



# Iona's Christmas (Royal Bastards MC: Camden Maine Chapter #3)

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**Category:** Action&Adventure

**Description:** Iona begged Warden to allow her to plan and celebrate Christmas. It was a holiday the Camden Chapter had dropped long ago. But Iona had memories of happy, fun-filled Christmases, and she wanted them back. It was one step on her path to make up for the pain and hurt she'd caused a long time ago.

Even as she plans it, some old adversaries come out of the woodwork, determined to let Iona know they are watching. Iona struggles to hold on to her Christmas Spirit as her circumstances change, and she begins to learn what is expected of Warden's old lady. Lindy takes her protégé in hand and starts teaching Iona how to be the perfect Queen Bee.

Two new faces arrive at the club, begging for sanctuary and surprising the club with their presence. Warden sees an opportunity to grow his special MC and takes it. A wounded soul ventures out for the first time with disastrous results. And finally, an enemy shows some of his hand... what will Warden make of it? Amongst all this, Iona is determined that the club celebrates and ploughs ahead, even when it seems Santa himself is sabotaging her!

**Total Pages (Source):** 8

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Iona.

I sat on mine and Warden's bed as I stared at a battered old shoe box. Whether I'd gone, that box had come with me. But I'd not looked in it for years. Quite simply, I had not been able to. I took a shuddering, deep breath and lifted the lid. The smell of lavender hit me, and I smiled as I reach down and touched the sprigs tied with a faded purple ribbon.

They were over fifteen years old, yet their scent remained. Probably because they'd been locked in this box for so long. I removed them carefully and closed my eyes at the item underneath them. It was a tiny gold ring, one that I'd cherished, and it happened to be a set of three.

"Babe?" Warden asked softly.

I lifted my face and offered him a trembling smile. Warden frowned and, reached out with a finger and wiped a tear from my cheek. Wow, I'd not even known I was crying.

"Sorry," I replied, wiping the tears away.

Warden sat down on the bed and looked down at the box in my hands.

"You kept it?" he asked in wonderment as he touched the ring.

"Of course. I may have hated you, but I still loved you," I sniffed.

Warden smiled warmly and cupped my face, offering me a kiss. I leaned into it, needing his heat and love. Warden broke it off and put his hand inside his tee.

“Huh,” I muttered as he pulled out a thick gold chain with a ring on it. It was one of the missing two. “You kept it.”

“Of course. I may have hated you, but I still loved you,” Warden teased, and his lips curved into a smile. I smacked his abs for being annoying.

Warden had bought me, Rosalea, and himself a ring with his first wage packet. He’d been sixteen and so proud of himself. I’d been ten at the time and so had Rosalea. Warden had sworn that we’d never be apart. How I’d let him down.

“What else is in there?” Warden asked.

I showed him the sprig of lavender, and his eyes crinkled. Warden bought me it when my mother had disappeared on another of her trips and left me alone as usual. Remembrance shone on Warden’s face as he touched it gently with a finger.

I reached into the box and pulled out a stack of pictures. They were of Warden, Rosalea and me when we were younger. Before everything went to shit. Before Berserker and Pearl split up. My favourite was a picture of Berserker, and he was bending his knees with his arms wrapped around us. Warden stood in the middle with Rosalea and me either side of him.

“I wondered where that’d gone,” Warden whispered, taking it from me.

“I did not steal it. It was mine,” I said, and Warden smiled.

“Didn’t we all get a copy?” he asked.

“Yeah,” I replied as I noticed a picture of him, Oracle and Undertaker. “Look at your clothes,” I teased.

“The clothes weren’t bad, the hair style, however, Jesus,” Warden complained as he grinned.

I finally found the Christmas pictures I’d been looking for. I’d spent quite a few Christmases with Warden’s family. My own parents had been severely lacking in the parent department.

Slowly, I looked at them and handed them over to Warden. That bittersweet pain was in his eyes, as well as mine. Good memories with Berserker, which Pearl had stamped and shit all over. Rosalea and I had lost everything because of Pearl’s bitterness and hate. Now, we were struggling to claim it back.

“I want a happy Christmas,” I whispered.

Warden shifted his ass and wrapped me in his arms, and dropped a kiss on my head.

“Plan it, Iona, I know I said before to do so, but I miss that as well. Make this a Christmas to remember,” Warden muttered.

“I will do,” I promised.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Iona

I plan Christmas exactly how I want. Warden's orders. The problem was I'd no idea how to do it. I ran through the car lot, heading towards the clubhouse in a sheer panic. I had been fine last night when Warden had fucked my brains out, and I'd fallen to sleep immediately. But this morning, as soon as his Harley roared, I woke and panicked. That fear had built exponentially since I opened my eyes.

"Slow your ass down!" Spice ordered as me as I rushed past him. I skidded to a stop. Lindy!

"Lindy's inside?" I asked.

"Yeah?"

"Oh, thank God." I threw my arms around Spice, kissed his grizzled cheek and, darted into the clubhouse and ran smack bang into a brick wall.

One of the biggest assholes in the club reached out and steadied me as I rocked backwards. I gazed upwards at Bogeyman and gulped. He had his usual scowl on his face.

"Who's after you?" he demanded, moving me behind him and looking out through the door.

"No one," I whispered as wariness replaced panic. Somehow, facing Bogeyman, I wasn't so worried about Christmas now.

Bogeyman turned and gazed at me intently.

“You’re planning Christmas?” he asked, puzzled.

I wondered if I’d said that out loud and then I remembered his ‘talent.’

I nodded silently as Bogeyman’s frown turned to a confused expression.

“Why?” he demanded.

“Because we used to have some great ones until they were ruined for everyone. I want Warden to have a memorable holiday,” I whispered.

Bogeyman kept holding my gaze as he stared into my eyes. “You mean that, but you want all of us to have a good Christmas.”

“Yes.”

“Go on, find Lindy. She will help,” Bogeyman replied. “She’ll probably be in the kitchen because those lazy sluts left it a shithole.”

“Thanks,” I said, skittering away quickly.

“Iona!” Bogeyman called, and I stopped and looked.

“You are right to fear me. But I won’t hurt you as long as you’re loyal to Warden and the club. You’ve changed, I can see that, and I approve. You’re becoming the woman you should always have been, just keep loving him and let him love you back. One day, someone will look at you like you do Lindy.”

With that, Bogeyman stomped away and left me standing there, open-mouthed.

Who'd have known the humongous enforcer had a sweet side?

"Never voice that thought," Bogeyman threw over his shoulder as he exited the clubhouse. A smile crossed my face as I hurried towards the kitchen, offering an idle wave at some of the brothers and sisters in the common room.

"I said, fucking get down and scrub that floor. If you don't, you'll be cleaning it with your tongue!" Lindy was hissing as I entered.

I pursed my lips and refused to smile, although the temptation was there. Standing in front of Lindy were the club's whores, and they weren't looking happy.

Lolita had been here the longest and thought she was the equivalent of an old lady. Peanut, Kiki, Maiden, Siren, Lolli, and Silky stood glaring at Lindy. There were also three men I had never seen before. Curious who they were, I watched silently. If I interfered, I'd undermine Lindy, so I stayed quiet.

"Ain't cleaning this shit up; those lazy bitches can," Lolita spat at Lindy.

Lindy's eyes narrowed.

"I know you think you are something, Lolita, because you've been here so long. And yeah, you're in charge of the club sluts, but I am an old lady, and you don't back-chat me," Lindy warned.

"I'm needed more than you," Lolita smirked.

"Last chance, clean up or take the punishment," Lindy replied.

"You screw one man, I fuck most of them. Where do you think you rank in comparison to me? Start being nice to me, you may wear a cut, but you don't hold the

pull I do,” Lolita said.

“Clean the kitchen,” Lindy ordered.

“If you’re that bothered, do it yourself,” Lolita snapped and, in blatant disrespect, turned her back on Lindy like she was nothing.

I began seething as Lolita shrugged. The other whores laughed and made faces at Lindy.

“Why don’t you take your dried-up cunt and disappear? We’d keep Spice happy,” Kiki twittered.

I winced. That was a huge mistake. Everyone knew that Spice wasn’t to be messed with.

“Yeah, he might want some tight, smooth skin that ain’t wrinkled,” Maiden suggested.

Lindy moved before I saw her. Lolita’s head smashed off a worktop twice, and she collapsed dazed to the floor. Lindy had her fist in Kiki’s hair and rammed her headfirst into a wall. Lindy then hauled back and smacked her straight in the nose. We all heard the crack, and I knew it was broken. Maiden paled as Lindy came for her next.

Lolli moved towards Lindy as her back was turned, and I reached out and yanked her away. Lolli looked surprised as I spun her around and, punched her several times and swept her legs out under her.

“Anyone else want to interfere?” I demanded, and the remaining sluts shook their heads.



Lindy was pummelling Maiden hard and finally knocked her out. Kiki was wailing on the ground, curled up and holding her nose when Lindy kicked her in the ribs twice. Lindy stormed at Lolita with determined strides. She grabbed Lolita by her hair, dragged her to her knees, and forced her head towards the floor.

“Start licking,” Lindy demanded.

Lolita shook her head. Lindy rammed it into the ground this time. I saw a gash open on her forehead.

“You were warned, cunt. I told you to mop, or you’d lick it clean. I never say shit I don’t mean,” Lindy hissed.

“You’ll get yours, bitch. What do you think the brothers will say? Your cunt’s not worth what mine is,” Lolita spat.

Lolita shook her head, and Lindy smashed her head again, and this time Lolita’s nose broke. Lindy ripped out a handful of Lolita’s hair, and Lolita screamed, and Lindy’s boot made contact with her ribs.

Lindy held Lolita’s face down, and Lolita let out a sob. A few more punches and a threat to carve Lolita up got the result Lindy wanted. Lolita began licking the floor. Lindy looked at the other sluts.

“Get on your knees and start licking. You were told to clean the floor, you’d thought you’d disrespect me,” she seethed.

All bar the men, who’d apparently been putting a food delivery away, dropped to their knees.

A hand wrapped around my waist, and I jumped as Warden drew me in close. Behind

him ranged some of the brothers. Lolita, on seeing them, sat up.

“Look what she did to me!” she cried to Pipe.

“And? Did you disrespect an old lady?” Pipe asked, not seemingly bothered.

“She told me to clean up,” Lolita screeched.

“Am I missing something? Did you get a cut I don’t know about?” Warden demanded. Lolita looked at him and tried to seem alluring. Warden sneered, and she dropped her expression.

“I’m the boss of the girls,” Lolita replied.

“You’re in charge of shit. Lindy’s in charge of you as an old lady. You’ve got no rights like she has. Who the fuck did you think you were disrespecting?” Vogue snapped.

“I didn’t disrespect her,” Lolita snapped.

“Lie,” Soul said from the back of the crowd.

“I heard everything. Are you calling me a liar?” Vogue demanded.

“She has no right to order me about!” Lolita cried.

“Think again. Lindy has every right, as does Iona and Rosalea. I’ve seen how you interact with them. Iona is Warden’s old lady, and Rosalea a Princess. You’ve got too big for your boots,” Vogue snapped.

“I’m important to the club!” Lolita exclaimed.

“Lie,” Soul intoned, and I hid a smile.

Lolita sent him an annoyed glare.

“This is your last warning. All of you. Disrespect an old lady, member or family member again, any of you, and you are gone. There’ll be no further warnings, and I do not give a fuck whose dick you’re sucking. Your sluts, and if you ain’t screwing one of us, then you earn your keep.

“You get food, money, an allowance and a roof over your head. Don’t get that for fucking a brother. You’ve gotten lazy, and the clubhouse is looking untidy. Not anymore. Earn your keep and not just on your back,” Warden snapped and led me away.

“Where those three men's new prospects?” I asked.

Warden snorted.

“No, they’re the male club sluts for the sisters,” Warden answered, and I stopped dead and stared at him in surprise.

“What?” I exclaimed.

“Vogue, Dynamo, and Dare have needs too. Levi, Rowan and Riley are their whores,” Warden explained.

“Wow,” I gasped, really surprised.

“What?” Warden sought, looking annoyed.

“That is progressive for you,” I replied, and Warden began to laugh.

“That’s what’s surprising you?” he asked.

“Well, yeah. There’s a lot of testosterone and big dick swinging in the club. I’m a little stunned you have male sluts for the sisters,” I said.

Warden laughed even harder. Several of the family looked over with curiosity and surprise on their faces.

“Iona’s shocked we have men whores for the women,” he explained, and the brothers also chuckled.

“Do you share them? Like the men do those bitches?” I asked Vogue. This was damn interesting to me.

“We could do, but we seem to have settled on a guy each. To be honest, I don’t want a man dipping his cock inside me that has been in Dynamo,” Vogue answered with a slight smile.

“Wow,” I replied.

“They are not our boyfriends. They’re here to service us, and that’s all. Get treated the same as those bitches,” Vogue carried on, explaining.

“Do they share a building with them?” I asked, wrinkling my nose.

“No, they have their own house on the compound. If they are caught fucking those whores, they’re gone. I won’t have a dick inside me that’s been in one of them,” Vogue replied.

I noticed Rook wincing and wondered why.

“Warden! I’ve just had a vision: Cécile is coming with Etienne. Something is wrong, and I can feel terror emanating from her,” Oracle murmured, approaching us. “Cécile is fleeing someone.”

“When?” Warden asked, running his hands through his hair.

“Soon. I can almost taste her fear. Etienne is frightened too,” Oracle explained.

“Anything else?” Warden demanded.

“No, that’s it, and it was just a flash. But I got the sense of family,” Oracle mused. “Ours.”

“Okay,” Warden said.

I wanted to ask who Cécile was but knew better than to question Warden in front of club members. The frown on his face told me Cécile was someone he cared about.

“Babe, I hate to ask. Could you get the guest suite ready? If Cécile has left Louisiana, something is seriously wrong. And the fact she has not contacted me by phone means she’s travelling incognito,” Warden asked.

“Of course. Should I make up two rooms?” The question would let me know if this woman was someone Warden had once slept with.

