



Kilo's Edge (Saint's Outlaws MC: Phoenix Chapter #1)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Some secrets are meant to be kept, but love has a way of revealing them all

Camila

I've spent four years running, hiding, and surviving.

When my family finds refuge in Phoenix, I tell myself not to get attached.

But Kilo—the rugged biker next door—makes me dream of staying put.

How can I build a future when my past won't stop hunting me?

Kilo

As a military vet turned motorcycle club Sergeant at Arms, I've seen my share of darkness.

When Camila moves in next door, something about her calls to my soul.

She's beautiful, guarded, and carrying secrets that could get her killed.

Now that she's in my world, no force on Earth will stop me from protecting her.

As the threat from her past creeps closer, Camila finds herself drawn into the protective fold of the MC brotherhood.

But can a woman who's spent years running learn to stand and fight?

And can a man sworn to protect his club risk everything for love?

When trust means survival and secrets can be deadly, they'll have to decide if they can overcome all the odds and stay together...

Total Pages (Source): 39

CHAPTER 1

Camila

“Head’s up!”

I ducked, wondering what was about to hit me, then cringed with embarrassment at my action as the football landed in our yard at my feet. My eyes darted over and I groaned as my gorgeous neighbor came jogging over.

“Sorry about that,” he called as he slowed to a walk. “Freddy’s got a cannon for an arm, but his aim needs some work.”

The man flashed me a devastating grin and it wasn’t the heat of the morning threatening to melt me into a puddle anymore. He pointed to the football. “You mind?”

It was lying at my feet, so I set my purse down, bent over and picked it up. I wished just for a second that I was wearing something a bit...nicer. I eyed the man in front of me as I walked it over to him. I wasn’t about to throw it and embarrass myself further. Nothing but running had ever been my thing. I’d loved track and cross country when I was younger, though there hadn’t been an opportunity to keep up running lately.

He was still smiling as I walked up. He had his shirt off and there were tattoos covering his chest, arms, and neck. His jeans rode low on his hips, showing off a six pack that most men would kill to have.

I stopped in front of him and held out the ball. I didn't say anything to him. This wasn't the first time I'd noticed my neighbor. That had been when he'd pulled up on his motorcycle a few weeks ago. We'd just finished unloading our things a few hours before and were sitting out on the porch drinking lemonade. Mama had given me a warning look and said, "Don't even think about it."

She knew her daughter well, because I hadn't stopped thinking about it. About him.

He took the ball, his tattooed fingers brushing mine. "Thanks."

I nodded and started to turn away.

"What's your name?"

Pausing, I looked back at him, then over at my house before facing him again. The curtains were still closed, which meant Mama wasn't spying on us. "Camila."

"I'm Kilo."

My eyebrows shot up at that and I frowned. Sure he rode a motorcycle, had tattoos, and had one of those vest things that had the name Saint's Outlaws Motorcycle Club on it, but the name still threw me for a loop. "Kilo?"

"That's right," he shrugged. "It's my road name."

He wasn't wearing the vest now, as he played outside in the street with the kids. "What's a road name?"

He chuckled. "It's a nickname I was given."

"Because you do drugs," I said before I could stop myself. My eyes widened and both

my hands slapped over my mouth. Dad had always told me my mouth would get me in trouble. And boy had it over the years. Sometimes I wondered if he cursed me when he'd first told me that. Ever since, I'd done my best to keep those inner thoughts to myself, but most of the time it didn't work.

Kilo's laugh was deep and loud as he bent over a little, holding his flat stomach. "Alright," he admitted once the laughter died down, "I could see how you'd think that. But no, it's not because I do drugs." He cocked his head. "Tell you what. Let me take you to dinner and I'll explain how I got my road name."

My eyes were so wide now they must have looked like saucers. I glanced back at the house again before focusing on him and shaking my head. "I can't." I turned and all but ran to my car in the driveway. The door slammed behind me, but when I looked over I saw those tanned, sweaty abs at the window.

I muttered to myself when he bent down a bit so I could see his face and made the 'roll down the window' motion. Glaring at him, I did.

He shot me another one of those mega-watt smiles and held up my purse.

Calling myself an idiot, I reached out to grab it, but he pulled it back before I could. I narrowed my eyes on his gorgeous face.

"Come on, Camila," he all but purred at me. "You owe me now. First you insult me and then forget your purse, forcing me to deliver it to you. Going to dinner is the least you could do." He dangled it and smiled.

"I don't date men like you," I told him.

His grin grew as he studied me. "What do you know about the kind of man I am?"

He had me there. All I knew was that he rode a motorcycle and had tattoos. He handed me my purse, giving me a heated look as he did so. “Maybe I’ll surprise you.”

My eyes flicked back to my house again and I groaned softly when I saw the curtains move. I was in for it when I got home.

He caught the sound and turned to look at my new—well, new to us—house. “How old are you?” he asked, sounding suspicious.

“Twenty-four,” I replied, amused at the relief that crossed over his face.

“Had to ask,” he said with a shrug.

The kids called out for him to return to their game, sounding impatient.

“Heading to work?” he asked.

I nodded. “I’m going to be late if I don’t go.”

He stepped back and crossed his arms over his chest, palming the football with one hand. “Have a good day at work, Camila.”

He didn’t leave, so I started up my car and backed out of the driveway. I could feel his deep brown eyes on me as I drove away. Mama was just looking out for me, but how was I supposed to resist a man like that?

By the time I got to work, I had to rush into the employee area to stow my stuff in my locker and grab my apron. I hurried up to the front. “Morning, Mary,” I said, as I stepped behind the register I’d been assigned for the day. Being a cashier wasn’t what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but I’d be damned if I was going to let Mama work three jobs to try to support me and my little sister.

“Morning, Camila,” Mary called as she rang up her customer. The familiar beeps settled my nerves as I began my work day. It was too busy to think too much of gorgeous eyes and tattoos.

The minute I sat down with my lunch though, Kilo crept back into my mind.

“What held you up this morning?” Mary asked, as she sat across the table from me in the lunchroom.

I sighed. “My neighbor.”

“The gorgeous biker?”

Nodding, I told her, “He said his name is Kilo. That it’s a road name.”

“Oh,” she said, drawing the word out with a grin. “So he’s in an MC.”

“A what?”

“A motorcycle club. Those are usually the guys who have road names. Does he wear a cut?”

“What’s that?”

“A black leather vest.”

So that was what he wore. A cut. I nodded.

“Yeah, your neighbor is in a motorcycle club.” She smiled at me.

I wasn’t exactly sure what that meant, but experience told me I’d been right to turn

down his offer of dinner. We'd just moved here. There was enough going on in our life without me dating a man like that. Not that I knew what it meant to be in an MC, but I planned to research it the minute I was alone.

After lunch we went back out to our registers. The day was going great until a man dropped his case of beer onto the belt. It hit so hard the noise made me jump. A stranger dropping beer shouldn't have me on full alert. My eyes snapped down to the beer then up to his face. He was grinning sheepishly, though I wasn't sure if it was from making such a loud noise or from buying a thirty pack for himself. It took every ounce of self-control to keep my hands from shaking.

My heart thumped heavily in my chest as I rang him up and sent him on his way. I hated my reaction, but couldn't seem to help myself. Four years ago something like that wouldn't have even fazed me. But enough had happened during that time that now I was jumpy as hell.

"Hey, Camila," Joe said from behind me.

"Hi."

"Gary said you were interested in overtime?" he asked.

"Yeah, if it's available," I told him.

"Let me look over the schedule and I'll let you know. It's time for you to head out. Your shift's over," he told me, staring down at the clipboard in his hand as he walked away.

I closed down my register, grabbed my stuff out of the back, and headed to the grade school nearby. Sitting in the carpool lane gave me time to look up motorcycle clubs on my phone. I frowned down at the screen as I read.

It said that some clubs were one percenters, which meant they committed crimes. Others didn't and they just liked to ride their motorcycles with like-minded people. I didn't know what kind of club Kilo was in, but considering my luck? I wasn't holding my breath thinking it was the second kind of club.

I was too much like my mama, which meant trouble followed us everywhere we went. And we already had more trouble than we could handle. I didn't want to have to move again. It was getting tiring. I was hoping that Phoenix would be our permanent home. That the city would swallow us up and we couldn't be found. I looked up and honked the horn, watching as my sister ran toward the car.

"Hi, Mija," I told her as she got into the back seat and buckled up. "How was school?"

"Great," she said, her dark brown eyes shining with excitement. She talked my ear off the whole way home. She was taking summer courses to catch up on missing the last few weeks of classes at her last school. We'd had to run again and pulled her out before summer started. She was also taking additional classes to help her get ahead in case the same thing happened again.

It took too much willpower to keep my eyes from landing on the motorcycle in the driveway next to ours as I pulled up to our house. Just because he wasn't right for me, didn't mean Kilo wasn't tempting.

I went inside with Carmen and started dinner as she continued to tell me what she learned in her summer school classes that day. It relieved me to see the spark coming back into her eyes. For too long she was withdrawn and quiet.

"When is Mama going to be home?" she asked.

"In a few hours," I told her as I chopped vegetables. "Why don't you get started on

your homework?”

A few hours passed in silence as she worked, and I was just coming back from pulling the carne asada off of the grill in our backyard, when there was a knock on the door.

I froze, then looked over at Carmen. She wasn't moving in her chair, eyes wide, as she stared at me. Forcing myself to relax, I gave her a smile and set the tray of meat on top of the stove, then went to the kitchen window and looked out. My sigh was heavy as I wiped my hands on the apron around my hips and went to the front door. “It's okay. It's a...friend,” I told her. I waved in her direction. “Homework.”

Her now curious eyes dropped down to her math book, but there was still a spark of fear in them.

Opening the door, I stared at Kilo. A grin stretched over his face and it made me wonder if he was always smiling. I wasn't sure I'd seen him without one yet. It had a way of setting me at ease. Which was probably his plan. Not that I thought everyone was out to get me, but when someone was actually trying to find you, it was hard to remember that some people were just nice.

“Hey there, Cami,” he said.

I frowned at the nickname. “Hi.”

His smile got even bigger, then he held up his hand. From his fingers a keychain was dangling. “Found these after you drove off,” he told me. “Must have dropped out of your purse.”

I narrowed my eyes on the house keys I'd been trying to find earlier. We'd ended up having to use Carmen's to get inside. Reaching out, I went to grab them, but Kilo

pulled his hand out of the way. He was holding my keys up too high for me to reach. I was five-six, a whole four inches taller than my mama, but this man had to be at least six foot or more. Hard to tell from down here.

“What smells so good?”

“What?” I asked, too shocked that he’d just yanked the keys away from me to focus on his question.

He sniffed the air. “What’re you making?”

I stared at him in disbelief. “Carne asada,” I answered when he just watched me with an amused look.

He groaned. “I love carne asada.” He took a step forward, about to invite himself in. He must have seen the expression on my face, because he seemed to realize that I was ready to bolt. Not from him—though he couldn’t know that—but from a man barging into my home.

Instead he moved his foot back and kept the smile on, easing my nerves. He dangled the keys playfully. “I skipped lunch today. Makes a man a bit hungry.”

I relaxed at the playfulness. My mama would kill me, full on murder me in my sleep, if I invited this man to have dinner with us. But the manners she’d taught me were also nagging at me. “Oh. Um...”

“One set of keys for one taco?” he asked, bringing the keys down. They were lying in his huge palm.

I stared at them, then looked up at him and opened my mouth to tell him that I was sorry, but he couldn’t stay. “Would you like to have dinner with us?”

Sucking in a breath, my eyes widened. Where had that come from?

You. It came from you. Mama is going to kill you.

Great. He had me so twisted I was arguing with myself.

“Thank you, Camila,” he rumbled, using my full name in a way that had heat unfurling inside my stomach. He handed me the keys, then put his hands on my shoulders and gently moved me to the side. Then this sexy, overbearing man walked into my house. I was in deep trouble. In more ways than one.

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CHAPTER 2

Kilo

The deer in headlights look Camila was giving me would have made me laugh if I wasn't feeling a bit guilty. As soon as she refused to go on a date with me this morning, I'd palmed her keys out of her purse. I wasn't above doing shady shit to get my way. Not when it involved a gorgeous dark-eyed girl.

She was quiet. And wary. I wasn't as oblivious to her discomfort as I made out to be, but I wanted her to relax. To get to know me. Because damn, did I want to learn more about her. I sensed that there was something more to her unease, but now was definitely not the time to pry.

Her family moved in a few weeks ago. Had I known, I would have offered to help them unload, but they'd been finished by the time I'd gotten home. I'd spent every day since trying to get a look at Camila as she came and went. Her jet black hair had a slight wave to it, and it was usually in one of those buns on top of her head, but today she'd worn it loose.

Makes me want to wrap it around my fist and...

My thoughts ended abruptly as I saw a younger carbon copy of Camila sitting at the dining room table. She had the same wide eyed expression on her face as her sister. "Hi," I said with a smile.

Big smile so you don't frighten the poor girls to death.

“I’m Kilo.” I shifted mental gears to ‘child appropriate’ to keep from saying anything bad.

She looked down at the hand I extended, then around me at her sister. Manners won out, just like they had with Camila a few minutes ago, and she shook my hand. “I’m Carmen,” she said in a quiet voice.

It wasn’t exactly fair. I’d kind of bullied my way into their house, but damn Camila made it hard to catch her attention. I’d had to make a deal with Freddy this morning to chuck that damn football at her feet. I’d given him a death glare when it came close to hitting her, but the little shit had just shrugged and run off with my money. Nothing but a bunch of little hustlers living on this block.

I sat down at the table, making myself at home. I knew I was making them nervous, though I wasn’t sure why. I was a nice guy. Mostly. To my friends anyway. And damn did I want to be friends with Camila. Turning in my chair, I watched her wring her hands as she came into the kitchen. “It smells great.”

“Thank you,” she replied, looking like she didn’t know what to say or do.

The sound of a car door shutting had her stilling and she and her sister exchanged glances. I wondered if it was their father and they were worried what he’d say? I hadn’t seen a man the entire time they’d been here, but I wasn’t home much either so maybe I’d just missed him.

Another carbon copy of Camila walked through the door. “Mijas, I’m ho-” the mother’s greeting cut off as she looked up and saw me.

The genuine fear and worry in her gaze made the guilt flare to life again. Jesus these women were jumpy. Big smile, big smile. “Hi,” I told her, standing up. Bad move. She shrank back a step and I let my hand fall, shoving it into my pocket instead. “I’m

Kilo,” I said with a friendly smile. “I live next door.”

Her eyes darted to her oldest daughter, then she looked back at me. “I’m Lucia,” she replied. She had a heavy accent, but I had no trouble understanding her.

“It’s nice to meet you, Lucia,” I told her. “I was just returning something your daughter dropped.” Understanding now that I wasn’t just intruding, but these women were afraid of me, I bowed out gracefully. “It was nice to meet you. I should get home.”

Turning, I winked at Camila, then moved past a motionless Lucia, and walked out the door. “Going to be harder than I thought to get to know her,” I muttered as I went back over to my house.

Opening the door, I turned on the lights, went to the fridge and pulled out a packaged burrito. “It’s not carne asada,” I said with a sigh as I unwrapped it and tossed it into the microwave, not bothering with a plate.

I went to my bedroom, stripped and got into the shower. My mind drifted to Camila as the hot water pounded down on my head. I braced my hand on the front wall of the shower and closed my eyes. All I wanted was to get to know her. Wasn’t sure how I was supposed to do that when she spooked like a rabbit every time I came near.

My hand slid down my body and I grabbed my dick with a groan. It’d gotten hard the minute Camila’s gorgeous eyes flashed in my mind. She was a beautiful woman. And legal, thank fuck. If she’d told me this morning that she was seventeen I would have lost my shit. I was thirty years old, there was no way I would go anywhere near jailbait.

I stroked my cock, picturing her curvy body. She didn’t wear makeup and was dressed in simple jeans and a pretty green blouse this morning. But she’d caught my

eye far easier than the bunnies at the clubhouse did with their short skirts and low cut tops.

The doorbell rang and my hand froze, mid-stroke. My head dropped back and I stared up at the ceiling in irritation. It was probably Overdrive. My club brother usually stopped by after work for a beer. I debated on leaving his ass on the porch while I rubbed one out, but figured I'd better not. He might catch sight of my pretty rabbit and make a move. Then I'd have to kill him. He was the Vice President of our MC while I was just the Sergeant at Arms. He outranked me but I'd have to whip his ass all the same if he made a move on my girl.

Wrapping a towel around my waist, I went to the front door. When the doorbell sounded again, I shouted, "Hold your fucking horses, asshole!"

I yanked open the door and nearly swallowed my tongue. If I thought Camila's eyes were wide before, it was nothing like now. They were big and beautiful as they tracked down my body and got stuck on the place where my towel was held together by a loose knot. "Camila." It came out as a damn purr, but fuck did I want to touch her.

"I- Yo-" She swallowed hard.

Her reaction made me grin. Thank fuck I wasn't the only one affected here. I was beginning to think she wasn't attracted to me. That would have been a damn shame. My eyes dropped down to the tin foil covered plate in her hands.

"Did you just bring me homemade tacos?" I groaned.

Her startled eyes darted up to meet mine. She nodded.

Reaching out, I grabbed her gently by the bicep and hauled her into my house. Alone

at last.

She must not have been expecting that because those pretty lips parted as her mouth fell open.

I was doing my best not to be a creep and stare, but I was failing. The thought of Overdrive earlier had made my hard-on disappear, but now it was stirring again. “Give me a minute to put some clothes on,” I told her. Glancing over my shoulder, I ordered, “Don’t leave.”

It would be my luck if she scampered out of my house the second I hit my bedroom, but if she left the tacos, I’d consider myself fortunate. I pulled on a pair of jeans, not bothering with boxers, and a clean t-shirt. Lifting the material to my nose, I gave it a sniff test and nodded.

Yup. Clean.

To my surprise, she was sitting at my dining room table, looking around curiously when I came back. Seeing her sitting there was like a fucking dream. In fact, I’d had that dream. Only, she hadn’t been sitting in a chair, but was bent over the table as I fucked her from behind. I blew out a breath and tried to calm my damn dick down. She’d run for sure if I tried to make a move on her.

“I’m sorry about earlier,” she said, her voice soft.

I didn’t get the feeling that she was a timid woman. Her mother? Absolutely. But not her. But she rarely spoke, at least to me, and when she did it was in soft tones. I didn’t know her in the least though, so maybe my initial assessment was wrong. “No worries. Thanks for bringing me dinner.” I gave her an easy smile.

Pulling the tinfoil off the plate, I muttered a prayer of thanks because there were five

heaping tacos there. They sure were going to beat the burrito sitting in the microwave. “Are these homemade tortillas?” I asked, picking a taco up and taking a huge bite.

“Yes,” she said, then laughed at my moan of delight. “I wasn’t sure how much you could eat.”

“Tacos?” I asked, giving her an incredulous look. “As many as you set in front of me.” I liked her laugh. Her eyes lit up and she lost that wary look.

When she ducked her head I realized I’d been staring so I went back to shoveling as much of the food into my mouth as I could, as quickly as I could. Fuck the woman could cook.

“You settling in alright?” I asked, after I’d made it through the first taco.

“Yes, thank you. It’s a nice neighborhood.”

I couldn’t believe she was still here, talking to me. She seemed to be building up to something. “What’s on your mind?”

“How did you get your name?”

I nearly missed her question because she asked it in such a quiet voice. Grinning, I took a bite of another taco. Once I swallowed, I started the story. “I was in the military-”

Her eyes flashed up to mine, surprise written all over her face. “You were?”

“Yeah. The Army. Anyway, we were on a convoy and I was driving a Humvee when our convoy was pinned down by long range fire.”

She was hanging off of my every word. Jesus. Did she have any idea what she did to a man? I was guessing not or she wouldn't be over here with me, alone.

“The snipers were pinning us down so their comrades could come in with a rocket launcher and blow our asses sky high. Our backup was too damn far away.” I shrugged and took another bite.

If she's willing to cook for me every night, and look at me the way she is right now, I'd marry this girl on the fucking spot.

I stopped chewing when I realized what I'd just thought. I wasn't the settling down type. My freedom was important to me. But damn it felt good to be looked at like I was a goddamn hero.

“What did you do?” she breathed.

Clearing my throat, I continued. “Anyway, I was busy coordinating everything on the radio. My call sign was Kilo One Three. Later on, once our asses were safe again, I got to meet a bunch of the guys who'd helped us out. They didn't bother to learn my name. Just started calling me Kilo One Three. Over the years it just got shortened to Kilo. Was so used to it by the time I joined the MC it was how I introduced myself, so it became my road name.”

She was smiling now. “That's much better than what I thought.” She frowned as she realized her assumption from this morning was a little insulting, not that I really cared. “I'm sorry about that, by the way.”

“No worries,” I told her.

“Are you still in the military?” she asked, looking hopeful.

I wasn't sure why she looked like she wanted me to say yes. Hated to disappoint her. "No. My enlistment ended and I didn't go back."

"Why-" The doorbell interrupted her next question and she jumped about a foot in the air.

"Give me a minute," I told her and went to the door. When I opened it and saw Overdrive there, I tried to shut it in his face.

The fucker stuck his boot in so it just bounced back open. "What the fuck, Kilo?" he said as he shoved past me. He stopped when he saw Camila sitting there. A slow grin spread over his face. "Well, hello, beautiful."

Her eyes met mine, then she stood up. "I should go."

"Wait," I told her. "You don't have to go. He was just leaving."

"I am?" Overdrive asked, looking offended.

She just smiled and headed for the door, so I followed after her. I opened the door and leaned on the frame once she was outside. "Thanks for making me dinner, Camila."

She shook her head at me and waved before going back over to her own house.

I watched her walk away and once she was inside, shut my door and went back to the dining room. "Oh, you fucking asshole," I snapped, snatching my plate away from Overdrive. It looked like a feral coyote had gotten to it. There wasn't much left, so I glared at him. "That was my goddamned dinner."

"Fucking good," he mumbled around a mouth full of food. "Who was the hottie?" he

asked once he swallowed.

“New neighbor. And you scared her off.”

“Damn.” He eyeballed me. “You interested?”

“Yeah, she’s mine, asshole. Go fuck one of your own neighbors.” I’d known Overdrive since we were in diapers. He was the reason I’d joined the Saint’s Outlaws in the first place. Still, the only time I spoke to him this way was when we were alone. I wouldn’t disrespect him in front of the club. Didn’t matter that this was how we teased each other, it could be seen as me not knowing my place. I wouldn’t allow that.

He made a face. “Mrs. Dillers is eighty, and a little too feisty for eighty, if you know what I mean? And the other couple are lesbians. Slim pickings over in my neighborhood. I like yours better.”

“Not happening,” I told him, taking beers from my fridge and handing him one.

He let out a heavy sigh. “Woman looks like that and she can cook?” He let out a whistle. “Don’t turn your back, Bro, or someone’s going to steal her.”

Not if I had anything to say about it.

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CHAPTER 3

Kilo

Unlocking the door and flicking on the lights, I went through my morning routine of opening up the business. Overdrive and I had pooled our money together a few years ago and bought an existing indoor shooting range and gun store. The owner had been old as dirt and ready to retire and we were all too happy to take over.

We each worked here three days a week and made damn good money doing it. It gave us both a lot of free time for club shit, too. And we had a couple of our club brothers who knew how to run the place in case we needed some time off.

Like a couple weeks ago when we'd gone up to the White Mountains to help out our new friends, The Viking's Rampage. They had a club over in Tucson and had run into a bit of trouble. I'll be honest, after a fight like that, I was jonesing for more action. It was like a hit of heroin to us former service members. I missed the days when war was my life.

I looked up from polishing the glass case as the door opened. The woman had that 'harassed mother' look written all over her face as she stuttered to a stop and blinked at me in confusion.

Smiling at her, then down at her daughter who was clutching her leg, I pointed behind her. "Next door."

"Huh?"

“I’m guessing you’re looking for Tappin’ Toes?”

She blinked again, then nodded.

“This is Double Tap.” I jerked my thumb over my shoulder at the wall of weapons behind me. “Gun store and shooting range. Dance studio is the next door over.”

Her eyes dropped to the tattoos on my hands as I pointed her in the right direction again. Her hand fluttered a little, then landed on her chest. “Oh. I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t be,” I told her with a grin. “Happens often.” Or often enough that we had a running joke about it with Jess, the owner of the dance studio. That tended to happen when gun toting men showed up in the middle of her dance classes.

“Thank you,” the mom said, smiling at me and guiding the little girl back out the door.

Leaning on the case, I watched as she glanced back then flushed when I caught her looking. I chuckled and went back to work. I pulled out the rifle I’d taken with me up to the White Mountains. Breaking it down, I started giving it a thorough cleaning.

Ever since we’d met the Viking’s Rampage and the Berserker’s Rage MCs I’d been thinking about our own club and where we were going with it. I had a feeling Ruck had been having the same thoughts because he’d called for church Thursday morning. I was really hoping he was going to start taking us in a different direction.

For a while, after a lot of us had gotten out of the military, we just needed quiet. And peace. And we had a few members who were still actively in the military, one was even deployed right now, but the rest of us were getting antsy.

We were men created for war. For hard times. And while it’d been nice to take a

break from all that, there was a burning in our blood that needed to be slaked. And the flames were starting to build.

None of this was on Ruck. We'd voted to take it easy so we could all start figuring out how to live after leaving the military. Most of us bought, or started, businesses. And building those kept us busy and contained. Add in partying and fucking and life had been good. But more and more we were chomping at the bit to get into some shit.

The incident up in the mountains had fueled me and now I was feeling that old need surging back up inside me once more. The need that drove me into the military to begin with.

The hours passed quietly, with a couple of regulars coming in to use the shooting range, then heading home. The sun was starting to set. It was only about an hour from closing time when the door opened again.

"Hey Kilo."

"Jess. How's it going?" I asked.

We'd gotten to know the woman whose building was next to ours pretty well over the last few years. She was a good lady. In her fifties and sweet as could be. She often brought us cookies. There wasn't much I wouldn't do for a homemade chocolate chip cookie. She'd found my weak spot. My stomach.

"So that asshole across from me parked in one of our spots again. Sandy ended up having to park way out in the lot. I was wondering..."

"I'll walk her to her car," I offered before she even had the chance to ask.

Her face broke out into a grin. "Thank you, Kilo. I just-" She broke off and shook her

head.

“He still giving her trouble?”

“I don’t know,” she sighed. “He keeps parking in our spots no matter how many times I ask him to knock it off. He hasn’t asked her out again, but I just get the feeling she’s not telling me everything. You know?”

“Yeah.” I grabbed my Glock and shoved it in the holster I had clipped to my belt. Arizona was an open carry state. I also had a concealed carry permit, but for dickheads like Shawn from across the way, it was better to let him see what you were packing. He was too much of a coward to confront a man though. No. He liked to harass young women. Young married women.

Sandy was his target right now and it didn’t matter that she’d told him she had a husband. He was one of those guys who didn’t think no meant no. Jess had told me what he’d said about her husband not needing to know about them and I’d nearly lost my shit. It was assholes like that who ripped families apart while military members were deployed.

I’d been single for all of my deployments, but I’d seen it happen often enough. Sandy was a sweet girl. Twenty years old. One kid. Just trying to survive while her husband was gone, and this creep was trying to intimidate her into making a stupid decision. She didn’t want to worry her husband, give him stress that could cause him to get distracted and hurt while deployed. Admirable, but that didn’t mean she needed to endure harassment.

Not on my watch.

“I’ll look after your store while you walk her.”

“What about your studio?”

“I’m done for the night.”

“Then I’ll just lock up for a few minutes and walk both of you,” I told her.

She crossed her arms over her chest. “Your mama sure taught you right, Kilo.”

“Thanks,” I replied with a chuckle, holding the door open for her. I locked it behind me. When I turned, I found both women standing there waiting for me.

Sandy gave a sheepish smile. “Thanks for this, Kilo. Jess worries too much.”

“I’d say she worries just the right amount,” I told her as we stopped at Jess’s car. It was parked right in front of her studio, which was where Sandy’s little Honda should be as well. Instead, a BMW sat there. “You want me to talk to him?” I asked Jess.

She sighed. “No, thank you. I’ll go have a word with him again tomorrow.”

Shrugging, I lifted my hand in a wave as she slipped into her car and drove away. “Lead the way,” I told Sandy, motioning to the lot. I fell into step beside her.

“How’s Matt doing?” I asked as we walked.

“Good,” she said with a beaming smile. “I got to talk to him for an hour last night.”

“That’s good.” Deployment was so damn hard on the families. Wives and husbands were left behind, often raising children alone, and missing their partners. It wasn’t much easier on the service member. They had to shove the worry down so they could focus on their job. Otherwise they could get themselves, or someone else, killed. But that wasn’t easy to do when you knew your families were at home, trying to make it

all work alone.

When Sandy sucked in a little breath, I followed her stare. Shawn was standing outside the building he worked in, watching us.

I met his gaze and dropped my arm around Sandy's shoulders. His face dipped into a scowl, but he turned around and went back inside. I hadn't told Jess, but I suspected he was continuing to take up their parking spaces so Sandy would be forced to park further away. That way he could waylay her on her way back to her car.

Douche.

Sandy sighed and her shoulders relaxed as soon as Shawn walked away. She didn't seem to mind that I had my arm around her. I'd never once hit on her. I didn't take other men's women. This was merely making a point to the dickhead to stay away from her. Sandy knew I was safe. Hell, Matt had called me a few months ago to thank me for watching out for his wife while he was gone.

