” he replies.

“Do you need any help with anything before I head in there?” I question.

He chuckles while shaking his head. “I’ll be fine, Holly. Go do what you need to do.”

I’m in the shower, my hair not only piled on top of my head but also underneath a shower cap when a wave of nausea hits that almost has me hitting my knees. “What on earth?” I muse as bile climbs up my throat.

No, no, no, no, no! my brain screams as I stumble out of the shower and land in front of the toilet, where I proceed to lose everything I’ve ever eaten, including that horrid jello mold when I was seven. Every time I think I’m done, another wave hits me as sweat and tears pour down my face. I’m so lost in my misery that it takes a second for me to realize there’s now a cool cloth settled against the back of my neck and strong arms supporting me around my waist.

“Rebel, you don’t need to see or hear this,” I croak out between waves of blech.

“In sickness and in health, sweetheart,” he replies. “What do you need?”

“Just what you’re doing right now, even if I think you’re a little bit nuts for willingly being in here,” I mumble, which makes him laugh.

Once I’m positive I’m finished, I sit back on my heels as his hand moves to flush the toilet. He then hands me the wet cloth and I use it to wipe my face and mouth, which has a horrible aftertaste inside, like I cleaned out a dumpster with my tongue.

“What happened?” he asks as he helps me get up. I move to the double sinks and immediately put toothpaste on my toothbrush before I begin brushing every centimeter inside my mouth, including my tongue and the insides of both cheeks.

After I spit and rinse, then wash my face, I turn to face him, still naked and slightly wet from my shower. “I don’t know, Rebel. I can’t think of anything I ate or drank that would’ve caused this at all.”

He grabs a towel and moves closer then wraps me up in it which is a good thing because now I’m shivering. “Let’s get you dried off and into bed.”

Disappointment courses through me and I want to stomp my foot. “Rebel,” I whine. “That’s not how tonight’s supposed to go!”

He chuckles while leading me back into the bedroom. “Babe,” he says, causing me to roll my eyes. This is said in a tone I haven’t deciphered just yet. “Do you honestly think every newly married couple consummates their marriage on the same day? Think about the weddings you’ve attended over the years. Most of those couples were trashed out of their minds thanks to all the toasts and open bars. I’d hazard a guess that a lot of the guys couldn’t even get their dicks hard with the amount of alcohol they consumed, and personally, if you and I had drank a lot, we wouldn’t be either. Not because I’m not always hard whenever you’re around, but because the first time we’re together as man and wife will happen when we’re both fully present and in our right minds.”

Gah, he’s such a good man! “I agree,” I slowly admit.

“Although there’s a time and place for a drunk romp,” he teases. “Now, come on, sweetheart, I don’t want you catching a chill and getting sick. Well, sicker than whatever’s going on right now, that is.”

I forgo the pretty new nightgown in favor of one of his Henleys he pulled from the dresser which I slip over my head then climb into bed. Once underneath the covers, I remember I have my shower cap on, so I quickly pull it off and fluff out my hair. As he climbs into bed, I remember his gift and reach into my nightstand to pull it out.

“I got this for you,” I tell him as he settles against the headboard and pulls me into his arms.

I see his look of surprise as he takes the nicely wrapped box, but my heart breaks when I see how carefully he unwraps it. He did the same at Christmas, which tells me a lot about how he grew up without saying a single word. I suspect he didn’t often receive gifts, and that blows my mind because he’s one of the most generous people I’ve ever met. He thinks nothing of buying stuff that he sees that he thinks I’ll like, or Mina and Ruby will enjoy. Hell, he found a cute sign for Grammy’s chicken coop when he and the guys were out on a run and brought it home for her. Pappy hung it up as soon as she finished gushing over it.

He finally opens the box and pulls out the tissue wrapped bell and I hold my breath, hoping against hope that he’ll like it. Carefully unwrapping it, I hear his gasp as he pulls out the new gremlin bell. “Holly,” he whispers.

“I knew you were going to need a new one based on what the brothers said,” I reply. “So, I went to the Harley-Davidson store and a nice salesclerk helped me find the perfect one for you.”