“I have no idea. Nobody knows the truth behind Cécile and Etienne’s relationship and, not for lack of asking. All they ever say is Etienne is her anchor,” Warden replied.

“Anchor?”

“Yeah. Cécile says that strong psychics suffer for their gift. But if they discovered what is called an anchor, the pain lessens because the anchor absorbs some of the backlash. The anchor is someone that is their balance, that soaks up their overflow, but it doesn’t affect them,” Warden continued to explain.

“Am I yours?” I asked, desperate to know the answer.

“I’m not strong, babe, but I am calmer around you. My gut feelings seem tighter more focused than before you came along. So yeah, I guess you’re my anchor, even though I’ve never experienced pain. Not like Oracle and some of the others,” Warden said.

I basked in his words, happy to know I was helping him. Any burden I could take off him, I would.

Spice barrelled through the door and headed straight for Lindy. His eyes raked her face as he checked her over for marks and then picked up her hands. I winced as I saw she’d bruised and split her knuckles, and Spice looked at me.

“Clean her up,” he ordered and stormed into the kitchen. There were the sounds of shouting and then a loud slap and silence.

I led Lindy to a seat and, got the first aid kit and began cleaning her up.

Had Spice just hit Lolita? I gaped as he barrelled back out.

“She’s on her last warning,” he hissed, and Warden nodded.

“Did you hit her?” I whispered, shocked, and Spice turned to me in disbelief.

“Stupid girl. I’d never, not even a slut like that,” Spice spat angrily at me.

“We heard a slap...” I stuttered.

“I smacked a worktop,” he replied as he stalked over and crouched by Lindy.

“Don’t be mad at Iona. I thought you’d hit her too, and I know you won’t touch a female in anger,” Lindy chided.

Spice sent us both a look as he calmed down. He picked up Lindy’s hands, which I’d cleaned and put salve on, and kissed them.

“Use rings next time to mark them and save these precious fingers of yours,” Spice murmured.

“Didn’t quite have time to go and tool up,” Lindy chuckled.

“I’ll get you a coffee,” Spice said and strode off. Everyone else had returned to what they were doing, and the clubhouse had emptied quite a lot as they went off to their jobs.

“What did you want me for?” Lindy asked, turning to me.

I went to answer, but Warden tipped my head up and kissed me before stroking my cheek with a finger and disappearing into his office. I gazed after him, dumbfounded, as Lindy chuckled.

“Still feel that way when Spice kisses me,” she admitted, and I nodded slowly. “Why were you looking for me?”

“Christmas! Do you remember I mentioned it Halloween, and Warden claimed we could hold it? Warden had said it to keep me happy,, and I didn’t want to push him on it. I was going to get a tree and some food for dinner and keep everything basic,” I

replied.

“But?”

“That’s not what I really wanted to do. I wanna go all out. Last night, Warden caught me looking at some old pictures and I realised he wants Christmas like the old days. But I don’t know how to plan it. Can you help?”

Lindy lit up like a Christmas tree, and her smile was beautiful.

“I’d love to, Iona. Have you made any plans?”

“No. I do not have a clue. The holidays at... Pearl’s... it was quiet and understated. A small tree that was always decorated beautifully. A wreath on the door, a few garlands discreetly placed, and a quiet dinner. I don’t want that here. I would like it like the old days,” I said.

“Loud and chaotic,” Lindy suggested with a laugh.

“Yes. Exactly that. Bikers being bikers and the women looking after them. Lots of presents and food and drink. No club whores!”

“That won’t be hard. Lolita and the whores learned a lesson today. One day, you’ll have to throw down, too, Iona. Although it didn’t look like you’d have an issue doing so.” Lindy giggled.

“None at all. They need to remember their places. I’m surprised at the male... do we call them sluts?” I asked.

Lindy laughed again and shook her head.



“Service men,” she said and winked.

“That makes a whole lot of sense!” I exclaimed gleefully. “They are certainly good-looking and fit.”

“Nothing but the best for the sisters. Those three guys cause hardly any drama. The only time I’ve ever seen anything from them is when a slut hits on them, and they shut it down. They’ve been about for roughly a year and do as they’re told without issue.

“That’s what kicked today off. I was watching those lazy sluts lay around while the guys began sorting the kitchen. When asked to help, those bitches laughed at them. The men aren’t even meant to clean, they have different duties, like mowing the lawn and emptying the trash. But they’ve been cleaning shit in the clubhouse, letting those whores get away with murder, and they never complain,” Lindy explained.

“Well, that won’t happen again,” I agreed.

“Iona, I naturally lead, and I’ve been the only old lady for years. But you are the Queen Bee. You gotta start stepping up and letting me fade into the background. That doesn’t mean I won’t be here to guide you and offer support, but you now need to be the face of the old ladies. And I think you are just the start, that others will soon come along,” Lindy said, and I was touched.

“You have faith in me?” I asked.

“To become the woman who deserves to be Warden’s old lady? Yes. You’ve a way to go and a lot of confidence to gain, alongside respect and loyalty. You had that once and lost it, if you get it back, don’t squander it. The family won’t forgive again. But things like this? That will mean the world to them,” Lindy stated, and I nodded.

She was right. I did have a long way to go. But I had time, and that meant something. This was my new start, no misunderstandings, no hate, no accusations or anything else. I'd done the unthinkable and turned my back on Pearl, and it had been easier than I thought. Pearl's lies remained in the past, not in my future.

"Okay, I hear you," I said, and Lindy squeezed my knee.

"Now, I have some ideas, I hope you do too!"

"Well, I was thinking a huge ass tree. Like Berserker and the old timers used to buy, do you remember them, Lindy? Then, some fairy lights strung around the clubhouse with garlands and wreaths. A full Christmas dinner with hams and turkeys, but I remember some of the guys loved lamb, such as Fists did.

"Then we'd get several desserts because they all like different stuff. For the evening, I thought maybe some finger foods, things that are easy to bake or prepare. Of course, we would need to stock up on booze, make sure the bar is fully stocked," I said.

Lindy nodded her head in approval.

"I also thought about us all decorating the tree together and having a takeout and movie night. But I wanted to buy everyone something special to put on the tree," I mused, and Lindy leaned forward.

"Tell me everything," she ordered and settling in, I did.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Iona

T ogether, Lindy and I had banged out a plan by midday, and I was so excited about it. We'd even allocated days to do certain things. We had called Rosalea and included her so she didn't feel left out. Rosalea was now working with Soar at the tattoo parlour and enjoying herself immensely. She loved being a receptionist and bossing everyone about, and Soar had privately admitted to Warden that Rosalea was a real support.

I'd sniggered when I told my best friend that, as she'd blushed. In our previous jobs, criticise more than praise was practised. I'd not gone back to work, staying instead to help Warden out. Each week I ordered the food delivery and ensured that the laundry was done, although I was doing it more than the whores. Considering the amount of time I spent around the clubhouse, I was rather shocked I had not noticed the Service Men as I'd taken to calling them.

Warden had surprised me because he was all about being an alpha and swinging his dick. The others were the same. Even the sisters could bust balls like a man. But having guys who were basically club skanks was shocking to me because, as I said, so progressive.

A smile crossed my lips. Lindy had put the whores in their place, and the clubhouse looked cleaner than it had done for a few weeks. I could smell polish and bleach in the air. As Lindy pointed out, it was now my job to manage the bitches and make sure they did their work. I'd been uncertain since getting with Warden on how far to go. Nobody could or would dispute that Lindy was Queen Bee. No way was I stepping on her toes.

Lindy had earned her place, and despite my role as Warden's old lady giving me rank over Lindy, it didn't sit well to insult her by stealing her position. But I'd noticed Lindy deferring to me for certain things, and I was hoping we'd find a balance. Rosalea just deferred to both of us.

My job now was helping Warden in his office with his invoices and keeping the accounts. I knew that the club managed illegal shit, but that never crossed my path. Lindy had her own office and somehow, I thought, she dealt with that side. Warden paid me for my role, but I also had access to his card if I needed anything.

It had been something that we'd fought over. I wanted to earn my own money; Warden didn't want me to leave the compound, not after the threat McKay issued. He'd kicked off at Rosalea working for Soar. Warden had only agreed on the condition she worked the same shifts as Soar. Plus, Soar's artists weren't exactly men people argued with. Each of them would have been welcome to join the Royal Bastards if they wished to.

But I wasn't allowed off the compound without an escort, one of the family, and there was no way I was going to get a job elsewhere. Warden had said he'd let me, but my employer had better get used to me having a biker bodyguard. That settled that. I ended up working at the clubhouse for the MC.

And to be honest, I was scared of leaving the compound. What McKay had done to frighten me had given me nightmares. Warden slept soundly, but I woke up sweating and crying silently. If Warden knew how affected I was, he'd go crazy, and I did not want that. I needed Warden alive and whole, not hurt or killed. RMBC was one percenter, I wasn't stupid; I knew what the diamond on their cut meant. But there were lines they didn't cross. For McKay, there wasn't a single boundary he wouldn't break.

I glanced up as Fists came towards me.

“You doing that room?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m going to get it ready in a moment, and then I need to pop into town. Um, Fists, would you mind...” I replied.

Fists had begun walking away when I started speaking but stopped.

“What?” he demanded.

“I don’t want to go alone,” I muttered, and Fists stared at me. He didn’t say anything for a long time, and I squirmed.

“Get the guest rooms ready, Iona, and I’ll take you into town,” he said gently.

I was shocked that Fists had agreed and even more so that he’d been gentle. Fists and the old timers were certainly holding a grudge and did not care who knew it. They were never outright disrespectful or hateful, but they’d leave a room or ignore me completely.

“Thank you. I’m just...” I tried to explain, and Fists shook his head.

“McKay.”

“Exactly. He scares me,” I whispered.

“McKay should. The asshole is dangerous and unpredictable. Even with our boys’ and girls’ talents, I wouldn’t ever underestimate him. RBMC can take him out, and one day we will. But for now, we don’t need to start shit.”

“He still thinks Rosalea’s his daughter,” I offered.

“Good. Let him think that. It’ll protect Rosalea. If McKay finds out she’s not, all bets are off, and he’ll come for both of you. The kid’s murder is unsolved. McKay will put you both in the ground if he discovers Rosalea’s not his. That’ll start a war where it will end with the last man standing,” Fists said.

“I get it.”

“Good. Go ready that room and find me. I’ll be here,” Fists ordered and walked off.

???

Two hours later, I was sat in a reinforced SUV with Fists and Pipe, both riding their Harleys escorting me into town. I received some strange looks until people saw the cuts on Pipe and Fists’ backs, and then they turned away quickly. Nobody wanted to gain the attention of the RBMC.

I parked in Main Street as Pipe and Fists pulled in next to me. Fists opened my car door, and I climbed out.

“Where to?” he questioned.

“I need to visit some food shops and place a large order,” I answered, and Pipe wrinkled his nose.

“You couldn’t do that online?” he mumbled.

“No. I wanted to ensure they didn’t ignore my orders,” I stated, and Pipe nodded.

“Yeah. What’s this for?” he asked.

“Christmas.”

Pipe and Fists stared at me in surprise.

“Thought it was only you and Warden?” Pipe asked.

“No. Where did you hear that from?” I responded, confused.

“Warden. Prez said you were planning Christmas,” Fists replied.

“For all of us,” I explained, and both men looked at each other.

“Don’t know what I rightly feel about that, Iona,” Pipe mused thoughtfully.

“No? Don’t you remember a huge assed breakfast, lots of presents and dinner being served? Everyone falling to sleep in armchairs and on sofas? What about the evening meal where there were loads of food and drink, and we had music and people danced? Or we played games first and then did that,” I said.

“You remember that?” Fists replied, surprised.

“Yeah. Don’t you?”

“I do, kid. Just didn’t know that you remembered all that,” Fists murmured softly.

“I did. And I want it again this year. Lindy, Rosalea and I are planning this down to the finest detail. And making sure we get our food orders is paramount,” I said and headed towards the butchers we always ordered from.

Truthfully, we’d never had an order go missing, but you never knew what levels spite might rise to at Christmas. If someone got the chance to ruin the club’s happy time, I’m certain they would. Being face to face when I placed my order ensured things wouldn’t go walk abouts, be misplaced or get lost. I’d be able to sign off on the

delivery, and having two brothers with me would make any shopkeeper think twice about screwing me over.

After the butcher, I popped along to the other shops we used. I was pretty passionate about supporting local businesses and rarely bought from a chain store. Warden also encouraged us buying locally, mainly because we owed a lot of businesses in town.

As I crossed the road heading towards my favourite delicatessen when, I walked straight into Pearl. I froze as she stepped back and went to walk past before she realised it was me. A sneer appeared on her face as she took in my cut.

“Didn’t take him long,” she said.

“A pleasure to see you too,” I replied and felt a presence at my back and guessed Fists and Pipe were there.

“Your warden let you out,” Pearl sneered, trying to be clever with her words.

“I don’t have much to say to you, and I’m rather busy,” I responded, stepping away from her.

“Wait! My daughter? Rosalea?” Pearl asked.

“What about her?”

“Is she okay?” Pearl questioned, and Fists snorted.

“You’re seriously asking if Rosalea is good after she discovered the truth? That you lied to her father, to Warden, and to everybody else because you were a jealous bitch? That you destroyed a good man simply because you couldn’t accept his love. You knew who you got involved with, and if you had doubts, you shouldn’t have dated



Berserker. Your jealousy drove you to destroy everyone and everything around you. And you dare stand there and ask how Rosalea is?" I snapped.

Pearl didn't flinch or look away. She held my gaze.

"I asked you politely, how is my daughter?"

"Rosalea is very happy with her family. She has settled in perfectly well, almost as if she's never been away," Pipe said.

Pearl flinched then.

"And she is planning a Christmas bonanza with this one. It's like they've never been away," Fists added insult to injury.

"Was I talking to you?" Pearl jibed.

"I do not care, but you stopped our Prez's old lady," Pipe replied.

To my utter amazement, Pearl ignored them and faced me. "Rosalea is planning Christmas with the MC?"