I didn't know him well, but he came into the store occasionally and when he was home he was always picking up his wife from work, so we'd talked. He was a good kid. So was Sandy. I couldn't imagine how frustrating it was for him to be halfway around the world and not be able to help your woman when she needed it.

Which was why Overdrive and I had sort of taken to watching out for Jess, Sandy, and Laura while they were at the dance studio. The women mostly dealt with moms, their kids, and the occasional dance dad who brought their little princesses in, so their clientele wasn't an issue. It was the men working in this complex that needed to learn some fucking manners.

Jess was right. My mama had taught me right. She was a single mom after my dad passed away and she made sure I knew how to treat a lady. Sure, I was in an MC, so I

wasn't exactly a fucking angel, but that didn't mean I was like Shawn the Douche.

"Thanks again, Kilo." Sandy smiled as I dropped my arm and she unlocked her car. "He just won't take the hint."

"If you need anything, you call me, or Overdrive," I told her. We'd made sure all three ladies working at Tappin' Toes had our cell numbers in case there was ever any trouble. "I'm more than happy to make sure he gets the hint."

She grinned at me. "I bet. Thanks. I have to go pick up Charlotte from the sitter."

"Drive safe. Monsoon's rolling in," I told her. Thunder clapped a few seconds later, as if to punctuate my statement.

She waved, and I waited, hands shoved in my pockets until her car turned out onto the main road. Turning, I headed back inside. No one was around, so I was going to close early. Nothing worse than getting caught in a monsoon on a motorcycle. I was going to have to race the storm home.

CHAPTER 4

Camila

G lass breaking jerked me awake. My heart was trying to climb out of my chest via my throat as my body went into panic mode. I wanted so badly to lay there in the dark, straining to listen for any footsteps. But I couldn't. My mom and sister were counting on me.

I'd never been this girl. As a kid I was outgoing and confident. It was still there, I was just suppressing it half the time, and the other half, during situations like this, past traumas kept her contained.

Forcing myself to get out of bed, I walked down the hall. I was still listening hard for who might have broken our downstairs window. I clasped my hands together to keep them from shaking.

Mom met me in the hallway. Her eyes were wide and she looked terrified. I knew if I looked into a mirror my expression would match hers.

"What's going on?" Carmen asked from her doorway. She was clutching the wood as hard as she could.

"I'll go check," I said, keeping my voice soothing.

"Mija--"

“Stay with Carmen, Mama,” I told her. There was no way I’d ever let either of them go check on what was waiting downstairs. That was my job. Walking to the lower level of our new house was like going toward a firing squad. I could hardly contain my shaking, but I had to make sure no one was in our home. Grabbing the broom from the closet next to the stairs, I held it aloft as I walked.

By the time I got to the dining room I was close to throwing up because of the anxiety and fear. It was only a small relief to see the tree branch that the storm had tossed through our window. My nervous system was still up in arms, warning me that there was danger.

I surveyed the damage, then put the broom back and went upstairs. We’d have to clean up in the morning. I wasn’t going to do it while the storm was still raging outside.

I found my family in my Mom’s bed, clinging to one another. A wave of anger and sadness washed over me. We shouldn’t have to live like this. None of this was our fault, yet we were paying the price. Climbing in with them, I smiled when Carmen held the covers up so I could get underneath.

“It was a tree branch,” I told them, snuggling close. “I’ll take care of it in the morning.” My hand stroked over Carmen’s hair and I met my mother’s gaze over her head. There was guilt and sadness in her eyes. This wasn’t her fault any more than it was mine. I reached out and squeezed her hand. Maybe one day we wouldn’t react to every loud noise this way.

Hesitating, I stared at the security door before I took a deep breath and opened it. I hadn’t made it more than a few steps inside when I stopped in shock.

“Well hey there, neighbor,” Kilo said, a blindingly bright smile forming on his face.

Why was he so handsome? This would be so much easier if he wasn't so ridiculously good looking.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

He cocked his head. "This is my business. Well, mine and Overdrive's. You met him the other night. Besides," there was that smile again, "I'm pretty sure that should be my question for you."

"Oh," I replied, feeling stupid. It wasn't really my place to question where he went or what he did. What were the odds I'd walk into his store? "I- Um-" My eyes flashed up to the wall of guns behind him. "Need one of those."

His brows shot up. "You want to buy a gun?"

I nodded and walked up to the glass case that was separating the two of us.

"What kind?"

"Um-" My eyes darted all around. Ugh. Not that one. I wasn't sure I could lift it even. The thing was massive. Next I looked at what I was sure was a shotgun.

"How about this," Kilo said, sensing my unease. "What do you want it for?"

I swallowed as shame, fear, and guilt all vied for top position inside my chest.

"Shooting skeet?" he continued when I didn't say anything. "You want a shotgun, for example. But it's got a heavy kick and your shoulder isn't going to thank you afterward. Rifles," he pointed to the massive gun, "are good for shooting long distances." His eyes twinkled when he saw the disdain on my face. "Home protection, the shotgun or a nice handgun are going to be good options."

“Does a handgun...hurt to shoot?” I asked. I’d never in my life handled a gun. Though I’d seen Dad load his plenty of times over the years.

“It’s got a little kick, but nothing like the shotgun, and no, it doesn’t hurt to shoot it. Well, not you anyway.” He started pulling small weapons out of the glass case and setting them on top. He was rattling off information that was making my eyes want to cross.

“Which would you recommend?” I asked, interrupting his spiel.

“Well, it depends on what you want it for.”

I couldn’t just tell him. Not here. Not...ever maybe. I settled for an easy, half-truth. “Last night a branch fell and banged on the window. It...scared me. More than it should have. I think I would feel safer if...” I let the words hang.

He studied me for a minute, I could feel him evaluating my words, deciding if they were true. But after a minute he smiled and kept talking. He leaned against the counter, and I couldn’t help but admire the tattoos on his arms. “I’d go with this little beauty,” he told me, pointing at a small gun to the left. “It’s a Glock, but made to easily fit inside your purse. Or we can get you a holster and you can wear it on your belt. But, it still shoots nine millimeter so it’ll make an impression.”

“I don’t know what that means,” I told him.

He laughed. “A nine millimeter is the size of the bullet,” he explained. “There are bigger rounds, but they don’t actually have more stopping power. Plus, a nine millimeter won’t hurt your hand or cause too much recoil.”

“Okay,” I told him. “I’ll take it.”

“Just like that. Okay.” He slid a paper and pen over to me. “Fill that out so I can get the background check going for you first. Typically takes about thirty minutes or so.”

My breath caught in my throat as I stared down at the form. “You have to do...a background check?”

He must have caught the slight tremor in my voice, because he looked up at me. He was studying me again in a way that made me want to shift from foot to foot. “That’s right. Laws.” He rolled his eyes. Then pinned me with another intense stare. “That a problem?”

God I hope not.

I shook my head and willed my hand not to shake as I neatly filled out the form he’d given me. I watched with a sinking feeling as he got the process started.

No more than two minutes had passed since he’d entered my information and my cell rang. Pulling it out of my purse, I groaned when I saw Dustin’s name on the screen. “Excuse me,” I told Kilo and stepped a couple feet away.

His gaze was burning into my back as I answered. “Hey.”

“Hi, Camila...” There was silence for a moment, then he continued. “Just had an alert pop up. You’re buying a gun?”

“I am. Is...is that okay?”

“Of course. I wish you’d have listened to me sooner and gotten one a while ago. What made you change your mind?”

I looked over my shoulder and found Kilo staring at me. He didn’t even try to make it

look like he wasn't. "Um...nothing. It's stupid, but a branch went through our window and..." I trailed off, not wanting to tell him that none of us had slept for the rest of the night as we cocooned ourselves in the relative safety of Mom's bedroom. He'd think I was dumb. Maybe I was. Then again, maybe he'd understand. He'd been there for us since the beginning. Knew what we'd been going through.

"Do you need us to come fix that for you?"

"No. Thank you though. Really. We appreciate everything you've done."

"I'm just a phone call away," he told me. "Even if it's midnight during a monsoon," he joked. "My house is twenty minutes from yours."

"Thanks, Dustin. Really."

"Alright, well, I took care of the alert and you're all set."

"Okay. Thank you."

I hung up and turned around, letting out a little squeak because Kilo was right behind me now. I hadn't even heard him move. His massive arms were crossed over an equally muscular chest. The fabric of his t-shirt strained against his muscles.

"A branch went through your window last night? I thought it banged on the window?"

That answered whether or not he'd been listening in. "Yeah. It's in our backyard and-"

"You have someone coming to fix it?" he asked, his eyes dropping down to the cell phone in my hand.

“Oh. No. Um, I was going to try to call someone later today.”

He nodded and motioned for me to come back to the case that acted as a counter. “Background check went through just fine. Faster than usual,” he told me as he ran the credit card I handed over.

I wasn’t sure what to say to that. Thank God? No, that would make him suspicious. So I settled for staying quiet.

“Case comes with the purchase,” he told me, placing my new gun inside the black plastic gun case and handing me a key.

“Thank you.”

He’d already set aside things I would need, like bullets, and packed those into a brown bag.

“Is...is that it?” I asked. Seemed like this should be a harder process or something.

He shot me another grin. “That’s it. I recommend you practice with it. Won’t do you any good if you’re rusty and miss.”

That would imply I knew what the hell I was doing with it in the first place. Dad had never bothered to show me how to shoot. He probably never thought I’d need to know. That he’d be there to protect us. I didn’t tell Kilo I didn’t know what I was doing, though. I just nodded and held onto my new purchases. “Okay.”

“This is an indoor shooting range, too,” he told me. He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. “It’s back there. We have eyes and ears that you can use if you don’t want to buy them. But you’ll have to purchase the inner ears. No one wants to reuse those.” He laughed at his own joke.

Eyes? Ears? He may as well be speaking another language. I gave him a weak smile and started backing up. “Thank you so much,” I stammered as I beat a hasty retreat.

“Are you okay?” he asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Um, yeah. I just have to get home. Thank you again.” It was cowardly, but I rushed out of there as fast as my legs would carry me. It wasn’t even him I was running from this time. Not really. It was just that buying a gun made this all too real.

The next time they came for us, I was going to fight back, or die trying. And it scared the hell out of me. My first order of business was to go home and look up videos on how to use my new gun.

CHAPTER 5

Kilo

“B rother,” I said as I bumped Drifter’s fist. It was early and most of my club was already at the compound. Ruck had gotten a wild hair up his ass once he got a chance to see the Tucson clubhouse. He loved it.

Now we were spending most of our days off building one that was similar. The existing building would still be used for parties and get togethers, but there would be a second building with apartments.

“Remind me what we need apartments for?” Code asked. He wiped his forearm across his brow. It was already hot as balls and it was only seven in the morning. That was what July in Phoenix got you. Heat stroke.

“Damn expensive,” Flir muttered. He was the treasurer for our club and this whole business was making him cranky. He didn’t like parting with money, even if it wasn’t his own.

“It’ll be worth it,” Ruck told him, his tone saying they’d had this discussion more than once before. “It’s so you assholes have somewhere to stay when you get too damn drunk to drive home,” he answered Code this time.

“Floor’s always been good enough before, Prez,” Code said, rubbing the back of his neck. When Ruck straightened up and gave him a grim look Code shrugged. “Whatever you want. It’s not a problem.”

Code had only been patched in about a year ago. He was still young, but he was a damn good member so far. He hardly ever bitched, so to hear him asking why we'd decided—as a club—to do something was a surprise. It was the heat. Phoenix in the summer may as well be the surface of the sun. It was all the damn blacktop. It attracted the heat to this city and made it damn near unbearable.

Ruck didn't want those apartments for the nights we partied too hard. The man was always five steps ahead of the rest of us. He'd seen the Viking's Rampage and what they were doing down in Tucson. They were building families. And even though they still fought for their club and their city, those families were having a calming effect on the guys. They were still dangerous as fuck, the battle up in the mountains against assassins, hit men, and sicarios was a prime example of that.

Not one of them had shied away from that fight, not even Butcher's old lady, who happened to be an assassin herself. They'd loaded up their weapons and taken the fight to the assholes coming for their own. But they had something to fight for. And that was intriguing to Ruck. He knew most of us were getting restless, and as our leader, he wanted to see us content and happy.

I glanced over at Ruck and found him watching me with narrowed eyes. "Sorry I'm late."

"You're not even supposed to be here this morning," he reminded me. "What's the face for?"

"What'd you mean, Prez?" I asked, feigning innocence.

"That stupid ass grin? Why am I staring at it this early?"

I busted out laughing. Ruck was more of a night owl. Getting up this early was making him a cranky fucker. Me? My eyes opened at five a.m. every day, like

clockwork. “How did you make it through so many years of service when you hate getting up early?” I asked, dodging his question. I wasn’t about to tell him that my ‘stupid ass grin’ was because I knew what he was up to. He wanted to play matchmaker and start finding our brothers some women.

Not the bunnies. No one was about to wife up the women who hung around here. Some of them were nice enough girls, but if anyone was into them, they’d have already made them old ladies.

“Persistence,” he muttered. “You asked for the day off, Kilo. Why’re you here?”

“‘Bout that,” I told him. “Have a...friend. Window was broken out in the monsoon the other night.” It’d been three days and Camila hadn’t gotten that window fixed yet. I knew why. It was hard as hell to get contractors out to a small job like that in the dead of summer.

Despite our summers being hell on Earth, with scorching temperatures and scatterings of storms that wreaked havoc around here, it was the height of construction season. Even the smaller handymen were booked out weeks, or months, in advance. If you managed to get anyone to even answer a phone call, you were damn fucking lucky.

“Sucks,” Ruck said, waiting for me to get to my point.

“Wanted to see if I could take one of those,” I pointed over toward the windows and other supplies that were stacked inside the steel building we used as a maintenance space for our bikes.

He looked over at the windows, and I could see the gears in his head turning. He was counting out how many he had versus how many he’d need.

“I’ll pay you for it. I just didn’t want to have to wait in rush hour traffic to make it to

the store to buy one.”

“You don’t need to pay for it,” he said, sounding offended that I’d even offer.

That was Ruck. The man would give you the shirt off his back. Even if it was his last. He didn’t even ask which friend I needed the window for. He just knew I needed it.

“Take whatever you need to get the job done,” he told me. “But run it all by Flir so that we can make sure to pick up more later.”

“No problem. Thanks, Ruck.”

“This for your lady friend?” Overdrive asked from behind me.

Ruck’s brows shot up. He’d bent over to pick up a board, but straightened up again. Staring at me, he crossed his arms over his chest. “What lady friend?”

“She lives next door to him. Cooks like an angel,” Overdrive sighed.

Ruck’s amused gaze met mine. “She made you food?”

“Tacos,” Overdrive moaned before I could answer. “Best fucking tacos I’ve ever eaten. Does she have a sister?” he asked, a hopeful look on his face.

“Yeah,” I replied. I grinned at him. “She’s like eleven.”

“That’s just fucking mean,” he muttered. “A mama? I don’t mind my women being a little bit older.”

“Not happening,” I growled at him. “Go find your own woman.”

“Meh,” he scoffed. “I don’t want to be tied down. Just want more tacos.”

A month ago, I would have agreed with him wholeheartedly. Now? I wasn’t so sure anymore. The girl next door kept calling to me. She was fascinating. I often caught fear in her eyes, but then a few days ago she strolled right into my shop and bought a gun. Then had bolted so fast, I hadn’t even gotten to chat her up more. She was a walking contradiction and I really wanted—no, needed—to get to the bottom of her.

“I’ll leave it up to Kilo to make new friends,” Overdrive added.

I glared at him over my shoulder. “Least I have a friend,” I told him.

He grabbed his chest, over his heart, and gave me a wounded look, then he flipped me off with a grin as he walked away.

I looked over and sighed when I found Ruck still watching me with an amused look. “Don’t go getting your hopes up. She’s cute. That’s all.”

“Uh huh,” he replied. “And that’s why you’re giving up a day off to go fix her window for her.”

“I have four days a week off,” I told him. “It’s not exactly a hardship.” The last thing I needed was Ruck shoving me into something I wasn’t ready for. I was handling that part on my own just fucking fine. If I stopped and thought about it, I was going to lose my shit and hole myself up somewhere while going on a bender. I didn’t need, or want, an old lady. It was exactly as I said. Camila was cute. Well, I’d downplayed that.

She’s drop dead gorgeous with a little body that I want to-

Breaking off the thought, I walked away from my president before I admitted

something that I wasn't ready for anyone to know. She'd invaded my mind and I couldn't evict her. I went over to the garage and started picking through what I'd need.

"You need any help?"

I glanced over my shoulder at Bolo and shook my head. "I'm just framing in a window. You taught me how to do that years ago."

He grinned. "Didn't even know how to hold a fucking hammer back then."

"And I made you a better shooter," I pointed out. "Made your range masters a lot happier with your scores."

If Bolo could, he'd just bash the enemy's skull in every time. He was a big man and could fight like a damn demon. Guns looked like toys in his hands. It was no wonder he'd struggled during qualifications with the pistol. At one point he'd gotten pissed and just chucked the weapon at the target. When it hit dead center, he'd pointed at it. Like, see? I don't need to shoot shit.

He was great with the shotgun and rifle. But it'd taken some work, patience, and some modifications to his service pistol to get him there with his handgun. Now he was damn near as good as I was. And still he'd choose snapping a man's neck over shooting him if he had the chance. He was a man who was used to working with his hands.

"Thanks," I told him. "But I've got it. I don't want to take you away from this place for the day."

Bolo was the reason this project was running smoothly. He'd worked with his dad at their construction company since he was a kid. Still helped out with it even though it

was his older brother running it now.

Not that the rest of us were useless, we just didn't have the experience.

Bolo nodded and got back to work. I started loading up the materials I'd need into one of the cage rides. It didn't take long before Flir started hovering. "Go away," I told him.

"What're you doing?" he asked, looking at the pile of stuff I was loading up.

"What's it look like?"

"Looks like eight hundred and forty-three dollars," he replied, then frowned as he double checked his math in his head. "And thirty-eight cents."

"Ruck said I could take it," I told him. "Grab the other end." Since he was here, hovering, I was going to make use of him. We gently put the window in the back of the truck and I strapped it down.

By the time I jumped out of the truck, Flir was circling like a shark, scribbling on a piece of paper. "Where'd you get that?" I asked, looking around.

"Do you have two, or three of those two by fours?"

"Four of 'em." I crossed my arms over my chest, content to sit and answer all his questions now that I was done.

"Why do you need two buckets of nails?"

"In case I need two of 'em," I replied. He glared at me, but wrote them down.

“Let me know if you end up bringing anything back.”

I gave him a short wave and headed around the cab to get into the driver’s seat.

“I mean it!”

This time I waved with my middle finger as I drove off. Fuck, I loved my brothers. Each and every one of the crazy bastards.

CHAPTER 6

Camila

“M ama. What are you doing?”

She glared at me over her shoulder, but didn't step away from the window. She held the curtain back the barest inch so she could peek out. “What's he doing out there?”

I sighed and stepped in close, my eyes widening when I saw Kilo, sans shirt, in our backyard. It was still early in the morning, but he was whistling as he worked, sweat tracking a trail down his chest. My eyes followed a drop as it slid down over those abs, wishing for a moment I could trace that drop. “It looks like he's fixing our window,” I told her, keeping my voice down so he didn't overhear us. We were in the kitchen, while he was fixing the window in our dining room, but it wasn't that big of a house and it was an open concept, and sound carried when there was no glass to keep the outside sectioned off.

He was fixing our window. If I didn't already find the man attractive, that would have cinched it right there. He was gorgeous, competent, and kind. Not to mention that smile that he flashed every chance he got. A man couldn't be an abusive jerk if he was smiling every time you saw him. I was pretty sure it was a statistical improbability.

“Maybe you should go thank him,” I told her when she scowled at my answer. That made her glare harder at me. “I've been trying for three days to get anyone to call us back to fix that window,” I reminded her. “He doesn't have to help us. I didn't even

ask him, Mama.”

Her shoulders loosened, the tension draining out of her. She was a kind and caring woman, but the last four years had turned her suspicious and wary. And the same had happened to Carmen and me. It wasn't her fault, any of our faults, but I didn't want to be that way and I knew it was starting to get worse. “You're right,” she replied.

I'd learned my manners from her. I knew this would prompt her to be nicer to our neighbor. Sitting at the table, I watched as she made fresh lemonade. My smile was wide as she placed the pitcher in the fridge, then put a full glass with ice on a serving tray and swept past me in a huff.

She didn't want to be nice. She wanted to hide. We'd been hiding for too long. But it seemed never ending. Every time we started to relax, they found us...

Shaking off the impending sense of doom, I shoved off my chair and busied myself. I didn't like thinking back over the last four years. I began the prep for tonight's dinner. I was off work today, those overtime hours hadn't been scheduled yet, and I needed something to keep my mind busy.

It helped that I was able to peek out the window above the sink and watch as my mother handed the lemonade over to Kilo. His muscles bunched as he set his hammer down and took the glass from her. My eyes trailed down over tanned muscles and tattoos. I really just wanted Mama to feel more comfortable around him. I knew she was right the other night when she told me I couldn't get involved with him. It wasn't fair to drag anyone into the mess we were in. But I wanted to. I liked the way he smiled at me. The way his pretty brown eyes sparkled as he teased me.

Turning away from the window, I began to chop vegetables on our kitchen island. When I heard shuffling from behind me, I asked, “Was that so hard?” in a teasing tone.

When Mama didn't answer, I glanced over my shoulder and froze. Kilo was leaning against the wall, watching me as he held his glass. "Oh-"

"Your mom said to bring this in when I was done," he said with a grin.

I looked down at the half full glass and my brows rose. "You're finished?" Stepping forward, I went to take his glass.

He jerked it away, narrowing his eyes in a mock glare. "Not even close. This lemonade is too good to waste."

My lips lifted involuntarily. He was a goofball. He always seemed to be teasing me whenever we spoke. "Then why did you bring it in here?"

He shrugged those muscular shoulders. "Haven't seen you in a few days. Figured I'd better check in."

It wasn't his duty to check in on me. Or to fix our window. Yet, here he was. Going to the fridge, I pulled the pitcher out and met his eyes as I filled his glass. "Thank you."

"Pretty sure I'm supposed to be saying that to you," he replied, motioning to his glass.

"For the window," I clarified, my cheeks heating. Why was I always blushing and tongue tied around him?

"Oh, it's no trouble."

He was taking time away from his business to fix up our house. And I hadn't even had to ask. Or pay. "If you let me know how much everything costs, I can-"

“Dinner,” he replied, before I could finish.

I looked over my shoulder at the pot on the stove. “I’m making pozole,” I told him.

He groaned. “You’re kidding me?”

That made me blink and I licked my lips because the sound rumbling out of him made everything within me soften. I wondered if he even realized what the sound of him groaning in appreciation did to me? I shifted, pressing my thighs together to try to stop the sudden ache that sprang to life between them.

The last four years had been hell. Torture. There wasn’t time for attraction. Or men. Or anything a young woman should be thinking about. School. Careers. Marriage. Kids. All of it had taken a backseat. And it wasn’t over. But Kilo was forcing me to confront the fact that I was still alive. And young. And that I wanted some of those things.

“Homemade pozole?” he added. I nodded. “I haven’t had pozole in a long damn time. Dang time,” he corrected with a cough. Mama always scowled at bad language.

“Would you like to have dinner with us?” I offered.

“Yes,” he replied so fast I couldn’t help but laugh. “But, that’s not what I want in payment for the window,” he added with a wicked smile. He stepped forward, placing his glass on the counter.

I sucked in a breath because he was standing so close now. I glanced up at him. “What do you want?” He paused for so long it made me wonder what he was thinking.

“For you to come to dinner with me. On a date,” he finally said.

How was I supposed to refuse that? How was I supposed to turn him down when everything inside me was screaming yes? When he'd taken his own time, his own money, and his own supplies to help my family? When he didn't need to make our problem his own? "Okay." The word came out soft and unsteady.

He searched my gaze. There was confusion there in his eyes. He didn't seem to know what to do about this attraction any more than I did. I was glad it wasn't only me struggling.

He reached out to me and brushed his thumb over my cheek. I had to fight against closing my eyes. When he stepped in even closer the breath lodged in my chest. I swallowed hard. I wanted him to kiss me. Mama and the drama following us be damned. My lips parted as I waited for him to make that move.

Our eyes were locked together and he seemed to take my stillness as the acceptance it was. He lowered his head.

My eyes drifted closed as our lips met. His were softer than I thought they'd be. I gasped as his arms went around me and he gathered me close so he could deepen our kiss. It was...heaven.

He was being slow and gentle. Thorough. His lips moved against mine and when his tongue brushed against my skin, I opened for him.

This was nothing like the kiss I'd shared with Mike when I was nineteen and beginning to entertain the idea of a boyfriend. That had been nothing but fumbling chaos. When our teeth had crashed together, we'd ended up laughing. We knew nothing about kissing at the time. We'd started dating and had learned, but it was still nothing like this. There was something different about Kilo and the way he made me feel.

I sighed into his mouth. He was stoking something inside of me I hadn't known existed. His tongue brushed mine and I melted in his arms. Everything around us disappeared.

When someone cleared their throat, I jerked away from him. We both gave my mama guilty smiles. I knew she'd softened toward him because all she did was watch him like a hawk as he gave her a polite nod, grabbed his lemonade, and headed back outside.

She turned back to me and sighed. "Mija."

"It's nothing Mama," I told her. "We were just--"

"I can see what you were doing," she interrupted, resting her hands on her hips.

My cheeks flamed with heat, and I turned back to the vegetables. I was so confused and embarrassed. I didn't know what to do about the feelings swirling around inside me.

"Mija," she said again, coming around the island and waiting until I looked up at her. There was sadness in her eyes. "I don't want you to be alone."

My brows shot up. "What?"

A pained expression crossed her face. "You aren't me. I know you won't make the same mistakes I did."

I sighed and gave her a sympathetic look. "Mama, you didn't do anything wrong."

"I chose the wrong man," she insisted. "That was my mistake. I don't want that for you."

Sighing, I shook my head. “I know. I’ll just-”

“Stop,” she told me. She held up her hand to quiet me. “I don’t want you to make the same mistakes as me, but you’re not me .”

That made me blink in shock. She’d spent the last few years warning me away from any man who’d come close.

“And I don’t want you to be alone,” she repeated. “ No one wants to live their life alone.”

“Oh, Mama,” I sighed. “You don’t have to be alone either.”

She gave me a soft smile. “I’m starting to realize that. We both need to learn to open up again.”

As usual, we were thinking the same thing. She claimed we weren’t the same, but we were as close as two people could be. I was the spitting image of her. We were more alike than she thought.

“I like him,” she admitted. My mouth dropped open, making her laugh. “And not just because he’s fixing our window. Maybe he works, maybe he doesn’t. But maybe you should give it a chance.”

He’d been wearing her down. Every time he saw us outside, he was smiling and saying hello to her. I wasn’t sure why he was putting in so much effort to win her over, but I appreciated it. There was a lot about him I was coming to appreciate. And there was so much more to learn, I was sure.

“I won’t stand in your way.”

Shaking my head, I smiled at her. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“He likes you, Sweetie,” she told me with a grin.

I looked over at the wall he was standing outside of. He’d kissed me, so I knew she was right. “I don’t know...” I didn’t mean I wasn’t sure if he liked me and Mama seemed to get what I was saying.

“We have to start learning how to trust again,” she told me.

“I know.”

“I think this is your opportunity.”

Nodding, I stared down at the vegetables, then met her gaze. “When it’s your turn I’m going to have fun reminding you of this conversation.”

She laughed and came around the counter to give me a hug. “Good. Because I’m going to need your help.”

I squeezed her tight. “I’ll always be here to help you.”

She stared up at me. “I wish I could leave you and your sister completely out of it.”

She’d do it. She’d take on this trouble all by herself. I’d never want that for her. I only wanted to protect my family. I just wasn’t sure how to do it.

My mind strayed to the gun that was locked in its case upstairs. Maybe I did know how.

“Go,” she said, nodding toward where Kilo was out back working. “I’ll finish this.”

Smiling, I went outside and stopped when I saw him measuring a piece of wood.

He must have heard me because he turned. His eyes strayed toward the kitchen window. “Hope I didn’t get you into trouble.”

“You didn’t,” I assured him. “Could...Could I ask you a favor?”

“Sure.”

“Would you teach me to shoot my new gun?”

His brows rose. “You’ve never shot one?”

I shook my head, waiting to see what he’d say.

He studied me for a minute then nodded. “How about on Friday?” he asked.

“That’s perfect. Thank you,” I said, my voice breathless with excitement and nerves. “I’ll let you-”

“Camila?”

“Yeah?”

“What about dinner?” He flashed me that smile.

“After you teach me to shoot.” It was a step in the right direction. The nerves fluttered in my stomach because I’d accepted a date with a man. One who I was insanely attracted to. This was the first step in taking back my life. No one was going to force me into that dark place again. I wouldn’t allow it.

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CHAPTER 7

Kilo

“Thank you,” I said, smiling at Lucia as she set a bowl of pozole in front of me. “Have you lived in Phoenix long?”

Camila and her mother exchanged glances at my question, but it was Carmen who piped up. “No. We moved here from Idaho.”

My brows shot up. “What brought you here?”

“Well, we lived in New Mexico for my whole life,” she said, buttering a piece of bread, “but then-”

“We needed a change of scenery,” Lucia interrupted with a tight smile. “But...Idaho...was too cold.”