“It’s perfect,” he says. I know the minute he sees what the engraving says because he starts to say something, then can’t. It takes him several seconds before he turns to look at me. “Y’all are always right here,” he announces, tapping the center of his chest. “Every little thing I do, I consider how it’ll impact y’all. Whether it’s a club decision or one for us as a couple, I do it all for y’all.”

Tears are now streaming down my face at his words. I mean, I knew deep inside that he was that kind of man, much like my Pappy, but hearing him vocalize it solidifies once again what a good man I've got. "I love you, Jonah Sherman," I manage to say through my clogged throat.

"I love you more, Holly Sherman," he replies, pulling me into his arms. "What do you say to a little rest since you were so sick a little bit ago?"

"As long as we're together, I'm down with that," I reply.

Chapter Fifteen

Rebel

“Thanks for driving us, Paul,” I say as we head to the hospital. “She’s been sick since the night of our wedding and hasn’t been able to keep anything down.”

I’m sitting in the back with Holly leaning against me. She’s so pale and while I don’t know how it’s even possible, she’s lost even more weight since we got married five days ago.

He looks in the rearview mirror as I speak, merely nodding at my words. “Esther said something wasn’t right and that she has her suspicions but wouldn’t tell me what they were.”

Despite the seriousness of the situation, I smirk because I have my own ideas about what’s going on with my wife. I tried mentioning it to her once and she was so adamant that it couldn’t be possible, I decided to keep it to myself.

“I don’t think this is necessary,” Holly grumbles. “It’s just a stomach flu or something, is all.”

“Most of those resolve in a few days, pumpkin,” Paul gently tells her.

“Whatever,” she grouches, crossing her hands across her chest. I kiss the top of her head and grin at Paul who merely shakes his head.

In no time at all, we're pulling into the doctor's office and after Paul gets my chair out of the back of the truck, I transfer over then motion for Holly to climb onto my lap. She huffs and rolls her eyes but does it which has Paul chuckling as he follows us inside.

"There's no way I'm pregnant," Holly tells the nurse who is holding out the cup for her to give a urine sample.

"Mrs. Sherman, the doctor wants to rule everything out, including a possible urinary tract infection, so you need to provide us with a sample," the nurse reiterates, having already told her twice.

"Ugh, fine. I hope I can squeeze out enough seeing as I haven't been able to hold down anything for almost a week now," Holly says, grabbing the cup. Giving me a glare, she stomps off to the restroom while I look at the nurse.

"It's possible she could be," I admit. "The night before my accident we had sex."

"Pregnancy is always a possibility unless you're abstaining from sex," she replies. "I'm sure it's been a lot with everything you've obviously gone through as well."

"She's been a saint through all of it," I admit. "She never left my side when I was in the hospital, then was with me in rehab every single day."

"You've got a good woman," the nurse says as we see Holly exit the restroom. She still has an obstinate look on her face, but it clears when she sees me.

"Okay, where to now?" Holly asks.

"You'll be in Room Three," the nurse announces. "Follow me."

“How did this happen?” Holly murmurs, looking down at the paperwork the woman at the checkout handed her as we leave.

“I know your grandmother taught you about the birds and the bees,” I tease.

She huffs out a breath and stares at me. “Really? You’ve got jokes?”

“Honey, this isn’t a bad thing,” I remind her. “The girls are gonna be so excited, don’t you think?”

A look of wonder crosses her face at my words as she nods. “They really will be but who knows what they’re going to request.”

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“Well, they’re too young for us to explain that whether it’s a boy or a girl depends on you. Not wishes to shooting stars, or prayers, or anything else,” she replies.

As I help her into the truck, Paul is there to make sure I transfer safely, then he gets my wheelchair into the back before he slides into the driver’s seat and buckles up.

“Everything good?” he finally asks once we’re on the road toward home.

“Pappy, you’re going to have a new great-grandchild in about six or so months, give or take,” Holly replies.

His smile splits his face almost in two as he says, “Well, I’ll be. Your grammy was right.”

“Grammy knew?” Holly asks.

“She suspected that’s what was going on,” Paul replies. “But she also took into consideration how emotional you’ve been too.”