"I don't think that's any of your concern. You've burned your bridges with me, and my business isn't yours," I stated. Inside, I was shaking.

Pearl had been a huge part of my life and had replaced my parents as a mother. But I looked at her now and realised how manipulative and cruel she was. According to Pearl, everything in the world revolved around her. I recognised the kindness she had shown me hadn't been that at all.

It had been about having another person adore Pearl and boost her fragile ego. The

years of Pearl guiding me had been about Pearl getting one over on Warden and Berserker. She'd used me to hurt Berserker and Warden. I'd never meant anything to her other than being a weapon to hurt good men.

As for Rosalea, I'd no idea if Pearl really loved her child or not. But Rosalea and I had been badly damaged by Pearl's actions, and we weren't the only ones. Berserker had gone to his grave thinking Rosalea was McKay's daughter, and Warden had believed it for ten years. Instead, Rosalea had been Berserker's child all along. It was time Rosalea could never get back with her father or Warden. And all because Pearl was a total bitch.

"Don't back chat me!" Pearl exclaimed.

"You mean nothing. Now, if you don't mind, I have a family Christmas to plan," I said and stepped past her.

She reached out a hand, and Pipe knocked it away.

"Do not touch her. As far as you are concerned, Iona does not exist," he warned, and he and Fists took my sides as we walked off.

"Iona!" Pearl called. I didn't stop and kept walking.

"Are you okay?" Pipe asked as we approached the shop I wanted.

"Yup."

"Girl, you're shaking," Fists said.

"I hate confrontations. But it doesn't mean I can't hold my own. But that woman, for most of my life, I idolised her, and she was a lying, manipulative bitch. She shook

me. That was the first time I've seen her since the truth came out. To be honest, just want to go home and hide away. But that would be letting her win, I didn't lie and cheat. I was stupid enough to be gullible and believe her, but I wasn't out to destroy anyone. I won't let her shame me," I replied.

Fists reached out and caught my arm. Without a word, he pulled me in close and hugged me tightly.

"You look like you needed that," Fists said as he released me.

I offered a tremulous smile and held back tears.

"Let's offer my cheese," I whispered.

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Pipe was winking at a waitress as we sat in the diner to order food. Despite it being late afternoon, the Old Timers had decided they wanted lunch.

"Did you see that?" I asked as the woman walked away with our drink orders.

"What?" Fists asked.

"The diner is up for sale," I pointed out. There was a small sign in the window.

"Huh," Pipe replied.

"Weird. Because it's always so busy in here," I mused as I looked around. All but one table was taken, which seemed strange the business was being sold. It was a gold mine.

“You come here often?” Pipe inquired.

“I used to come at least three times a week with Rosalea for lunch, and we’d have dinner here on a Thursday,” I said. “It doesn’t make sense that the owner is selling because this is a nice little money maker.”

The waitress returned at that moment and snorted.

“What do you know?” Pipe asked, and she looked around.

“The owner has a gambling habit, horses, and it does not matter how successful this place is. He gambles the profits before they even hit the bank,” she murmured and placed our drinks down in front of us.

We ordered our dinner, and I could see how impressed they were by the quality of it.

“Decent chow,” Fists replied.

“They do really nice food. It is a shame they’re shutting. Rosalea will be upset too,” I declared, feeling sad. Why are people such idiots?

“If it’s a good money maker, Warden might be interested,” Pipe said.

“Oh. That would be great, especially if you keep the staff on. The cooks certainly would be hard to replace,” I suggested.

“The owner doesn’t cook?” Fists asked.

“Not that I’ve seen. He’s rarely here. The waitress over there seems to double as a manager.” I nodded to a woman who was serving a family with a friendly smile.

“I’m gonna hit the john, and we’ll make a move unless you’ve got anything else to do?” Pipe inquired as he rose to his feet.

I shook my head as Fists headed towards the till to pay and I glanced out the window and froze.

On a bike opposite the diner was McKay. He was flanked by his VP, Knife, and another biker. McKay was staring straight at me, and terror rose inside me. My throat tightened as I let out a tiny squeak, and McKay smiled. I swear he could smell my fear from where he was sitting. He raised his arm and saluted me before making a movement to imitate zipping his lips. Then he slashed a finger across his neck.

A hand landed on my shoulder, and I nearly screamed as I glanced up and saw Pipe. His other went to his cut, which he opened a little, and I spotted a weapon there.

McKay’s smirk disappeared, and he glowered, but Pipe’s warning was clear. I was protected by the RBMC, and I was a member of the club. Pipe yanked me back against him and held McKay’s gaze.

McKay sneered and reeved his bike before speeding away. His message had been sent. McKay was watching the compound and me. But Pipe had sent his own. One that McKay hadn’t liked.

McKay had no right being in Camden, and the fact he had appeared was cause for grief. This was RBMC territory, not Screaming Barons. I’d no doubt Warden would retaliate against this. He had to. Or McKay would think that he’d got one over us.

“Car now,” Pipe said as Fists returned. I nodded and hurried out of the diner. On the way back to the motor, I kept swivelling my head, looking for another sign of the Screaming Barons, but there wasn’t any.

We drove to the compound quickly and Warden was waiting with Undertaker. I'd not even switched the SUV off and Warden was dragging me from it. He drew me in close, and I relaxed into his arms, letting him comfort me.

"Bad day, baby?" he murmured, and I nodded. He stroked my hair as he turned us to face Undertaker.

"Get Dynamo and Vogue. We've got a point to make," he ordered to Undertaker. Our VP nodded and disappeared.

"You can update me fully. Let me deal with Iona," he said to Pipe and Fists. "Thanks for protecting her brothers."

"Nothing less than we'd do for your woman," Pipe replied, and he and Fists headed inside.

"If I weren't claimed by you, he'd have left me hanging," I muttered and let out a bitter laugh.

Warden sighed, he couldn't disagree.

"Shit will take time, Iona. You knew that. But they're slowly coming around. This Christmas thing is a step in the right direction," he replied.

"I know. I just want things to be perfect."

"Perfection doesn't exist, baby," Warden responded.

"Yeah, it does. I see it every day in you," I said.

Warden chuckled and kept rubbing my back. "First my mom and then McKay. You

didn't see anyone else, did you?"

"Nope, but I think Elvis might have popped up if we'd stayed," I quipped. The terror was subsiding. Just being in Warden's arms did that. He made me feel safe. There was nothing that couldn't be overcome with Warden by my side.

Warden was my safe space. The compound helped, but Warden was the one who'd always come for me. He was everything I dreamed he would be and more. Nobody could hurt me as long as Warden was around. The terror finally fled as Warden kissed my forehead. This man would slay dragons for me, and demons would quake in fear if they crossed him.

And I did not mean his powers or the abilities of the club. Warden was strong and capable and knew his own strengths and weaknesses and owned them. That was something a lot of people didn't or wouldn't face.

"When you go out, you'll need two on you at all times. Don't risk yourself, baby. Obey your escorts, they'll only be looking out for you," Warden said.

I nodded and felt better.

"What about Rosalea?"

"I think she is safe. As long as McKay thinks she's his daughter, he won't move on her. But he might try sending her a message, too. Meanwhile, I've one of my own to send," Warden replied.

"Should we warn her about Pearl and McKay?"

"Yes. Soar will keep an eye on her, and we've bullet proof glass in the parlour. Even so, he needs to be aware as well."

“Soar doesn’t have an ability if I remember correctly,” I muttered.

“Nope, but I’d hate to be anyone who pisses him off. His temper is a damn ability on its own. If Soar goes Nuclear, then everyone’s gotta duck and run,” Warden replied with a chuckle.

“Wow.”

“Come on, baby. Let’s head in. I’m sure Lindy will want to hear everything,” he said and walked me towards the doors with his arm around my shoulders.

In that moment, I was safe and brave. Fuck Pearl and McKay. They weren’t going to ruin my life.



## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Cécile

I drove towards the RBMC clubhouse. Etienne was beside me and kept looking over his shoulder. It was early hours of the morning. It was past two, but I knew someone would be on the gates and an officer would be around. I was miserable and on edge. I had detoured all over the damn country before heading here. For six weeks, I'd laid false trails and hoped I'd lose the fucker I'd attracted.

Etienne glanced over his shoulder again, looking for a tail. I wasn't sure who'd been hit the hardest, me or him. Leaving our home in New Orleans had been hard. I'd lived there fifteen years and Etienne for twelve. New Orleans suited us. Now, we were on the run and hunted. All because of my abilities.

"Head there, Cécile. We've got no tail," Etienne said wearily.

"Sure?"

"Yeah, let's get some rest," he replied.

I nodded and drove straight for the compound. As we hit the gates, I saw a figure appear out of the darkness. His stance was alert, and I knew he had a weapon in hand.

"What ya want?" he demanded from where he stood. Safely behind the gates, I wanted to also be protected by.

"Warden's expecting me. I'm Cécile, and this is my friend Etienne," I called back.

“Wait there. If you try to breach, I’ll open fire,” the person warned.

“Okay.”

A few minutes passed before someone approached us. I recognised the walk and build and nodded at Noble.

“Cécile, Etienne. We’ve been waiting on you. Come in,” he said.

The gates opened, and I drove inside and parked outside their clubhouse. Noble looked at our piece of shit car.

“Not your usual standard of travelling,” Noble noted.

“Nope, and I ache from that pile of crap. It is not a nice drive,” I replied, and both Etienne and Noble snorted. Etienne in agreement, and Noble in amusement.

Etienne reached in the back and pulled two rucksacks out.

“It’s nearly three. The guest rooms have been prepared, hit the sack Cécile and Warden will meet with you in the morning,” Noble said as we headed towards the clubhouse. It was a huge assed building and different to what I expected. The Maine chapter clearly liked their comfort.

We followed Noble down the stairs.

“There’s two bedrooms for you. The kitchen is full of food and coffee. Help yourself. This is where you’ll be staying and you and Etienne have the level to yourself,” Noble said as we entered an almost luxurious lounge area. The bedrooms were placed around it, and I spotted an open door showing the kitchen.

“There are bathrooms in there, small but functional. We prepared those two rooms there.” Noble pointed, and we nodded.

“Get some rest, guys, you both look fucked. You’re safe here. Warden will be waiting for you when you wake up,” Noble said and turned to exit.

“Thank you for getting up for us,” I called, and Noble shook his head.

“All officers take turns in staying up one night in twelve. We don’t leave the gate guard alone,” Noble replied.

“Thanks any way for the welcome,” I offered, and Noble grinned.

“That I’ll accept. Hit the sack, that’s an order,” he said and left.

“Bossy bastard,” Etienne muttered, but we headed for our bedrooms. I didn’t even bother undressing. I collapsed onto the bed and fell to sleep instantly.

???

The smell of bacon and eggs cooking woke me, and I yawned as I glanced down at my phone and was shocked. It had gone midday. I sat up quickly and headed for the bathroom. Once I’d done my business, which included brushing my teeth, I walked outside.

Etienne was in the kitchen cooking, but Warden and Undertaker were also present.

“Cécile,” Warden greeted me and passed me a mug of coffee.

“Nectar,” I murmured and sank into an armchair, cupping the heavenly beverage. I didn’t function until I had downed two cups of coffee. Sometimes, I needed more if

I'd been woken from a vision or prophecy.

Warden and Undertaker waited patiently as Etienne brought me in a second just as I finished mine first. He then put a plate of bacon and eggs in front of me.

"Scrambled and fried?" Undertaker asked, surprised.

"Best way for eggs. Spread the dippy yolk on the toast. Add scrambled and then bacon on top," I replied, shoving a mouthful of food in.

Warden's eyebrows rose. "When was the last time you ate properly?"

"About four days ago. And we haven't had a proper home-cooked meal since we fled New Orleans," Etienne inserted.

"You ran?" Undertaker inquired.

"Yes," I mumbled.

"Cécile, what's going on? Why not approach Jameson?" Warden demanded.

"Jameson can't keep me safe," I replied.

Warden and Undertaker sat up straight. I'd just issued insult to the National President.

"Not because of whatever reason you're thinking of," I added. "Thirteen months ago, bodies started cropping up, young women aged between fifteen and twenty-five. They were always discovered after a full moon. They'd been raped and tortured before being ritually sacrificed," I explained.

“Shit. Did you tell Jameson?”

“I’m not sure. The bodies were found in San Antonio, Texas. Wasn’t a Louisiana problem, so quite likely, Jameson wasn’t aware. I was asked by the Feds to come in. Worked with the cops before and have a good, solid rep. I didn’t mind going to help, especially when the youngest victim was a fifteen-year-old child.

“Etienne and I travelled to San Antonio, and I did my thing. I was able to give them some information, and that led them to a suspect. I went home because there was nothing more I could give them. We’re unsure what happened, but the individual fled, and two more bodies dropped. But the serial killer had somehow discovered my connection and was now sending me messages. They were followed by images of the dead girls, and it was horrific.

“We called the Feds back, and they provided some protection, but it didn’t work. The murderer began sending me gifts, and we realised he was focused on me. Which was bad news. The crunch point came six weeks ago when he dropped his last victim. The girl could have been my clone. It was a clear message. Then, my house was broken into by him, and we knew he had his sights locked on me.

“The Feds and cops could not protect me, I was dead if he got his hands on me. He’d sent messages about wanting to explore my brain and use me to find victims. He’s totally insane. Etienne and I packed bare minimum and fled in the middle of the night. Since then, we have been laying false trails everywhere and living off cash. We daren’t use a card and couldn’t show ID’s at a lot of hotels. We’ve been on edge and unsafe for weeks,” I said, drawing in a deep breath.

“Why not go to Jameson?” Undertaker asked.

“Because I’d be putting him and his family in a serial killer’s sights. There’re children there, Warden, I couldn’t risk them. And Jameson’s people, while good,

aren't you guys and you're the ones I need to survive," I replied.

"Cécile, are you sure he is targeting you?" Undertaker inquired.

"I've got every letter and a picture of every gift he sent me. The answer is yes. He's definitely coming for me. If I can hide, it gives the feds time to track him down. The guy's a lunatic and a murderer, but he is human and can't stay hidden forever," I replied.