I studied Camila as she turned away to get the pitcher of sweet tea. Her shoulders were tense. Lucia was giving Carmen a warning look. I’d already suspected these women were hiding something, but I didn’t know what. Now I was sure of it. Not that they owed me an explanation. They didn’t know me. But I was hoping to get to know them enough that they’d feel comfortable enough to share with me.

The women sat down and I focused back on Carmen. “Do you like your school?”

She smiled, the spark coming back in her eyes. “I do. I’ve made a lot of friends

already.”

I watched them closely as we ate. Carmen was chatting up a storm with me, but the others were quiet, more withdrawn. Though, I did notice that they both watched Carmen like she was the light in their lives as she spoke.

“What about you two?” I asked, once Carmen paused for breath. “Are you making friends?”

Camila looked up at me with a startled expression on her face. I could see the confusion in her eyes as she tried to decipher my meaning.

There’d been no meaning behind my words, but I didn’t want her to be nervous. “Besides me, of course,” I added.

She gave me a half-hearted smile. “I have a friend at work.”

I had to bite back the immediate question that sprang to my mind. Man, or woman? It wasn’t exactly my business. Yet. And I didn’t want her to stop talking. “Where do you work?”

“Oh, just down the road at the grocery store.” She told me the name and I knew which one.

I was going to have to start shopping there. “How about you, Lucia?”

“I work for a cleaning service,” she replied. There was a wariness in her eyes, as though she thought I was going to judge her for that. I wasn’t. It impressed me that they did whatever was necessary for their family. It was clear that Carmen was happy and wanted for nothing.

“I own a local shooting range,” I told Lucia, keeping the conversation flowing. “It was a natural progression for me and my best friend once we got out of the military.” I’d added the last because Lucia had tensed up when I told her about my business.

I stared at the pot of pozole on the stove, wondering if it would be bad manners to ask for more. I’d wolfed the first down so quickly I was left sitting here while they were still eating their own dinners. Camila followed my gaze and without a word took my bowl and went to the stove to refill it. I gave her a sheepish grin when she set it back in front of me. “Thank you.”

“We’re not used to a man’s appetite anymore,” Lucia said with a grin.

“Why’s that?” I asked. I’d been dying to figure out where Camila and Carmen’s father was. It was the wrong question to ask because all three of them fell quiet.

“He’s no longer with us,” Lucia said in a soft voice.

“I’m so sorry.” The statement was ambiguous, but her tone implied that whatever it meant, it caused them pain to think about it. I wasn’t about to ask, though, since the mood at the table had turned so somber.

It only took a few minutes for conversation to start back up and to stay steady until the end of the meal.

“I’ll walk you out,” Camila offered when it was clear that it was time to go.

“Thank you all for sharing with me,” I told them. I followed Camila to the front door. “Sorry if I-”

“It’s okay,” she said, shaking her head. “My dad died a few years ago. We’re not exactly over it.” She gave me a wry smile.

I glanced over my shoulder, then pulled her gently out onto the porch with me and shut the door. “I want to thank you properly for the home cooked meal.” My lips were on hers before she could respond.

All damn day I’d been thinking about her. About kissing her again. My dick kept interrupting the work on the window to remind me of the woman inside the house who I wanted to see. To get to know better.

She let out a soft moan and arched into me, forcing a groan from my own chest. She was soft and sweet, but underneath all that I recognized an iron will and courage.

Pinning her against the side of the house, I let my mouth explore hers, but I kept my hands PG and only used them to cup her cheeks. I didn’t want to scare her away, or piss her off. But she was addictive and I knew I wasn’t going to think of anything else tonight.

She pulled away a bit and I huffed out a breath. “Sorry, you’re just so damn beautiful.”

She stared up at me, her cheeks a rosy pink under the porch lights. “Thank you. I like kissing you,” she added. “I just...”

“It’s too soon,” I finished for her. Using my fingers, I caught her chin, angling her face upward so I could drop a quick kiss on her lips. “I know. Thanks again for dinner. Come to the range Friday at three and we’ll do some shooting. Then we’ll grab dinner afterward.”

She nodded and waited, watching as I walked away from her. I wasn’t sure if she was waiting until I got into my house, or if she just wasn’t ready to go inside and face her family, but either way it made me grin.

I shut my front door, then rubbed my hand over my short hair in agitation. “What the hell are you doing?” I muttered. This wasn’t in the plans. She wasn’t in them, but I couldn’t seem to help myself. She was drawing me in. And it wasn’t even like she was doing it on purpose.

My phone buzzed and I took it out to look at the reminder that we had church in the morning. I’d finished the window not long before dinner started, and that was only because I was taking my sweet ass time so I had a reason to hang around and talk to Camila as much as possible.

I was conflicted. Whenever I was alone I tried to convince myself I should leave her be. But I couldn’t stop thinking about her. And ended up finding any excuse I could to see her. I was damn glad she was agreeing to go out with me. Fucking ecstatic that she’d asked for help with her gun. And I was going to keep finding ways to take up all her time. There didn’t seem to be any other choice.

“Fuck off,” I muttered. Overdrive’s eyes were boring into the side of my face as we sat and waited for the other officers to settle down in the seats around the table the next morning.

“You didn’t answer the door last night.”

“Wasn’t home,” I told him, tossing him a dark look. I knew where he was going with this. He wasn’t reading any of the signs on my face saying I didn’t want to talk about it. Or my verbal warning. Asshole.

“Didn’t answer your phone either.”

“I was busy. Who are you, my mother?”

“No,” he replied, cocking his head to the side. “But I bet Maria would be thrilled to

hear that her son has found himself a lady friend-”

“Don’t even think about calling my mother,” I sighed.

Overdrive grinned. “What did she make?”

“My mother?” I asked, confused.

“No. Camila. She had you over for dinner, right?” He leaned his arms on the table.

“What did she make?”

“Pozole.”

He groaned. “No shit? How was it?”

“Best fucking pozole I’ve ever had.”

“Oh,” he hooted out with a laugh. “Now I really have something to hold over your head with your mom.” He held out his phone and hit a button. “Say that again?”

“Fuck you.”

He rolled his eyes. “Bro, you’ve gotten two home cooked meals out of her-”

“You ate one,” I reminded him.

“Why are you so fucking bitchy this morning?”

Because I’d barely slept. My damn dick was nearly raw from how many times I’d had a go at it last night. Gorgeous, dark-eyed women were not in my plans. At least not long-term, but my feelings didn’t seem to matter. My body, heart, and mind had

rebelled and there wasn't anything I could seem to do about it. It was making me a little cranky. Or maybe it was the fact that I was here and not finding some reason to visit the grocery store where Camila worked. Who knew at this point? Fuck, I'd become club caterer if it meant I had an excuse to go see her.

Ruck started church, forcing Overdrive to stop asking questions. Thank fuck. I listened as they spoke about the construction of the new apartments, trying to keep my mind focused.

"You bring any of those supplies back?" Flir asked, looking my way.

"A bucket of nails," I replied.

He pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and scribbled something down.

"Window get in alright?" Bolo asked me.

"Who's window?" Drifter asked.

"Friends'," I answered, then looked over at Bolo and nodded. "Yeah, it's good now."

"Maybe I should take a look. Make sure it's not going to fall out," he joked.

"If it does then it just means you're a shitty teacher," I shot back with a grin.

He flipped me off.

Ruck put an end to our back and forth. "We're having a party in a couple weeks. Maybe you should bring your friend."

That did it. Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked over at me. I glared at

Ruck.

“What’d I miss?” Relay, our Chaplin, asked with an amused smile. “Who are you bringing?”

“No one,” I muttered. “Not sure she’d be comfortable with that,” I added when Ruck raised an eyebrow.

“Then bring her to the barbeque first,” he offered.

“Barbeque...” Strike said with wide eyes. “Wait, did Kilo get himself an old lady?” Strike was our secretary and wasn’t used to being the last to know shit.

“No,” I answered at the same time as Overdrive said, “Looks like it’s going that way.”

Letting out a humorless laugh, I shook my head. I always knew that whoever the poor fucker was, who brought home an old lady first, was going to have to pave the way. I just never thought that asshole would be me. Not that I was fully on board with making Camila my old lady. We’d get to know one another and see where it went. That was what I kept telling myself. And I wasn’t idiot enough to not realize I was fucking fooling myself. I was heading toward the deep end with a goddamned smile on my face.

CHAPTER 8

Camila

I stared down at the sundress I was wearing and shook my head. Kilo probably didn't realize the conundrum he'd put me in. We were going to shoot my new gun, then go to dinner. How was I supposed to dress? For shooting? Or for dinner? I couldn't wear heels to a gun range. At least I didn't think I should. But I didn't want to show up to dinner with a gorgeous man while I was dressed in a t-shirt. I sighed and lifted the hem of the dress out as I considered my problem.

"You look beautiful."

Turning my head, I smiled at Carmen as she bounced into my room and took a seat on the bed. I hadn't told her or Mama that I'd bought a gun. It wasn't worth worrying them over. Though I did have it tucked up in my closet, high on a shelf. It was also still in the case. Carmen was old enough to know not to play with the things, but I wasn't taking any chances. "Thank you."

"What shoes are you wearing?"

"I don't even know if I'm wearing this," I told her, staring back at my reflection.

"Why not?" she asked. "The red looks so good on you."

It was a cute dress that cut down far enough that Mama was going to frown at me for showing that much cleavage, and was short enough to show off my thighs. I really

wanted to wear it for Kilo. It had sat in my closet for years now and this felt like the right time to let it see the light of day. “I don't know where we're going.” It was the only way I could think of to relay my dilemma without telling her about the range. “What if it's not somewhere dress appropriate?”

She tilted her head as we both studied my reflection in the mirror. “Wear it with sneakers,” she finally said, a determined note in her voice.

I laughed and shook my head. That solution did solve the problem of my footwear at least.

“He's going to lose his mind when he sees you in that,” she added. “He won't even notice the sneakers. Boys never do.”

I eyed her in the mirror. “What do you know about boys losing their minds?” I questioned.

“Nothing,” she replied primly. “Just that they do when they see a pretty girl.” She gave me a wide smile. “And you're a very pretty girl.”

“Thank you, Sweetie,” I told her, turning so I could draw her into a hug. “You're also a very pretty girl.”

“Thanks. But boys are dumb,” she declared before she pulled out of my embrace and skipped out of my room, disappearing as quickly as she'd arrived.

I looked down at my dress again, then my bare feet, and shrugged my shoulders. I was going to take my sister's advice because the idea of Kilo losing his mind over me was very appealing. Sighing, I went to my closet and slipped my bare feet into a pair of white sneakers. Normally I'd wear socks, but socks with a dress wasn't a level I was willing to stoop to. Grabbing my gun case from the closet and the paper bag with

the bullets in it, I looked around, then draped a coat over my arm to hide them.

“Mama!” I called out as I came down the stairs. She appeared in the doorway that sectioned off the kitchen and dining room from the living room. “I’m going.”

She frowned at my coat. “Why are you bringing that?”

It was one hundred and fourteen degrees outside today. She was right to be suspicious. “In case I get chilly,” I told her. “Some places crank their air conditioning too high,” I added.

Then her narrowed eyes moved up to the top of my dress. “That’s too low cut,” she declared.

“It’s not, Mama,” I said with a roll of my eyes.

“You can see your boobs.”

“I’m twenty-four years old. If I want to show my boobs, I’m allowed to,” I told her.

She frowned, her eyes still lingering on my cleavage, then she finally met my gaze. “Have fun. Not too much fun, though,” she warned me with a stern look.

I laughed. “It’s just dinner, Mama.”

“Uh huh. I remember what just dinner was from when I was younger.”

I widened my eyes at her in mock horror. “What kind of dinner were you having?”

“Never mind that,” she replied, deflecting my question. “Drive carefully. And be safe.”

Waving at her, I made my way to the door. If she came over and hugged me right now, she'd feel the case I was carrying in my hand. "I will! Bye!" I hurried out the door before she could grab me.

The drive only took a couple of minutes, and I let out a whoosh of breath as I parked in front of Kilo's store. I was nervous. He made me nervous. Though in a good way. I grabbed my case and the paper bag and got out of my car, locking it.

"Hello."

Startled, I turned and stared at the man leaning against a BMW nearby. He was in a polo and tan slacks and had a smile on his face. My stomach plummeted as my instincts clamored at me that he was dangerous. I'd learned over the last couple of years that I had very good instincts and I listened to them closely now. I nodded at him, then skirted around my car to head inside the building.

"Wait, what's your name?"

He loped over and cut off my path to Kilo's door. There weren't many windows on the building, so I knew he wasn't going to know I was out here.

"Please let me pass." My tone was sharp. I wasn't in the mood to deal with this guy. I didn't get the impression that he was with them, but he wasn't up to any good. I could just tell.

"Just tell me your name, Beautiful," he cajoled. His voice held a whine to it that grated at me. "I'm Shawn."

I looked around the parking lot, but no one was around. "I'm Camila," I relented, hoping that he'd just leave me alone if I gave him my name. He reached out toward me and I took a step backward. I didn't want his hands on me.

“Oh don't be like that, Baby.”

We'd gone from beautiful to baby and I really didn't like either one. “I'm not your baby. Leave me alone.”

“You don't have to be rude,” he snapped. “I just want to get your phone number.”

“I'm seeing someone,” I lied. Kilo and I weren't official or anything, but he didn't need to know that.

“I didn't say that I was going to date you or anything,” he replied, sounding offended. “I just wanted to talk to you a little. Does your man not let you speak with other men? Do you really want to be with someone that controlling?”

This was going downhill fast. He'd absolutely been hitting on me, but now he was trying to spin it as if he was just being friendly. What was wrong with him? And why wasn't he taking my disinterest to heart? “I'm not interested,” I told him, thinking maybe if I was more direct he'd take the hint.

“You have so many friends you don't want another?” he sneered, raising an eyebrow.

“Exactly,” I snapped, getting irritated with him. “Now please leave me alone.”

“Camila.”

The deep voice sent a thrill down my spine, and I looked over Shawn's head, and saw Kilo coming toward me. The relief was bone deep. “Kilo, hi. I was just-”

“Back off. You can't have them all,” Shawn said, interrupting me as he turned and faced Kilo. “You can talk to her after I'm done with her.”

My mouth dropped open at that and I shook my head. It was an automatic reaction. I didn't want Kilo to leave me with this creep. I didn't want to speak with him, or be anywhere near him. And I didn't want Kilo thinking I did.

Kilo's gorgeous brown eyes narrowed on Shawn. He hadn't looked at me, but he didn't seem to need to in order to know this guy was unwelcome. "Shawn. You keep making it a habit to bother women who aren't interested and I'm going to teach you some fucking manners."

"Who said she's not interested?" he asked, stepping backward and throwing an arm over my shoulders before I had a chance to avoid him.

My skin crawled where Shawn touched me and I reacted without even thinking. I swung the case I was holding and hit him in the stomach with it.

"Ommmph," Shawn grunted as I scurried away from him.

Strong fingers caught my bicep and Kilo pulled me behind him. As soon as he was between me and Shawn, he released me and moved forward. I gasped as Shawn's head snapped backward from the force of Kilo's punch.

Shawn stumbled back, then fell on his ass. "You stupid bitch!" Shawn snarled, glaring at me as he wiped blood off his lip. "I'm going to-"

"You're going to what?" Kilo asked, his voice deadly quiet as he stepped closer to Shawn, who was still sitting on the sidewalk. "I'll tell you what you're going to do," he said as Shawn fell silent. "You're going to get your piece of shit ass away from my store and my girl. Come near her again and I'm going to do a lot more than just fucking hit you once."

Shawn's eyes danced between us, but he seemed to realize it wasn't a good idea to

test Kilo further. He got to his feet, glaring at us the whole time, and took off across the parking lot.

“Thank you. I-” The words caught in my throat as Kilo tugged me against him and laid his lips on mine. How was a girl supposed to speak, breathe, or even think when he was kissing her?

“Sorry,” he muttered when he finally pulled away, leaving me breathless. “Are you okay?”

“Yes. Thank you for helping me.” My free hand was on his chest. It was rising and falling rapidly beneath my palm. I wasn’t sure if it was from desire from the kiss, or anger from dealing with Shawn.

“When you were late, I thought I’d better come take a look outside.” He scowled over where the other man had disappeared. “He’s making himself a nuisance.” He pulled me against his chest, his hand resting on my head, my cheek against his cut as though he needed to know I was safe to calm himself. “Come on,” he said after a moment of holding me close. “Let’s go inside.”

His hand went to the small of my back as he guided me into his store. He shut the door and locked it behind us. “Overdrive will be in soon,” he explained. “He’ll open back up for the rest of the night.” His eyes searched mine. “You alright? Would you rather do this some other time?”

“No,” I replied. “I mean, I’m alright. This is the perfect time for this, I think.” I gave him a tentative smile.

“That was a great idea to hit him with your gun case.”

“I didn’t exactly think,” I admitted. “I just didn’t want him touching me.”

He stepped forward, his huge hand cupping my cheek. “Good, ‘cause I fucking hated seeing his hands on you. Even for a second.”

His hand was warm and I let my eyes close as I leaned my head into his touch. I may not have wanted Shawn to touch me, but I really didn’t mind when Kilo did.

“Come on,” he said, his voice husky and deep. “Let’s go do some shooting.” He took my gun case from me and motioned toward where he wanted me to go.

Maybe it was my imagination, but it sounded like there could have been more to that sentence. Like, ‘let’s go do some shooting, before I kiss you again.’ My eyes dropped to his lips, but I forced my body to move. I brushed past him toward the black door behind the counter. He walked over and held it open for me. I sucked in a breath as I walked into the shooting range portion of the building. It was bigger than I expected. And empty. We were completely alone in here.

CHAPTER 9

Kilo

My eyes raked over Camila as she had her back turned to check out the range. Jesus. She looked damn good in that dress. The white sneakers she was wearing were appropriate for what we were doing today so I was glad she'd worn them. Also if she'd worn heels with that little dress of hers I might have had a heart attack and died on the spot.

I hadn't noticed what she'd been wearing until just now. My heart was still hammering inside my chest. Seeing Shawn grab her had made every protective instinct inside of me roar to life. I was still struggling to come down from the need to kill him and bury his body somewhere. The heightened emotions were the reason I'd grabbed her and made out with her in front of my store. She wasn't completely comfortable with that yet, with me yet, but I'd needed it. Needed to put my touch on her after he'd had the fucking gall to grab what belonged to me.

A buzzing started in my ears. Mine? Fuck. I was so screwed. If I was already thinking of her in that way, I wasn't sure I could undo it. Wasn't sure I really wanted to. Damn it. My brothers were going to have a fucking field day with this. A perfect pair of tits suddenly filled my vision. Her dress dipped down revealing the top swells and my mouth watered with the urge to taste them.

"Kilo?"

My head snapped up and I realized that she'd just caught me staring at her tits. And

her ass before that. She gave me an expectant look. She'd asked me something. Not that I heard what it was. "Sorry, what?"

She stared at me for a brief moment before giving me a gorgeous smile. "Where should I go?" she repeated. Her cheeks flushed as she realized what she'd caught me doing. She was going to be the death of me.

"Lane two," I told her, pointing toward the end of the building. I moved in behind her as she walked, my eyes dropping down to her ass again. It took all my self-control to bite back a groan of appreciation at the sway of her hips.

When we got to the lane, I started to set her case on the sectioned off shelf that formed the firing line, then I had a brilliant idea and set it on the ground next to where she'd be standing. I took the bag from her and set it on the shelf instead. I forced myself to stare into her eyes when she turned to watch me. Not that it was a hardship. A man could get lost in those eyes.

"Alright," I said, voice gruff. I cleared my throat and continued. "Rules of the range. Never pass the firing line." I pointed at the shelf. "That's it right there. Even when we're in here alone you want to follow safe practices."

She nodded, her eyes wide as she listened.

Reaching over I grabbed a set of clear glasses, earmuffs, and a sealed package with ear plugs that were sitting on a table along the back wall. "These are your eyes and ears. They need to be on at all times when you come in the door. Since I knew no one was in here, I didn't grab any outside, but we have them if you need to borrow them." I held up the package. "These ear plugs are your inner ears. The muffs are your outer ears. Wear both sets. You don't want to go deaf by the time you hit thirty."

I showed her how to roll the inners to fit inside her ears, then set the outers on her

head, taking my time adjusting them. It allowed me to brush my fingers along her face and jaw a little longer. She'd already put her eyes on. The outer ears had a mechanism that allowed her to still hear me speak, while drowning out loud noises, like gunfire, so I wasn't worried about her struggling to hear my directions. I ran her through the rest of the rules.

"Grab your case," I told her when I was finished, crossing my arms over my chest.

She turned and bent to grab the gun case off the floor. That little dress of hers slid upward as she bent and I thanked whatever fucker designed it for doing me a solid. I wanted to run my short beard over the backs of her thighs so I could hear what kind of sound she'd make. A squeal? A moan? My eyes flicked up as she straightened and turned. Didn't want to get caught staring again. She was tempting the shit out of me, but I didn't want to be disrespectful. There were rules to dating a woman. I had to be a gentleman—like that was even possible—until the moment she let me get her into bed. Then I would get to live out every wicked fantasy I'd been having since the day I laid eyes on her. Of course once the multitudes of orgasms I planned to give her were over, I'd go back to treating her well. I wasn't a fucking douchebag after all.

She listened intently as I went over her new weapon with her. I could see the gears turning in her head, filing away information for later, as I showed her how to clear the gun. Then I showed her how to clear a jam if it happened. How to properly load the magazine, and everything else that she'd need to know. When I finally fell silent she gave me a big smile.

"Is that it?" There was a teasing note in her tone that made me laugh.

"Sorry," I told her. "I know that was a lot of information, but I'll go over it all again for you next time. Eventually it will sink in and you won't even have to think about any of it. We go over things again and again so that in the heat of the moment it's completely natural for you to do what needs to be done without having to even think.

Like reloading. I'll run you through drill after drill."

"Do you do this for all your clients?"

"Hell no," I said, barking out a laugh. "You're getting the in-depth version. Most of our clients come in just to shoot. I do run a few classes every so often, but it's rare."

"Well, thank you," she told me. "I can't tell you what this means to me."

The genuine gratitude in her voice had my instincts kicking into gear. This wasn't about being scared because a branch broke her window. There was something else going on with her. I wanted to ask her what it was. To pry until she spilled all her deepest, darkest, secrets to me. And then I wanted to take care of anything in her life that she needed help with.

Fuck.

I was a goner.

I may as well be honest with myself about that, at least. I'd been fighting it because who fell in love with a woman they saw once? This fucking guy. No way I would have admitted it until now, but she'd hooked me that first day when she'd glanced over as I pulled up on my bike. Sure, every interaction from that point on was what had me falling harder than a tree in a forest, but that was the moment this all started. It was like something out of one of those cheesy movies that played around Christmas time, but it seemed to be my reality. Now I just needed to convince her that she wanted to date a man like me.

Once I got her set up, the weapon loaded, I stepped in behind her on the firing line. I pushed the button on the side of the divider and the holder whirred as it moved forward. I reached around her, aware that I was invading her personal space, and

clipped the paper target to the holder. I gritted my teeth as her ass brushed against my hard-on as I hit the button again to send the target back. I set it at about fifteen feet. I wanted it nice and close so she could get used to everything without having to worry about distance. That would come later.

“Okay,” I said, speaking low next to her ear. The earmuffs were in the way of me being able to make this sexy, but it was fine. I’d make do. “You’re not wearing a belt so we’re not going to worry about a holster for now.” I picked up the gun and wrapped her hands around it, showing her how I wanted her to hold it. “Arms out.” Her feet were too close together, so I placed my leg against hers and gently pushed it out until her stance was proper. I noticed her breathing change as I did so and smiled to myself. She wasn’t unaffected by my touches.

When she was where I wanted her—for shooting guns anyway—I put my hands on her hips. I couldn’t help but squeeze a little. “When you pull the trigger, I want you to give a nice slow, steady squeeze. The gun is going to buck in your hand, just let your hands move with the motion of the pistol then reposition. Don’t fight it.”

She nodded, staring straight forward at the target as I put my eyes and ears on. She was waiting for me like I’d instructed her to do during my little spiel. She was a fast learner. Her stance was perfect now.

“Fire when ready.”

She sucked in a breath and I saw her hold it—another tip of mine—and her finger gave a steady squeeze. When the gunshot rang out, she froze, staring down the lane.

“Perfect,” I told her, watching her closely. She was tense. “You hit the five ring.” I stepped in close, wrapped my hand around the barrel of the gun and she released it. I laid it down, then pointed at her target. She was still tense and not moving. “Camila?”

Her head turned and she stared at me with wide eyes. I wasn't sure what emotion was swimming around in them, but when I frowned she seemed to snap out of it. "Good." Her voice was soft, but steady.

"You ready to try again?" I asked.

She swallowed hard, but then she nodded and picked up the gun again. She settled back into her stance once more, looking more sure of herself this time.

"Fire."

Bang.

We continued that way until her ammunition was gone. I may have spent more time correcting her stance and grip than I needed to, but it gave me the opportunity to wrap my arms around her, so I took it. By the time we were finished, we'd moved the target back and she was starting to perfect her grouping. It always helped to get someone who'd never shot before because they didn't have any bad habits that needed to be fixed. I stared down into her smiling face as she looked down at her target, which looked like Swiss Cheese, then up at me.

"Thank you so much for helping me with this," she said, her voice a little breathless.

"Anytime. In fact, if you want to keep practicing we can meet here once or twice a week."

"Yes, please," she replied, her eyes dancing with happiness.

"Addictive isn't it?"

"It really is," she answered. "Is that weird?"

“No,” I said with a chuckle. “Or if it is, then I’m weird, too. I’ll show you where the bathroom is so you can wash your hands, then we’ll go grab an early dinner.”

I walked her back out to the front and showed her to the bathroom, then leaned against the counter as I waited. Overdrive grinned at me. “You mind brassing up for me?” It was typically a shooter’s responsibility to pick up the shell casings they left behind—unless they rolled past the firing line, then we got it later—but I didn’t want to waste time with that right now. Though, watching Camila bend over to get all the casings would be fun. I’d teach her about that next time. I’d thrown enough information at her today.

“Not at all,” he replied. “Gives me something to do.” He was studying me.

“Don’t.”

“Don’t what?”

“You know what, asshole,” I told him with a shake of my head. I glanced over at him. “I have something I’m going to need to take care of in the next couple of days. You want to give me a hand?”

“Depends,” he replied, putting his arms on the counter and leaning forward. “You talking something shitty? Or something fun?”

“I need to teach someone some manners.”

“I’m in,” Overdrive said without any hesitation.

We both fell silent as Camila came out of the bathroom. My eyes raked over her and I couldn’t help but pray for some strength. It wasn’t going to be hard to spend the evening getting to know this beautiful woman. I, on the other hand, would be hard all

night.

CHAPTER 10

Camila

I took a few extra minutes in the bathroom. I had to in order to get my heart to calm down. That first shot I'd taken had thrown me right back to that night. When I'd watched my father be murdered. But for some reason, the more I shot, the more it was as though I was taking my power back. Taking the fear and anxiety away from the people who'd killed him and putting it back in my hands. I'd eventually shaken off the memories, determined to put them behind me.

After that, I actually had fun. And it was like I was powerful for once. It was exhilarating and full of torture as Kilo wrapped his muscular arms around me to show me how to move and to fix my stance. Every time he brushed against me, ran his strong fingers over my skin, it stoked the heat building up in me. It bolstered my confidence. He made me feel as though nothing could touch me. Except him, of course. I didn't mind him touching me.

Boys had never been my focus. When I was younger, I studied hard so that I could get into a good college. After I'd graduated I'd taken a job to help our family financially. Dad struggled to provide for us, but refused to let Mama work. I'd managed to convince him that I needed to build up my resume anyway and he was reluctant, but finally agreed to let me get a job. College had gone right out the window in place of real life struggles. Then Dad was murdered two years later and here we were.

Shaking my head, I stepped away from the mirror and blew out a breath. I opened the

bathroom door and stuttered to a stop when both men stared over at me. I didn't miss the heat in Kilo's eyes. At least I wasn't in this alone. He seemed to be just as attracted to me. My heart jumped again. We'd moved around too much for me to form any close friendships or have a relationship. I should have gone off to college, made friends, had a boyfriend, and had the time of my life. Instead, we struggled to keep one step ahead of our own deaths.

Guilt overtook me. I shouldn't be doing this. Dating anyone meant dragging them into this mess right alongside me. It wasn't fair, but I couldn't seem to help myself. I knew Mama was right, that we needed to start trusting again, but that was a luxury at this point. We were all hoping that Phoenix would be our last stop. That we'd finally be free of this nightmare. But if they found us, we'd have to leave again.

Kilo held out his hand and I stepped forward to take it, internally cursing myself. If this went beyond one dinner, I was going to have to tell him. I couldn't risk putting his life on the line. Not for something he had nothing to do with.

"You hungry?" he asked.

I loved his voice. It was deep and gruff, but I had yet to see him lose his temper. The other day when he'd been working on the window he'd let out a few curses, but they were low and barely audible inside the house. That was a novelty to me. My father had been a screamer. He thought the solution to everything was to roar at the top of his lungs. I hated it. I only realized later, once I was older, it was because he didn't have the ability to control himself. Though, he never hit us. Just screamed. I was grateful that was as far as it ever went, despite how much I hated the yelling.