“Shoulda just asked Grammy I guess,” she murmurs, making me chuckle. She mock glares at me then states, “You know I’m gonna get as big as a house. I did with both girls.”

“And I’ll enjoy every single minute, sweetheart,” I tell her.

It’s not long before we’re home and once the girls are back in their playroom, I watch as Holly tells Esther our news.

“Did you already make an appointment with the obstetrician?” Esther questions.

“The doctor sent over a message. I’m just waiting on a callback to get one scheduled,” Holly replies. “I guess I’m gonna have to stop waitressing now.”

“Babe,” I growl out. “It’s not like we’re hurting for money.”

“I know, but gosh, I enjoy doing it. Plus, I’ve been tucking the tips aside for Christmas like I did last year,” she admits. “Morris is gonna miss me.”

“Morris will get over it,” I retort. “My wife isn’t going to be hauling trays of food and alcohol all over the damn place and risk her health or that of my baby’s.”

“Caveman,” she grumbles, grinning at me.

“Maybe so, but I’m your caveman,” I remind her, leaning in to kiss her nose. “Now, how about you go and rest for a bit. Your grandfather’s gonna run me out to the clubhouse since we have a meeting.”

She yawns then says, “I guess I could do with a nap.”

“Anything else?” I ask Ash, who’s been holding down the fort while I’ve been at home healing.

“Naw, Pres, all the businesses are making bank, and we’re on target to do the renovations of the one we want to open once everything’s done,” he replies.

“Gotta say, I appreciate all of y’all pulling more weight since this shit happened,” I tell my brothers as I wave down at my chair.

“Pres, we’re a brotherhood, remember?” Prophet asks. “Now, how about we get you back home so you can check on your wife and the girls.”

“Those girls are something,” Data adds. “May need to consider buying or investing in a firing range and ammo store, Pres.”

Laughter reverberates around the room as I flip off my IT guy. “Fucker,” I growl out. “They’re not dating until they’re at least forty, so I should be okay.”

“How’s Holly feel about that?” Prophet asks. “Because I don’t foresee that happening, Pres.”

I shrug then reply, “She’ll listen to reason, I’m sure.”

“Should we start a betting pool?” Ash asks the other brothers.

“Might not be a bad idea, I’ve been looking at some modifications for my bike,” Psycho replies.

“Pres, hate to say it, but I think you’re screwed. We’ll start looking for a storefront

we can convert to an ammo store that has land for a firing range,” Fox, the club’s SAA states.

“Fine, whatever. Anything else?” I ask, gavel in hand. I’m ready to get home to my girls and see how my ol’ lady is feeling. Thankfully, the doctor did call in a prescription for anti-nausea medication so hopefully she’ll be able to keep food and fluids down. My biggest concern, of course, was she was getting dehydrated, and she is a little bit, but the doctor knows Esther and told Holly that her grandmother has all the tricks to keep us from having to take her to the hospital

“No!” is yelled out in unison so I quickly slam down the gavel then wait until the room clears before following Prophet and Ash outside. Paul dropped me off but left when the brothers told him they’d get me back home. I think they secretly are hoping that Esther is cooking so they can stay for dinner.

Assholes. Of course, I think that with a grin on my face because they’re loyal as hell and some of the best men I’ve ever known who’ll always have my back, as well as my family’s. What more could I possibly ask for?

Holly

We're sitting with Samuel as we wait to see what Myra's sentence is going to be. It's been a long six months as Myra kept wanting a jury trial, but her attorney finally convinced her that a bench trial was in her best interest, given the charges pending against her. I squeeze Samuel's hand as the bailiff brings Myra, chained and handcuffed, into the courtroom.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen, I think as she shuffles to the table to stand next to her attorney. Despite her circumstances, she does glare at each one of us, which has Rebel smirking. He's finally back on two feet and has his new bike since Myra's insurance company decided they'd cover those damages. Unfortunately, his medical bills and ongoing issues due to the injuries he sustained resulted in us having to retain an attorney because they were trying to lowball him on their settlement offer.