"The Zodiac Killer did," Etienne mumbled, and I glared at him. Etienne shrugged.

"Shut up, smart ass," I retorted. Etienne had all the discretion of a bulldozer.

"So, you want protection?" Warden asked.

"Please. Just while Etienne and I decide where to land once the killer's caught. We won't be returning to New Orleans. It would be far too dangerous. And we both hate busy cities. New Orleans was palpable because... well, it was New Orleans. Plus, we didn't live in the city itself. But now we need to find a new home," I replied.

"What about Camden?" Undertaker suggested, and I was startled. I glanced at Etienne and even he looked shocked.

"We come as a pair," Etienne said, and Undertaker nodded.

"The offer was for both of you. In New Orleans, you blended in because there were so many frauds. You didn't stand out except when you started to grow your name. Despite all your attempts, you and Etienne became known. Join us. Cécile, you know all about the abilities our brothers and sisters have. You won't stand out amongst us," Undertaker continued, and Warden looked intrigued.

“I’ve been told what you put your prospects through, I don’t want to be cleaning, puke, piss and shit up. That’s a generous offer, but nah, I ain’t doing that,” Etienne said.

“You think about joining, and we’ll talk about prospect status,” Warden replied slowly.

“Don’t you need to vote on this?” Etienne asked.

“Nope. Because we discussed this when we first met you and the consensus was to make you an offer should an opportunity come up. This is the right time to give that. Even if you both decline, we’ll still give our protection,” Warden interrupted before Undertaker could say anything else.

“You would take both of us?” I asked, and Warden nodded.

“Etienne is your anchor; you can’t leave him, or you’d suffer. We don’t like causing innocents’ pain. We ain’t clean, but we have boundaries, Cécile. There’re lines we won’t cross, Jameson knows and allows us to run as we do. The club would benefit from having you, but I think you’d thrive being around genuine people with abilities. Pretending not to be the real deal had to be draining,” Warden added.

“Warden, you’ve no idea,” I exclaimed. What he said was true.

There were a lot of frauds in the quarter, and hearing them daily spinning bullshit stories to tourists was painful. Especially when I could see what was going to happen to them. In the end, I stayed well away from them all. When some idiot promised a couple love and a long, happy life, and I saw tears and death, it wasn’t a good thing.

“Yeah, I do. Don’t forget a lot of our club were alone until we found one another. I might have had Undertaker and Oracle, but we had to protect Oracle from those who

had used him,” Warden replied.

“Or who’d abuse him for being different. Oracle may’ve been jeered and tormented when we claimed he was epileptic, but it stopped everyone discovering the truth. Rather, he was teased and made fun of for something untrue than something true,” Undertaker added.

“And how many times do you think unscrupulous people attempted to grab Vogue and Dynamo? The underworld knows about them, and there’s some individuals who’d love to claim them. Except the women soon showed them they weren’t to be messed with,” Warden said.

“Dynamo only got trafficked because they hit her with a dart from afar. If they’d tried taking her straight on, they’d have failed. And even though they had taken her, they didn’t last long,” Undertaker explained, and I heard the envy in his voice.

“Dynamo still struggles,” I whispered, knowing that was true.

“Wisecrack is working with her,” Warden stated.

I could taste Dynamo’s hate and she wasn’t in the room.

“Wisecrack may be healing her pain, but her resentment is robust. Her memories are just as sharp as they were when you rescued her,” I murmured.

“Do you see something regarding Dynamo?” Warden demanded.

I did, but I didn’t tittle-tattle.

“Dynamo has a long path, Warden, but there is light at the end of it. That’s all I’ll tell you. If Dynamo wants to know more, she can come to me. But it’s not my right to



discuss what I see concerning her with you. You wouldn't like it if I did that to you. No. Trust Dynamo will find her way, but it'll be a struggle," I said firmly.

Warden and Undertaker both looked put out. They wanted answers and to heal their wounded road captain. I understood, but my point was valid. It was unethical for me to discuss someone's future with anyone else but that person. I didn't have much in my life, but I had ethics.

Warden and Undertaker rose to their feet.

"I'll inform the others of what you told us. Cécile, you and Etienne will be under lockdown with our protection. Just for a few weeks until we're sure you've not been followed. In the meantime, put together a list of items you need. I've no doubt you travelled light. Stay off your credit cards, and you'll use the clubs to order things. And pay us when you have access to your accounts," Warden said.

"I have a bank nobody knew about. I'll transfer money through that," I replied.

"Get with Cipher. If you give him all your accounts, he'll drain them into an untraceable account. That way, you can get your funds, but even so, use the clubs card for now," Warden ordered.

"Can he do that for mine, too?" Etienne asked.

"Yeah. Not a problem. Cipher could do this in his sleep," Undertaker replied.

"We'll think of your offer of joining," I called out as they walked to the exit.

"Do that," Warden threw over his shoulder.

Etienne waited until they'd left and laughed at me.

“What?”

“Babe, you know full well we’re going to take their offer. Why would we be here? Jameson could and would have protected us. You saw something and came here for a reason,” he said as he picked up our mugs.

“No. I won’t force this on you, Etienne. You’ve sacrificed enough for me. This will be your choice,” I replied, stiffening.

Did Etienne believe I tricked him into coming here? I’d never do that. Poor Etienne was stuck with me.

“Cécile, I haven’t given up anything for you. I can read your thoughts, woman; you really shouldn’t play poker. Don’t forget my past, my own history, and how I feel about your powers. My role is not one easily replaced. Without me, I know what you’d face. But I’m not cleaning up sick, piss and shit!” Etienne reiterated his stance.

I got to my feet and, walked over to him, and wrapped my arms around his waist. “I’d be lost without you.”

“Yeah, you would. You’d still be back in New York, struggling to cope with everything. Or actually, by now, you’d be in a lunatic asylum,” Etienne said cheerfully.

I growled because what else could I reply!

Iona

Warden informed me we had two guests and that they might need stuff. What kind of items was a mystery because ‘stuff’ could cover a lot of things. I grabbed my laptop and bounced down the stairs. I knocked on the door because of politeness, and a man

answered. Holy shit. My jaw dropped open as I took him in.

This had to be Etienne. This Cécile was a damn lucky woman. Etienne was tall, black and fucking gorgeous. He was as tall as the brothers; he had to be six foot four or five. His shoulders were made for a linebacker, and his waist was trim. Etienne's chest was as broad as Lord knows what, and jeans hugged thick, muscled legs.

"Yeah?" he rumbled, and I swear his voice made me shiver all the way through my body. Once I was done with this, I was hunting Warden down and banging his brains out.

"I'm Iona. Warden's old lady. He said you needed to order some stuff but didn't specify exactly what. Then again, he's a man; why would he?" I asked, and Etienne let out a bark of laughter.

"Cécile, this one is for you," Etienne called out and moved out of the way.

I entered and gaped at the woman who stood there as she stared back at me.

"You!" she exclaimed, which didn't sink in at first.

Cécile was beyond stunning. She had almond-coloured skin with striking bright hazel eyes. Her lips were a peachy red colour in the shape of a cupid's bow. Cécile boasted an hourglass figure that would drive men mad, and her hair was the shade of honey. She was about five foot six tall and had a natural warmth about her.

"Hi," I said and then realised what she'd cried. "What do you mean me?"

"Sorry, I spoke out of turn. I thought I recognised you," Cécile replied, looking embarrassed, and moved towards Etienne. It was almost as if she sought his protection. I studied her more carefully.

“You have got special abilities. The same... thing as the others,” I stated, and Cécile looked worried.

“You know about us?”

“Girl, I grew up with Warden, Undertaker and Oracle. I’ve been around those who are special for years,” I replied, trying to put her at ease.

“Yeah, I know,” Cécile whispered.

I tilted my head, running through the abilities I was aware of. “Are you a medium?”

“No, I do not see spirits, don’t wish that on me! I was more a prophet, but I seem to be leaning more towards being a seer or psychic. I am receiving visions of what will happen but also, I’m able to see the here and now,” Cécile answered.

“You’re another Oracle,” I said, grasping what Cécile meant.

“No, not an oracle... oh, you mean Oracle the person. Yes, like him, but more advanced,” Cécile replied.

“Because you have your anchor. I’m Warden’s, he says. I don’t quite see it, but I’ll go with it. Plus, it’s huge fun getting Warden riled up. So come on, tell me, what did you see about me?” I demanded as I sat down in an armchair and curled up.

Cécile regarded me as if I was an alien. I suppose I was, in a way. From my own experiences, I’d seen how individuals reacted when confronted with something different. Throw in powers that weren’t meant to exist? People became monsters.

“Just like that? No doubt or accusations?” Cécile asked, sitting down.

“Nope. If you were a fake, the club would know. Which means you’re the real deal. So come on, lady. Tell me what you saw!” I demanded.

I understood Cécile’s hesitation. Being accepted for what you are isn’t something that happens to most people. Someone always judges you or tries to change you. Life was so cruel and unfair. What the judgemental idiots didn’t realise or even try to understand was they didn’t ask to be born differently.

They went on about God’s will and abominations and blah blah, but if God was the all-seeing and powerful entity, they said, then he gave them abilities. Which means the ‘burn them at the stake’ twits were burning God’s gifts to mankind. That was how I saw it, and screw anyone who didn’t agree.

“You were a lot older than you are now. And you were surrounded by the club, and everybody was laughing and joking. It felt as if you were the glue that held everyone together. Iona, that’s your name, right? You were very important. Warden was there, and there were lots of children. I don’t know if any were yours, but the vision left me with an overwhelming sense of love and commitment,” Cécile said.

I stared at her, open-mouthed. “Have you ever been wrong?” I asked finally.

“No.”

“Never?”

“No.”

“That’s not what I expected. I’m one of the most disliked people in the club,” I explained.

Cécile frowned. “Are you sure?”

“Very. Let me tell you a story.” “I’ll put the kettle on,” Etienne said. “Start without me; I can hear very well in the kitchen.”

Etienne’s wonderful ass caught my attention as he walked away, and I stared, bemused. I may love Warden, but Dear God, Etienne was temptation wrapped in one sinful package.

“That’s how I first felt when I saw him,” Cécile admitted, and we giggled.

“You and I are going to be great friends,” I stated and began telling Cécile everything.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Iona

Rosalea, Lindy, Cécile and I were chatting when Cipher stuck his head into the common room.

“Pigs at the door,” he said, and Warden straightened.

“Who?” he demanded.

“Who’d ya think?” Cipher retorted, and Warden cursed.

“Fuckin’ Detective Noah Myers,” Warden spat, and I felt his anger and dislike from where I sat.

Warden’s phone rang, and he glowered before answering it.

“Yeah?” he snapped.

“Detective Myers wants you, Prez,” Priest replied.

“He doesn’t come in without an escort. Undertaker is on his way,” Warden said, and Undertaker glared. I guess nobody liked Detective Myers.

Warden turned to us as Undertaker left the clubhouse.

“Cécile, take Etienne and head downstairs. Now. We don’t want him to see you. Rosalea and Iona, no matter what, keep your mouths shut. Myers’ is alone, which is

strange enough. But let's not give him ammunition to return," Warden ordered.

"Got it," I agreed. "Would you prefer us to leave?"

"No. I do not trust Myers', and I don't want you out of my sight," Warden said.

The door opened, and the club fell silent as Undertaker brought a man in. My first thought was this was a cop. He was around thirty-five and quite good-looking. He wore jeans and a Henley with a jacket over the top. Myers had on cowboy boots, and they weren't for show; they were well-worn.

"Got a warrant?" Warden snapped.

Myers' ran his hand through his neatly trimmed hair, and that's when I saw it. Myers was tired. Something heavy was weighing this man down, and whatever it was had brought him here.

"Not here to bust your balls. I need your help," Myers said, holding Warden's gaze.

A surprised murmur arose from the family before silence fell again. The atmosphere was tense with hostility, dislike and a lot of other negative emotions. Nobody took their eyes off the intruder in our midst. I was shocked Myers had the fortitude to stand there as he was.

"My help?" Warden drawled from where he lounged.

"Yeah, and I'm not afraid to beg," Myers replied.

Warden's eyebrows shot up. "This must be serious," he said with a hint of amusement.



“A one-year-old baby boy and a three-year-old baby girl were snatched by their father, Liam Conway, yesterday morning. Before he kidnapped the children, he slaughtered their mother. Warden, I do mean slaughtered. Conway gutted her like a pig. Poor woman was alive when he started and would have died in agony. She was unrecognisable as a human by the time Conway finished. Worse, we know he did this in front of his kids,” Myers said, softly wincing as he looked at me.

“Lindy, take the girls now,” Warden ordered.

I didn’t put up an argument as Lindy led us away. We headed upstairs, not to draw attention to Cécile in the basement with Etienne.

Warden

I regarded Myers. I hated the man and everything he stood for. He was a pompous ass who had a legal stick wedged so far up his butt you’d have to operate to remove it. Myers had sworn to bring my club down and yet here he was, begging. I’d been prepared to toss him out when he first mentioned help.

Now, I couldn’t. There was no way I was going to leave innocent babies in the hands of a nutcase. A man who’d slaughtered their mother in front of them. My gut twisted as I thought how anguished and scared they must be.

“Tell the prospects to lock the compound down,” I said to Undertaker. “Noble, you’re staying here. Everyone else is with me. Where do you want us searching?” I turned to Myers, who was shaking his head.

“We got people combing the woods. Search parties are out there. But I need your...” Myers swallowed as if he couldn’t believe what he was about to say.

“My what?” I snapped, not wanting to waste time.

Fuck Myers. I didn't give a shit if he wanted our help or not. The RBMC was going to look for those kids.

"I know Warden... about..." Myers said, and I stared at him.

"Say it."

"Warden, it's hard to believe."

"Say it, Myers," I demanded. I wanted him to say it.

"Your abilities," Myers spat, going red.

"Abilities?" I questioned.

"I'm well aware some of you are..." Myers broke off as he sought for a word, and hate welled in front of me.

"Freaks?" I supplied, and Myers blanched.