Kilo led me outside and kept looking over at me as we walked around the building. He must have sensed the shift in my mood. "You okay?"

"Yeah," I replied, giving him a smile. It died on my face when the motorcycle came

into view. It was a beautiful machine, all black and chrome.

“You ever ridden one?” he asked.

I shook my head, clasping my hands together when he let go so he could grab the helmet that was hanging off the handlebars. My mother would kill me if she found out I rode on his motorcycle, but I was all but shaking with excitement. I’ve always wanted to ride one. Everything I read about motorcycle clubs was that they were very selective about who they let ride on the back of their bikes, though. I’d been doing a lot of research since I met Kilo. I doubted I’d even scratched the surface.

He came over and our eyes locked as he lowered the helmet down over my head. His fingers brushed my throat as he secured the buckle and tightened it. I swallowed hard, forcing myself to breathe as he touched me. I’d never had this reaction to a man before. Maybe because the few guys I’d hung out with before were boys. Not men.

My reaction to Kilo was visceral. My nipples ached to be touched. My pussy was wet. And all he’d done was put a damn helmet on me. I needed to pull myself together. I shoved the visor up as he swung a leg over his bike. “Where’s yours?” I asked.

“You’re wearing it,” he replied with a chuckle. “Don’t worry. There’s no helmet laws in Arizona. I don’t need it.”

“That won’t stop your brains from splattering all over the pavement if we get hit,” I pointed out. I lifted my hands to the buckle and started to undo it. “I can’t take your helmet, Kilo.”

He was off the bike in a flash, his fingers wrapped around my wrists. “The only way you’re getting on this bike is with that helmet.”

My eyes widened at the determination in his voice. I blinked, my fingers falling away from the strap. His eyes were narrowed and he had a stern expression on his face, but he wasn't angry. He was just telling me the rules. "Okay."

"Don't worry about me," he added, readjusting the strap under my chin again. "I'll get a second helmet."

Uh oh.

He was not only letting me ride on his bike, when we could just as easily take my car, but he was planning on getting another helmet? I sighed as anxiety twisted inside my stomach. This was a great sign for my heart—which was already invested—and my pussy, which was hopeful. It was a bad sign for keeping my secret. I just knew if I told it to him and he ran from me, it was going to break my heart. Not that I would blame him. It was a shitty situation that no one would want to be in.

He got back on his motorcycle and held out a hand for me. As soon as his fingers wrapped around mine, he held me in place when I would have tried to get on. "Put your feet on the pegs back there," he said. "And lean when I do. Not too much. Just look in the direction I do and let your body do it naturally."

"Okay."

"Hold on tight."

I nodded as he reached out with his free hand and closed my visor. As soon as he motioned for me to, I threw my leg over, tucked the ends of my dress under me, and settled onto the back of his bike. Sucking in a deep breath, I wrapped my arms around his waist and held on. He maneuvered us through the parking lot, and out onto the street and my eyes widened behind my helmet as he gained speed.

This must be what flying feels like.

I never wanted it to stop. As soon as we got onto I-10, I let out a laugh of amazement. The wind was whipping past us as he accelerated. The vibrations were added torture, as if I wasn't wet enough. I wanted to hold my arms out and see if maybe I really could take off into the sky, but there was no way I was letting go of him. I curled my fingers into his t-shirt, beneath his cut. He reached back with one hand and rested it on my thigh. It was a comforting gesture. He probably thought I was nervous. And maybe I was, a little, but mostly I was elated. For some unknown reason this felt like freedom. Like no one could touch me. Like they couldn't catch me. And for a woman who has been hunted for the last four years, that was a heady feeling.

The ride ended too fast. Before I knew it we were pulling into the parking lot of a little restaurant. I scrambled off the back so that he could get off, and smiled as he removed my helmet again. This time he tucked it under his arm and brought it inside with us.

"A friend owns this place," he told me as the hostess showed us to a table.

It was a cute little Italian restaurant and it wasn't too busy since it was so early. I looked around and smiled as I saw older couples enjoying their time together in the quiet atmosphere. It wasn't a stuffy place, but it was romantic. "It's great," I told him.

The waiter came by and grabbed our drink order. I waited for the man to leave, then met Kilo's gaze. "I have something I should tell you-"

"Kilo!"

We both looked over as an older guy, with a huge belly, walked up, his arms extended out. Kilo stood up and he and the man embraced.

“It’s been too long, my friend.” The man’s eyes dropped to me and he grinned. “Who’s your pretty lady?”

Kilo chuckled. “Camila, this is Roger. Roger, Camila.”

Before I had a chance to stand, Roger took my hand and kissed the back of it. My cheeks flushed and I smiled. “It’s very nice to meet you. This is your restaurant?”

“It is,” he boomed with a hearty chuckle. “My wife Prissy and I bought it fifteen years ago. We enjoy running it.”

“It’s wonderful,” I told him.

“She’s too good for you,” he told Kilo with a wink as he released my hand.

“Yeah, yeah,” Kilo replied.

“Enjoy your meal. My staff will take excellent care of you. Tell Ruck to give me a call when he has a chance.” Roger gave me a nod as he left.

“Prissy?” I asked as Kilo sat back down.

“His wife, Priscilla.”

“He seems so nice.”

“They both are, but she’s going to chew him out for leaving the kitchen during the beginning of service,” he replied with a chuckle. “She runs this business with an iron fist. She won’t like that the head chef abandoned everyone back there, even if he is her husband.”

I laughed along with him. The waiter came back to take our order and I fidgeted, wondering how to bring all this up to him. I was going to just blurt it out before, but I was losing my nerve. It was a lot to dump on someone when you were first getting to know them. I wanted to just enjoy the night with him.

“What did you want to tell me?” he asked.

Searching his gorgeous brown eyes, I made a split-second decision. One I hoped I wouldn't come to regret. “I loved riding on your motorcycle. It was...incredible.”

He chuckled. “And now you see why I love it.”

He knew that wasn't what I was going to tell him. I could see it in his eyes, but he let me get away with not confessing. If tonight went well and we went out again, I'd tell him then. What was the point if we didn't even pursue things from here?

Dinner was delicious and we talked the whole time, though we kept it lighthearted. He told me a little about his MC and how he and Overdrive had bought the gun range. Neither of us were quite willing to dig too deep into the details of each other's lives. That was best left for future dates. I was relieved because it gave me a chance to keep my secret a bit longer.

The ride back to my car was even better than the first one without the sun beating down on us. I had a feeling I was going to become addicted to motorcycles. He took the helmet off my head and walked me over to my car. It was hard to contain my nerves and excitement. I'd already kissed him. But I wanted more. When I turned to tell him goodnight, he caged me against the car. It didn't frighten me. Nothing he did scared me. I hardly knew him, but I did know that he was safe. He wouldn't hurt me.

“Thank you for dinner,” I told him. My voice sounded a bit breathless even to me.

“Thank you for going with me,” he countered. “When do you want to shoot again?”

“Whenever you have time.”

“I’ll call you,” he told me. “I need to check that Ruck, my MC president, isn’t going to need me for anything over the next week.”

“Okay.”

His eyes dropped down to my lips and I held my breath. His fingers threaded through my hair as he lowered his mouth to mine. He tilted my head, fixing the angle, and we both sank into the kiss.

I opened my mouth and our tongues brushed together. A moan escaped my chest as he moved closer, pressing our bodies together even more. I ran my hands up his arms, feeling the muscles in his biceps. It was a heady feeling to have this strong man kissing me like his life depended on it.

A few catcalls and whistles pulled us apart and I ducked my head against his chest. Kilo turned, shielding me from the sight of the two young boys riding by on their bikes. He brushed his fingers over my cheek, smiling down at me. “I’ll call you,” he repeated.

Nodding, I stepped away and he opened the car door for me. I needed to get my body under control because it was almost like it was vibrating. No wonder why people did stupid things for lust and love if this was what it felt like. I drove home, trying to pull myself together as I went.

This was the first time in a long time that I’d let myself relax and just have fun. I didn’t feel as though I needed to have my guard up around Kilo. And I knew that no one could get to me while I was with him. It was freeing. Maybe this time would be

different. Maybe they wouldn't find us and we could stay.

CHAPTER 11

Kilo

“Yo, Cynic, how’s it going?” I asked, holding my phone to my ear.

“Hey man, things are good. How about you?”

“Doing decent. I was wondering if I could bother you for a favor?”

I met Cynic on one of our deployments. We’d clicked right away and spent the whole deployment fucking off when we weren’t busy with actual work. We’d stayed in contact ever since. He was a part of the Berserker’s Rage MC over in Wyoming and was the one who’d introduced us to our new friends down in Tucson.

“Sure. What do you need?”

“Gotta piece of shit bothering a couple of friends down here. Any way you could have Glitch run a plate for me? Get me an address?”

Cynic’s chuckle was dark because he knew exactly what I needed an address for without having to be told. Glitch was their resident technological rain man. “Yeah, send it to me and I’ll have him send over the info.”

“Thanks, Bro. You coming down this way anytime soon?”

“Don't think so, Cypher’s keeping us busy.”

“Well, the next time I find myself up that way, I’ll stop in.”

“You better, fucker.”

We both hung up with that. We didn’t need much more than an occasional check in between seeing each other. Cypher was the president of the Berserkers, and he kept them moving. They were like us, all former military, but some of them, like Cynic, were young. That’s because Cypher poached them away from the military and into his security firm. He had some of the best fighters, amongst other skills, in his club now. Those he could convince to move to that hellhole in Wyoming anyway.

No way I would ever go. Too fucking cold. I was a desert rat, through and through. The most we worried about was monsoons and heat, and that meant riding our motorcycle almost year-round. Those bastards up there dealt with subzero temperatures. No thanks.

The passenger door opened to the cage ride I was in, and I glanced over as Overdrive settled in the passenger seat. “We ready?”

“Almost,” I told him, texting over the plate I’d gotten off of Shawn’s car the other night. That was the only reason I hadn’t followed Camila home. The douche had still been there, working late. It was the perfect time to get what I needed.

I hit another button on the phone and waited.

“Yeah?”

“Hey Prez,” I said, looking at Overdrive. “You need me or OD tonight?”

There was a pause before Ruck spoke again. “No, there’s nothing going on.”

“Okay. We’ll be out of pocket for the night then.”

Another pause. “Something I should know?”

“It’s not club business,” I told him, “but some fucker put his hands on Camila the other day. Scared her a bit. I’m going to take care of it.”

“Need help?”

“Naw, we got this. It’s a no shovel job, so far. Thanks. Really, I’m only bringing OD to keep a lookout. I can take this fucker easy enough.”

Overdrive flipped me off, but kept scrolling on his phone, not worried at all about his part in tonight’s shitshow.

“Sounds good. If you end up needing anything, just give me a call.”

“Thanks, Prez.”

“Oh, hey.”

“Yeah?” I asked.

“You bringing Camila to the barbecue?”

I could hear the grin in his tone. Fuck. “Yeah,” I muttered. “I’m bringing her.”

Overdrive was staring at me now, a slow shit-eating grin forming on his face. I knew my president’s matched my friend’s smug smile.

“Good. Looking forward to meeting her.”

“Uh huh. Later.” I glared over at my best friend. “Don’t say a fucking word.”

“Who was going to say anything?” he inquired as though he wasn’t even speaking to me. “Not me.”

“Sure.”

My phone dinged and I glanced down at the unknown number. Opening the text, I grinned down at the address. “Got him.” I saved the contact as Glitch’s and shot him back a quick text before turning the SUV on. “Let’s do this.”

It was ten at night, exactly three days after my date with Camila. I planned to give her a call earlier than this, but shit got busy with inventory at the shop and construction on the new clubhouse. Bolo was pushing us hard to get the framing finished up. Normally, I wouldn’t mind, but now that it was keeping me from seeing my girl, I was getting pissed. I was still texting her each day. Didn’t want her thinking I’d disappeared on her. Or that she could even think about going out with anyone else for that matter.

“You sure he’s home?”

I shrugged. “Let’s go see.” I drove across the city and looked around when we pulled into a subdivision. Everything was quiet. That was good.

“There it is. Car’s in the drive.”

“Good.” I drove past and parked down the block. We didn’t want some old lady peeking out her blinds and being able to pick out our vehicle. Which was the whole reason we drove the cage instead of our bikes. We weren’t wearing our cuts either. No reason to advertise while we did this. This wasn’t club business; I didn’t need to rain any drama down on them.

Flipping my hood over my head, I got out of the SUV and met Overdrive on the sidewalk. We didn't take much time getting to his place. Two men walking down the street in black hoodies when it was still over a hundred degrees outside was the epitome of suspicion. There was just enough of a moon outside to help see. The less time we spent on the street the better.

"Around back," he muttered. "He probably has a camera."

Fucking everyone had cameras at their front doors these days. I looked around, then hopped the back fence. "Better not have a damn dog."

"If he does it'll be a Chihuahua or some shit."

I chuckled as we rounded the corner and stopped at the back door. Reaching out, I tried the handle, and the door swung open without a sound. "Idiot," I muttered under my breath.

The house was dark inside, but it wasn't hard to navigate the small one-story home. The back door opened up into a living room which blended into the dining room and kitchen areas. There was a hallway that led to the back of the house and one that split off to the right.

"That's gotta be the master," Overdrive said, keeping his voice low as he motioned to the hallway next to us.

Nodding, I made my way back. The door was open and I could see a form underneath covers on the bed in the darkness. I grabbed Overdrive by the sweatshirt and yanked him close so I didn't have to speak loudly. "Go check the rest of the house. Make sure it's just him."

He melted into the darkness while I made my way into the master bedroom. I went

over to the tv and picked up a couple of movies he had lying there. Porn. I rolled my eyes and set them back down. Making my way into the walk in closet, I looked around under piles of clothes. I didn't see a gun. Not that it couldn't be in that nightstand next to him, but I wasn't checking that until Overdrive gave me the all clear.

When I came back out into the room and saw Overdrive standing there. He gave me a thumb's up, then disappeared again. He was going out toward the front door to keep an eye out. I went over to the bed and slowly slid the nightstand drawer open. Nothing. Well, there was shit in there, but not a gun. Mine was a heavy weight against the small of my back, but I wasn't planning to use it tonight unless this asshole got belligerent.

I flicked the lamp on and grabbed Shawn. Squinting against the bright light after being in the darkness, I landed a solid blow to the fucker's kidney before he had a chance to figure out what was happening. I dragged him out of bed, dropping his ass on the floor.

"What the fuck?" he howled in pain.

"This is your friendly evening wake-up call," I told him. "And a warning that if you ever go near Camila again, I'm going to make you fucking regret it. And stay away from the dance studio."

He blinked up at me, still fighting against grogginess and the bright light. "You think I'm going to listen to you? You're nothing but a piece of shit-"

I let him climb to his feet as he spoke, but as soon as he got up, my hand shot out. His head snapped back. It was a damn satisfying to feel his nose break beneath my fist and to see blood gush down his face. "The quicker you decide to listen, the less damage I'll do," I told him. I threw another punch. This one was a body blow that had

him grunting and sagging to the side. “Touch Camila again, and we’ll be having a much different conversation. Got it?” I tilted my head. “Actually, if you even see her, I expect you to go the other way. Same with Jess, Laura, and Sandy.”

He let out a sound that I imagined a pissed off bull would make and charged me. There wasn’t enough room to side step him so the shit head managed to wrap me up and slam me into the wall next to the door. He wasn’t a small guy, so his weight and momentum were on his side, but he wasn’t expecting my counter attack. It was clear he had no fucking clue what he was doing. Much easier for him to go after women than deal with men, so he probably never bothered to fight. Fucking dickhead.

I hit him in the side a couple of times, until he stepped back a little to try to get away from my swings. That was a mistake. The upper cut hit him right beneath the jaw and I stared at him as his eyes rolled to the back of his head. He was lying in a heap on the ground when Overdrive came in.

“What the fuck shook the house?”

“Asshole charged me.”

Overdrive grinned. “He pinned you against the wall?”

“For a few seconds while I beat on him,” I replied.

He crowed out a laugh. “Shit. Guess he’s not such a pussy after all.”

“I wouldn’t exactly call him skilled,” I told him with a shake of my head.

“No, but I figured he’d curl in a ball and cry. Didn’t take him for the type to try to fight back at all.”

That was true. I hadn't been expecting it either, which is why my head was aching a bit from where it'd slammed into the wall.

"What do you want to do now?"

"I warned the fucker. His next move is up to him," I told him. "Let's get the fuck out of here."

We left the same way we came, careful to make sure no one was around by the time we got out onto the street. As soon as we were back in the SUV, Overdrive turned and grinned at me.

"So you're bringing your lady friend to our barbecue?"

"Oh, fuck off," I said with a chuckle.

He'd given me about an hour reprieve on giving me shit. It was more than I'd expected. And it was much more than my other brothers were going to give me. I'd need to call Camila tomorrow to invite her. Despite the epic shit I knew I was going to get from the others, I was looking forward to seeing her again.

CHAPTER 12

Camila

I t'd been about five days since my date with Kilo, but I wasn't worried. He was texting me every day. He hadn't asked me out again though, so I wasn't sure what to think about that. I sat down at the table in the break room next to Mary. "Do you know much about motorcycle clubs?"

"Girl," she sighed, a happy look on her face. "Do I ever. Used to date a biker back in my prime."

My eyebrows shot up. "Terry was a biker?"

"No," she replied with a laugh. "My husband is definitely not a biker. That was a lifetime ago."

"I have a few questions."

She focused on me with a smile on her face. "The hot neighbor?"

I nodded. "He fixed our window for us." She was staring at me with hearts in her eyes and I couldn't blame her because... same. "And then took me out to dinner." I didn't mention the gun range because that would bring up far too many questions.

"Did you ride on his motorcycle?"

“Yeah.”

“Oh, yeah. He’s into you,” she said with a cackle.

“I read that they don’t really let a lot of people onto their bikes.”

“That’s true. Usually they only let their old lady ride on the back of their motorcycle.”

“Old lady?” I asked.

“Girlfriend or wife,” she clarified. “It’s an honorable title for their woman.”

“What else can you tell me?”

“Where to start?”

My eyes got wider and wider as she told me what she knew about what she called club culture. When our lunch break was nearing an end, she took a look at my expression and laughed. “Don’t worry, Sweetheart. Kilo will fill you in on everything you need to know once he decides to make his move.”

“Taking me on a date isn’t his move?”

She laughed. “Not even close. Though, it’s a step in the right direction.”

My phone rang and I took it out of my apron pocket and stared at Kilo’s name on the screen.

“Take it, I’ll cover for you for a few minutes,” Mary said, giving me a wink.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Camila.”

A thrill shot down my spine at hearing that deep voice again after so many days. I’d dreamed of flying down the highway on the back of his bike almost every night. I wasn’t sure if the fascination was with the machine, the man, or both. “Hey, Kilo.”

“I was wondering if you were busy Saturday night?”

“Not really,” I told him. I worked the early shift that day and had Sunday off.

“My club is having a barbecue and a party afterward. Want to come with me?”

Mary had just gotten done telling me about the wild parties guys like this tended to throw. But she’d also said they’d always been a lot of fun. I had a feeling I was getting in over my head, but I wanted to spend more time with Kilo. “I’d love to.” If this was the way that was going to happen, I’d go wherever he wanted.

“Good. I’ll pick you up around five.”

“Okay.”

“See you later, Camila.”

The words were a dark promise and despite everything going on in my life, I was excited. My pulse was racing as I hung up the phone and gave a little sigh. I’d never been the type to like bad boys. The way I was raised had sort of discouraged it. But suddenly I was understanding the fascination that women had.

I floated through the next three days. It was like they were a dream and it wasn’t until

I was walking out my front door with Kilo that I was awake. His bike was sitting in his driveway and I didn't have to wonder long whether we were taking it, or something else, to the barbecue.

"I got you something," he told me with a grin. He grabbed a helmet off the seat and held it up. It was black with light purple swirls.

"That's for me?" I asked, shocked.

"Yeah, that way we don't have to fight over helmets."

"How did you know I love purple?" I asked, reaching out to take the helmet from him.

"I may have asked Carmen," he admitted with a sheepish smile.

Going onto my tip toes, I pressed a light kiss to his mouth. "Thank you so much. I love it."

He grinned at me and helped me put it on. "Once we're not in your front yard, I'm going to want another kiss," he warned.

I laughed as he tightened the helmet strap. I'd already talked to Mama about the motorcycle, and she wasn't thrilled, but she wasn't outside stopping me. She was starting to understand that I was old enough to make my own decisions. That I deserved the chance to make my own mistakes. I'd learned from hers, it was hard not to, but I didn't consider Kilo a mistake. If we had to run again, I'd cherish every moment I got with him.

We pulled out onto the road, and I relished the experience once again. I wasn't sure I'd ever get used to it. I didn't want to. It was so freeing and should stay that way.

He pulled into a fenced off area. I was surprised how big it was, at least ten acres. We were on the outskirts of Phoenix, but still, it was a fantastic spot. The parking lot area was paved, but the rest was reminiscent of the desert surrounding the city. There was a building, and it looked like another being built.

“This belongs to my club,” he told me as we got off the bike and took our helmets off.

“It’s really nice,” I told him.

He grinned at me, then dropped his hand to the small of my back and led me toward the back of the buildings. My steps stuttered as we came around one of the buildings and in one move every eye was on us. “It’s fine,” Kilo said in a soothing tone. “These are my brothers. They’re excited to meet you.”

I swallowed and gave everyone a shy smile. Being the center of attention wasn’t really something I liked. I was used to blending into the background, not standing out. But there were only men here. So it wasn’t like I had anywhere I could hide.

“Everyone,” Kilo called out even though he didn’t need to raise his voice since they’d fallen silent when they saw us. That wasn’t nerve wracking at all. “This is Camila.” Kilo started rattling off names of his brothers and I scrambled to keep them straight. The fact that no one had an actual name, just descriptions, wasn’t something I was ready for.

These men were all gorgeous. I was blown away because there were white teeth flashing, muscles, and tattoos everywhere. I was shocked the female population of Phoenix wasn’t charging the gate out front to get into this place. The man I’d met at Kilo’s house, Overdrive, came up to us. There was a huge grin on his face and before I could say anything, he grabbed me and planted two kisses on each of my cheeks. I blinked at him in surprise.

“Dick,” Kilo muttered, shoving him away from me.

“Does that mean you’re claiming her?” Another man asked with a sly grin.

Kilo’s jaw dropped open. “I- Uh-”

“Give him a break, Bolo,” the man who Kilo had addressed as his president ordered. “Tonight, Camila is his guest and no one touches her.” He gave Overdrive a pointed look.

“Like I’d do that,” Overdrive said with a roll of his eyes. “That was just a thank you for her amazing tacos.”

I frowned up at Kilo. “Huh?”

“He stole the tacos you made for me,” he told me with a dark frown at his friend.

I covered my mouth to stifle a laugh. It wasn’t hard to see that these men bonded by needling each other. I wasn’t sure what to think about Bolo’s statement about claiming me. Filing that away to ask Mary about later, I tried to relax as Kilo dragged me into the middle of the guys. Everyone started talking all at once and someone shoved an opened beer bottle into my hand. It made me feel at home in an instant. They were open and kind. I didn’t know what I was expecting from Kilo’s MC brothers, but they were far exceeding any preconceived notions I might have had.

After what had happened I’d been a bit leery of men. Which was why I’d been so hesitant to give Kilo a chance when I first met him. But he’d set himself apart so quickly with his kind actions that I started realizing he wasn’t like the men who were after us.

Dangerous and kind. I hadn’t thought that was possible. But he’d proven it. I had a

feeling if I hung around long enough all these men would be the same.

He and his brothers had that same tough and dangerous vibe, but I could see the way they gentled themselves a bit for me. How they made sure to include me in their conversations while they all spoke so that I didn't feel left out. And it was obvious the love and respect they had for Kilo. Which then was extended to me as well because he'd brought me here.

I was safe here with them. That was an important distinction. I wasn't safe from them, but with them. They wouldn't hurt me, and I felt down to my bones that they would stand between me and any threat. That was a new realization, and I liked it. What must it be like to go through your day knowing nothing could harm you? That there were no enemies who could reach you? I certainly wouldn't know.

My shoulders lost all the previous tenseness they'd held and I began to really enjoy myself. I noticed a man eyeing every beer—and scribbling in a notepad—the brothers consumed and tilted my head. “Are you making sure they don't get too drunk?” I asked him. I couldn't quite remember his name.

He barked out a laugh and shook his head. “There's no keeping this group in line when it comes to drinking,” he told me. “No, I'm calculating how much money we're spending for the barbecue and party later.”

“I'm sorry. I can't remember your name...” I admitted.

“I'm Flir,” he told me, holding out his hand and shaking mine.

“F-” I stopped and my brows drew together. His name was pronounced Flee-ir. “What does that mean?”

He chuckled. “It's an acronym for Forward Looking Infrared.”

I blinked at him, making him laugh again. He was probably in his mid-thirties, had sandy brown hair and intelligent blue eyes.

“They’re a type of thermal camera,” he explained. “At least that’s the easiest description. You know in the movies when they look at people in the black and white heat images?”

I nodded, eyes going back to his notebook. The last thing I wanted to do was pry too much into these guys’ lives, because I didn’t want them asking me too many questions. But I had a lot of things I wanted to ask. Like why was his name Flir? And why weren’t there other women here? Far too many questions to name, but I swallowed them back.

He must have seen the curiosity in my eyes because he answered one of them. “I’m the club treasurer. It’s my job to keep tabs on how much we spend.”

“That makes sense,” I told him. “How does the club make money?”

His smile spread over his face into a large grin. “That’s one of those things that I’m going to leave unanswered.”

My eyes widened. “I’m so sorry. I wasn’t trying to pry.”

“Don’t be,” he said with a shake of his head. “Motorcycle clubs are private. They don’t share a lot with outsiders. I understand your curiosity, but simply put, it’s not your business, not yet.”

“I understand.” And I appreciated that he was telling me this without sounding angry or offended that I didn’t already know this.

Did he say ‘yet’? What does that mean?

“Hey,” he said, catching Kilo’s attention.

“Yeah,” Kilo stepped over and draped his arm over my shoulders.

“I like your girl,” Flir told him.

With that, he walked off to return to his counting.

Kilo smiled down at me. “Well, that was unexpected.”

“Was it?” I asked. “He seems really nice.”

“He is, but Flir isn’t big on meeting new people. He’d rather let the rest of us do the talking. He’s more into numbers.”

“I noticed that,” I replied with a smile. “I like your friends.”

“Good, because they’re more like family.”

I nodded. “I have a lot of questions.”

He chuckled. “I’ll bet you do. Why don’t we go get some grub, and maybe I can answer a few for you.”

He reached down and linked our fingers together, pulling me toward the table where plates and food were sitting. My cheeks heated because we were holding hands in front of the men he considered family.

It was already hard enough to convince myself that this wasn’t anything serious. A fun little fling for him and a way for me to dip my toes into the dating world. The way he kept making me feel was threatening to have my heart completely invested in

him though. I wasn't sure that was the smartest thing, but I also knew I wasn't exactly in control of my heart. She was going to do whatever she wanted and I was going to have to deal with the consequences.

CHAPTER 13

Kilo

This was going better than I expected. I smiled as I watched Camila take a bite of her burger while my brothers crowded around her. They were doing their damndest to make her comfortable. I was so grateful for that. It was a short-lived reprieve for me because I knew once we were alone they were going to do their damndest to make me uncomfortable. But they wouldn't do that in front of her. At least nothing more than Bolo teasing me about claiming her. They wouldn't want her to feel disrespected.

And it wasn't even just because of me. Camila had this energy about her. You wanted to make her smile. It was easy to see that she was kind and caring and it made you want to be better. Or maybe that was just me, but considering the way my brothers were reacting to her, I didn't think so. It did explain why I was losing my shit over her though. She was the kind of woman you wifed up.

I rubbed the back of my neck at that thought. Jesus, I needed to get my damn thoughts under control. No one was talking about marriage. Or making anyone an old lady. Or anything permanent like that.

Yet. Fuck.

"You're thinking too much."

I glanced over at Ruck and grimaced. "Hard to stop."

“Just enjoy your time with her for now,” he suggested. “Quit thinking about the future.”

I snorted out a laugh. Future. Sure. My damn mind was trying to bring that shit into the present. Future would be bad enough but this was insane. I’d always been a pretty decisive guy, but I’d never looked at a woman and thought ‘yup, that’s the one’. I glanced over at Camila and blew out a breath. At least I never had before. Who knew what my rogue mind was doing these days?

“Glad you brought her.”

“Same,” I replied. “Not sure we’ll stay for the whole party.”

“No problem,” he said, then he chuckled. “Maybe it’s better if you don’t. Does she know much about clubs?”

“No.” I had a lot of explaining to do. But the minute we’d sat down Bolo, Drifter, and Strike had sat down on either side of her and started up a conversation. Even Hype was sitting across from her, but focusing all his attention on her. Mercenary was the only one who hadn’t said much, other than hi, to her. He was over talking with Code and Relay near the grill. He wasn’t a big talker on a good day let alone every other day of the week.

“Yeah, maybe leave before the women show up,” Ruck suggested, slapping my back.

If I was going to keep bringing Camila around, I needed to explain a few of the basics to her. Nothing too deep, because we got into enough shit that I wasn’t going to tell her. Not yet anyway. I could imagine how that would go and something told me that explaining that we had killed a bunch of people up in the mountains earlier this month wouldn’t be taken well.