Fuck that noise; my husband has permanent hardware in his body, and every time the weather changes, I know he hurts, even though he never says a word. The only reason I'm aware of that fact is because he spends more time in the pool when that happens. Rebel's insurance company has already settled their claim for his policy limits, which means our bank accounts are quite healthy, even with paying out copays for the upcoming baby.

"All rise," the bailiff intones as the door behind the judge's bench opens and the judge steps through in his black robes.

We all stand until the judge is in place, then are directed to sit back down, while Myra and her attorney remain standing. "Myra McAfee, you've been charged with

hit-and-run, attempted murder, serious bodily injury due to an automobile accident, and fleeing the scene without rendering aid. How do you plead?" the judge asks.

"Guilty, Your Honor," Myra says, her voice low.

"Mrs. McAfee, after reviewing the police report, as well as all the scene photos and additional information provided by the injured party's attorney, I find your actions to be heinous and egregious. Furthermore, the fact that you have continually delayed these proceedings due to your unwillingness to own up to your guilt does not weigh in your favor whatsoever. The injured party has lifelong issues related to the damages you caused and as such, while your attorney has requested leniency due to your age and the fact this is your first offense, I cannot in good conscience even consider that at all. Therefore, I'm giving you the maximum sentence of twenty-five years to life, with the possibility of parole after you've served at least twenty years."

Myra starts to splutter in protest, but quickly shuts up at the judge's glare. He continues and says, "You'll be transported back to the local jail until you're moved to prison. It is the hope of this court that during your time there you think about your actions and strive to become a better person. Court is adjourned." He strikes his gavel on the desk then stands, which has all of us hastily getting to our feet as he leaves through the door behind his bench.

"Well, this first part was kind of sucky, but at least we're on to a good rest of the day," Rebel says, which has Myra turning in our direction.

Since I'm standing, it's impossible to miss the fact that I'm heavily pregnant. Not only that, but Samuel is on one side of me, Rebel is on the other, and Pappy's next to him. Grammy has the girls out in the hallway since we're going to another courtroom to finalize the girls' adoption today as well.

"What in the world? I always knew you were a slut," Myra hisses as her attorney tries to get her to shut up. "And you," she continues, glaring at Samuel, "you always did

favor her more than your own son!”

Samuel shakes his head in shocked denial and even though I suspect he wants to say something to refute her words, instead he places his hand on my lower back and leans in to whisper, “Let’s go, sweetheart. She’s got nothing to say that I wanna hear.”

“I love you, Samuel, I hope you know that,” I reply. If I thought I could get away with it, I’d race over to Myra and pound her face in for how she’s always treated Samuel, as well as what she did to Rebel. Unfortunately, the further along in this pregnancy I am, the more protective Rebel is, so I doubt I’d even get close enough to spit on her. More’s the pity.

“Yeah, we’ve got two little girls who are waiting outside,” Rebel says. “Then a party at the clubhouse, of course.”

Rolling my eyes, I allow the three men to surround me as we leave the courtroom, Myra’s unhappy shrieks as she fights against being removed ringing in our ears. What just happened can now be relegated to the past; it’s time to look forward to our future.

“Mina and Ruby Barnes, will you two step forward?” the female judge asks.

I watch as Mina and Ruby take their places next to Rebel, who has already answered the few questions Judge Claussen asked him. Each girl grabs one of his hands and I have to swallow back my tears when I see how gentle he is with each of them.

“Mina, I’ve heard Mr. Sherman explain why he wants to adopt you and your sister, Ruby. How do you feel about what he said?” Judge Claussen questions.

Mina, my precocious, impressionable, loving little girl looks at the judge and says, “He’s already our daddy, Mrs. Judge. Me and Ruby love him because he plays with us, and he takes care of us and our mommy. This just means we aren’t illegal anymore.”

Soft laughter surrounds me as I watch the judge hold back her obvious amusement at my daughter's words. "What about you, Ruby?" she finally manages to ask.

"He gives me piggyback rides and when he had his wheelchair, we got rides then, too," Ruby admits. "I don't like being illegal, though. Are you going to fix that for me and my sissy?"