"No!" he exclaimed, offended. Or so I believed, he could have been acting.

"No?" I replied.

"Do not put words in my mouth. I don't think you are fuckin' freaks. Ain't gonna lie, Warden, I know your club is running illegal shit, and it's my job to stop it. But that doesn't mean I'm unaware of the good you do. You're an idiot if you think I don't look beyond my badge and at what the MC does."

My entire family was now alert and on guard. Myers would die if he put one step wrong.

“So, you came to blackmail us to help you?” Dynamo asked. Her hair was starting to float around her head as static built up inside her.

“No. I’ve come to beg you. One of you must have the ability to see where the babies are. See if they’re alive still. I need that. Those kids may be okay because he’s their father. If they are, I need to rescue them,” Myers spat quickly.

I stared at the man who was my arch-nemesis. Dramatic as that might sound. Desperation rolled off him, and I glanced at Soul.

“Truth,” Soul said clearly. Myers looked at him and flinched at Soul’s expression. Soul was staring directly at him, and it would un-nerve anyone.

Confusion crossed Myers' face, but he turned back to me. “I will get on my knees and beg Warden if I have to. But help me save those kids. Please .”

“Do you have anything belonging to them?” I questioned.

“Yes, in my car,” he replied.

“Go fetch it,” I ordered, and Myers rushed out. “Can you do this?” I asked Oracle.

“Don’t know. But Cécile can. I’ll try, but we may have to tap her,” Oracle responded.

“How will we get it down to her?” Blister demanded as he watched the door.

“Are we going to trust Myers won’t use this against us? We find the kid, and he arrests the club for kidnapping?” Dare added, her face creased in concern.

“Yeah, I’m with Dare. Myers has been breaking his back for years to arrest one of us. This is dangerous,” Kosmic replied.

“We can’t leave those kids out there,” I said. “What’s our solution?”

“Oracle does his shit, and we keep silent and rescue the children ourselves. Drop them near a shop or house and keep an eye on them until they’re collected,” Wisecrack suggested.

“That will protect us from Myers,” Undertaker agreed.

“You do not need protecting from me. Not on this. I understand only too well what would happen to you all if the wrong people found out. You’d be locked in labs and experimented on. Pain would become a way of life for you. I believe in the law, but I don’t believe in torture,” Myers said from behind us.

“Truth. But there’s something he’s holding back,” Soar announced.

“They did that to his grandmother, it’s in his thoughts. She was a medium and not a fraud. The government found out and took her. She was missing for three years before she escaped. His grandfather helped hide her and fell in love with her. His grandmother’s story was handed down as a warning. Myers knows full well that psychic abilities existed. He just didn’t expect to find them in us.

“Whatever Myers has on the MC around our abilities, he’d rather die than tell. Myers doesn’t believe that people like us should be abused nor hunted down. In fact, as much as it pains me to say it, and probably him to admit it, Myers would rather die than give us up,” Romeo said.

I nodded. Nobody would lie to Romeo once he was in their head. Myers’ jaw dropped, but he bit back his words and instead held out a sealed plastic bag. Inside were two more bags which contained a bloody teddy bear in each. Seeing that made me determined to find those kids.

“The grandmother claims those are the kid’s favourite bears. She says the babies slept with them and carried them everywhere,” Myers said. “How do we do this?”

“We don’t do shit. You will have a seat while we try to locate the children. We ain’t circus animals, and we need privacy,” I replied, and Myers sat instantly on a sofa. I walked over and took the bag. I called out ten names and ordered them to come with me as I headed into the hallway that led to church.

“Take one bear to the basement, see if Cécile can get a read on it,” I said to Kosmic as soon as we were out of sight.

Kosmic grabbed the little boy’s teddy and, hiding it, walked towards the basement. I heard him call out to Myers as he walked through the rec room.

“Get comfortable, this may take a while.”

“I don’t care, not as long as I get a lead,” Myers called back.

“Church for all of you, bar Oracle. Do you want my office?” I asked.

“Yeah. And I need you there, too.”

“Not a problem. Come on, brother,” I replied.

Oracle looked nervous as he took the pink bear from the packaging. The scent of blood drifted into the air, and I winced. It was soaked with it, but Oracle managed to find a couple of patches that hadn’t been polluted.

“She really loved this bear. I can hear her mom calling her Lissy,” Oracle said after several minutes. His eyes were closed, and his face was scrunched up as he concentrated. Moments ticked past, and I saw pain etch into his expression. But he

didn't speak again. Oracle's nose began to bleed, and I knocked the bear from his grip.

Oracle collapsed onto my desk, his head in his hands. I handed him tissues to mop the blood dripping steadily from his nose.

"All I could hear was screams," he said.

"Head to church and stay there. I do not want Myers knowing which of us tried this. Send Blister in. He might pick something up," I ordered.

Oracle nodded and staggered to his feet. On seeing how weak he was, I slung my arm around him and helped him into church.

"Lay him down and make him comfortable. I don't want Myers knowing which of us has the ability he needs. Blister, Oracle, couldn't get much, could you try?"

"Sure, but I tend to see the past," Blister said.

My phone rang, and I held up a hand as I answered it.

"Cecile has a lock on them. They're alive but hungry, but the dad's mental state is deteriorating quickly," Kosmic announced. "I recorded everything and am sending to you." My mobile pinged, and I guessed that was Kosmic's text.

"Write this information down," I said to Vogue, who nodded. She grabbed a pen and paper and got ready.

I pressed play on the voice message and hit pause every few words. It was imperative Vogue got the wording correct. One wrong word could send the police elsewhere and get the kids murdered. Once we'd transcribed it, I played it back twice, and Griffin

and Anubis checked it. Then, I left everyone in church and headed out to Myers.

“Here, this is where the children are. They’re alive,” I said, and tension left Myers’ shoulders.

“The asshole hasn’t killed them?” he demanded.

“No, but he’s close,” I replied.

Myers held my gaze, and he nodded. “Thank you, Warden.”

“I’d say you’re welcome, but you know that would be a lie. Save those kids, Myers, and we’re good.”

“I will try, but even with a description, I’ve got to lock the location down,” Myers said. He rose to his feet and turned away.

“There’s a lot of woods to cover,” I murmured.

“Yeah, but I’ll pull men, and we’ll narrow in,” Myers stated. “This will help a lot.”

“Or you could take us,” I suggested.

“If I do that, people would ask why,” Myers replied, shaking his head.

“We’d be there to assist the search. Do not tell me you don’t need more people,” I challenged. “You can tell everybody you met us heading out.”

“That would be... helpful,” Myers replied, choosing his words carefully.

“Everyone gear up. We’re going to find these kids,” I ordered.

Undertaker moved past me to get the men and women from church. I was relieved when he brought all but half of them back.

“Oracle needs to recover. I’m leaving Wisecrack with him to block his pain, as we might need Slasher with us,” he murmured, and I nodded.

“Did you tell them to keep Iona and Cécile up to date?”

“Cécile will be dialling and guiding you once we leave. She is focused on the children and had a strong connection, but we’d better not waste time,” Undertaker said softly.

I nodded an agreement.

“Myers, you know we’ve all got concealed licences?” I called out. He scowled but offered a chin lift. “We’ll take the shot if the kids are in danger. Otherwise, he’s all yours. Follow me, I’ll be the lead.”

“Why?” Myers demanded.

“What?”

“Why are you the lead? Why isn’t the person who found them in charge?”

“Because then I wouldn’t be protecting their identity. Work with me or don’t. It’s no skin off my nose because we’re going to find those kids. And you can be the damn hero or a zero. Choose wisely,” I said and headed out to my motorbike.

Most of the club had already assembled, and I looked around. It was a cold night; I could see my breathing in the air. Slasher was carrying his medical kit and extra blankets. Dynamo had a wrapped package on her bike, as did Bogeyman.



Once everyone was ready, I dialled Kosmic, who'd remained with Cécile and headed out. I was surprised at how clear Cécile's directions were. Half an hour later, we were parking up and moving out in pairs. Myers came with me and Undertaker as Cécile kept up a steady chatter in my ear. Somehow, she'd completely locked onto the kids and could tell how close I was.

We walked into Camden Hills State Park. The father had taken them deep, but everyone was linked into my call, so we spread out and began searching quietly. Twenty minutes later, I heard a tiny voice.

"Hungry Daddy," a little girl said.

"Shut up, Larisa," Conway snapped.

Myers and I swapped glances, and he made motions with his hands, ordering me to go right. I nodded and gestured Undertaker to head further right.

A thin cry cut through the air, and we froze. That was the boy, and he didn't sound too good.

"Chester's hungry," Larissa whimpered.

"Do you want me to smack you?" Conway yelled.

There was a soft moan and then silence. As we moved quietly forward, Larissa spoke again.

"Daddy, it's cold."

There was the sound of a smack, and Larissa began crying. Shit, Conway had hit her.

“Shut up!” he screamed at her.

“I want my mommy!” Larissa wailed.

“You’ll have to wait a long time. If you want another slap, keep on!” Conway snarled.

Anger rushed through me, and I spotted Conway in a small clearing. I pointed to my eyes and then forward, and Myers nodded.

Before either of us could act, Conway went flying through the air. He smashed into a tree, and I didn’t hesitate. Undertaker and I dashed ahead even as Myers cried ‘No’.

I grabbed Larissa and Undertaker, snatched Chester up and, opened his coat, and wrapped the little boy up inside. Undertaker zipped him in tight as I did the same with Larissa. Blood dripped from a spilt lip which Conway had just given her.

I heard a noise from behind me and turned to see Conway getting to his feet. Myers had appeared with his weapon drawn and was ordering Conway to put his hands up. Instead, Conway’s hands moved towards his waist, and before Myers could shoot, Conway was picked up and tossed against another tree.

It looked like Dynamo intended to have some fun.

Myers stood in the clearing with his mouth open as a screaming Conway was shot upwards to about fifteen feet and allowed to drop hard.

“Are you doing this?” Myers demanded, and I shook my head.

“Nope.”

“But this is one of your people.”

“Good luck proving that,” I said, keeping Larissa’s face turned away. “Hi, Honey, my name is Warden, and I’ve come to take you somewhere warm. This is Detective Noah. He’s going to drive you in his car and get you some food and drink while he calls your grandma.”

Larissa looked up at me and cried.

“I want my mommy.”

“I know, sweetheart, but let’s get safe,” I said gently. There was no fuckin’ way I was telling this kid her mother was dead.

“How am I gonna transport him and the children?” Myers asked distractedly as Conway flipped across the clearing and landed upside down in some branches.

“Call it in Myers. Stop watching the show. Whoever this is will stop soon. I’ve got a medic here who’ll check the kids, but they’re freezing. They need an ambulance, as Chester looks critical.”

That got Myers moving. Within minutes, an ambo had been ordered, and I could see blue lights heading our way. I guess a cop had been nearby. Slasher met us in the clearing and I sensed him sending some healing into Chester and then Larissa.

“Another hour or so and Chester would have lost digits, if not his life. He was in a critical condition, Warden. That piece of shit needs to die,” he hissed in Conway’s direction.

Dynamo had finally tired of playing with him and had broken two legs when she dumped him hard on the ground. Slashes appeared in his back, and I grinned.

“Looks like he got hold of a bear,” I said to Myers, who slowly nodded.

“Let me check the kids,” Romeo murmured close to me, and he placed a hand on Larissa’s head. “She remembers everything. But does not realise her mom’s dead.”

“Wipe the memory and what happened after Conway slapped her. Do the same for the boy. He may not understand, but he doesn’t deserve those memories,” I whispered.

“Done,” Romeo confirmed and moved over to Undertaker.

“Thanks for your help,” Myers said, and I could tell he hated that.

It made me happy that he had to squirm.

“The kids are alive. That’s all that matters,” I offered, and Myer’s glared at me through slitted eyes.

The first black and white appeared, and the uniformed officers were shocked to see us there. One approached with cuffs out until Myers put them straight.

“Your secret is safe with me,” Myers muttered as he organised the cops to take the kids to hospital.

“Try blackmailing us or abusing the knowledge, and we’ll wipe your memory; that is a promise,” I said.

“Whatever happens between me and your club, I can swear on my life I’ll never spill your secret. Nor abuse it; that’s not my way. It might be yours, but it will never be mine,” Myers replied, with the stick firmly up his ass.

And once again, our world was righted.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Iona

“I need a favour,” Vogue stated, startling me from the list I was surveying.

“Of course,” I replied.

“Just like that?” Vogue asked, surprised.

“You’re family, so yes, I’d help,” I answered, leaving Vogue confused as well as shocked.

“Whatever,” she said with a wave of her hand.

“Katie wants to go Christmas shopping but won’t let me send people with her,” Vogue explained, and a smile crossed my face.

It had been a few months since Katie had been saved from traffickers, and she’d not ventured out of the clubhouse once. She avoided the brothers and barely tolerated the sisters. This was huge news. Katie had shown no interest in going outside at all. Now, all of a sudden, she wanted to go shopping. As happy as I was that Katie was making forward steps, but wary at the same time. This was a big deal, and shopping was a huge jump for someone who’d been isolated.

“Is she ready? It’s gonna be hectic, and there’ll be a lot of people,” I finally replied.

“You’re thinking what I am. Why now when she’s not been outside her room. Fuck, she still won’t eat meals with us, and nobody here would harm her,” Vogue

complained.

I could understand her frustration and her pain. Katie was Vogue's little sister, and she had been taken and held captive for six months. She'd been raped multiple times and by different men. Katie had tried to kill herself, but I knew the guys had stepped in. They'd blocked the worst of her memories, and slowly, over time, when she was able to cope with what she remembered, they allowed another few memories to surface.

Romeo had been pulling images and information on the guys from Katie's mind, and Warden had been hunting them down. I wasn't meant to know this, but I did. It was one of those things Warden and I did not mention, but I was glad he was taking that scum off the streets. Those assholes may not have been in our state, but no woman was safe from them. My man ensured they were protected.