At first, I was amused by my brothers monopolizing my girl's attention, but then I started to get annoyed. They were doing it on purpose if their smirks were any indication. Clearing my throat, I caught Camila's attention. "Let's go for a walk."

She smiled and stood up, picking up her plate.

"Don't worry about that," Strike, our secretary, told her as he covered her hand with his. "We'll clear this up."

I narrowed my eyes at him as he kept his hand on hers and shot me a toothy grin. Bastard. They were all trying to piss me off. I was going to remember this when they brought their own women around. I'd have my payback. As soon as Camila looked down to get out of the picnic table, I flipped Strike off.

He threw his head back and laughed. Bolo just kept smirking at me.

Camila shot me a confused look. I walked around the table and draped an arm over her shoulders, leading her toward the clubhouse. I walked her inside. "This is where we usually have our parties, though they do end up outside most of the time." I pointed toward the bar area. "You want a drink?"

She shook her head. "No, thank you."

She'd drunk the beer the guys had given her earlier, so I didn't say anything. I brought her toward the back hallway. "Back here is where we have church and some of the small rooms we have where we can crash after our parties if we don't want to drive home. This is mine." I opened the door and motioned for her to head inside.

"What's the other building for?" she asked, looking around the room.

"Bigger apartments. We have some friends over in Tucson that have them on their

compound and Ruck really liked that idea. So, we're building them."

"You're doing the building?"

The way she was staring up at me, all impressed and beautiful made me feel like a damn hero. "Well, not just me," I told her with a grin. "Though I'm helping."

"Maybe you could show me a few things sometime," she said. "I've always been impressed with people who can build things." She went over and sat on my bed. I had to look away to keep my dick from getting too damn excited. As much as I liked her, sex wasn't the reason I'd brought her in here. She wasn't a club girl. Or a hang around who came to the parties to get laid.

"What is it you like to do?" I asked. "In your spare time."

"Cook," she admitted with a smile. "I always wanted to start up my own restaurant."

"Really?" I nodded. "You're damn good at it, so I could see that. Why haven't you?" My eyes narrowed when her gaze darted away.

"Do you sleep here much?"

I let her change the subject. Despite my curiosity I needed to handle her gently. "No. Not often. We have a couple girls who work here. They keep the rooms and bedding clean in case we do stay though." Going over, I sat next to her on the bed. "If you want to stay for the party tonight, we should talk."

She lifted her leg onto the bed, tucking it beneath her other so she was facing me, and nodded. "Okay."

I sighed. "I know you're not super comfortable with me yet, but I can't fucking help

myself.” I didn't give her the chance to ask the question forming in her eyes. Cupping her cheeks, I kissed her.

The minute my lips touched hers she melted. How the fuck was I supposed to resist doing this when she reacted to me that way? I slid my hands back, cupping her head, and angling it just right so I could take the kiss deeper. Her little gasps were driving me insane, and if I didn't stop soon, I wouldn't.

Pulling back, I dropped my forehead against hers. “I don't want you to think I only brought you here to fuck you.” She made a little sound and I wasn't sure if it was dismay or interest. “But I definitely want to. Okay.” I straightened up, determined to keep my hands off her tempting curves. “But there's some shit you need to know about the club.”

She was staring at me, wide eyed, but not speaking. I'd probably shocked her with my words, but she'd have to get used to that. I was a blunt motherfucker. Poetry and shit like that wasn't my thing. At least she knew I'd never lie to her. Might omit a few things here and there. I started into some of what she could expect in an hour or so. Our parties started early and ended late.

She let me do most of the talking. She just listened. It was a skill for sure.

“I'm sure you have questions.”

She gave a soft laugh. “That was...a lot.”

“Yeah, that's us,” I told her with a grin. “A lot.”

“So, most of the people coming to tonight's party will be women?” she asked.

“Yeah. But we'll have some friends of the club here. Guys that are hanging around to

see if maybe they might be a good fit. If they are we might let them prospect with us. Others are allies of the club, who happen to be in town. Maybe some Nomads.” I’d already explained about the structure of the club. Though I kept some of it vague. Told her about some of the rides we did for charity and to help children. And kept even more of the club business vague.

If I decided to make her my old lady and the club agreed, then I would tell her more. If not, then she’d just remain in the dark about the shit we got up to. Most people would label us as vigilantes. I was cool with that description. We helped those who needed it and took care of those who demanded it.

“And...”

“What?” I prompted when she trailed off.

“Nothing. It’s none of my business,” she said.

“You’re wondering if I’ve fucked the other women?”

Her cheeks flushed a bit, so I knew I was right.

“I’m a Saint’s Outlaw, but that doesn’t mean I’m a damn saint, Camila. I’m not going to lie and tell you I’m a virgin or some shit, but when I’m getting to know a woman, I don’t sleep with anyone else. And I don’t cheat. Never have. It’s one of my lines.”

She met my gaze. “Is that what we’re doing?”

One side of my lips tip upward. “Yeah. It is.”

“Okay. I don’t cheat either.”

I arched a brow at her.

“What?” she questioned when I didn’t say anything.

“Have you even had sex?”

She opened her mouth, as though to tell me she had, but then she nodded. “I had a boyfriend for about a year when I was nineteen.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah. Do- Do you care about that?”

“That you had a boyfriend? Or that you’ve only had one?” I knew she was pretty inexperienced. In fact, I would have guessed she was a virgin based off how shy she was with me.

She nodded.

“Fuck no.” I grasped her by the chin, forcing her to hold my gaze. “I don’t care about your past.” I paused, then grinned. “Unless you don’t like that ex. Then I could go beat his ass for you if you wanted.”

She let out a startled laugh. “No, I don’t want that.”

Shattering glass from outside the door made her jerk in my hold. “Sorry about them. Did I mention they get bat shit crazy?”

“I think you said, a little out of control,” she said with a nervous laugh.

“We can leave anytime you want.”

“I like your family,” she told me.

“Then let’s go join them.” I took her hand and pulled her to her feet as I rose. This was either going to be a fun night or a shit show. Hopefully these assholes didn’t run my girl off.

It was only a few hours later and I knew the night was turning toward shit show. Merc was over in the fucking corner getting his dick sucked by a chick who’d just started showing up to our parties a few months ago. My eyes scanned the room and I found Camila. She was playing beer pong with Flir, Bolo, and Code. Thankfully her back was turned to the real action in the room.

“Once you’re done with this game, we should go,” I told her as she walked up.

“Don’t worry,” Flir said in a low voice. “We’ve kept her busy.” He shook his head over at Merc. “I swear the fucker’s an exhibitionist.”

“He just doesn’t give a shit,” Bolo said with a shrug. “Not like we haven’t all seen worse over the years.”

“True,” Flir admitted. “Guess I just prefer to fuck in private.”

I went over to where Camila was standing and frowned at her. She was swaying lightly. I looked over at the glasses and frowned when I saw different colored liquids in the plastic cups. “Seriously?” I asked. “What the fuck are you playing with?”

“Whiskey, Bourbon, Vodka...” Code closed one eye as he tried to remember more.

“Absinth,” Bolo offered.

I glared at him. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“Too many things to count,” he replied.

“Dammit,” Camila muttered as she missed her shot.

“Okay, game’s over,” I told the group.

“Oh fuck that,” Bolo snapped. “We’re almost done.”

I motioned toward Camila, who I now realized was in a damn daze. “She doesn’t drink much, you dickhead. I thought you were playing beer pong, not kill your liver pong.” I reached out and caught Camila as she stumbled. All night I’d been keeping an eye on her as she and the others played games. If I’d had any idea they were pouring hard alcohol into her I’d have stopped them.

“Just helping you out,” Bolo said with a chuckle.

I rolled my eyes. “I don’t need her comatose, thanks.” I started to walk her toward the back hallway but she was less than unsteady on her feet. Giving in, I bent and tossed her over my shoulder. A cheer went up from the room and all I could do was laugh and shake my head. That was my fault. Next time I’d know to monitor what those assholes were drinking so that they didn’t give it to my girl, too.

CHAPTER 14

Camila

G roaning, I pressed my hands against my throbbing temples. It was like my head was beating in time with my heartbeat. Something rumbled beneath my ear, so I looked up and groaned again when I found Kilo staring down at me. I was curled up against his powerful body. He looked damn good and I was sure I looked exactly how I felt. “Those guys are trouble,” I told him.

He laughed again. “I should’ve warned you not to drink what they gave you without asking what was in it.”

“Poison,” I replied. “Pretty sure that’s what it was.”

“Close enough.” His arms tightened around me before he reached over and grabbed a bottle and a glass of water on the nightstand. “Take these,” he said, handing me the painkillers. “And drink all of that water.”

My eyes widened when I saw the time on the clock. It was ten o’clock in the morning. “Oh my God!” I gasped. “Mama’s going to kill me.”

“I called her,” he told me, holding me close to him so that I couldn’t get up.

Looking up at him, I winced. “Was she mad?”

“She wasn’t pleased, but I told her I’d had a beer too many and couldn’t drive.”

“And she didn’t offer to come pick me up?” I asked, brows shooting up.

“She did, but a monsoon started up last night. Told her I didn’t want her driving in it and that I’d bring you back in the morning.”

I was going to get chewed out as soon as I got home, but I’d deal with that then. “Thank you for calling her.” I laid my head back down on his chest. My eyes closed as I enjoyed cuddling close to him. Then flashes of what happened last night started to come to my mind. I squeezed my eyes shut harder. “Please tell me I didn’t come on to you... And you turned me down? I was dreaming that, right?” I opened one eye and looked at him.

“If you weren’t so drunk, I wouldn’t have turned you down,” he told me, his voice husky.

I sighed and vowed to myself that I was never trusting Bolo to pour the drinks again. I still wasn’t sure what it even was that I’d downed last night, but my head was both fuzzy and aching and my stomach wasn’t too pleased either. “Thank you,” I told him. He was proving to be not only a gentleman but a man I could trust. There was nothing more important to me. “I should get home though.”

“Alright. I’ll take a cage ride,” he said as we got up out of bed.

My eyes dropped down to the sweatpants he was wearing and my jaw dropped.

He was hard. His eyes followed mine and he shrugged as he adjusted himself. “Can’t blame a guy for that,” he said as he walked into the little bathroom with some clothes.

“Maybe I need to be drunk for that,” I muttered to myself. He didn’t seem like he was a very small man. It shouldn’t be a surprise. He seemed to match the rest of his proportions. Straightening my clothes, I tried to make myself look a little less

rumpled and awful, but there was only so much I could do. I used the camera on my phone to check my makeup. I scrubbed the mascara from below my eyes while I waited for him to change. A part of me was grateful he didn't strip me to sleep. The inner hussy inside of me considered it a lost opportunity.

Kilo came out of the bathroom, I used it, then we left his room. As we came out into the main area of the building, he put his hands over my eyes. "Okay, so I'll direct you," he said, his tone strained.

"What? Why?"

"Because more than one of my brothers are bare assed out here."

"Oh." My cheeks were flaming hot by the time we made it out the door. I wasn't a prude, but this wasn't something I was used to either. Growing up, Dad had done his best to shield me from the darker side of the world. That had all come crashing down after his murder.

Kilo's hands left my eyes as we walked outside. "Hopefully it's safe out here. Though if any of them slept out here during the monsoon it's their own damn fault."

I laughed at that, but noticed he was scanning the grounds, looking for anyone who might have done just that. I had no doubts he would detour to take care of them if they had. I didn't know him that well, but I was beginning to understand that he was just that kind of guy. The kind who'd always have your back. Who would protect those he loved. It was a really attractive quality.

We stopped next to a truck and he opened the door for me. "Thank you."

He grinned at me then walked around and slid into the driver's seat.

“What’s a cage?” I asked.

“Any vehicle that’s not a bike,” he replied.

“Because it surrounds you,” I said with a nod.

“That and it cages you in versus how it feels to be on a motorcycle.”

I understood that completely.

“Hopefully, I didn’t get you into too much trouble,” he said, with a sheepish look as he began driving.

“It’s okay,” I told him. “I’m twenty-four years old. If I want to...sleep at a man’s house, I can. Besides, I’m the one who got drunk.” I laughed at myself. Yeah right. Mama was going to lay into me, but it was totally worth it. Just sleeping in Kilo’s arms made the lecture coming my way worth anything.

He cleared his throat and I focused on him. “It’s not okay with me if you sleep at a man’s house. Other than me.”

I couldn’t tell if he was kidding so I shook my head. “I don’t have any plans to.” I wasn’t really sure what we were saying, but I remembered him telling me that while he was getting to know a woman he didn’t sleep with others. “I don’t want you to, either.”

“I don’t sleep with men in any house,” he joked.

I laughed. “At any other women’s houses.”

“Fair enough.”

My heart leapt inside my chest. It wasn't exactly a declaration, but we were setting boundaries with each other. It was another step in the right direction, as Mary, my co-worker and friend, would say. We kept the conversation light on the way home. "I would have won last night, you know. If you hadn't interrupted the game." It was fun to tease him.

He laughed and shot me a knowing look. "You couldn't stand straight. There was no way you were going to make those shots."

"I shoot better that way." I was full of it. Drinking wasn't something I did. You had to feel secure in your surroundings to let go enough to get drunk. I hadn't had that privilege in a long, long time. At least, not until last night. If I wondered whether I trusted Kilo, that would tell me right there.

He pulled up in front of my house and cut the engine. "I want to see you again. Tomorrow? We could do a movie night at my house."

I smiled at him, thrilled that he wanted to spend more time with me. "I'd like that. I can make us dinner."

"Fucking sold," he replied. He reached over and grasped my chin, leaning toward me.

I swatted at him, making him stop and give me a questioning look. "I haven't brushed my teeth, or-"

He leaned forward and planted a firm kiss on my mouth, but didn't take it any deeper than a meeting of lips. "I'll see you tomorrow," he told me. He let go of my chin and smoothed his hand over my hair.

"Okay," I told him. I waited a beat, then asked something that I'd been curious about for a while now. Considering we'd just slept in the same bed all night, I figured I

should know. “Kilo?”

“Yeah?”

“What’s your real name?”

He hesitated, then grinned, and with a shrug said, “Chris.”

“Chris.” It was weird. I’d only known him as Kilo. Trying to think of him as anything else seemed strange. “Thank you.” It was difficult to force myself to get out of the truck, but I did.

He waited until I got to the door before he started it and drove away.

“Mama,” I called out as I went inside. “I’m home.”

Carmen looked up from the couch and gave me a grim look. “She’s upstairs.”

I went and sat next to her, pulling her against my side. “Is she mad?”

“She was worried.”

“Sorry if I worried you both.”

She wrinkled her nose. “You stink.”

Ugh. I knew what she meant, but Kilo had slept next to me all night. And kissed me. I didn’t want to stink. “I’m going to shower.”

I bypassed Mama’s room and quickly showered and changed before going to face the music. She looked me up and down as I entered her room. “I’m sorry.”

She sighed and set her knitting aside. “I don’t want you to be sorry.”

“But I am,” I told her, walking over and sitting on her bed. She was in the little armchair next to it. She liked to look out the window while she knitted.

“I know. I was just worried, Mija.”

“I know,” I echoed. “I really like him, Mama.”

She closed her eyes and sucked in a deep breath. “And I’m trying to remember that you’re not my little girl anymore. That if you go out and... stay the night somewhere,” she gave me a pointed look that said not to tell her what happened, “that it’s your right. This whole mess has taken so many years away from you. It’s not fair.”

This was going way better than I ever expected. She wasn’t yelling. She wasn’t even scolding me. I was getting nothing but empathy and understanding. “Who are you and what have you done with Lucia?” I teased.

She cracked a smile at that. “This isn’t easy for any of us. If you’ve found someone to make it better, that’s good.” I nodded. “Have you told him?”

I cringed and shook my head. “I don’t know when the right time would be. How do you just tell a guy that you’re in Witness Protection because some really bad people are trying to murder you and your whole family?”

“I don’t know, Mija,” she said, leaning forward to take my hand. “But you’re going to need to tell him at some point. It won’t be fair if we have to disappear again and he doesn’t know why.”

“I know, Mama,” I sighed. “I know.”

She patted my hand. “Go watch TV with your sister.”

I left her room, trying not to be depressed that I not only needed to tell Kilo about my secret, but that at some point I’d probably have to leave him.

CHAPTER 15

Camila

I carried over the lasagna I'd made earlier that day and knocked on Kilo's door. It'd been three weeks of this. Almost every night, I went to his house and brought a meal. We'd eat, talk, watch movies, and most nights I fell asleep in his arms on his couch. Then I'd sneak home and into my bed. It was the most normal thing in my life in over four years.

And each day I fell harder and harder for him. We made out often, but still hadn't slept together. He seemed to be taking things slow with me and as much as I appreciated that, I was done. My body was rioting and demanding that we give in to the urges that refused to give me any relief.

Tonight was the night. I'd bought a new bra and panty set and I was wearing a short pair of cotton shorts and a tank top. Food and small clothes, that was my plan to seduce this man. It was laughable. He had beautiful, half-clothed women around the clubhouse every day. But this was the best I could do, so I was going for it. Seeing how his eyes lit up when I brought dinner in, and how his gaze heated when he looked me up and down, I thought it was a good plan.

"Hey, Cami," he said with a grin as he opened up the door. His eyes narrowed on the dish I was holding. "What did you make today?"

I laughed at his tone, because I'd already figured out the way to this man's heart was through his stomach. "Lasagna."

He groaned. “I’m going to have to up my cardio after this, Woman. You’re going to make me gain weight.” He crossed his muscular arms over his chest. “Unless that’s your plan?” He arched a brow. “You trying to fatten me up so no other woman will want me?”

Tilting my head, I studied him. He hadn’t put on an ounce. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I teased, faking an innocent tone.

He grabbed me by the back of the neck and pulled me in for a kiss. Every muscle in my body relaxed into him. If there was any doubt in my mind that I trusted and cared for this man, my own body’s reaction would have put me at ease.

I moaned softly when his tongue swept into my mouth. His other hand slipped under the back of my tank top, his palm warm on my skin. When he pulled back, he looked down at me. “Come on in.” His voice was husky and deep.

Sucking in a breath, I stepped past him into his house. “Is Overdrive stopping by tonight?” Sometimes his friend joined us on our movie nights.

“No.”

I looked over at him and saw the glint in his eyes. We both seemed to know that something was different tonight. I went into his kitchen and put the lasagna in his oven to reheat. Leaning back against the counter, I watched him come in toward me.

“What do you want to watch tonight?”

“You choose,” I told him. I’d picked the last few movies.

“Alright,” he was watching me like a predator would prey. Like if he took his eyes off me I might run off.

Try it, he might chase you.

I didn't think I'd mind Kilo chasing after me. Especially not once he caught me. "It'll only take a few minutes to heat this up," I told him, trying to force my mind back to the here and now. I wrung my hands together, feeling awkward. It didn't matter that I wanted him, this was still nerve wracking for me.

A muscle jumped in his jaw as he stared at me. "I like your shorts."

I blinked at the abrupt change in topic. "Thank you."

"They new?"

Should I admit that they were? That I'd bought them for him?

He stalked closer to me and ran his hand up the outer side of my thigh, making my heart skip a beat. "Your skin is so fucking soft."

I swallowed, staring up at him, unsure of how to respond to that.

His lips tipped up on one side. "Did you buy these for me, Camila?"

Oh Lord.

Those words in that low voice were doing something to me. I wanted to squeeze my thighs together to relieve the sudden ache between them, but his hand was already there, fingers running over the inside of my knee. I settled for nodding. Playing hard to get was never my strong suit. I was too damn honest.

His fingers were back to the outside of my leg and moving upward, under the hem of the shorts. "You trying to kill me?" he teased. "Wearing these little booty shorts over

here?”

I shook my head. Killing him wasn't in my plans. I needed him very much alive.

“But you are. Then you wear this white tank top that doesn't quite reach the shorts.” His hand skimmed up to my stomach and his fingers disappeared under the hem of my shirt. He groaned and my disappointment was heavy when his hand left my skin. But then he gripped my hips and lifted me onto the counter, as if I weighed nothing.

I gasped, holding onto his shoulders so that I didn't fall forward with the sudden movement. “Kilo-”

“Nope,” he said, cutting me off. “You don't get to come over here, teasing me, then tell me not to do the things I've been thinking about for over a month. Have some fucking mercy on me, Woman.”

“I wasn't going to tell you to stop,” I told him, voice quiet but firm.

His eyes narrowed. “You weren't?”

I shook my head, then leaned down and kissed him.

He let out a rumble of pleasure as he deepened the kiss.

My heart was racing and my pulse was thudding loudly in my ears. The sound of the oven timer beeping had him pulling back and cursing under his breath. He reached over and slammed his finger against the off button. “We'll eat later,” he growled.

“But-”

“I'm not hungry for food,” he told me, his mouth finding mine again. His mouth was

just as demanding and eager as his hands as they roved over me, igniting fires inside of my body. My legs went around his waist and my arms went around his neck. “Fuck,” he growled. “Hold on tight, Baby.”

He lifted me off the counter, one arm under my ass while the other threaded through my hair, holding me still as he continued to kiss me as he walked. The next thing I knew we were going down. I let out a squeak and clutched him tighter.

“That was fucking adorable,” he mumbled against my neck as he settled us on his bed. His hips pressed into mine and I realized exactly what he meant by he wasn’t hungry for food. He was starving for me. He was using his tongue and teeth on my skin and it made me shiver with delight.

His cock was thick and hard between us. It was rubbing against my pussy and I couldn’t help but grind up against him. I’d been waiting for this for too long. I’d been too scared to give in because if I did, and had to leave, it would break me. But there was no choice anymore. I needed him too badly.

He pushed up on his forearms and stared down at me. “You have any idea how badly I’ve wanted you? How many times I’ve jacked off in the shower thinking about you?”

My mouth dropped open at his words. I wasn’t a virgin, but that didn’t mean I had a lot of experience. And his dirty words conjured up all sorts of images in my mind. I wanted to see that. To watch him stroke himself until he came. And that realization made me feel a little shy. That and the knowledge that he was about to strip me naked and do all those things he’d said he was thinking about before.

My body didn’t embarrass me. My breasts were small, my stomach a bit rounded, and my butt and thighs were thick. I loved my butt. It was my best feature. I just didn’t want to think that he’d look at me and find me lacking in any way. If he liked a flaca

with big breasts and blonde hair, he was going to be disappointed.

He frowned down at me. “What’re you thinking?” He already knew how to read me too well. He arched a brow. “I know it doesn’t have anything to do with this fucking sexy body because you’re perfect.” He shoved my shirt higher, peppering kisses over my stomach as he went.

I couldn’t help but laugh as his short beard tickled me. My laughter didn’t last long. “Oh God,” I breathed as his hands skimmed up and cupped my breasts.

He squeezed them and groaned, then shoved my shirt up until it was just under my chin. My nipples hardened further under his gaze. “Is this new, too?” he teased, fingers tracing the lace of my bra.

“Yes,” I admitted.

He grinned at me. “So you planned to seduce me, huh? With these tiny shorts and this sexy lingerie. What else you got hidden under your clothes, Camila?”

My tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth. How was I supposed to talk when he looked at me like that? When his fingers started rubbing my nipple?

He chuckled. “Guess I’ll have to find out. Later. Right now, I’m busy.” He kissed the corner of my mouth, then tugged the cup of my bra under my breast. My clit throbbed as the cool air hit my nipple before his hot mouth was closing around it.

I cried out, arching off the bed, my fingers digging into his short hair. His tongue swirled around the tight peak and he sucked. Now it was him trying to kill me. I was having a hard time holding still, writhing beneath him. He had me so turned on, I wondered if I could orgasm like this. Probably not, but he seemed determined to try to make me.

“Fucking perfect,” he said, switching to my other breast. He didn’t seem to mind my smaller breasts, and thank God, because his tongue was magic. My body was burning up. He moved lower, licking the space between my breasts, then the soft skin under each, his mouth leaving a trail of heat everywhere it went.

It wasn’t enough though. My fingers dug into his shoulders. “Kilo.”

He lifted his head, a smug look on his face. “What do you want, Baby? Tell me.”

“Have some mercy,” I said, repeating his earlier words.

He chuckled as he continued to kiss his way down my body.

“Is that what you want? Mercy?”

I nodded, breathing hard as he scraped his teeth over my hip.

He dragged my shorts down, leaving my little lace thong on. “Or do you want me to give you an orgasm that makes you scream?”

I sucked in a breath, my eyes fluttering closed. “That. I want that.”

“You want to scream?”

“God, yes.”

“Thank fuck,” he muttered, wedging his massive shoulders between my thighs.

When he rubbed his mouth over the wet lace of my thong, I let out a strangled cry. He didn’t stop there, just kept pressing his face against my core. His nose nuzzled my clit, sending zings of pleasure through me.

He growled against me and I was about to tell him not to stop, when he grabbed the flimsy lace with his teeth and dragged it down. It didn't go far, so he used his hands and ripped them apart and off, tossing the scraps impatiently to the side.

It was so sexy, I wasn't even mad about him destroying them.

When he put his mouth back on me, I was glad the panties were gone. There was nothing separating us now. He was eating me like a starved man, tongue flicking over my clit. I moaned, hips arching up into his mouth. It was so good I never wanted him to stop.

He growled and the vibration went straight through me. My fingers dug into his scalp. His hair wasn't long enough to hang on to. "Oh God," I gasped as pleasure built inside of me.

His mouth was relentless. When his finger slid into my pussy, I knew I wasn't going to last much longer. He was moving faster, his tongue and finger working together to bring me to an orgasm. I was so close.

"Kilo," I begged.

His answer was a groan against my clit. Then his fingers slid in a little deeper and curved, rubbing against a spot that had my whole body lighting up. It was a tingle at first, then it exploded. "Oh! Oh!" My body bowed and I came.

"Fucking beautiful," he growled, lifting his head. He was stroking my inner wall, keeping the pressure on as I came. His mouth latched onto one of my breasts and I nearly shot off the bed. It was like he knew every spot that made me light up like fireworks.

He pulled his finger from me, and I whined in protest.

“You’re going to come again,” he told me, unzipping his pants.

I watched as he pulled his cock free and gave it a hard stroke. It was much bigger than I expected, but I wasn’t afraid. He wouldn’t hurt me. I knew that with every inch of my being.

He reached into his nightstand and pulled out a condom, rolling it on his dick before settling back down between my thighs. “Put me inside,” he ordered, bracing himself on forearms above me.

I knew what he was doing. He was making sure this was my choice, as if I hadn’t already made it. My hand shook a little as I took hold of his cock. He was hot and thick in my hand, even covered in latex. I wanted him bare, for there to be nothing between us, but I wasn’t on birth control, so I didn’t say anything about taking the condom off. The last thing we needed was for me to get pregnant.

“Goddamn,” he bit out as I notched him at my core.

Once I had the head nestled against my entrance, his hips thrust, burying his length inside of me.

I cried out in pleasure. He was so big. I felt every inch as he pulled out, then slammed home. His hands gripped my thighs and pushed them back toward my chest.

“Oh!” The angle changed and his pelvic bone rubbed against my clit with each stroke.

“Jesus Christ, you’re tight,” he gritted out.

I could only moan in response. The feel of him was almost overwhelming. The stretch, the fullness, the friction. All of it.

“Come for me,” he demanded.

He was fucking me harder, his pace fast and punishing. It was just what I needed.

“Yes,” I breathed.

His hips rocked into me, slamming his cock home. I was lost in a sea of sensation and then he was sucking on my nipple and I was flying apart.

“Fuck yeah. That’s it, Baby,” he groaned as I came around his cock.

His hips didn’t stop, just kept pounding into me. My nails scratched down his back.

“You’re gonna come again.” It was a warning. A demand.

I moaned, feeling another orgasm approaching. I wasn’t sure how that was possible, but Kilo had a way of making the impossible happen. He was demanding and too sexy to resist. I wasn’t sure whether it was a third orgasm, or if he was just prolonging the one that was tearing through me. Either way, it was ecstasy.

“That’s right,” he praised.

“Kilo!” I screamed as he fucked me into oblivion.

I couldn’t get enough. My nails raked over his shoulders and arms, needing him closer, but not wanting him to stop.

He groaned and gave me what I needed, burying his face in my neck as his hips rocked harder. He was chasing his own pleasure now and the idea that I’d been able to drive him to this was so satisfying.

“Jesus, Camila,” he gasped, his pace turning erratic.

My fingers dug into his back, holding him against me as he thrust. One, two, three more strokes and he stiffened, then cursed, his hips stilling as he came.

When his body collapsed on top of mine, I stroked his back and kissed the side of his neck. My thighs were trembling and my heart was beating a mile a minute.

“Fuck,” he breathed, pulling his head from my neck and staring down at me. He cupped my cheek before kissing me deeply, then he rolled, taking me with him until I was sprawled over his muscular body.

We were both silent for a while, the only sound in the room was our panting breaths. He was brushing his hand over my ass, occasionally palming it while we recovered.

I closed my eyes, my cheek against his chest as I listened to the beating of his heart. This was exactly what I’d needed and I felt closer to him than ever. I frowned, realizing that my time was up. I was going to have to tell him my secret. I couldn’t keep it from him anymore.

Tomorrow.

The last thing I wanted to do was ruin this perfect night with all the nightmares of my past. I’d give myself this one amazing night with him, then tomorrow I’d sit him down and give him the entire story.

CHAPTER 16

Kilo

The scream woke me up and I came up ready to fight. Then I realized Camila was sleeping beside me and thrashing around. “Shhh, wake up, Cami,” I soothed. I held her arms pinned to her sides so she couldn’t accidentally hurt herself.