"I think I can do that for both of you young ladies. Now, a lot of what's on these papers in front of me is a bunch of legal words that most adults don't understand, but what it means is that from today, you'll be known as Mina and Ruby Sherman. Congratulations, Mr. Sherman, you have two bouncing little girls to love and take care of!"

I'm sure this isn't normal courtroom behavior, but the brothers let out a round of cheers as Rebel scoops up both girls in his strong, capable arms, his smile so wide he looks like his face is going to split. Over the noise, the judge motions for quiet and everyone turns their attention back to her.

"It also looks like congratulations are in order for a new baby for you and your wife, Mr. Sherman," Judge Claussen advises. "May y'all have a long and happy life."

"We're having a baby brudder!" Ruby exclaims, clapping her hands. "Me and Mina are gonna help Mama take care of him."

I shake my head as laughter bubbles out of my mouth and tears flow down my face. "Thank you," I mouth to the judge, who merely smiles at me. "Girls, are we ready to go party at the clubhouse?" I ask as Rebel makes his way to my side, both girls hanging on him like they're spider monkeys or something.

I worried when they first started doing that after he was completely cast-free, but he promised he'd never allow them to be hurt, and they've been so starved for good affection from a father figure, I finally relented.

“Let’s head out to the clubhouse,” he murmurs against my lips. “Seems the club girls and your grandmother have been in cahoots about some things.”

My brow raises at his words; while the club girls are pretty chill for the most part, I can’t understand in what world my grammy and them would have anything to collaborate over. Guess I’m about to find out.

Rebel

“You and the girls did well, Esther,” I say, my arm going around Holly’s grandmother. When we got here, we found out that today was a dual-purpose party. The first part, of course, was to celebrate Mina and Ruby legally becoming my daughters, but the second part was a baby shower for Holly.

“While I don’t claim to understand why they’d willingly choose their lives, they’re good girls, Rebel,” she says, patting my hand. “Plus, I know Holly doesn’t really have a lot of friends per se thanks to her previous life before you came along. You’ve given her a bigger family and Paul and I couldn’t be more thankful that you decided to approach her in the grocery store.”

“She and the girls are my world,” I reply, my voice husky with emotion. “Before she came along, I had my brothers but little else since my life before was definitely not one to write home about. Now, I have y’all, Samuel, Holly, Mina, Ruby, our little man coming soon, and my brothers. I’d say it’s been a win-win for both of us, wouldn’t you?”

“Absolutely. Now, I think maybe some of the rest of the boys might find their one, don’t you?” she asks, looking pointedly at where Ash is arguing with one of the waitresses from the club’s bar.

Marnie’s a bit of an enigma. None of us know her story and while we have a basic background check on her to make sure she wouldn’t bring trouble to the club, seeing

her trading barbs with my vice president has me wondering what's going on.

"I see it too," Holly whispers, sidling up to my side. "Do you think maybe there's something there between them?"

"No clue, but we're not getting in the middle of it," I instruct.

She smirks at me and says, "Whatever you say, hubby dear."

I can't help the snort that escapes my lips because I know my wife well enough to know she's going to jump into the fray with both feet. I just hope she waits until our little man comes first. The thought of her insinuating herself in anything right now gives me cold chills. That could be the caveman in me, I don't know, but if I could wrap her in bubble wrap until she delivers, I'd be perfectly okay.

"Guess we're both going to have to wait and see what happens, sweetheart," I tell her. "Now, let's go see what all we got for our little guy so we can see what else we're going to need."

"Sounds like a plan to me. Can we make a pitstop at the cake table first? Our son wants another piece," she teases.

"Of course, he does," I reply, chuckling. Once Holly got past the first few months, she's been able to eat without any problems and she's done what she said she would do; gotten huge as our son has grown. Granted, she's always going to be beautiful to me, especially with the pregnancy glow she's got going on, but I know once he arrives, she'll be stressing. Still, if she wants another piece of cake, I'm not gonna deny her.

Never will.

Whatever she wants, if it's within my power to get it for her, I'll do so.

As we pass Ash and Marnie, I see him pull his hand through his hair in frustration.
Yeah, that situation is definitely one to watch.

The end...