Bogeyman, Vogue, Scorch, Rook and Thunderbird, alongside Dynamo had been doing a lot of travelling lately. I said nothing, but when they came back, with a look in their eyes that spoke of seeing or hearing horror's nobody should. I made sure they were loved on. Whatever they needed, I got them, favourite food, favourite drinks. None of them said anything about my spoiling them, but I think it meant something to them.

"Iona? Did you hear me?"

"What, sorry?"

"I asked if Katie could go with you. You have to have guards on you now. Which means Katie couldn't complain about them, and she'd be safe with you," Vogue suggested.

I considered her request.

“Actually, Vogue, I’ve been feeling unsettled and a little unsafe,” I replied, and Vogue scowled. “I might ask Warden for another guard or two. That would make me much safer.”

The dark expression on Vogue’s face cleared, and she sent me an approving look.

“Takes a strong person to admit they don’t feel safe,” she said, but I knew she’d understood what I’d not spoken.

If I had an extra two guards, then Katie would be covered. Katie wouldn’t be able to complain if they were for me, but she’d be protected, anyway.

“I will speak to Warden,” she suggested, and I nodded.

“I’ll be leaving in about an hour if Katie wants to join me,” I replied, and Vogue offered a sharp nod and walked away.

That was a step in the right direction for me and the club’s female enforcer.

Today I was meant to have Blue and Spice on me. I wondered who else Warden would send. It wouldn’t be him, that was for certain. Warden hated shopping. The one time we’d gone shopping together, Warden had reduced two women to tears, and that was before we set foot in a shop. Nope, it would not be him.

It was Noble, however, and Anubis. Neither of them looked happy to be my security, but they didn’t complain.

“I said I didn’t need guards,” Katie stated quietly from behind us as we waited for her.

“They are not yours, honey, they’re mine. Ever since the diner and McKay appearing,



Warden has been on edge,” I replied.

“I remember Vogue mentioning that,” Katie murmured. She refused to look at the brothers, and I knew that was upsetting them, but they kept quiet.

“McKay was seen in our town. Warden wants to make sure I’m safe,” I continued explained.

Katie looked up at me, and anger sparked in her eyes. “God forbid the Prez’s old lady gets kidnapped and trafficked.”

I rocked back on my heels, shocked and lost for words. The level of hate in Katie’s voice surprised me from replying.

“That’s enough, Katie,” Noble said, and Katie shot him a frightened stare.

“You are out of line. We came for you and never stopped looking. What happened wasn’t Iona’s fault. Do you really wish that on her?” Spice chided, and shame crossed Katie’s expression.

“No, I guess I was being a jealous bitch,” she answered, avoiding his gaze.

“Yes, you were, but knowing Iona, she’ll forgive you. Can you now get in the car, and let’s do this shit before I get cranky,” Spice stated, and a smile appeared on my face.

Katie remained impassive, though. But she followed us out, and we climbed into the SUV, which was being driven by Blue. The prospect didn’t seem happy at being caged as he shrugged his cut off. RBMC never wore a cut when driving a car; they thought it disrespectful.

Katie sat on edge next to me, glancing at Blue every so often. It was clear she did not trust him and was uncomfortable that he was here.

“I wanted to go alone, no offence, Iona,” Katie murmured.

“None taken. But do you get why Vogue and everyone was so worried?”

“Why is it so hard to understand that I don’t wanna be smothered? I just need to be alone. Even now, what I wanted has been ignored, and I am here with you and four babysitters. Play it any way you wish, but I know two of them are for me,” Katie hissed.

“When we hit Windfells, we can go our separate ways, although I was looking forward to your help. But never mind, I’m sure I’ll manage,” I retorted with just enough zest in my voice to peak Katie’s curiosity.

“From me?” Katie laughed bitterly.

“Yes. I knew them ten years ago, they’ve changed since then, no doubt. I wanted to buy them a special tree decoration that would mean something to them. One we can use every year. I had thought you would be useful as you knew them during the time I was gone. But if you can’t be bothered, don’t worry, I’ll manage,” I replied.

Katie studied me, trying to figure out if I was playing her or not. I held her gaze until she looked away. “Fine. I’ll help.”

The words were given begrudgingly, but Katie had uttered them. That gave me hope that the girl everyone spoke about wasn’t lost.

I hadn’t met Katie back then; I was too wrapped up in my own world and angst. We were similar ages and should have been friends.

“Yeah, that would not have happened,” Katie said, and I jumped.

“What?”

“You spoke aloud, Iona. We wouldn’t have been mates. You and Rosalea were total bitches and not likeable,” Katie stated, and I noted how she didn’t flinch at telling me.

That was interesting. Katie, despite bitching me out, was comfortable enough to do so.

“Carry on, don’t hold back,” I encouraged, and Katie sneered.

“You were. Both of you Berserker’s little princesses. Spoiled and pampered. Vogue used to come home and tell tales on you. I couldn’t believe half the shit I heard. But your sense of self-entitlement soon bit you in the ass; Warden chose the club over you,” Katie continued her attack.

“Warden did, and it hurt, but he did the right thing,” I replied.

Katie glared at me. “Do you really mean that, or just paying lip service because of being in Warden’s bed?”

“Katie, I get you suffered and are in pain. I know the need to lash out and make some hurt like you do. But being deliberately cruel to somebody else will not help you, trust me. It will just make you feel shittier. But if you need to tear someone down to make yourself feel good, go ahead. However, your words won’t hurt me because they are the truth, and I accepted what a damn bitch I’d been months ago when Pearl’s lies were exposed,” I said.

Katie’s glare deepened, but she stayed quiet as we parked in Windfells car park and climbed out.

“Are you ready to shop?” I asked and didn’t wait for an answer. Spice and Blue took my back as Noble and Anubis took Katie’s. She sent them dark looks, but neither paid her any attention.

I headed for the elevator with Katie by my side. Katie was silent now and on edge. She kept swivelling her head all around, and at one point, I thought she might go full-on Exorcist. That was a terrifying thought. Katie’s hands caught my attention, and I saw she’d clenched them into fists. and I winced as I considered her nails biting into her skin.

“We can go to the car,” I whispered, and Katie shook her head.

“Let’s get these ornaments,” she gritted out. We stepped off the elevator, and Katie almost jumped back in. There were huge crowds of people.

Taking the initiative, I pulled Katie’s arm through mine, and the guys took our four sides.

“One step at a time, and we will do this together. When you need to leave, say so, and we’ll go straight away,” I murmured.

Katie nodded, her body tense, and she stumbled as we headed towards the ornament department. It didn’t matter that she was surrounded by the club brothers, Katie clearly was ill at ease and uncomfortable.

I wandered around, seeking her opinion on the little specialised ornaments we picked up. We found things like a truck for Oracle, a poker chip for Romeo and Kosmic and a disco ball for Rook. Some of the others were harder to find, such as what did you buy for a brothel manager? Katie had managed a weak giggle over that, but we located a tiny pair of handcuffs.

We were picking up the last few ornaments when Katie froze and began to shake. Her eyes were focused on the floor, and I wondered what had happened. I caught glimpse of a man sending Katie an admiring glance and realised she'd seen him and panicked. I tugged on Spice as he approached Katie with a lusty smile on his face.

"Hey baby," he said, and Katie cringed and collapsed in on herself.

"Back off," I warned.

"Just being friendly to a pretty lady," he retorted, and Katie made a wounded noise.

I noticed what was triggering her. He was okay looking, but his interest was one trigger. The second was the way he was dressed, like a businessman. That was who'd bought Katie and abused her. Rich businessmen who wanted to own and abuse women.

"I said back off," I repeated, and my tone alerted the brothers. Within seconds, we were surrounded.

"Problem?" Noble demanded. I reached out and touched a hard barrier.

"Katie. Give me your hand," I whispered as she curled into my side. She hid her head in my shoulder as she shook. Katie clutched my tee, and I touched her hand.

"Come on, honey, give me your hand," I urged. I took her fingers and reached out and she felt the barrier.

"Noble is protecting you," I murmured.

Katie snatched her hand back and clung tighter to me. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she shook badly in my arms.

I missed what was said, but the guy was moving swiftly away and looking downright embarrassed. The four of them crowded us, but that wasn't helping Katie, who let out a couple of whimpers. People began staring at the scene in front of them.

"Is she alright?" a woman demanded, gazing suspiciously at the brothers.

"We're fine," I replied, but Katie didn't answer. A small cry of fear left her lips, and the woman's eyes narrowed.

"I'm calling the cops," she snapped, whipping her phone out.

"You do that!" Spice retorted and turned back to me. "What do we do?" he asked.

"Give her some space. Crowding her isn't helping. That guy set her off. We need to get her out of everyone's nosiness as well," I replied.

Blue disappeared as the men formed a barrier between Katie and those now avidly watching. He reappeared with a member of staff in tow, who looked concerned.

"My friend is having a panic attack, do you have somewhere private we can go?" I asked.

"We do have a small area that is for employees only close by," the girl said.

"Could we go there? Everyone staring isn't helping." The woman nodded at me and pointed the direction to head towards. I tried making Katie walk, but she wouldn't move. She was rooted to the spot and melting down.

"What do we do?" Anubis hissed.

"I do not suggest picking Katie up; that'll make everything worse," I said.

“Should we call Vogue?” Noble asked.

“I don’t think that will help. We need to get Katie away from everyone. Why do assholes see a pretty girl and think it’s okay to stare at them and approach?” I grumbled as I attempted to figure a way out of this.

For several minutes, we tried getting Katie to move, but she was frozen in fear. Despite our encouragement and soothing words, Katie was lost in her nightmares again.

“Detective Myers, what is the problem here?” A man inquired, and Noble cursed under his breath.

Katie let out a scream and clung even tighter to me, taking us both to the floor.

“Stupid cunt,” Noble hissed at the woman who’d interfered. “Now look what you have done. Myers, we don’t need your help.”

The lady blanched but kept staring.

“That’s Vogue’s sister, isn’t it?” Myers asked, studying Katie.

“Myers, we’ve got this under control,” Spice said, getting in his way.

“Spice, you’ve got a woman having a full-on meltdown in public. You ain’t got shit under control. Let me pass,” Myers demanded.

“Don’t touch RBMC property,” Noble threatened and Myers froze and turned to face him.

“What did you call her?”

“Katie is Vogue’s sister. She belongs to the RBMC; she’s ours to protect,” Noble retorted.

“Noble, you’ve five seconds to get out of my way. Or I’ll be calling for backup and arresting you,” Myers threatened.

Noble grinned. “I’d like to see you try.”

“Stop swinging your cocks, both of you,” I hissed, my temper igniting. “We need to get Katie somewhere safe where she can regroup.”

Noble deflated and looked at me.

“Iona, there’s only one way we’re going to be able to move her,” he said.

“Do it,” I agreed.

Noble swapped glances with everyone and then knelt down and picked Katie up. A heart-wrenching scream left her lips, but Noble ignored her as she fought him.

“Lead the way,” he snarled at the member of staff, watching open-mouthed. The girl exploded into movement, and we pursued her through the crowd.

Blue stopped and snatched some guy’s phone from him and deleted something before chasing another woman down and doing the same. Anubis helped him, and Myers looked conflicted but followed after us in the end.

“Serve them right for being nosey bastards. I hate technology sometimes,” he muttered as we finally entered a closed-off area. Noble quickly placed Katie down on the ground, and I sat down beside her and hugged her tightly. Katie collapsed onto her side, and I laid down behind her and hauled her in close. Katie lay there shaking



as Spice made a call. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I saw Noble relax.

"Romeo and Slasher are on their way. They'll knock her out and take her home," Spice informed Noble.

"You need to get gone," Anubis said to Myers as he entered the room.

"I gotta stay, or you'll be accused of kidnapping. If I hadn't recognised Katie, you'd be under arrest right now," Myers retorted.

"You assholes don't learn. You put bracelets on us and then end up with a lawsuit. I wouldn't mind a nice Christmas bonus." Noble laughed.

"For fuck's sake, just put your cocks away. Katie is still aware of what's going on, and as soon as you start arguing, she tenses," I interrupted.

Both men shut their mouths.

"I know a good trauma therapist," Myers announced after a few minutes. "Dr Harwood specialises in trafficking victims."

"You know?" I asked softly.

"Yes. We searched for Katie for months. Warden and Vogue reported her missing. Warden notified me when Katie escaped but said she was too traumatised to interview," Myers answered.

"Clearly, she still is," I replied.

"I never did get her statement," Myers pushed.

“Do all rape victims report straight away? Or do some take time to recover from the trauma? Because once they report, they get violated all over again. And not just by their attacker. The cops violate them by prying for every detail, the DA does, the defence lawyer, the jury, the media... are you surprised Katie hasn't spoken to you?” I demanded.

“No. And as much as I'd like to say, that wouldn't happen. It does. And I am sorry for it. I'm glad they got Katie back,” Myers said, and Noble snorted.

“Katie returned herself. She escaped and found help. And we won't let anyone hurt her again,” he warned.

“Back off, Noble. I am getting tired of your attitude,” Myers snapped.

“And I'm sick of you,” Noble retorted.

I rolled my eyes. They had no intention of pulling the dicks in, so I concentrated on rocking Katie and keeping her safe in an 'Iona' cocoon.

By the time Slasher and Romeo had arrived, Katie was almost catatonic. Romeo immediately knocked her out while Slasher blocked her pain. Then, with his badge clearly on his hip, Myers walked Slasher and Romeo, carrying Katie out to the car they'd come in.

“Are you nearly done?” Blue asked me.

“Yes. I just had a few things left to buy,” I replied.

“Let's get them bought and take you home,” Spice said, and I nodded.

Today had been a trying day.

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I lay curled on my bed as I absorbed today's events. Katie's pain had sliced through me, and I don't think I'd realised how deep her trauma was. Of course, I knew Katie had suffered, but I had a far deeper understanding now. Blue had stopped by my room and informed me that Katie was unconscious, and Romeo and Slasher remained with her, and Wisecrack had joined them.

They were the best three to help Katie. I'd not been able to soothe her, and that had upset me. I had taken myself off as soon I could due to how emotional I had felt. Now, I was calmer and in a better place, but I couldn't see how we could have done anything different.