Her eyes snapped open and she froze, as though listening for danger.

“It’s okay. You’re okay,” I told her, letting her go and smoothing the hair out of her face.

She was gulping in breaths as though she’d just run a mile. Then she did something that cracked my fucking stone-cold heart in two. She turned into me and pressed her face into my chest, taking comfort in me.

I was a fucking goner.

How was I supposed to resist this woman? She was everything I wanted. She was a mystery at first, but little by little she was letting her guard down. Letting me in. Seeing her turn from the suspicious, solemn, woman I first met into this beautiful creature who smiled and laughed... Damn. I wasn’t a poetic kind of man, but she almost made me want to fucking try to be. She just filled in all the gaps in my life. With seemingly no effort.

I was stroking her hair as she calmed down, waiting until she caught her breath. “Bad

dream?”

She nodded, still keeping her face buried in my chest. She could stay there forever as far as I was concerned.

“Want some water?” I asked her.

She sighed. “Yes, please.”

I waited a beat until her arms unwrapped from me, then stood up. I pulled on a pair of boxer briefs and sweats.

“Sorry I woke you,” she whispered.

“Don’t apologize,” I told her. “I’ll be right back.”

She settled back against the pillows. The moonlight was the only thing lighting up the room. I didn’t bother to turn on the lights as I went into the kitchen and filled up a glass of water. We’d eaten the lasagna in bed and then I’d fucked her again before we’d both fallen asleep. I knew I wasn’t ever going to get enough of her.

I looked up as movement caught my eye. Someone was walking down Camila’s driveway. It was only eleven at night, but these women didn’t have visitors. I set the glass down, grabbed the pistol I had stashed in a holster under one of the cabinets—I had weapons all over this house—and made a beeline for the front door. I knew Camila was keeping something from me. She and her family weren’t very good liars. And either this guy—had to be a guy, judging from his height—had something to do with it, or it was Shawn the douche creeping around. Either way, I was going to take care of it.

It didn’t take long to catch up with the guy. He was strolling along like he wasn’t

being a fucking creep outside my girl's house. I'd stuffed my gun into the back of my sweats. "Who the fuck are you and why are you-" I didn't even get to finish because the fucker moved too fast for my liking.

He spun around and I took in his face. Blond. Tall. Blue eyes. Pretty boy. "Who the fuck are you?" he growled.

"That's my fucking question," I snapped.

"You live around here?" When I didn't answer he shook his head. "Fuck off."

"Not until you tell me what you were doing skulking around," I told him.

"What's it to you?"

"This is-"

"Kilo?"

I groaned to myself when Camila's soft voice called out in the darkness. As soon as the man took a step toward her, I was on him. He wasn't getting anywhere close to my girl until I knew who he was. I shoved him back. "Don't even fucking think about it." When he took another step toward Camila, I lost my temper. My fist connected with his jaw.

He seemed all too happy to fight with me as he grabbed my shoulder and landed a body blow into my side. Pretty soon all I could hear was our grunts as we beat on each other. I caught a blow to the face, returning the favor by ramming my fist into his again. Whoever this guy was, he wasn't a pussy like Shawn. This guy was dangerous. He had training and experience.

“Kilo!”

“Stay back,” I told her, looking over my shoulder. I was distracted just long enough for the asshole to pull a gun on me. Mine was in my hand and pointed at him before I knew what was happening.

Fuck. That escalated quick.

“Drop it,” the man told me.

“You drop yours,” I countered.

“Oh my God.” Camila hadn’t listened and her voice came from right behind me. “Wait-”

The guy charged, taking us both to the ground. My elbow hit the sidewalk and the pain nearly blinded me for a minute. It was never funny when it was your own damn funny bone that takes a beating. That was when I realized I’d lost my gun.

“Dustin! Stop!”

We both froze and stared up at Camila. She was standing over us, her hands out in a pacifying gesture. “He’s my boyfriend.”

The man on top of me looked between us. “Boyfriend?”

“Dustin?” I asked. I shoved him off me, making sure to hit him as hard as I could as I did.

Camila wrapped her arms around herself as we picked ourselves up off the ground.

“You have a lot of explaining to do, Camila,” Dustin said.

“Yeah, you do,” I growled, narrowing my eyes on her. I didn’t know what the fuck was going on, but I needed to before I killed this fucker. Well, strictly speaking I didn’t need to know before killing him, it was just courtesy.

“Can we go into your house?” Camila asked me, her eyes pleading with me. “I don’t want to drag Mama and Carmen into this.”

We’d already talked about not seeing other people, so I was really hoping there was an explanation for all this. “Yeah,” I muttered. I put my hand on her lower back, leading her back to my house as if I hadn’t just gotten into a fight with a guy in her driveway. As soon as we were back inside, I turned on the living room light.

The worry on Camila’s face killed me, but I wasn’t ready to let my guard down just yet. Not until I knew what the hell was going on.

“Sit down, please,” she said, looking between me and Dustin. “Both of you, but not next to each other.”

He finally sat, but not before I shoved him once for good measure. Then I sat.

She blew out a breath and motioned toward the other guy. “Dustin is my...” She paused, searching for the right word. “He’s a U.S. Marshal.”

My brows shot up at that.

“You assaulted a federal agent, asshole,” he told me.

“You were sneaking around in the dark outside my girlfriend’s house, asshole. Besides you never fucking identified yourself,” I shot back. This wasn’t the first time

I'd assaulted a fed. Though it was the first time I did so unknowingly.

He glared at me, but fell quiet when Camila stepped in between us.

I pulled her back until she was behind me. I didn't trust this piece of shit and I didn't want her in the way if he tried something. Then what she said clicked. "What is a U.S. Marshal doing here?"

"He's in charge of watching over my family," she told me. I turned and stared down at her. "We're in witness protection."

Gritting my teeth, I ran a hand over my head. "Witness protection."

"Yes," she said, voice soft and uncertain. "I-"

"Does he need to be here for this?" I asked.

"No, I was just checking in with Lucia," Dustin said, answering before Camila could. "I'll come back tomorrow, Camila. Check in again. When it's nice and bright out." He said the last part to me before he stood and left.

I watched him until he shut the door, then turned back to Camila. She looked wrecked. I didn't want her to be upset, but Dustin had been right, she had a lot of explaining to do. "What's going on?"

"I'm so sorry. I never meant to drag you into this," she said, choking on a sob.

Tears were my weakness. My sisters had learned that early on and used them often, but I could tell Camila wasn't used to crying. It was destroying me to see her so fucking upset. I pulled her close and hugged her. "Don't cry." My anger was fading since I knew Dustin was just some dirtbag fed and not her former boyfriend trying to

rekindle shit or something. “Come on, Baby. Mercy. Your tears are killing me.”

She sniffled and nodded, trying to wipe away the tears. I helped her, wiping my thumbs over her cheeks. “I was going to tell you in the morning.”

“Come here.” I sat her down on the couch, then walked back into the kitchen and grabbed the glass of water. Sitting down next to her, I dragged her into my lap with one arm, then handed her the glass. “Drink that.” I waited while she took a few gulps. “Now tell me what’s going on. Why are you in witness protection?”

I’d suspected from the start they were hiding something. This wasn’t what I’d expected though. Witness protection was fucking serious. It meant that whatever was going on was no small matter. They didn’t put you in witness protection unless some bad shit was going down.

Camila let out a shaky breath. “I’ll understand if you don’t want to see me anymore. I can’t promise-”

“How about you tell me what’s going on before you start overanalyzing all the ways you think I’ll leave you.” We hadn’t officially said we were boyfriend and girlfriend. Mostly because I was a grown ass man and not a kid. I didn’t have girlfriends. I had a woman. An old lady. But there was no denying we were in a relationship. Especially after what happened earlier tonight. No way I was leaving her behind now. Whatever this was, we’d face it together. I just needed to know what she was involved in.

“Four years ago, my father was murdered right in front of me.” She started shaking in my arms.

Jesus fucking Christ. That’s a way to start a story.

This was going to be a shit show. I sighed and held her close. “Take your time,

Baby.” I stroked a hand down her back. I wanted her to know she was safe, that I had her. I could tell this wasn’t going to be easy, but she needed to get it out as much as I needed to know what was coming for her.

CHAPTER 17

Camila

Memories were a strange thing. It'd been four years, and I knew that, but my mind liked to make me think it was just yesterday that Dad had died. Or worse, it liked to put me directly back into the memory when I slept and make me relive it again and again. It was torture. And I couldn't talk to anyone about it.

The only time I'd told anyone what had happened had been when the cops showed up at our house, found us with Dad's dead body, and it all went from there. I'd given my initial statement, then had to give it again once the FBI had taken over. Once they found out who was involved, they'd jumped in so fast my head had spun.

"I was getting ready to go out to a movie with a friend," I told Kilo, the memories flashing through my mind. "I was going to meet her at the theater. Mama and Carmen had already gone out to get dinner." I took another drink from the glass in my hand. My mouth was so dry from the nerves. Telling him could mean the end of this. Whatever this was.

And I didn't want it to end. Kilo was the first thing in four years I'd allowed myself to have. I'd been living every day in survival mode, just trying to keep the rest of my family alive. I worked, I came home, I ate, and I slept. And worried. There were a lot of sleepless nights worrying that I was doing the wrong thing by agreeing to testify.

Of course, that was the only thing keeping me alive. Keeping my family safe. If I hadn't agreed to testify, Kruzman's men likely would have already found us and

killed us. At least that's what I assumed.

Dustin and the other Marshals were all that was standing between him and us. And considering Kruzman had found us twice before, that wasn't a comforting thought.

"I forgot something so I turned around and went home to grab it."

Kilo was stroking my back and I wasn't sure how to verbalize how much his comfort was helping me. I knew I was safe there, sitting in his lap.

"I heard shouting. My dad was the only one home, so I followed the voices," I whispered. "Dad had always just said he was an accountant when I asked what he did for work. It wasn't until that night that I realized he did the books for a really bad man."

Kilo was silent. He took the glass from my numb fingers and set it aside before I dropped it.

"There were four men in Dad's office with him." I took a shaky breath. "I almost called out to him, but I realized they had guns and stayed quiet."

It wasn't until his arms wrapped around me that I realized I was trembling. One hand smoothed over my bare leg, beneath my shorts.

"Only one of the men was speaking. He was threatening Dad. Over and over, telling him that he was going to kill Dad. To kill us. I was frozen in place. I knew I should leave. Should run, but I couldn't move."

"You're safe," Kilo murmured.

There were tears streaming down my face. When I'd given my statement to the

authorities my eyes had been bone dry both times. I knew I was crying now because I was with someone safe. Someone who could shoulder the burden for me, for a little while, as I expelled all the vileness from my system. I was too afraid to speak to anyone about it, even a therapist. The last thing I needed to do was put someone else in Kruzman's line of fire. So I'd been holding this all in. For four damn years.

"I don't know why they were there. Why this guy was threatening Dad. Everything happened so fast. Dad didn't even say a word. He just sat there, behind his desk, quiet. Almost like he was resigned to it." I turned my head and stared at Kilo. "The FBI thinks Dad must have done something wrong, but they don't know what."

"That must have been so hard," Kilo said in a soothing tone.

I nodded and used the back of my hand to wipe away some of the tears. "Kruzman just...let out this disappointed sigh and gave the order. His men were the ones who shot my dad. But it was because of Kruzman."

Kilo stiffened beneath me. "Alec Kruzman?"

I nodded in misery. "The high-powered businessman everyone suspects has cartel connections? Yeah, him."

"They saw you?"

"No. Once the guns fired, I ran." I gave a humorless laugh. "Brave, right?"

"It would have been suicide to stay, Camila."

I sighed. I knew that, but it didn't ease the guilt that plagued me. I'd run off and left my dad to die alone. It didn't matter that Dustin told me the Medical Examiner said he'd died instantaneously. The guilt was still there. "I called the cops from my phone

and it went from there. Once the FBI stepped in, they offered us protective custody until the trial. But Kruzman found us. They think he paid someone off to get my name. So, they arranged for us to disappear.”

“How many times has he found you?”

“Three times. That’s why I was so hesitant to even talk to you at first,” I told him, staring into his beautiful brown eyes. “I don’t know when we’ll have to run again. The trial keeps getting pushed back because of appeals. I don’t know when, or if, this is ever going to end.”

Kilo’s arms tightened around me and I laid my cheek on his chest and soaked in his warmth. It wasn’t cold out, that was impossible in Arizona at the end of August, but I was still freezing.

He picked me up, taking me back into his bedroom and settling into his bed with me. “I don’t want you to worry.”

I let out a soft laugh. Nothing was funny. I was just exhausted. Tired of running. Of hiding. Tired of everything. “Sometimes I wonder if it would be best to give myself to him as long as he promised not to hurt my mom or sister,” I whispered in the dark.

“Don’t say that,” Kilo snapped. “Don’t even think that shit. He’ll kill you.”

I knew that. And I didn’t want to die. It terrified me, but even more, I didn’t want anything to happen to my family. “Do you think I made a mistake agreeing to work with the FBI?”

“No. I think they’re the reason you’re still alive. Even though they’re doing a shitty job of keeping you safe. If you hadn’t gone into witness protection, Kruzman would have found out about you anyway. And then no one would be helping you.”

I sighed and laid there in his arms. He was right. I knew it. Once they started suspecting that someone had been paid off, they'd found a couple Marshals that were single and moved around with us. Dustin had been with us since we went into witness protection. He'd done his best to keep us safe. Sometimes I thought it was a losing game for him. Kruzman had money, power, and time. I had nothing.

"Is that even your name? Camila?"

"It is now. That other girl is dead and gone," I told him.

"Then I'm going to give you my own name."

"What's that?"

"Mercy."

I smiled and cuddled closer. Mercy was a nice name. Mary had mentioned, when she told me about clubs, that the men would often give their old ladies their own names. I loved that he was doing that for me. "I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm so glad I met you, Kilo."

"Don't do that," he warned.

"Do what?" I asked, voice soft.

"Don't say goodbye. You're not going anywhere. And neither am I."

God, I hoped he was right. I wanted to believe that somehow everything was going to turn out okay. There'd just been too many times in the past when those hopes were dashed. I wasn't sure I could believe it anymore. The man who was after us had too much power and money. He always seemed to find us.

I woke up before Kilo the next morning and stared down at his handsome face as he slept. It was relaxed and he looked so carefree. It wasn't fair of me to put him in danger. I was just starting to realize that. And that was what I'd done, however unintentional it'd been. If he associated with me, Kruzman would find him. I couldn't live with myself if anything happened to him.

Disentangling myself from his arms, I slipped out of bed and out of his house. I hurried across the lawn to my own home and went inside. Carmen was at the dining room table eating cereal. I sat down next to her and rested my chin in my hand.

"What's wrong?" she asked, looking up from her phone. She made friends fast everywhere she went. There were a couple of girls her age that had been in the same summer school program as her and it hadn't taken long before they were constantly texting each other.

"Nothing," I told her.

She set her phone and spoon down and stared at me. The unamused look on her face made me laugh. She looked so much like Mama in that moment. "Spill."

"I don't think I can keep seeing Kilo." It made me miserable to even say it out loud.

Her face fell. "Why not? I like him."

"I do, too. That's why I can't keep seeing him."

She scrunched her nose. "That's stupid."

"I'm worried he'll get hurt because of me." I didn't mention Kruzman's name. It made Carmen shut down anytime she heard it. Even now the happy glow on her face dimmed a little.

“Oh.”

“Yeah,” I sighed. “I don’t know what to do.”

She reached out and put her hand on top of mine on the table. “Camila?”

“Yeah?”

“I love you so much.”

Swallowing back tears, I managed to choke out, “I love you, too, Bug.” It was an old nickname. One I didn’t use much anymore because she didn’t like it. She was too old for ‘baby’ nicknames. Or so she’d declared a few years ago. But she didn’t protest my use of it now.

“I don’t know what you should do either,” she told me. “But maybe you should talk to Kilo about it.”

“I already told him everything.” Mostly. I didn’t go into the gory details of how close Kruzman’s men had come to killing me the last time.

“Talk to him again,” she told me, staring at me with far too much wisdom in her eyes. “He doesn’t deserve you pushing him away.”

“I’m trying to protect him.”

“Maybe you should give him a chance to protect you ,” she countered. “He is really big.”

That made me crack a smile, then I narrowed my eyes. “When did you get so smart?” I teased.

She shrugged. "I've always been smart." Then she picked her phone up again and proceeded to ignore me.

Taking advice from an eleven-year-old was me hitting rock bottom, but I couldn't deny that it was good advice. Kilo at least deserved to know why we shouldn't continue seeing each other. I didn't expect him to protect me. It wasn't his responsibility. But I liked him enough to talk to him again and explain my decisions. I sighed. That wasn't a talk I was looking forward to. I'd give him a day or two to process what I'd told him. Maybe he would come to the same conclusion I had. It was best if we parted ways now. Before anyone got hurt.

CHAPTER 18

Kilo

I walked into the clubhouse, nodding at Hype as I walked past. He was busy restocking the liquor behind the bar. Most days I would stop to give him a hand, but I was on a mission. The other guys were already busy outside. Bolo was mostly in charge, per Ruck, on the building projects, so he was getting everybody started. I went down the hallway and knocked on a door.

“Yeah.”

Stepping into the office, I went and flopped down in the chair on the other side of Ruck’s desk. I wiped a hand over my mouth, wondering how I was even going to start this conversation.

Ruck’s brows rose as he watched me. “You look like shit,” he told me.

I’d been pissed to find Camila gone this morning, but she’d left me a text telling me she was at home. I couldn’t say I was surprised. She’d been dealing with heavy shit over the last few years and having to do so alone. I expected she’d pull away from me, just not quite as quickly as she did. “I’ve got a problem.”

Ruck leaned back in his chair, watching me. “How bad?”

“FUBAR’d.”

His expression turned grim. FUBAR was an acronym. It meant fucked up beyond all repair. “Go get the officers. We’re having church.”

“Now?” I asked.

He studied my face for a moment, then nodded. “Yeah. Now.”

I shoved out of the chair and blew out a breath as I went back outside. This wasn’t something I was going to be able to handle on my own. And I sure as fuck wasn’t going to trust the feds to take care of my girl and her family. This was the kind of shit I needed my family for. “Bolo,” I called out.

He straightened and looked over at me. “What?”

“Church.”

“Now?”

“Yeah,” I said, echoing Ruck’s words. “Now.”

“Well, fucking Christ,” he said, holding his hands up in a what the hell movement. “OD!” he called out as Overdrive walked past with some lumber.

“What?”

“Church.”

“Now?”

I chuckled as Bolo spread the word. As a group, the officers started walking toward me. Bolo turned, walking backward and pointed at Code. “Don’t touch the fucking

saw,” he ordered.

Code scoffed. “I know how to use the damn saw, Bolo.”

“I don’t want to deal with you cutting your fucking arm off, Kid. Don’t. Touch. It.”

Code shook his head, but he took the cigarette that Merc handed over and they went and sat in the folding chairs in the shade. Hype was already walking out to meet them. They’d wait until we were back to get started again.

“What’s up?” Overdrive asked me.

“Nothing good,” I warned.

“Shit. Now you’ve got me curious.”

We all piled into the room we used for church and took our seats. Ruck was already there waiting, his arms crossed over his chest. He arched a brow my way once everyone settled. “Go ahead.”

I huffed out a breath, rubbing my hand over my hair. “I found out last night that Camila’s in witness protection.”

There was silence as they all stared at me in surprise.

“No shit?” Overdrive finally asked.

“She saw Alec Kruzman have her father killed.”

“Fucking hell,” Relay said. Most would think that as our chaplain he wouldn’t cuss. Which would make the rest of us laugh. He’d only taken on the role of chaplain in the

military because it'd been needed. He was a ruthless killer in the right circumstances, just like the rest of us.

“Alec fucking Kruzman?” Strike asked. He let out a low whistle. He'd worked in intelligence while in the military. He knew a lot of shit. Secrets that many high-powered people wouldn't want getting out. “How the hell did her dad get tangled up with that piece of shit?”

Drifter also swore when he heard the name. He was responding to what the rest of us also knew. If Strike knew who Kruzman was, then the fucker was big time. This wasn't going to be an easy task. Drifter had taken over as our Road Captain after his last deployment a few months ago, since I'd been promoted to Sergeant at Arms. That was his last and now he was out of the service like the rest of us

“Apparently he did Kruzman's books. Camila doesn't know why he was killed. The FBI assumes he made some mistake, but I'm not so sure. Camila agreed to testify against him,” I continued on. “When he found her, they put her in witness protection.”

“Which I'm guessing didn't do shit,” Strike commented.

I shook my head. “He's found them twice more after that first time, even with witness protection.”

“Which means he's paying people on the inside to find them,” Ruck said.

“Yeah, that's what I'm thinking too,” I replied with a nod. “There's just something bothering me.”

“What's that?” Ruck asked.

“From what she told me, it sounds like he’s had the opportunity to kill her. That first time, he got close to her. But he didn’t take her out. Why wouldn’t he if he didn’t want her testifying?”

“Good question,” Relay said with a frown. “If he’s found her three times it would have been easy enough for him to have a sniper just wait for her to come out of her house during one of those slip ups. Or a driver run her off the road, anything really.”

“Maybe he wants her alive,” Flir offered.

“Why though?” I asked.

No one said anything as we all thought about it.

“There’s something else he wants,” Strike, our club secretary, said with a shrug. “Nothing else makes sense.”

“Hmmm,” I replied. I’d have to talk to Camila about the night her father died again. We were missing something.

“If he’s got people on the inside, it means it’s only a matter of time before he finds her again,” Overdrive said, getting us back on track, a grim look on his face.

Flir shook his head. “What kind of asshole goes after women?”

“Oh, he doesn’t give a shit if it’s women...kids... Kruzman would put a bullet in his own mother to gain the upper hand,” Strike sneered. “He’s got heavy connections with the cartels.”

“How heavy?” Bolo asked.

“Been working with them for over a decade. He helps them here in the U.S. and they give him money, manpower, and anything else he needs.”

Ruck looked over at me. “So, what's the plan?”

I almost laughed. Because this was the reason Ruck was our president. If he heard that there was danger he wanted to know how he could help face it, head on. He didn't run, or hide, from a fight.

“Hang on,” Bolo said. He was our enforcer, not to mention a former Army Ranger. The guy was made for battle. He lived for this shit, so I was surprised to hear him put a halt to things. “Before we do this,” he said, meeting my gaze, “I want to hear him say it.”

I groaned and tilted my head back to stare at the ceiling. The other men sitting at the table chuckled.

“He's got a point,” Relay added. “Not one of us has a problem with this, but if we're going to kill her enemies, you really should have to say it.”

They were all grinning at me. Feral fucking smiles as they waited for me to seal my goddamn fate. “Camila is my old lady.”

The epic amount of abuse and shit talking that proceeded to batter me was indescribable, but I took it all with a grin and mostly good humor.

“Alright, enough,” Ruck finally called out. He scanned the faces at the table. “So. Thoughts?”

“We could go on the offensive,” Bolo offered, face sober once more now that we were focusing on serious shit once again.

“Kill him, his men, the cartel’s men, and anyone connected to their business,” Relay added. “Go so burnt fucking Earth that no one dares to even utter the name Camila again.”

We all stared at him. There was a slightly deranged look in his eyes.

“You scare me sometimes, Bro,” Overdrive told him, scooting his chair a bit away.

Relay just wrapped an arm around Overdrive’s shoulders and dragged him back in closer. The chair skidded across the floor. “I know.”

Ruck shook his head. “That’s an...option. But that gives Kruzman the home court advantage. We could wait, let him bring the fight to us. Set it up so that we have the upper hand.”

“Means we wouldn’t know when he was coming,” Flir pointed out.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Ruck said. “I could get a hold of Cypher. See if he could use his contacts to do some digging for us.”

Cypher was the president of the Berserker’s Rage MC in Wyoming. He also owned a security firm. He’d poached the brightest minds and deadliest killers from the military and feds and brought them into his club and onto his teams. It was definitely a plus to have the Berserkers in our corner. Just like it was a plus to have the Viking’s Rampage guys.

“We could call Lockout, too,” I said. He was the president of the Viking’s Rampage MC in Tucson. “Maybe they’d be willing to send some guys over once shit hits the fan. Help protect the women.”

“I’ll make the calls,” Ruck told us. “Everyone on board with this?”

The choruses of 'yeah' were instant and loud. No one was going to back down from this and leave me to figure out how to take care of my girl on my own. "Thanks," I told them.

Ruck didn't bother to respond to that because a thank you wasn't really needed. We were family. This was what you did for family. "Strike. What do we have to look forward to?"

"He'll send sicarios first."

"What the fuck is a sicario?" Drifter asked. He'd been quiet up until now.

"Hit men for the cartel," I answered before Strike could.

"And if we kill them?" Ruck asked.

"He'll send everything he has," Strike said with a shrug.

"We could use that to our advantage," I pointed out. "Take out the sicarios, then hole up in a place of our choosing and wait for the rest."

"Looks like we're heading back to the White Mountains," Overdrive said with a grin.

"I don't think we can use the cabin again," I said. "Isla wouldn't mind, but we probably burned the spot. Anyone who knew about the fight that happened there would have spread that information far and wide." Isla was one of the Tucson guys' old lady. She was an assassin who we helped out at the beginning of the summer. Had a hell of a fire fight at her cabin in the White Mountains.

"We'll come up with something," Ruck announced, "but we have some time. So, let's think this over. Make a concrete plan. First, I need to call Cypher and Lockout. Then

we'll finish up the mission planning.”

We all went back to working outside after that. It felt good to throw myself into manual labor to alleviate some of the frustration that was building inside me. I wanted to go fucking kill Kruzman. Right now. End the threat to Camila, but that would be suicide. The fucker was too well guarded for that kind of shit. So I had to wait. Plan. And eventually I'd put a bullet through his head. Before he died he'd come to realize he'd done this to himself by coming after my old lady.

CHAPTER 19

Camila

Opening the door, I gave Kilo an uncertain smile. I hadn't spoken to him at all yesterday after I'd snuck out of his bed. "Hi."

"Hey, Mercy," he said.

His sexy smile made my heart do a flip in my chest. I'd thought long and hard yesterday about this situation. I didn't want to end things. But I was also terrified. More for him than myself. I didn't want someone I cared about to get hurt because of me.

"Can we talk?" he asked, arching an eyebrow.

"Sure." I shut the door behind me and followed him over to his house. It was the only way to get privacy. Otherwise Carmen, and probably Mama, would be hiding somewhere, listening in. I sat on his couch, my eyes following him back and forth as he paced his living room.

"I'm not letting you disappear on me," he finally said after a few moments of silence.

Frowning, I shook my head. "What do you mean? If Kruzman finds us, we'll have to go."

"Not happening, Baby," he said, giving me an intense look. "I want you to stay. To

be my old lady.”

Now my heart was doing the merengue against my ribcage. I was thrilled to hear those words. I’d been slowly falling for this man over the last month and he was giving me everything I wanted, and more. “Kilo,” I said, a little breathless. “I want that, too.”

“But you’re scared,” he said, finishing the words I didn’t say out loud.

I nodded. “I can’t watch anyone be hurt. It would be my fault.”

“No, it’s the fault of the sadistic asshole who’s hunting you,” he pointed out. “None of this is your fault, Camila.”

“Whoever’s fault it is, or isn’t,” I told him, “the truth is, this isn’t just going to go away. It could be years before the FBI finishes the case against Kruzman.”

“Even then, you wouldn’t be safe.”

My eyes widened and he sighed.

“Sorry, but it’s true. Prison doesn’t hold onto men like that for long. And even if he were to stay inside, there’s people out here who will still do his fucking bidding.”

I hadn’t thought of it like that. All my hopes were pinned on Kruzman being locked away. Now I didn’t know what to hope for.

He must have seen my face fall because he came over and sat next to me. I turned toward him and he cupped both my cheeks in his hands and stared into my eyes. “I want to protect you. Let me take care of this for you. Agree to be mine.”

I let out a soft laugh. “I’ve been yours,” I admitted. “Pretty much since that football almost hit me. I haven’t been able to think of much else.”

He grinned at me, then leaned forward and kissed me. He pulled me onto his lap and wrapped his arms around me. “Don’t worry, I protect what’s mine. We’ll take care of Kruzman.”

“How?” I asked. “He almost seems untouchable. The FBI can’t seem to pin him down. The Marshals can’t hold him at bay.”

“They have rules to follow,” he said with a wry smile. “We don’t.”

“We?”

“The club will help protect you and your family.”

“Why would they do this for us?”

“Because you’re mine. And we protect our own.”

I tried to imagine what that was like. To have such safety and security surrounding you. I was afraid to be hopeful of what that meant for me, Mama, and Carmen.

“What if you get hurt? If one of them gets hurt?” I shook my head, tears threatening to fall. “I don’t want to put any of you in danger.”

“Leave all that up to us. We’re coming up with a plan to deal with this fucker. Pretty soon he won’t be a threat to you anymore.”

I stared into his eyes and shook my head in wonder. “Thank you. I- I’ve never had anyone do something like this for me before.”

“Your father put you in an impossible position. He put your whole family in danger. You shouldn’t have to shoulder this burden. And now you won’t.”

“You shouldn’t have to shoulder it either,” I pointed out. “I still don’t understand why you’re willing to.”

He chuckled. “It’s clear you don’t get it.” He moved his face closer until our noses were almost touching. “I’m willing to take this on, because it means I get to keep you.”

I relaxed and smiled at him. “I don’t know how to repay you.”