Katie hadn't even given off a warning sign that she'd been about to melt down. It had just happened. None of us had done anything wrong. Nor had we missed any body language that might have given us clues. The tears I'd held in at witnessing Katie's meltdown had flowed freely in the privacy of my room. Now I was calmer, and I lay quietly snuggling one of Warden's hoodies. This was my weak moment, when I left here, I'd be the strong old lady everyone expected.

That was my role, and I embraced it.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Cécile

It had been five days since we'd arrived here in the middle of the night. Warden had kept his word and sent Cipher to us. He'd moved my money so many times it made even him dizzy. Etienne was relieved to have a bank account once more. And truthfully, so was I. We had discussed Warden's offer, and, in the end, I was happy to join, but not without Etienne.

His only hold out was he didn't want to prospect. And I couldn't blame him. Some of the duties they did, caused me immense dislike of the role. I planned to talk to Warden today and make some of agreement avoiding the less attractive parts of prospect.

Both Etienne and I were comfortable here, and we knew we'd found a second home. And the other night, I'd had a vision that Etienne would find his soulmate here. A fact I rejoiced in, although I didn't tell him that. Etienne had a real aversion to relationships ever since a bitch broke his heart years ago.

That had sealed our fate. Etienne might be my anchor, but he deserved his person, and if staying here meant he got her, then so be it. I'd sacrifice anything for him, just like he would me. It was a shame we'd never been attracted to each other. But I guess it was too much to hope for.

I was heading for Warden's office when a vision hit me hard. I rocked back on my heels and gasped.

A woman looked over her shoulder as she slunk out of the club's gate. She hurried

down the street and got into a vehicle. I watched as an envelope exchanged hands. I could hear everything she was saying and started repeating it. The woman was someone I recognised, I'd seen her here once before.

As I looked, a Harley headed down the road towards the car, and the rider looked over and frowned. He recognised the lady and circled back. A man climbed out of the motor and raised a gun. It spat once, and the biker toppled backwards, and a shriek ripped from my throat. The driver got back in as the lady got out and started screaming. I caught a glimpse of a cut, and then my world turned red.

“Cécile!” Oracle shouted, shaking me from the vision and my scream.

“Etienne! He’s going to be shot!” I rushed past Oracle and headed out. The vision was playing out right now, I could feel it deep in my bones.

Footsteps pounded behind me but headed for the gate. Priest looked up, startled to see me racing towards him.

“Unlock it!” I screamed at him.

“Open it!” Oracle bellowed beside me.

I kept running as the gate opened, and I ran through and up the lane. I saw the car in front of me and pointed. Towards me rode a Harley, Etienne sitting proudly on it.

“Gun!” I shrieked as he passed the vehicle and glanced in. He started to circle back.

“No! Gun! Gun!” I exclaimed as I continued sprinting. A man got out, exactly as my vision and my heart nearly stopped. A gun spat, and Etienne fell backwards from his bike, which zoomed off into the bushes.

I reached Etienne and collapsed beside him as I checked him over for his wound.

“If my motorbike is damaged, I’m gonna kill that asshole,” Etienne complained. Once I was reassured, he wasn’t hurt. I punched his chest, making him groan, and I fell onto him sobbing.

“Take him!” Undertaker was yelling at someone, and I heard Iona screech.

“You damn traitorous bitch! Warden, let go of me, I’ll smack some whore tonight.” Iona was shouting.

Slasher landed next to me and began checking Etienne over.

“There’s no bullet wound, Cécile. Noble got a barrier up just in time,” Slasher explained.

“That’s what I ran into?” Etienne groaned.

“Yeah. But at least you’re alive,” Slasher replied cheerfully.

I glared balefully at him.

“I’ll fuckin’ gut you, cunt,” Dare hissed, and I lifted my head from Etienne’s chest.

The woman, who I recognised as a club whore called Lolita, was struggling with Vogue, who simply turned and punched her straight in the face. Lolita went down like a ton of bricks, and her eyes rolled up. A man was on his knees with Bogeyman holding him down and Blister pointing a gun to his head.

He wore a Screaming Barons cut. Warden held Iona back, who had now stopped fighting him to get at Lolita. Lindy calmly strolled over and kicked the bitch three

times before stepping away.

“Iona, this is club business. Come on, lovely, we’ve got presents to wrap,” Lindy stated.

Iona spat on Lolita before allowing herself to be walked away. I kept hold of Etienne’s hand as Slasher healed a few broken bones and bruises.

“My ride?” Etienne demanded.

“It’s scratched but not badly damaged. You wanted a custom paint job anyway,” Wisecrack answered, wheeling the Harley Fatboy back towards us.

Etienne nodded as Slasher said he could get to his feet. I scrambled up and helped Etienne up. He moved over to his bike stiffly and stood by it as he also looked it over.

“Does someone want to tell me what happened?” he asked.

“Cécile had a vision,” Oracle explained.

“You saw me getting shot?” Etienne demanded, and I nodded as I wrapped myself around him.

I ignored the knowing looks the brothers swapped. Etienne was destined to be one of the greatest loves of my life. Just because we weren’t fucking one another didn’t mean we did not care about each other. Etienne might not be my soulmate, but he was loved, and that is all that mattered.

“I’m okay,” Etienne soothed, and I knew he could feel my pounding heart.

“Looks like we had a leak,” Warden said as he stared down at Lolita.

“That bitch has sucked her last cock,” Dare hissed.

“Take them to the dungeon,” Warden ordered as Blister pulled up with a van. Romeo psychically punched the man unconscious and threw him in the back. Lolita followed. Romeo jogged round and climbed into the front.

“We’ll have answers for you when you arrive, Prez,” he called, and Blister sped off.

Warden turned to Etienne and me. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” Etienne answered as I was struggling to control my emotions.

“Join the club,” Warden demanded.

“We were going to. But we don’t like the idea of prospect,” Etienne replied.

“Well, you have known the Royal Bastards for over five years. I think all the help you’ve given us would ensure you miss prospecting. You’ve already kind of done it,” Warden said.

“That’s fine by me,” Etienne agreed.

“We’ll put it to the vote and let you know. Go back to the clubhouse and rest,” Warden ordered.

“You’ll put her six foot under?” I asked finally.

Warden studied me silently.

“Lolita will be handled,” Undertaker confirmed.



“I want her dead. She and that man were gonna kill Etienne. Warden, I need to know she’s not going to return,” I insisted.

“She’ll pay and in blood,” Warden agreed after a few moments.

I sank against Etienne. “Good.”

“Return to the club. Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and I’m sure Iona, Lindy and Rosalea could do with some help,” Warden said.

I nodded and allowed Etienne to plop me on his bike as he rode us back.

Iona

A huge assed tree dominated the clubhouse. Warden, Undertaker and Oracle had collected it last week, and it had already been decorated. Fairy lights hung around the walls, and we had draped tinsel everywhere. We had ceiling decorations, which had infuriated Warden when we poached Blue and Priest to hang them. The old timers had got involved and sprayed fake snow images on the windows.

Warden had complained that we had enough snow on the ground outside. We had Christmas decs outside and Lindy and I had been burning scented candles. Lindy had made it very clear that the club whores weren’t welcome to Christmas Day, although she’d invited the three service guys. Lindy had explained they didn’t cause drama and were pretty nice.

We were now wrapping in the common room and had to keep chasing the old-timers away as they kept wandering over to be nosey. The tree was going to be rammed full of presents.

Lindy, Rosalea and I had purchased everyone a present from the club itself, and then

the three of us had bought gifts. That meant each person should have four gifts each so far. I did wonder if anyone else had bought anything and could only hope. We had Christmas music on as we wrapped, and I was wrapping Warden's, a gold chain I'd bought him when Pipe yelled that food deliveries were here.

Lindy and I swapped grins and hurried out to the kitchen to open the rear door. I just prayed that everything was as I ordered it, or we'd be shopping tomorrow. A grin hit me as I saw the four huge assed turkeys, all plucked and ready to be cooked.

"Damn, girl, I didn't realise they were so big," Lindy gaped.

"Yeah, a little bigger than I realised," I admitted.

We only had three ovens here. This was a problem as I'd ordered huge hams and two legs of lamb.

"You take in the food, and I'll start getting these cooking," Lindy said, and I nodded. The deliveries came rolling in, and at the same time, so did the old-timers. Spice looked bemused as bags upon bags of items were brought in. Pipe and Fists began emptying them and stacking the food away.

I was rather shocked that I didn't have tell them how to unpack.

"Too many years under Lindy," Spice admitted with a wink as he put the cartons of fresh cream I'd ordered in a line in the fridge. Next to them, he placed the Brandy Butter. Then he started organising the cheeses I'd bought.

I turned to Pipe, but he was organising all the vegetables we'd bought. The old timers were amused as the bags kept coming as one store after another delivered my orders. Not a single one had messed me about, and I planned to give them all a huge thank you after Christmas.

Once I'd marked everything off my check list, I turned to Lindy, slightly overwhelmed.

"Where do we start?" I asked. There were only four of us cooking, Rosalea, Lindy, Cécile, and myself. No way would the sisters help prepare food; they had an aversion to it like the men did.

"We finish wrapping presents and then tomorrow we peel the vegetables. For now, we let these turkeys cook. Once they are done, we'll put the last one in and the legs of lamb," Lindy said.

"Okay," I replied and headed back out. "The club whores won't take the food, will they?"

"They're banned from here for the next few nights. Warden has made it clear it's family only," Lindy explained and smiled. "Beau is back tomorrow, and Decker is flying in. Lissy will be arriving tonight. She'll be here to help."

"Oh, how wonderful your boys are coming home," I exclaimed, happy for Lindy. I know she missed them all.

"Lissy is here to stay. She split from that wretched man she was with. Waste of damn space he was. She had a few things to tie, but she's coming home. Aura has a house for her, and her furniture arrived yesterday. Spice spent all day making sure the movers placed it where she'd want it. Of course, Lissy will move everything around, but Spice thought he was being helpful," Lindy explained with a laugh.

"Oh dear," I muttered and smiled.

"Come on, let's finish wrapping presents, there's still a lot to do," Lindy stated. And she wasn't lying.

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I was barely moving the next morning as I entered the kitchen and peered blurrily around.

“Coffee,” I croaked.

“Here,” Rosalea announced, handing me a cup. I smothered a yawn and took a deep sip. It was hot but good.

“Thank God for caffeine,” I muttered, sinking onto a stool. Someone snorted, and I looked up and spotted Lissy. “Hey, girl.”

“Well, like Rosalea, you ain’t changed much. I’d still know you anywhere. Although I hope you’ve undergone an attitude adjustment,” Lissy said as she sipped her own cup.

“I’ll talk to you when I’m awake,” I replied, waving a hand at her.

“Have you even showered?” Rosalea asked, and I blinked before glaring at her.

“What do you think?” I demanded, suddenly awake and offended.

“Well, considering the screams, not just yours, coming from your room last night, I hope so!” Rosalea snapped, amused.

“Sorry, was we too loud? Did we keep the little princess awake?” I teased, and Rosalea shook her head, laughing.

“You gotta invest in sound proofing,” she retorted.

“Or you need a decent set of ear plugs,” I replied, and we both laughed.

“Wow, I am so proud. Look at you two, both of you have removed those sticks up your ass,” Lissy added.

“You’ve still got yours, bitch,” I informed Lissy, and behind me, Lindy snorted. I waved a hand in her direction. “Don’t start if you can’t finish it. That’s what you taught us.”

“Not quite. I am sure I said don’t start shit if you can’t handle having crap shoved back at you. And if you start a fight, you’d better be prepared to end it,” Lindy corrected me.

“Knew it was something like that,” I agreed and eyed Lissy. “You look well. I kinda hate you right now.”

“Thanks, you’re as beautiful as ever, Iona,” Lissy said magnanimously.

“I’d agree with that statement, except I look like death warmed up,” I responded.

Lissy snorted. “Try sleeping at night.”

“We were up late wrapping presents, and then Warden needed punishing. He’s been searching for his gifts, and I caught him.”

“Too much info, Iona. Breakfast is up and done. Just basic food, scrambled eggs, toast, cereals, and pastries. Get some food in you. We’ve got a lot to do today. And Warden has gathered everyone so we can give them their Christmas Eve present,” Lindy said.

A smile crossed my face, and I darted into the common room. Lindy was right; they

were all there. I dragged out the sack that had their ornaments in and started handing them out.

“Iona, you do know this isn’t Christmas?” Griffin asked.

“Just open it,” I snapped as Lindy, Lissy, and Rosalea came out.

Undertaker opened his first and looked confused and then began laughing. “That’s fuckin’ amazing.” He held up a miniature coffin and a little washing machine.

“They are tree ornaments,” I said as he continued to smile.

“They’re great,” he admitted.

“Damn,” Wisecrack exclaimed as he unwrapped his and saw a small chapel referring to his role as Chaplin and a small car for his mechanic job.

The others tore open theirs, and laughter arose. I glowed as they showed each other what they’d received.

“Nicely done,” Lindy said with warm approval.

Grinning, I turned and handed her the presents I’d bought for her. Lindy chuckled as she opened a bee and a tiny leather waistcoat.

“Clever girl,” she stated as Lissy and Roselea opened theirs. There was happiness in the clubhouse, and you could tell everyone loved their gifts. Even the old timers were tickled.

“Okay, let’s get started with food prep,” Lindy ordered. “Breakfast is up, help yourselves, and you’re on your own for lunch. And someone needs to order takeout

for dinner tonight because we aren't cooking."

"We'll arrange it, Lindy. Go on with you," Warden agreed.

"Come on, ladies, we've got a busy day," I said, getting to my feet.

Warden sank a kiss on me, and I scuttled away as he slapped my ass.

"Payback's a bitch." I called out.

"A bitch that wears your name," Warden shouted at me.

I winked at him and disappeared into the kitchen. There, the enormity of the task we were facing hit me.

"Damn!" I swore.

"I thought we'd all work together. The hams are on, and cooking and the turkeys are in the fridge already. If we sort through the vegetables one at a time, it will stop us getting suicidal," Lindy said.