“I do,” he said. He picked me up as he stood then tossed me over his shoulder.

Laughing, I dangled there as he took me into his bedroom. “Put me down.”

“Sure.” He tossed me onto the bed.

I squealed as I bounced on his mattress, then sucked in a breath as the realization hit. I felt light as a feather. And it was all because of him. I trusted him to keep his word and to help me. Somehow, he’d taken all the mental and physical burden from me and I just wanted to bask in the relief that was filling me. And the love.

He followed me down onto the bed, and I welcomed him with open arms. “Mercy,” he growled, “don’t run from me. Whatever happens, stay.” I nodded. “You’re mine. Say it.”

“I’m yours, Kilo.”

“And I’m yours,” he told me, his brown eyes staring into mine.

If staying here meant dying, I'd rather have a short life and live it with him than run and have to leave him behind. I'd send Mama and Carmen away if need be, but I wasn't going anywhere without Kilo. I never thought I'd find love like this. Sure, there were many who would say that this was sudden and too soon, but my heart recognized this for exactly what it was. Kilo was my person. The one man who made life worth living.

He kissed me and I sighed into his mouth. The way my body and soul responded to him was too perfect to ignore. His hands roamed over my body, setting every nerve ending on fire. Soon his mouth was on my skin, his teeth grazing me as his tongue licked, tasted, and devoured.

"Let me hear you, Baby," he growled. "I want to hear how good I make you feel." His hands were stripping my clothes from me as he spoke and soon I was naked and spread out for him.

His head dipped between my thighs and when his tongue flicked over my clit, I cried out. The noises fell from my lips unbidden as he brought me right up to the edge and held me there.

"Oh my God," I moaned, my hands fisting the sheets. "I need to come. Please, Kilo."

"Hearing you say my name like that makes me so fucking hard," he groaned. His fingers sank into me and he sucked on my clit.

I exploded, screaming, as the pleasure tore through me.

He rose over me, his cock in his hand. He grabbed a condom and put it on before settling between my thighs. "I want to make you come over and over," he told me. We both groaned as he sank into my body. "Watching your face when you orgasm is the sexiest fucking thing."

“Kilo,” I breathed. “More,” I demanded. The last thing I wanted to do was talk. I wanted to fly. He was the only who’d ever made me feel as though I could.

He chuckled and began to move. Each thrust filled me, the angle causing his pelvis to rub my clit. I gasped and dug my nails into his back, lifting my hips to meet him thrust for thrust.

“Come for me, Mercy. I want to feel you clench around me.”

“Yes,” I groaned, arching as his fingers pinched and rolled my nipple.

“I want your screams of pleasure to be the last thing I hear before I fall asleep. I want your pussy wrapped around my cock when I wake up in the morning. Every goddamn morning,” he growled.

“I want that too,” I cried. “Yes!” I screamed as he fucked me hard and fast.

“That’s it, Mercy. Come. I want to feel it.”

I did as he commanded and shattered beneath him. His own growls of pleasure were muffled as waves of bliss crashed over me. And then I was floating. Tucked up against his body, safe, and content, I just let go. It was a strange thing to have this peaceful calm feeling once again after four years of anxiety and fear. Even in the best of times over the last four years, I’d been watchful and suspicious.

Kilo had broken down every one of my walls and had taught me that I could trust him. I’d started to think I wouldn’t ever trust anyone ever again. Not enough to let them get close to me anyway. I was so grateful that I hadn’t lost that ability completely. That I’d met him.

“What do you want to do today?” he asked as he trailed his fingers up and down my

spine.

“Can we go shooting again?”

He chuckled. “A girl after my own heart. Yeah, we can.”

I smiled against his chest and stifled a yawn. “Maybe after we take a nap?”

“That depends.”

“On what?” I asked, looking up at his face.

“You going to be here when I wake up?” he teased.

I smiled at him. “Yeah. I’m not going anywhere.”

“Good.” He pressed a kiss to my forehead and I listened to the rhythm of his heartbeat. I wondered how I’d gotten so lucky. Despite all the shitty things in my life so far, I must have gained some kind of good karma for fate to throw us together. Now all I could do was hope that we’d make it out the other side unscathed. Kruzman wasn’t going to make this easy. He wouldn’t just let me go. Later, I’d ask Kilo what the plan was. But for now, I just wanted to bask in the euphoric afterglow of being with the man I loved.

CHAPTER 20

Kilo

The next two weeks were a blur of activity. Between work, hanging out with Camila, working on the new apartments, and planning our move against Kruzman, things were hectic as hell. I wouldn't have it any other way. I was fucking alive again. Not that I hadn't needed the couple years of downtime we'd had, but I was starting to get bored. I had a feeling the others were too.

"Kilo."

I looked up and focused on Ruck. "Yeah?"

The other guys gathered around. We'd already told Merc, Code, and Hype about what was going on. The fact our members were fully on board as well just reaffirmed what I already knew. These men were family. I'd kill, and die, to protect them and they were willing to do the same for me.

"As you already know, Lockout and Cypher are on board," Ruck said as soon as everyone gathered around. "Lock said to give him the word and they'd head this way. Cypher already has Glitch looking into Kruzman. He's also got a contact inside the FBI who's going to see if they can find the mole."

"How do we know it's on the FBI's side?" Bolo asked.

"Could be the Marshals," Overdrive added.

“The first time Kruzman found her was before the Marshals got involved,” I told them. “Could be a fluke, but I don’t think it is. Someone inside the FBI is on his payroll.” Which pissed me the fuck off. The fact that some asshole was willing to get Camila killed for money made me want to hold his gaze as I strangled him. Watch as the life left his eyes. There wasn’t anything I wouldn’t do to keep Camila safe. To keep her alive.

Kruzman’s motivation was money and revenge. No fucking way he was winning this war. He didn’t have any idea what was about to come for him, but he’d find out soon enough.

“We need somewhere safe to stash the women when this goes down,” Ruck told me.

“I have a place,” I replied. “Someone I trust to watch over them until the Tucson guys get here.”

“Good. That’s one less thing for us to worry about. Glitch should be able to give us a head’s up if Kruzman mobilizes before we’re ready.”

“What about the rest of the plan?” Relay asked. “Where’s this going down?”

“No place better than the desert,” Ruck said with a grin.

“Lot of dangerous areas between here and Yuma,” Overdrive commented.

“Plenty of places for people to accidentally go missing,” Merc added.

“OD, why don’t you and Bolo find us a good spot,” Ruck ordered. “Something remote.”

“Will do, Prez,” Overdrive said. “We’ll head out tomorrow morning. Find the perfect

place.”

“How are we going to lure them out there?” Flir asked.

“We could put OD in a dress and a wig,” Code suggested.

Everyone chuckled at that. Overdrive arched a brow. “If anyone’s wearing a dress, it’s you, Kid.”

“All they have to think is that we have Camila with us,” Ruck said. “Cypher and Glitch can help with that.”

“We could utilize the Marshals watching over the girls, too.” I hated fucking saying it, but that was just more firepower on our side.

Strike cocked his head. “Can they be trusted?”

“Yeah, as much as I dislike the fucker, the Marshal I met that night seemed to actually care about them. If they weren’t trustworthy, there wouldn’t be anywhere that the women could go without Kruzman finding them immediately. I suspect that the Marshals are slow on their reports, just to keep the FBI behind the curve.”

Everyone nodded at that. “How do we get them involved without it looking too damn suspicious when Kruzman goes missing?” Drifter asked.

“Damn, that’s a good point,” I replied. “Might just have to leave them out of this after all.”

“We’ll save the Marshals as a last resort,” Ruck decided. “Hopefully we won’t need them.”

“If everything goes smooth we won’t,” Flir said. Everyone glared at him. “What?”

“You know the fucking rule, asshole,” Bolo muttered. “Don’t say shit like that.”

Flir rolled his eyes. “Not talking about the mission going well, or badly, doesn’t actually affect the outcome. That’s all superstition. You know that right?”

“I know if anything happens now, it’s your damn fault,” Bolo shot back.

Flir shook his head. “Fucking ridiculous to believe that shit.”

“Just stop talking about it.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle, but once their arguing died down, I looked around at my brothers. “Can’t tell you how much I appreciate this.”

“Maybe he should say it again,” Overdrive said with an evil grin.

“Fuck off,” I replied with a laugh.

“Kilo. Get the safehouse for the girls set up. OD, Bolo find us the perfect place to kill some hit men. Strike, any chance you have any old contacts from your intel days that could help?”

“Yeah, I’ll reach out.”

“Can’t have too much information on this piece of shit,” Ruck added.

“I’ll get us some more weapons,” Relay offered.

“Shouldn’t that be my and Kilo’s job?” Overdrive asked. “We own the weapons

store, remember?”

“Your shit have the serial numbers scraped off?” Relay countered.

“No, but that’s not hard to do,” Overdrive shot back.

“You need to sell that shit to make rent,” Relay said with a shake of his head. “This shit is untraceable and just sitting around, waiting to be used.”

“Appreciate it, Relay,” Ruck told him.

“When we doing this?” I asked.

“Shouldn’t take more than a day or two to get everything set,” Ruck replied. “Don’t want to wait too long or we risk Kruzman finding Camila before we’re ready. I don’t want to be on the defensive. I want him to walk right into the trap we’re setting, thinking he has the upper hand, but in reality he’s three steps behind.”

“You and me both, Brother,” I muttered.

“One week. Saturday night, we take the fight to this bastard.”

“Anything anyone can think of that we’re not seeing?” Strike asked.

Everyone thought about that for a minute, then shook their heads.

“Alright,” Overdrive said, rubbing his hands together with a smile of glee on his face. “I know I’m ready to kill some fuckers.”

“We’re not actually expecting Kruzman to show, are we?” Flir asked. “He wouldn’t be that stupid. Right?”

“Depends on what he wants from Camila,” I replied.

“Which means he might,” Ruck answered, “if we bait the trap well enough.”

“How’re we going to do that exactly?” Merc asked.

“If Cypher can figure out who the mole is, it’ll make it a whole lot easier. Kruzman isn’t going to smell a trap if the tip comes from his usual informant.”

“How do we leak information to the informant without him getting suspicious?” Hype asked, scratching his chin.

“Don’t know yet,” Ruck replied. “That’s why we’re doing this on Saturday and not tomorrow.”

A few of the guys let out laughs.

“We’ll figure it out once we find the mole. If we don’t, we’re going to need a new damn plan anyway. I’d rather have Kruzman show and not just his fucking lackeys. Cut the head off the damn snake and take out the threat to Camila and her family in one move. Otherwise we’re going to have to kill whoever he sends and take the fight to him. Once he knows we’re involved it’s going to ramp up this mission to shit level proportions if we don’t handle it all quickly.” Ruck looked around at us and nodded when we all agreed with him.

“Let’s get ourselves straight first, give Cypher, Glitch, and Drifter a couple days to see what they can find, and we’ll finish planning.”

“Meanwhile,” Bolo said, “we still have a building to work on.” Code groaned when Bolo grabbed him by the shoulder. “You’re with me, Kid.”

I watched everyone but Ruck and Overdrive disperse to continue working on the assignments they'd been given earlier. "This isn't going to go sideways, right?" I asked.

Both men gave me grim looks.

"Won't happen," Overdrive said. He always had a positive outlook.

I glanced over at Ruck.

Our president just shrugged. "If it does, we'll handle it. What's the other option? Not get involved? Let three women depend on some useless feds to keep them safe?" He shook his head. "Not when one of those women belongs to you, Brother."

"I could take care of it myself," I pointed out.

"Fuck that. We do this as a family. Just like we do everything else."

I nodded. "Figured I'd offer."

Ruck scoffed. "Like we'd let you walk into a fight alone. Get your head out of your ass." With that, he walked off, shrugging off his cut and laying it on a workbench inside the garage before pitching in with the others.

"This isn't a hardship for us, Kilo," Overdrive said after a few moments of silence. "Most of us are looking forward to it."

"Ruck's been happy with the peace," I pointed out.

Overdrive snorted. "He was getting just as fucking bored as the rest of us. If this hadn't come up, trust me, someone would have started some shit just for something to

do. This is better.”

“Thanks, OD.”

“Anytime. How’s Camila handling everything?”

“She almost bolted on me.” She hadn’t admitted to it, but I knew she’d come close.

He nodded. “Not surprised. Running has kept her safe.”

“It’s the end of the line,” I told him. “No more running. She’s on board. She wanted me to tell you all how grateful she is.”

“Don’t need to hear it from you, especially don’t need to hear it from her. She’ll learn soon enough that this is what family does.”

“Yeah,” I replied. “Gonna need you to find yourself an old lady so mine doesn’t get bored.”

Overdrive barked out a laugh. “Don’t you fucking curse me, you bastard.” He walked off with that, leaving me to get back to work.

There was a part of me that was looking forward to this. I just wished my girl wasn’t caught up in the middle of it. I hadn’t missed the spark of excitement in my brothers’ eyes. In a way, we all needed this. Overdrive was right. It was only a matter of time before we went looking for trouble on our own. Just so happened the trouble found us first.

CHAPTER 21

Camila

I sighed as I sat on Carmen's bed, watching her pack a bag. Kilo had warned me that they were going to make their move next weekend and that we needed to be ready. Mama and I had both quit our jobs. We hadn't been at either place of employment long enough to get time off, and we were going to need to lay low until the club gave us the all clear signal.

That meant we were once again pulling Carmen out of her classes and away from the new friends she made. "Hopefully it will only be for a few days, Bug," I told her. "Then you won't miss a thing."

She nodded, giving me a weak smile. "I know."

Her understanding, and barely concealed disappointment, made me sigh. No kid should have to live like this. She knew what all this meant in the past and she was preparing herself to have to run again. I couldn't blame her because if it came down to it, I was going to send her and Mama away.

I didn't know where yet, but I had a small savings stashed away and if I had to, I'd buy them a one-way ticket to some foreign country. Somewhere that they could sit on a beach and live out their lives away from the threat that always seemed to loom. Without me with them Kruzman wasn't likely to follow. I was the only one the FBI could use to testify against him.

I couldn't think of any other reason why he'd be after us, even though Kilo had asked if there was anything. It had to be because I was a threat to his continued freedom. What else was there? And while I knew deep down that I'd done what I needed to in order to make sure that both me and my family survived, I couldn't help but continue to wonder if I should have never made the choice to work with the FBI. It was an impossible situation. And one that wasn't of my making. That didn't mean the guilt wasn't there. I loved my mama and sister so much. I couldn't live with myself knowing something happened to them. And now there was Kilo.

The fact that he and his brothers were willing to help protect us made my heart want to burst inside my chest with happiness. But I was scared. For him. For his brothers. They were his family. I didn't want anyone to get hurt. Not for me.

My sigh was heavy and when Carmen sat on the bed next to me and wrapped her arms around me in a sideways hug, I leaned my head on her shoulder.

"None of this is your fault. You always take responsibility for things that aren't yours to claim."

I lifted my head and stared at her. Her pretty brown eyes were earnest and bright. "You have an old soul. You know that, right?" Some of the things she said surprised me sometimes. Heck, most of the time. She was an incredible girl, and she was going to grow up into a caring, kind, insightful woman. I'd give my life to make sure she had the opportunity to become what she was meant to. "I love you so much, Carmen."

"I love you, too. I just think you should consider something."

"What's that?"

"The way you always fight to protect me and Mama? To make sure our lives are as

easy as they can be?" I nodded. "That's what Kilo's trying to do for you."

I sighed and nodded again. "I know. It's hard to give this over to him. To let him take on a burden that's not his to carry."

"You've been doing it for us for years. For Dad." She paused a moment, then asked in a soft voice, "Are you angry with him?"

"With Dad?"

She looked down at her lap and nodded.

"No," I sighed. "I just want to know the truth. The FBI has their theories of why he got involved with Kruzman and what happened, but I can't make the man we knew into a bad guy in my mind. You know?"

"I know," she replied in a solemn tone. "I just keep thinking about that time he took us to the fair."

"You wanted to ride the carousel horses so badly."

"But I was scared I'd fall."

"He climbed up on that horse, pulled you in his lap, completely ignoring the guy running the ride while he shouted about weight limits and that parents weren't allowed on the ride."

Carmen giggled. "We rode it four times together." There were tears shining in her eyes as she looked up at me again. "Is it possible for a man to be bad but still love his family deeply?"

“Probably,” I admitted. “I still can’t see it though. I don’t know if we’ll ever know what happened. Sometimes good men make bad decisions.” I gave her a determined look. “I’ve just decided that there’s some reason we don’t know about and I’m going to hold close the memories from when we were younger. And remember that he loved us.”

“He was a flawed man, just like any other, but he loved the two of you more than you’ll ever know,” Mama said from the doorway.

Shame crept in as I stared at her. She had tears tracking down her face. “I’m sorry, Mama...”

“Don’t be. You’re allowed to talk about him.”

We’d had this conversation before. I knew that she had no idea why Dad was killed either. Other than Kruzman was just an evil person. Dad must have slighted him in some way that he took offense to. It was hard to make that connection in my mind.

That there were people out there who just killed others because they could. Self-defense made sense to me, but still it was difficult to wrap my head around taking a life. I would. For Carmen. For Mama. For Kilo. Even for myself, but that didn’t mean I wouldn’t struggle with it afterward. There was no struggle for Kruzman. I could still picture his smug, satisfied smile after his men shot my father.

“I’m going to make the guys lunch. They’re over working on the new clubhouse. It’s sort of a way of saying thank you.” I shrugged. “It’s all I can offer.”

“They’ll love that,” Mama told me, coming and sitting on the other side of Carmen. “We could come help you.”

“I appreciate that, but they may not appreciate me showing up unannounced, let alone

bringing two other people. I'll leave enough food for the two of you for lunch and dinner. And you can meet them all later."

"Thanks, Mija."

It was Sunday morning, and Kilo had mentioned that the whole club would be at their property all day. So I spent the morning cooking. I made enough to feed an army—or enough to be a snack for some bikers, if Overdrive's appetite was any indicator. Mama and Carmen helped me pack everything into my little car and I made the drive to the club's compound. I was nervous, thinking I should have given Kilo a head's up, but I wanted it to be a surprise.

When I pulled in, I saw a few of the guys watching my car with suspicion, but Kilo said something to them and came over.

"Hey, Mercy," he said with a grin. He didn't look put out that I'd dropped in.

"Hi," I told him. "I-I brought you guys lunch."

Kilo's brows shot up. "Really?"

"Yes, I...wanted to say thank you. To all of you. For what you're doing for us."

His smile spread slowly over his face. "I knew you were sweet, Baby, but Jesus..." He paused as he looked in the back seat, then his eyes widened. "Wait... All that is for us?"

I'd gone a bit overboard. There was so much food the pans and dishes were covering the seats and floorboards. I nodded, my cheeks heating.

"I figured you made some sandwiches." He paused, then a mischievous glint lit up his

eyes. “What’ve you got?”

“Tamales, Carne Asada, Chilles Rellenos, Sopaipillas-”

“Holy shit. OD is going to lose his mind,” Kilo said with a chuckle. “We’ll have to roll him onto his bike.”

Laughing, I shook my head. “I brought some paper plates and things like that,” I told him.

“We have everything we need inside. Let me get a couple guys to go in and set up the tables and we’ll bring the food in.”

It didn’t take long for the word to spread, and the guys came over to my car to help carry everything.

“This smells so damn good,” Mercenary told me with a grin. “I fucking love tacos.”

“The tortillas are homemade,” I offered. That was what I’d made the carne asada for, then I’d cut up all the fixings that they may want to have on them.

“Is that guacamole?” Code asked, edging Mercenary out of the way.

“Move fucker,” Mercenary grunted, elbowing him.

I couldn’t help but laugh. I was starting to get used to the way these men spoke to one another. And not one of them had been rude to me. “Could you take this inside?” I asked Mercenary, handing him the tray with the meat on it. I was mostly trying to avoid the scuffle that would surely break out if they kept shoving at each other that way.

“Sure.”

I handed the dish of guacamole to Code. From that point on it was a line of guys waiting to take the rest in. It didn't take long before we were all sitting down inside.

Overdrive let out a grunt of delight as he polished off his third taco in as many minutes. “This is amazing, Camila,” he groaned, then he shot Kilo a devious look. “Maybe you’re not so set on this guy?” he asked, tone hopeful. “I’d make a good old man.”

“Fuck off,” Kilo told him. “She’s mine.”

I laughed and patted Overdrive’s arm where it rested on the table. Kilo shot me an intense look. I used my other hand to pat his shoulder. “Sorry, Overdrive. I’m sort of set on this biker.”

Overdrive let out a mournful sigh. “Sure, they always go for the pretty ones.”

As if Overdrive wasn’t pretty. There wasn’t a man sitting here that wasn’t gorgeous. They were all tall, muscular, tattooed, and dangerous. Every woman’s secret fantasy.

“I just wanted to say...” I froze when every eye landed on me. That was a whole lot of sex appeal to be aimed at one woman. I swallowed and smiled nervously. “My family,” I added, “just wanted to say thank you. To all of you. The fact that you would go to such lengths to keep us safe when you don’t have to-” I shook my head, emotion overcoming me.

“You’re one of ours now,” Ruck said, speaking up while everyone else seemed to be struggling with what to say to an upset woman. “We always take care of our own,” he added. “Besides, if you keep cooking like this for us, you’re going to have every man here in love with you in no time.”

My cheeks heated and I laughed along with everyone else. Ruck seemed to be very skilled at setting everyone at ease. He'd broken up the tension at the table with his last statement and we all went back to eating.

Kilo had filled me in on their plan. The parts they had finished anyway. Apparently Overdrive and Bolo had gone early this morning and found somewhere out in the desert the men were going to lure Kruzman and his men to. I still had my doubts that Kruzman would show up, but it was possible. He'd been chasing me for four years. He had to be as eager to get this finished as I was.

I looked around the table as the men gorged themselves and prayed that no one would be hurt. I couldn't take it. There were times I wished that I could handle this myself, but I wasn't stupid. Even though Kilo and I had been shooting a couple times a week over the last month and a half that I'd known him, I wasn't even close to proficient enough to take on someone like Kruzman. Not to mention the killers he employed.

I wanted to keep professing my deep gratitude to these men, but I knew that it would just make them uncomfortable. They seemed to be taking my offering of food as the profound thanks it was meant to be. That would have to be enough, because I was pretty sure I couldn't pry any emotion out of them even if I had a crowbar.

Kilo wrapped one arm around my shoulders and I basked in the feeling that, thanks to him, I'd managed to add ten big brothers to my family. And one boyfriend. My heart was so full. If there wasn't the threat of this fight coming up, I'd think that I was the luckiest girl in the world. Who knew that it'd be a biker who ended up giving me everything I could ever ask for? I'd always suspected that there were people who were just meant for one another, and now I knew it with certainty.

CHAPTER 22

Kilo

G oddamn it. I needed this fight that was coming up. It was like a renewal to my soul to go into fucking battle, but I hated it at the same time. And I knew it was only because Camila was involved. If she wasn't in the thick of this threat, I'd be chomping at the bit to get started. Instead, I just wanted to keep laying here with her curled up at my side.

I squeezed her closer, grinning when she let out a sleepy protest. It was Wednesday afternoon and we'd worn each other out by staying in bed all day. She needed the rest and as much as I wanted to wake her up again for round...four? Five. Round five, I knew I needed to let her sleep. She wasn't sleeping very well at night. I knew she was nervous about Saturday. We were getting so fucking close to all this being over. All we were waiting on was the name of the mole.

My phone rang on the nightstand next to my bed. Glancing over at Camila, I picked it up. It was an incoming video call. I rolled out of bed, being careful not to wake her up, and walked out into my living room. "Hey."

There were multiple faces filling up my screen.

"Figured this would be easier than making everyone head to the clubhouse," Ruck told me. "Cypher's on the line. What did you find?"

"My contact has it narrowed down to five people," Cypher, the Berserker's Rage

president told us.

“Wait,” a voice said from behind him. “Does this contact happen to have brown hair and green eyes?”

Cypher looked away from the phone. “Warrant,” he said in a warning tone.

“Just wondering,” Warrant replied.

I couldn’t see his face, but the shit-eating grin rang clear through every word.

“I don’t remember green eyes, but I do remember something about a double D bullet proof vest,” another voice chimed in.

Cypher rubbed one temple, looking like he was about to snap and murder his officers.

I managed to hold back my chuckle, but it wasn’t easy. Even though Cypher was up in Wyoming that fucker had access to private jets and all sorts of shit. He could easily come down here to start some shit if we pissed him off. Not that we wouldn’t be up to the challenge. Still, as our allies, especially right now, we wanted to keep them happy.

“Fuck off, Pyre,” Cypher muttered. “I asked you guys to sit in on this call so I wouldn’t have to update you later on what’s going on. Don’t think for a minute I won’t kick your asses out of this room and refuse to fill you in.”

“So fucking cranky, not our fault you mentioned double D’s,” Warrant said. The phone shook as he, presumably, jerked Cypher’s hand so the screen landed on his face. He grinned. “You guys set up down there? If you need more hands on deck, I’m more than willing to come down and fuck some shit up.”

“You have an assignment tomorrow,” Cypher said, jerking the phone away from Warrant.

“I can do both.”

Ruck cleared his throat. “Five possibilities?” he said, getting things back on track.

“Oh. Yeah,” Cypher said, focusing back on us. His eyes narrowed on the phone. “Are you naked?”

I’d walked into the kitchen, set the phone propped up against the toaster and grabbed a carton of orange juice from the fridge. I was standing there, facing the phone, chugging from the container. Wiping my mouth on my forearm, I looked down at my dick. I’d forgotten about that. I shrugged. “Yeah. What’s it to you?”

“Fucking Christ,” Ruck muttered. “Either pick the phone back up or put some damn clothes on, Kilo.”

Rolling my eyes, I picked the phone up so that all they could see was my face and upper part of my chest and kept drinking straight from the carton.

“Could have done without seeing that today,” Bolo muttered.

“Fucker shits with the bathroom door open, too,” Overdrive added.

“I’m not shutting the door in my own damn house,” I pointed out. “Don’t like it, don’t come over here.”

Now it was Ruck’s turn to look harassed and pissed off. “Can we fucking focus?”

“Sorry,” Overdrive said. His grin didn’t look remorseful in the slightest though.

“Is there any way to narrow it down from five to one in a couple days?” Ruck asked Cypher.

“She’s doing her best, but-”

“Ha! I knew it was her!” Warrant crowed, cutting off his president.

Cypher looked over his shoulder, scowling at his Sgt at Arms. After a few moments, he took a deep breath and continued. “She’s doing her best. Saturday may not be feasible though.”

“Shit. Alright,” Ruck told him. “No problem. We’ve got time.”

“I’ll see if I can hurry her along, but she’s already doing what she can.”

“We appreciate this, Cypher,” Ruck told him.

“Yeah,” I added. “Thanks.”

“Thank me by not showing me your cock next time,” he replied. “I’ll call you once I have something new.”

We all hung up on the video chat and I put the orange juice back inside the fridge. Heading back into the bedroom, I slipped into bed behind Camila and kissed her shoulder. She stretched as I palmed her tits and let out a cute little mumble. I hadn’t been looking for her, but I’d be damned if I was going to let a cunt like Kruzman take her from me.

Burying my face in her neck, I went to start up round five. The knock on the door made me freeze and I sighed when it came again. “Fucking better not be some Mormon kid wanting to talk about God,” I muttered. This time, I pulled on a pair of

gray sweats as I went to answer the door. “Hold on, holy shit,” I bellowed as another knock came. “Insistent mother fuckers,” I said as I opened the door.

I rubbed a hand over my hair as I saw the Marshal standing there. I completely forgot that I’d texted him last night to meet me. “Hey,” I said, reluctant, but grateful he showed.

“What’s up?” he asked.

I stepped aside and let him inside my house. “Do you have the FBI reports on what happened to Camila’s father?”

He crossed his arms over his chest, narrowing his eyes. “Yeah.”

“I want them.”

He barked out a laugh. “Those are official reports in an ongoing case. Why the fuck would I give them to you?”

“To help her,” I shot back. That took the wind out of his sails and he sighed. “I’m not trying to fuck with the case. I’m just trying to figure out what Kruzman is up to.”

Dustin looked angry. “It pisses me off that we’re struggling to keep her safe.”

“Something tells me you’re the only reason she’s still alive,” I admitted. The last thing I wanted to do was give him any kind of credit, but he was helping to keep my girl safe, so I was going to put my feelings aside. “I just have this hunch that he doesn’t just want to kill her.”

“That’s what Michaels, my partner, and I think too. But we haven’t been able to figure out what it is he wants.”

“Then let me try.”

He gave me a grim look, then nodded. “Follow me.”

I walked out of the house behind him. “Where’re we going?” I didn’t want to leave Camila alone for too long.

He opened the door to his car and reached in, grabbing a thick folder.

“You carry this around with you?” I asked, surprised when he just handed it over. The fucking thing weighed a ton.

“Safer than leaving it unattended,” he replied with a grin. Then he gave me a serious look. “I’m going to need that back.”

“Give me a couple days and I’ll get it back to you.”

He nodded. “Sure.” He looked back toward the house. “I just want them to be safe. I’ve been with them long enough that they’re not just an assignment anymore.”

Gritting my teeth, I nodded. “I get it... Thanks.” I nearly choked on the word, which made him laugh.

“See you later,” he said, getting into his car and driving off.

I looked down at the folder in my hand. It was bulging at the seams. First chance I got I would give it to Flir. His anal retentive ass would have a field day with it. But first I would see if anything stood out to me.