"Thank God!" Rosalea exclaimed. "I was dreading peeling carrots for five hours."

"Not quite, but I wouldn't want you get bored," I teased, and Rosalea poked her tongue out.

"Grab the damn carrots," Lissy ordered, laughing as Lindy filled up a huge pot with water.

Lissy, Rosalea, Lindy and I settled in. Lindy put some Christmas music on, and we talked and giggled as we peeled. We were halfway through when Cécile arrived and

grabbed a stool to help.

“Did you celebrate Christmas in New Orleans?” Lindy asked.

“Etienne and I often celebrated alone. My family disowned me called me insane, so it was just us,” Cécile replied.

“Etienne did not have a family?” I inquired.

“Etienne had an aunt. She wasn’t... a nice person. She practised black magic, and Etienne’s soul is as white as they come,” Cécile stated. Her tone left no room for discussion.

“Are you looking forward to moving here?” Rosalea asked.

“Yeah. Etienne and I didn’t plan to leave New Orleans; we were content there. But something told me that we did not have a lifetime there. It wasn’t our forever home.”

“Camden is?” I inquired.

“Yes. This is where our future lies. It feels right, and both of us will be happy here,” Cecile said.

“Good, because Warden wants you to stay,” I offered.

“That’s nice to know. As we plan to.” Cécile winked.

“Let’s get Christmas dinner done because tomorrow, we’ve got a lot of fun planned!” I replied, and we all started peeling like mad.



## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:19 am*

Christmas Day.

Iona

I was shocked when I came downstairs Christmas morning and was met with every member of the club. But what took me back was the amount of presents under the tree. And I was surprised to see Katie. She was keeping apart from the others, but she was present at least.

“Happy Christmas, baby,” Warden said, giving me a kiss.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“What, babe?”

“All these?”

Warden laughed.

“I can’t decide whether you inspired or shamed them all into shopping,” he admitted.

I spun in Warden’s arms. “What was it with you?”

“Shame. Definitely.”

“Rotten fucker,” I chided, and Warden chuckled.

“Katie is down,” I whispered.

“Wisecrack and Romeo are blocking her, enabling her to enjoy the day,” he said quietly.

I nodded. That made me happy. Katie was pale, but she was at least present.

“This is your day, Iona, what would you like us to do?”

“I need to get breakfast on, and then we can unwrap presents afterwards,” I replied.

“Lindy and Lissy have already taken care of that. They’ve been up since seven preparing it. The serving hatch is full,” Warden said.

I like that about the kitchen. There were shutters which lifted up and hot plates all along the open space. We could place food in them, and people could help themselves. It was a lot like a serve-yourself restaurant.

“Wow, they didn’t have to do that,” I gasped, smelling the air and scenting bacon and sausages.

“It was their gift to you,” Warden replied.

“That’s so nice of them,” I said and beamed at the two women who appeared and announced breakfast was ready.

We all filled our bellies before gathering around the Christmas tree.

“How do we do this?” Undertaker asked.

“Just dive in?” Vogue suggested.

“No, Warden has to hand them out as he’s the Prez,” I ordered before a fight started.

“Well, get on with it, Prez,” Dare demanded.

Warden chuckled and sat on the floor in front of the huge pile of presents. He picked up the first one and glanced at the tag.

“Vogue,” he announced and handed it to her.

Vogue didn’t hesitate and tore into the wrapping. “Thanks, Dare,” she laughed, holding up a pair of handcuffs.

Ribald comments were pulled out, and I suddenly had a clue what type of gifts were under the tree.

“Oh, damn!” I exclaimed and began laughing myself.

Several hours later, I was rather relieved that there weren’t too many sex toys scattered about. Some of them had been funny gifts, like funny toilet roll, others had been thoughtful.

Warden had bought me a lovely riding jacket made of heavy leather, alongside a gold bracelet and earrings. He’d also got me a selection of toiletries I favoured. In return, I’d bought him a gold necklace, aftershave, and some new boots. After opening our presents, we played some games of Pictionary and Give us a Clue.

The girls and I excused ourselves after an hour and proceed to get dinner served up. After all our prep yesterday, it had been a mere point of turning on the stove top to cook the veg and roasting the potatoes. We warmed the turkeys, lamb and hams up and asked the brothers to carry them to the tables.

Warden, Undertaker, Oracle, Slasher, Thunderbird, Rook and Anubis all carved the

joints before we sat and ate. I was damn pleased we'd ordered and prepared so much food because everyone went for seconds.

I relaxed back with a sigh as Fists burped and patted his stomach.

"You ladies have outdone yourselves," Pipe said.

"Definitely. That was fantastic," Kosmic agreed.

"I've missed this," Scorch admitted quietly.

"Christmas?" Warden asked.

"No, gathering together for a meal. I do not remember the last time we actually sat down as a family," Kosmic explained.

"It's not something we do often. I'm with Kosmic, I don't recall it either," Dare stated.

"It was Berserker's funeral. But that wasn't a sit-down meal, it was a buffet," Pipe said.

"Ten years?" Warden asked, shocked.

"Yes." Fists replied.

"Damn," Warden drawled.

"Maybe we could do this once a month. But help the women prep?" Vogue suggested.

My ears perked up. That was something I'd like to do. It seemed my family

Christmas had stirred something inside all of them.

“That would be nice,” Lindy said. “The help, that is. It took five of us all day, plus we were cooking in between.”

I bit a smile back. We had not made fresh cookies last night but bought them ready. We’d done the same with the pumpkin and apple pies, fruit cake and cakes. If the club would help us prep, we could bake freshly made desserts. That would be nice.

“We’d take that,” I agreed.

“I’m sure we can draw up a rota,” Warden responded.

“Why do I think we just got nominated for extra work?” Bogeyman asked.

“Because you have,” Noble said, throwing a napkin at him.

“Did you enjoy the dinner?” Warden questioned.

“Yeah,” Bogeyman replied.

“Then, if you want more, you can help cook it. My woman isn’t your kitchen maid,” Warden retorted amidst laughter.

“If we paid her, she could be! What do you say, Iona?” Bogeyman demanded.

“I don’t mind cooking once or twice a week but not every day,” I answered, and Bogeyman booed.

“We need a cook,” Dare suggested.

“Not a bad idea. I think everybody is tired of the slop the sluts dish up. And we’d

save a fortune on takeouts,” Dare agreed.

“Iona, could you start interviews for a chef?” Undertaker asked.

“Yeah, and then work with her to plan menus for every night. I think everyone can make their own breakfast and lunch, although we could ask the cook to make prepacked lunches the evening before,” Warden mused.

“That would be a good idea. They could leave fruit and stuff in bowls, and we could help ourselves,” Dynamo added.

“Looks like you’ve got yourself a job,” Warden said to me with a grin.

I grinned back. That was exactly what I wanted. Most of the club stayed here in the clubhouse, but they didn’t eat meals and do things together. Of course, they gathered for church and if having a cookout. As close as they were, and they’d all die for each other, they lacked the closeness that had existed before. The sort of closeness that came from spending quality time together.

“That is not a job; that’s fun,” I replied, and Warden raised his eyes.

“This is what you wanted,” Warden murmured as chatter rose around us.

“Yes. Quality time. Look at how relaxed everyone is and the fun they’re having. You spend time together but not to relax. It’s always for updates or to deal with problems. This is something you used to do. Berserker insisted on it.”

“Dad’s death stopped a lot of shit. Grief prevented us moving forward, and then it became the new norm,” Warden admitted.

“I understand that, and I know we can’t go back to how we were. But we can move forward and carve out time for family time. Not just getting together to get drunk,” I

said.

“True. They’ve enjoyed this babe, and it was something they needed,” Warden agreed.

“Do you really think they liked this?” I asked, seeking confirmation.

“Yes. Look at them. Iona, this is the best gift you’ve given them. And I thank you, baby, for it.” Warden took my hand and kissed it. When he released it, I felt a weight on my finger that wasn’t there before.

I glanced down and stared, shocked speechless. Nestled on my ring finger was a white gold band with a solitaire diamond. I looked back up at Warden, not noticing the silence falling around the table.

“What do you say, baby?”

“Ask me,” I ordered.

“Marry me,” Warden demanded.

“Yes,” I whispered again.

Warden grinned and scooped me up out of my chair, laying a kiss on me that curled my toes.

“I love you, Iona,” he murmured.

“I love you more,” I replied as everyone began cheering and shouting.

As Warden and I stood up, the family crowded around us, slapping our backs and kissing my cheeks. Lindy snatched my hand with Rosalea and gasped over my ring.

A lot of ribald comments headed our way, but I took them in good nature.

“We gotta start planning your wedding!” Rosalea shrieked, hugging me tightly.

“Can I get used to being engaged?” I asked.

“Sure! Lindy and I will start organising it,” Rosalea cried. “You’re marrying a chapter president. That means we need to invite all the other presidents.”

I paled at the thought. Holy shit.

Rosalea and Lindy both giggled at my expression.

“You didn’t consider that, did you?” Lindy asked.

“No,” I gulped.

“Start considering it.” Rosalea laughed.

“Is it too late to say no?” I demanded, looking up into Warden’s face.

“Yeah, babe. You said yes, you ain’t wriggling out of it now,” he replied.

“Aww, shit.”

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Once we’d eaten dessert, Warden made the prospects, and the service guys put everything away and load up the dishwashers. It would take several turns to get everything washed, but it wasn’t a problem. We slumped in front of the big screen as Pipe fiddled around and finally found a movie. A few of the brothers complained, but they didn’t put up too much of a fight.



I looked around the common room. This was what I remembered. Everyone watching a film and relaxing. A couple were messing with their presents. Wyvern had been given a Rubix cube, and he'd made Fists hide the cheat sheet and was now trying to solve it.

Dare was playing on an electronic Sudoku, while Cipher and Spice were playing Battleships. A smile crossed my lips. Today would stay with me forever. When I was old and in my rocking chair, this memory would still be fresh and keep me warm at night. It may not have been everybody's idea of a wonderful holiday, but for me, it had been. It was days like this that built bonds and created precious memories.

When times got dark, and it seemed there was no light, recalling this day would bring a smile to our faces. Because it had been special.

"I hate this damn thing!" Wyvern exclaimed.

Fists chuckled. He'd bought everybody one. I could see a lot of frustration in the future.

"We ought to make a bet, whoever gets it solved first without the cheat sheet," Dare suggested, and everyone perked up.

"What do we get besides bragging rights?" Warden demanded as he eyed the cube in his pile of presents.

"One hundred bucks each?" Dare challenged. There was a glint in her eye.

"There's thirty-two of us, not including Fists, and including the prospects, Lindy, Iona, Rosalea, Cécile, and Etienne. Nice little bet to make," Warden replied with a sparkle in his eyes.

"Done," a chorus of voices agreed, and they all dived for their piles.

Before they could start, Fists messed, everyone's neat cube up and then confiscated their cheat sheets. He counted down on a timer and yelled start.

I kept an eye on Dare and Warden. My gut informed me they were up to something. Warden and Dare were furiously twisting their cubes. And then I remembered. Warden had sworn to beat this as a challenge when he was a teenager. And clearly, by the way, Dare's fingers were moving, she'd done the same. Everyone put their cubes down with a groan as Warden leapt to his feet, as did Dare.

"Done!" they both crowed.

"Who won?" Lindy demanded.

"I think they both finished at the same time," Fists answered, looking perplexed.

"They did," Pipe and I said.

"We'll share the pot," Warden suggested to Dare.

"You two cheated. You scammed us," Undertaker accused them, and Warden and Dare both laughed.

"Snooze you loose, brother," Dare retorted and wriggled her fingers at him.

"I'm going to get Christmas tea up. Ladies, would you help?" Lindy asked, and we got to our feet. It did not take long to put out the platters we'd prepared yesterday. And even though they'd eaten a few hours ago, the family descended on the trays like locusts.

"We'll make a stew with the leftover meat," Lindy said as, once again, the prospects cleared away the empty plates.

“I did not fancy doing another roast,” I admitted.

“It is simple. I call it Mom’s stew; it was my mother’s recipe. I’ll teach you it, it’s different from anything you’d have tasted. It has mulligatawny soup in it,” Lindy explained.

“A what now?” I demanded, never having heard of it.

“I order it in. It’s from England and a Heinz soup. Trust me, once you’ve made Mom’s Stew, you’ll not go back!” Lindy explained.

“I kinda want that now.”

“Tomorrow, girl. Come, let’s settle down. They’re going to watch the film you found. A Christmas Carol with Albert Finney. How on earth did you know about this version?” Lindy asked.

“Because my grandparents used to watch it every year with me until they died. It took me a while to find a version we will play here because it was filmed in England. And even weirder, the old guy who plays Scrooge isn’t really that age. When the Ghost of Christmas past comes, you see a young Ebenezer; that is how old Finney was at the time of filming. They used makeup to make him an old man, and it took three hours to apply. He was only thirty-three at the time of filming,” I said.

“You know a lot about that film,” Lindy teased, and I grinned.

“It’s going to become a tradition, along with Holiday Inn and the Muppet’s Christmas Carol.” Lindy laughed because I’d made everyone watch the Muppet’s film last night. I had been shocked to realise that most of the club hadn’t seen the films.

“Make our traditions, Iona. It gives us something to cherish,” Lindy said as we settled down. A couple of the brothers had gone up and got everyone drinks while the

prospects had loaded the dishwashers again and we all settled in.

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Outside, the snow fell, and the town was lit with Christmas lights. In here, we were warm and cosy and had full bellies and love. I'd made a Merry Christmas, one Berserker would have loved. Maybe now we could start to heal the wound that nobody spoke of. Warden tucked me under his chin and wrapped me up tight in his arms. I leant my head on his chest and listened to the steady heartbeat of the man I needed as much as air.

Warden's fingers idly played with my ring, and I knew I was looking forward to a wonderful future with him. I was blessed and damn lucky, and I knew now not to take that for granted. Because life was fragile, as Scrooge was about to show us, and we had to live each day at a time.

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Happy Christmas from The Royal Bastards, Camden, Maine Chapter!