When I got back inside, I checked on Camila. She was still sleeping, so I went out and sat at my dining room table and started searching through the records. I didn’t

want her to see that I had it. Not because I was hiding it from her, but there were crime scene photos in this thing and I didn't want her to have to relive the death of her father, yet again.

CHAPTER 23

Kilo

The next morning, I was already on the way to the clubhouse as the sun was rising. I'd stayed up most of the night, sifting through the reports, and I needed to talk to Flir. I knew he'd already be at the compound. He liked to get there first and double check his counts from the previous day before Bolo got there and got started for the morning. Bolo and Flir were employed by the club. They handled pretty much any job that needed doing, so they were at the compound most days.

I pulled in and killed the engine on my bike. Digging the Marshal's folder out of my saddle bag, I strode inside. My eyes zeroed in on Ruck, Bolo, and Flir where they were sitting, having a cup of coffee.

Ruck looked up at me and sighed. "Don't."

My steps hesitated. He was my president, so if he meant it, I'd turn my ass right back around and as much as it killed me, I'd wait until later.

He saw the indecision on my face and groaned. "Dammit, do you know what time it is?"

"Five twenty-two," Flir answered. He took a drink of his coffee, unbothered by the fact that Ruck was now glaring at him.

I was still standing in the middle of the clubhouse, waiting to see what Ruck would

decide.

“Stop standing there like a fucking idiot and get over here,” Ruck muttered.

From the hours of about nine a.m. to about three a.m. Ruck was a caring man who would flay himself alive for those he loved. But from three a.m. to eight fifty-nine? It was up in the air as to whether he'd care if you were breathing or not. Anything in the five o'clock hour was a gamble.

I walked over to the table, sat down, and opened up the folder.

“What's that?” Bolo asked, craning his neck to try to read the papers I was sifting through.

As soon as I found what I was looking for, I set it in front of Flir. “It's the FBI record on Kruzman and Camila's father.”

Ruck let out a whistle. “Do I want to know how you got that?”

“Believe it or not, I just asked,” I said with a shrug.

“The dirtbag Marshal?” Bolo asked.

I nodded. “I might have to give him some fucking points for caring enough about the girls to bend the rules.”

“That's more than bending,” Flir said, picking up the pages. His eyes lit up when he saw the columns and rows of numbers. “It's full on breaking them. Are these Kruzman's books?”

“They are. Could you do me a favor and look through them?”

“You think Camila’s father was cooking the books?” Ruck asked, eyebrows raised.

“I was thinking about it. What does Kruzman care about more than his freedom?”

“Power,” Bolo said.

“Money,” Ruck replied.

I pointed at them. “And money is power,” I said. “It clicked around two in the morning. If he’s not worried about going to prison, maybe he’s worried about money.”

Flir was already muttering to himself as his eyes scanned over the page.

Ruck sighed. “Great, he’s going to be doing that all day.”

“Going through the numbers?” I asked. “He’s pretty fast-”

“No,” Ruck interrupted. “The muttering. I always know when he’s done our books for the month because he mutters to himself for at least four to five hours afterward.”

I chuckled at that.

“It’s a pattern,” Flir said, looking up at me.

“Huh?” I asked, looking over at the other guys. They just shrugged.

“There’s a pattern here.”

“Okay,” I replied, drawing out the word.

But he wasn't listening to me anymore. There was a deep frown etched into his forehead as he pulled his phone out of his pocket and started punching numbers into the calculator function.

"Just let him go," Ruck said. "When he can't do it in his head, then you know it's big."

"Want coffee?" Bolo asked, getting up and pouring himself another cup.

"Yeah, thanks." I took the cup he handed over and sat back in my chair. I'd stayed up most of the night, once Camila had fallen back asleep, to pour over that file. I was relieved that I didn't have to try to go through those fucking numbers. If it was left up to me, my hunch would forever go unsolved. I wasn't a whiz with numbers the way Flir was. I wasn't a moron, but he was on a totally different level, or spectrum, than most people.

We sat and talked, drinking our coffee, while Flir tackled the books. Ruck was looking more alert by the minute and far less grumpy. It took a little over an hour before Flir looked up at me. "Four million, seven hundred and twenty-three dollars. And seven cents."

"What?" I asked him, blinking at the number.

"That's how much Camila's father stole from Kruzman."

"What?" we all asked this time, shocked.

"See?" Flir said, sliding the book over to me and stabbing his finger down at a number. "It's a pattern," he repeated. "Anytime a number ends in three, he skimmed some off the top. Made exactly point zero three percent of that transaction disappear."

I stared down at the numbers. I didn't see shit. "He stole from Kruzman...a fraction of a percent at a time?"

Flir nodded and grinned down at the book. "Fucking smart. He didn't do anything so overt that Kruzman would notice immediately. He stole from him slowly over the years. And here?" He pointed again. "These numbers aren't accounting numbers."

"What are they?" I asked, squinting down at them.

"Each of these numbers is a 'minor mistake'. If you subtract seven from the odd numbers and three from the even? They're a routing and account number."

"Was this guy your long lost cousin?" Ruck asked.

Flir just blinked at him, too absorbed with the numbers to get the joke.

I looked up at Flir, my mouth dropping open. "You're telling me that you know where this money is?"

He nodded. "That routing number belongs to a local bank in Philly."

"You know the routing numbers of banks?" Bolo asked.

Flir rolled his eyes. "I looked it up, asshole."

Bolo muttered something under his breath and went back to drinking his coffee.

"Wait, so... You're telling me that Camila's family has over four million dollars?"

"Well, if we kill Kruzman she will," Ruck said with a grin.

“We could make a trade,” Flir pointed out. “The money for their lives.”

“Fuck no,” I said with a shake of my head. “I wouldn’t trust that asshole to keep his end of the bargain. He’ll want to make an example of her, or some other super villain shit.”

“I don’t trust him either,” Ruck replied. “We stick to the plan.”

“Can I keep this?” Flir asked. “I’d like to make sure I didn’t miss anything. He has codes built into codes.”

“Jealous?” Ruck asked.

“A little.”

“Make a copy of it,” I told him. “I’ll have to give it back to the Marshal.”

He nodded and took the papers with him. He didn’t care about the rest of the file, just the numbers.

Scrubbing a hand over my face, I shook my head. “This is insane.”

“Why do you think he did it?” Bolo asked.

“Probably trying to set his family up so that they wouldn’t have to worry about money,” Ruck answered before I could. “Odds are he was trying to cut ties with Kruzman and that probably made Kruzman suspicious. You know how it goes. Ordinary guy gets too good to be true job offer, gets in too deep, wants a way out.”

I nodded. “That’s what I’m thinking too. Kruzman must have had someone else double check the books. Found the discrepancy, and killed Camila’s father.”

“Desperate men will do whatever they have to for their families,” Ruck added. “You gonna tell her?”

“Yeah. How can I not?” I asked with a shrug.

Flir came back and handed me the papers, which I put into the folder. “Thanks man,” I told him. “You just blew this thing wide open.”

“No worries. When you want the routing and account number, just let me know.”

“I’ll see you guys later,” I told them as I left. I wanted to get back home and tell Camila about what we’d found.

This was going to hurt her. To know that your father was murdered because he’d stolen from someone to try to provide a better life for his family? Yeah. That was definitely going to upset them, but at least this way they’d know what happened. They’d know why he was taken from them. And they could put to rest the idea that their father might have been a bad man. He wasn’t. He was just a guy who loved his wife and kids.

I had a hunch we were right. Didn’t know it for sure, but I trusted my gut. It hadn’t let me down yet. And if we never found out the rest of the truth, at least this would eventually ease the women’s minds. They could look back on their father’s memories without a dark cloud of guilt that they were loving a monster. There was something to be said about that.

I could at least give them that peace of mind. And who knew? Maybe they’d be four million richer by the time this was all over. But whatever happened, I planned to remove Kruzman from the equation. I wasn’t going to let him continue to be a threat to Camila and her family.

CHAPTER 24

Camila

It was early in the morning when Kilo left, so I'd gone home and had breakfast with my family. Several hours later there was a knock on the door. I opened it with a smile, expecting it to be Kilo since it was about one-thirty in the afternoon. Frowning, I looked between Dustin and Jeremy as they stood on my porch. "Hi."

"Can we come in?" Dustin asked.

The slight urgency in his tone made the hair on my nape rise. "Of course," I shut the door and locked it behind them. The only times in the past that both U.S. Marshals had shown up at our door together had been when Kruzman found us. I swallowed hard, meeting Dustin's gaze. "Does he know where we are?"

"We don't know yet, Camila," he said, being honest. He was always honest with me.

"What happened?" Mama asked, as we went into the dining room. She got up and started making coffee for them.

He rubbed the back of his neck. "It might be nothing."

"What might be nothing?" I insisted.

The knock on the door made me jump in the chair I'd sat on. Everyone fell silent and looked over at the door.

“I’ve got it,” Dustin said, getting up and going over there.

“The fuck are you doing here?”

I breathed out a sigh of relief when I heard Kilo’s voice. Getting up, I went over and practically threw myself into his arms. They wrapped around me and I didn’t need to look to know he was scowling at Dustin.

“Who’s that?” Kilo demanded.

“That’s my partner, Jeremy Michaels.”

“Why are you here?” he asked again.

“Come on,” I said, pulling out of the hug and tugging on his arm. “Come sit down.”

“I got an alert about an hour ago. Someone accessed our server,” Dustin told us.

“Okay. And?” Kilo said, clearly agitated.

“Like I said, it could be nothing.” That was directed at me.

“You wouldn’t be over here bothering my girl if it was nothing,” Kilo pointed out.

I elbowed him and gave a meaningful look in Carmen’s direction. She was sitting at the table, head down, staring at her plate. Her silence worried me. “Maybe you should go upstairs-”

“I’m okay,” she said. Her voice was firm, and when she looked up at me there was a determined look in her eyes. “I’m not a kid. I can handle it.”

She was a kid, but this involved her just as much as the rest of us, so I nodded. “Okay, Carmen.” I looked over at Dustin. “Why is this worrying you so much?” I could see it in his face. He was trying not to show us, but he was worried.

“Because the code was from the FBI and when I checked with the lead agent assigned to your case he knew nothing about it. He’s looking into it from his side.”

“What exactly does that mean?” I asked. “That they got into your server?”

“The U.S. Marshals have their own- Look, I don’t have time to explain it, but no one is supposed to be able to access Camila’s records except a handful of people since Kruzman keeps finding her.”

“And someone did?” Kilo insisted.

“Yeah.”

I blew out a long, heavy breath. Jeremy was standing quietly behind us. He never really spoke much, so that wasn’t unusual. The fear was clogging up my throat as I listened to them. Even though I knew that the guys were planning to have all this go down in another two days, this just seemed too soon. If Kruzman had found me, none of us were ready for that. It meant things were going to be that much more dangerous for Kilo and his brothers. I didn’t want that.

“Does that mean they have her information? Like...they know where she is?” Kilo asked, looking tense.

“Yeah. But I don’t know for sure that it wasn’t one of the FBI Agents who’s assigned to her case. I only spoke to the one, but he-”

“Shit,” Kilo muttered, cutting him off. “What are the fucking odds that it’s that

innocent?” He shot me a worried look, then glanced over at Mama and sighed. She was looking just as upset as Carmen.

“Fifty-fifty, at best,” Dustin admitted.

“Fifty-fifty odds work against me one hundred percent of the time. What was your plan?” Kilo asked him with a scowl.

“To sit with them until I figured out who accessed our server,” Dustin said with a shrug.

This wasn’t good. At all. We were two days away from taking Kruzman down. And by ‘we’ I meant the guys. There was no way that this was a coincidence. That would be too easy.

“That’s not the worst idea,” Kilo told him in what was the closest to nice he could be. “Give me a minute.”

“Okay,” he said, sounding suspicious, but not arguing since Kilo was agreeing with him.

Kilo motioned to me, and I followed him out of the living room. “This isn’t a coincidence,” I told him.

“I don’t think so either,” he said, keeping his voice low so the others couldn’t hear. “I need to get the guys, and our weapons. Will you stay with Dustin?”

“Of course,” I told him, rubbing my arm. “I’m so worried, Kilo...”

“Don’t be,” he told me, pulling me into a tight hug. “The only thing this changes is the timeline.”

I knew he was just trying to make me feel better. This changed everything. But he didn't want me to worry. And I didn't want him thinking about me when he needed to focus, so I nodded. "You're right. I'm ready for this."

"Good girl. Get your mom and sister ready to move, but don't tell Dustin anything," he warned me. "We can't have him knowing we're taking out Kruzman or we'll all end up in prison."

I nodded, determination filling me. I wasn't a courageous person, but I could pretend. For him. For Mama and Carmen. I could do this. "I won't."

"I love you, Mercy." He leaned back and cupped my cheeks. "Don't worry. I'll handle this. You just make sure to take care of yourself and your family. Keep your gun close. I'll be back to take you to Roger's as soon as I can. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Let's go," he told me, wrapping an arm around my shoulders and leading me into the dining room. "I'd rather sit with them, but I have to go to work."

Dustin nodded. "No problem. We'll be sitting with them until we get the all clear."

"I'm only working a couple more hours today," Kilo lied, giving me a pointed look, "so I'll be back soon."

Kilo gave me a kiss. He didn't need to say the words out loud again to know what he was trying to tell me. Be watchful. Be safe. I put my hand on his chest to ease him and to let him know I understood. I watched as he walked out of the house, Jeremy locking the door after him.

Sighing, I looked back at Dustin. "How worried should we be?"

“I really don’t know, Camila,” he said. “I’m going to make a call.”

As soon as he left the dining room, I whispered, “Don’t say anything to them about Kilo’s plan,” I warned.

“We won’t,” Mama assured me. “What can we do to help?”

“Just be ready to move. As soon as Kilo gets back he’s taking us somewhere safe.”

“This wasn’t supposed to happen yet,” Carmen said. Her voice sounded so small and lost.

It broke my heart to see the fear on her face. I wanted her to live free of that. Soon. “Don’t worry,” I said, echoing Kilo’s words. “The guys are going to take care of everything.”

Carmen nodded. “Okay.”

I needed to keep a brave face on to help them not be afraid, but deep down I was petrified. I trusted Kilo and the Saint’s Outlaws. I knew they could handle whatever came their way. That didn’t mean I wasn’t worried about their well-being. That I wasn’t scared for them. That I wasn’t scared for my family.

“We’re going to go upstairs,” I told Dustin in an upbeat voice.

He waved at me in acknowledgment as he continued to speak into his phone.

As soon as I was in my room, I grabbed my gun case, put the code in and pulled my weapon out. I loaded the magazine and clipped the holster to the back of my jeans. I’d seen Kilo do this more than once. It put the gun inside your pants, making it easier to conceal. I ripped my shirt off and grabbed one of the extra-large t-shirts I’d stolen

from him over the last couple of weeks. I tucked the front into my jeans and left the back hanging down. It had the added bonus of wrapping me in his scent, calming me down, as well as hiding the gun.

I grabbed my bag and tossed it on the bed. There were only a few last-minute things to pack. Kilo wasn't going to be back for at least an hour, or more, but I wanted to be ready when they got here. I had no idea how he planned to get rid of Dustin and Jeremy, but we'd think of something.

Placing a hand against my heart, I tried to slow it down because it was pounding at my chest. If this wasn't some kind of misunderstanding—and I really didn't think it was—this was all going down tonight. Maybe it was better this way. It meant two less days of torture, thinking about all the ways that things could go wrong on Saturday night. Because now it was happening Thursday night. I'd do whatever it took, whatever was asked of me, to make sure that both our families walked away from this fight alive and whole.

CHAPTER 25

Kilo

Fuck. Our plan was fucking bulletproof. Or so we thought. I lifted my cell to my ear. “Prez,” I said as soon as Ruck answered. “Shit’s hitting the fan. Mobilize everyone. I’m heading to you.”

“Shit. What about the women?”

“The Marshals are with them. They’ll be safe for the next couple hours.”

“Get your ass here then. I’ll make sure everyone else knows to be here.”

Shoving my phone into my pocket, I started up my bike. I was flying, taking back roads and routes I knew the local cops weren’t on as often. I avoided the highways because DPS—Arizona’s Highway Patrol—loved to pull motorcycles over. I didn’t have time to deal with them today. Not now. There was no way that someone was snooping around in the U.S. Marshals’ systems just a couple days before this all went down and it wasn’t something nefarious. Kruzman knew about Camila. What else could it be?

Fuck.

I poured on more speed, cruising through an intersection even though the light turned red just before I entered. The blare of horns let me know the other motorists saw me and didn’t appreciate my bullshit. Screw them. There wasn’t time for me to worry

about traffic laws. Not when my girl's life was on the line.

It still took too damn long to get to our compound. As much as I wanted to hide Camila away now, we needed to take the next hour or two to get our own shit squared away. Plus, Roger and Prissy weren't expecting this. I was going to need to give them time to get their restaurant shut down for the day. I shot Roger a quick SOS text and pocketed my phone again.

Leaving my bike in the parking lot, I jogged over to the clubhouse. My grin was automatic when I saw that all my brothers were already here. They'd dropped everything for this and managed to beat me here.

Ruck approached as I came through the door. "What happened?" I explained about the security breach. Everyone was listening in. No one else was around, so Ruck must have sent the club girls who worked here home. Ruck ran a hand through his hair. It was getting too long and kept flopping in his eyes. "Are you sure this is Kruzman?"

"Who else would it be?" I asked.

"Dammit." He pulled out his phone and walked away. "Hey, Cypher..."

"Camila and her family okay?" Overdrive asked as he walked up to me. The others were sitting around the tables, waiting for their orders.

"Yeah. They're scared, but they're holding up," I told him. "I've got Roger and Prissy heading back to their house now. As soon as we're done here, we'll head over and pick the girls up."

"Glitch is going to do some digging of his own," Ruck said, coming back. "But we're treating this like it's the real thing until we hear back." He looked around. "Everyone load the weapons into the SUVs."

That was all it took and everyone jumped into action. We were taking armfuls of weapons and ammo out with us. There was no telling how much of his crew Kruzman was going to throw at us. Not to mention how many men his cartel connections would lend to him. We were going in with the idea that being over prepared wasn't enough.

Once we had all the rifles, shotguns, and various other weapons loaded, I pulled my Glock out from the holster I kept it in, checked that there was a round chambered and then replaced it. I flipped my shirt over the back of my jeans to make sure it stayed hidden. I always walked around with it hot and ready to go, but fuck, if it came down to some asshole's life or ours? I was going to make them regret coming for my old lady.

"Guns and ammo are ready," I told Ruck as he came out with two bags.

He dropped them on the ground, unzipped one, and started tossing shit at each of us. "Once we're staged up at Camila's house, everyone wears theirs. They're custom made to your own size. No arguments."

I caught the Kevlar vest Ruck threw at my head and looked on the inside of the carrier. It was black fabric and nylon carrying the bulletproof plates in front and back. Inside was handwriting.

"Aw, you even put our blood type in there, Prez," Overdrive said with a dramatic clutch of his heart.

Sure enough, there was O-neg written out in white marker inside my vest, along with my name, and date of birth. I had no allergies, or I knew that would be there as well. It was something we all did while in the military. That way if we were down and couldn't respond, anyone who found us and, hopefully, got us to medical, would know the pertinent facts about us.

Probably seemed morbid to civilians, but this was the only way we knew. The fact that Ruck had already taken care of it meant a lot. It just showed how much he cared for his men.

“Where the hell’d you get Kevlar?” Bolo asked.

“This is the good shit, too,” Flir said, giving Ruck a narrowed-eyed look. “Expensive.”

“Cypher got them for us,” he replied, ignoring Flir. “What are you doing?” he barked.

Code froze, marker in his hand. “I was just going to draw on a-”

Hype smacked him upside the head. “No markings on the outside, Kid.”

“Makes you more of a target,” Strike added.

Code sighed, but pocketed the marker again.

I had no fucking clue where the kid had even gotten it. Was he just walking around with every fucking color of marker available?

“Have you heard from Glitch?” I asked.

Ruck gave me a grim look. “Yeah. This is it. I already called The Viking’s Rampage guys when this all started. They should be about an hour out. They’ll head straight to Roger’s.”

“Fuck,” I muttered. It would have been better for us if this was happening Saturday. When we planned. Not on Kruzman’s timeline.

“It’s fine,” Overdrive said, smacking me on the back in his version of a comforting pat.

“Just means we get to kill some fuckers today instead of tomorrow,” Relay added, grinning at us.

“It was Saturday,” Drifter told him.

He frowned. “You sure?”

“Yeah,” I replied with my brows up.

“Huh. Must have been someone else I was killing tomorrow.”

We all stared at him. He just stared back at us with a neutral expression.

“I honestly don’t know if you’re kidding or not,” Overdrive told him.

“I know,” Relay replied.

“He’s not kidding,” Merc said with a chuckle.

Ruck pressed a thumb into his right temple. “Alright. Everyone have everything? There’s no coming back here once we start. You forget something, that’s just too damn bad.”

Everyone waited, staying quiet because we were all ready.

“Anyone have to use the bathroom?” Overdrive finally added. “We’re not pulling over five miles up the road because you have to drain the lizard.” The grin slid off his face when he met Ruck’s eyes. He cleared his throat. “Just kidding, Prez. We can

stop if you have to piss.”

Ruck sighed. “Hype. Merc. You’re driving the SUVs. Bolo you’re bringing the spare bike. Everyone else, pile in.”

It had taken us an hour and twenty minutes to prepare. Now it was time to put the next phase of the plan into action. Originally we weren’t going to drop the girls off with Roger until the Tucson guys were here, but that wasn’t an option now. It would be a clusterfuck if Kruzman came to Camila’s house and they were still there.

Roger would protect the ladies until the Viking’s Rampage showed. And we’d take on Kruzman. By the time the night was over, everything was going to be different. I was determined to make sure we won and Camila and her family were safe from this motherfucker once and for all.

CHAPTER 26

Camila

Dustin scowled as he held the phone to his ear. “Yes, Sir. Well...no, I-” He broke off as whoever was on the other end of the line went off on a rant. Dustin’s expression was getting more and more grim by the moment. “Sir, I don’t think this is nothing.” He paused, listening again, then sighed. “Yes, Sir.”

He hung up the phone and frowned over at me. “According to my higher ups, the server incident was a routine check.”

“What does that mean?” I asked.

“Mostly that it was sanctioned by both the FBI and Marshals,” he told me with an apologetic look on his face.

Tilting my head, I studied his expression. He looked troubled. “You don’t believe them?”

“Fuck, I don’t know at this point. I’m probably just being overly cautious since Kruzman has found us so many damn times.”

I smiled at him. This was why I considered Dustin a friend. Not enough to tell him what Kilo and the others had planned, of course. I didn’t want them to get into trouble even though I sort of felt bad about not telling him. It was easy to see that he cared. He didn’t want us to get hurt. I didn’t think it was a job to him anymore. Who knew

with Jeremy. The man hardly spoke. But Dustin? He made us his priority.

“I think I’ll still hang out,” Dustin said, tone decisive.

“Thank you,” I told him, “but honestly, I’m going to spend the night with Kilo. And Mama has work. Carmen has a sleepover planned, and I don’t know how we’d explain to four young girls who you are and why you’re there.” Kilo had texted, saying they were on the way. It wasn’t going to take much time before they got here.

It wasn’t hard to see that Dustin was torn. He didn’t want to leave us. Again, my heart warmed at that. He was a caring man. If only he was twenty years older, I’d shove Mama his way. Though it was likely to take a lot of convincing to make Mama date again. She’d mentioned it, but I knew Dad had been her person. She’d loved him with everything she had. Not knowing what had happened to Dad had hit her hard. She wasn’t sure what to think about the man she’d married and loved. That broke my heart.

“If you’re sure,” he said, hesitating.

“We are. It’s nothing...right?” I asked. He knew there was something off. And I knew that somehow the mole the club thought was planted inside the FBI had played this off as some routine maintenance. No wonder Kruzman kept finding us. This just proved there were people who would happily take money in exchange for just about anything, even someone’s life, and that everyone else was busy and had so many things on their plate they’d believe the first lie told to them.

Dustin wasn’t like that. It was easy to see he didn’t want to leave, but he was trying to figure out how the two of them would follow all three of us when we split up in three different directions. Of course, if we didn’t have the club protecting us, I’d be begging for him to stay here with us for the night. My lack of concern was lulling him into a false sense of security. He shrugged. “Yeah, okay. You want us to hang out

until Kilo gets back from work?"

"No, we've taken up your whole day already," I told him, patting his shoulder. "Kilo will be home soon." At least that wasn't a lie. I shot Jeremy a smile. "Thank you for staying with us."

Jeremy's eyes narrowed on me. I had a feeling he was seeing through my overly bright attitude, but he finally nodded. "No problem."

"Call if anything is out of place," Dustin told me as I walked them to the front door.

"I will. Promise." Another lie. I had to bite back the sigh. I didn't like lying to these men. They'd helped us so many times over the last four years. I considered them friends. But their obligations were at odds with the Saint's Outlaws intentions. And my loyalty had to be with the men who were doing whatever it took to keep us safe. Dustin and Jeremy could only do what the law allowed. Besides, I wasn't doing anything that would place them into harm's way, so I shoved the guilt down.

I waved as they got into their SUV and drove away. Shutting the door, I locked it and Mama, Carmen, and I sat on the couch to wait for Kilo and the others. It didn't take long before the sound of a motorcycle revving outside and doors closing echoed through our quiet house. I got up and hurried to the window, peeking through the curtains. "They're here."

Mama and Carmen let out twin sighs of relief. I opened the door and stepped straight into Kilo's arms.

"Mercy," he growled. "You're not supposed to be opening doors."

"I saw it was you," I told him, my words muffled as I buried my face against him.

“You’re not supposed to be looking out windows,” he countered.

“I heard you coming.”

His chuckle vibrated inside my head. “Come on in everyone. Lucia, Carmen, these are the guys.”

I held on and moved with him, clinging like a spider monkey as he introduced the guys to my family.

“Where are the Marshals?” he asked, wrapping his arms around me and holding me close like I needed.

I’d shot him a quick text that they were gone, but that was all. “He got a call from some supervisor. Said the alert was a routine thing that the FBI sanctioned.”

“Bullshit.”

“I know, but I played it off like I believed it so they’d leave.”

“Good girl,” he told me with a grin.

It did things to my insides when he said stuff like that. Made me melt. Made me ache. He brought out too many emotions to examine.

Reluctantly, I let him go, but he yanked me back against him again. Like he wasn’t ready to break contact either. I could hear the others speaking in low voices with Mama and Carmen, but I just basked in his embrace. I could only pray that everything would go well tonight. If this was the last time I was able to lose myself in Kilo’s arms, I wasn’t sure what I’d do. It didn’t matter that we’d only known each other for a short time, he was mine. And I was his. I considered myself so lucky that

we'd found one another.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked, pulling back and looking down at me.

Huffing out a breath, I nodded. "We're ready."

"You have your gun?"

I took his hand and slid it down until his fingers brushed over the butt of my weapon.

He grinned. "Now I know where that shirt went. You hoarding my clothes, Mercy?"

I bit my lip and shrugged, giving him a guilty smile. "I needed something a bit bigger to hide the gun."

"Hides that perfect ass in those jeans too," he said in a low voice so my mama didn't overhear. "I don't like it. You should take it off."

"Now?" I teased.

"No," he growled. "Later. When it's just us."

"I can do that," I told him. I was still trying to get over my shyness with him, but he made it easier to be free.

"Kilo." We both looked over and found Ruck watching us with a smirk. "We don't know how much time we have."

"Sure thing, Prez. Come on," he told me, taking my hand and leading me toward the door.

Our bags were there, waiting to be loaded up. We'd brought them downstairs once Dustin and Jeremy left, so that we'd be ready.

Overdrive had Mama's arm through his and he was escorting her out the door like he was some kind of old fashioned gentleman. "Kid! Get the bags."

Code's jaw dropped and he grumbled as he picked up our bags from the floor. "Why does he get to escort the women and I have to get the bags?" he muttered.

"Cause he's the VP," Kilo responded, winking at me.

I paused at the door and turned, looking at all the men who were lounging on our couch and chairs, and the extra were standing, filling every inch of our small home. "Please...be safe."

Bolo shot me a grin. "Don't worry about us, Mercy. We'll be fine."

I pulled away from Kilo and went over, hesitating, but then wrapping my arms around him. I gave each of them a hug. It wasn't hard to tell they didn't know how to respond to that, but they allowed it. When I was finished, I swallowed back worried tears and went back to Kilo.

"You realize that's the last time I'm letting you hug them, right?"

Rolling my eyes, I laughed. I doubted that very much. He loved his brothers and I saw the smile on his face he tried to hide when I gave them hugs. He liked that we got along.

He walked me out to the SUV, eyes scanning the whole time as though Kruzman was going to pop out from behind a mesquite tree in someone's yard. His protective nature melted my heart. It made me feel so cherished and loved. He looked down at

me and frowned. “Why do you look like you’re about to cry?” he asked, sounding slightly panicked.

I laughed and blinked back another wave of tears. “I’m not.” The look he shot me told me he didn’t believe that for a second. “I’m just worried about you. All of you.”

“Don’t worry about us, Baby,” he said with a chuckle. “We’re all looking forward to the fight.”

I stopped at the SUV and stared up at him. “I’ve never met anyone like you before.”

He shook his head and if I didn’t know better I’d swear he was blushing. “I’m nothing special, Mercy. Come on, I don’t want you standing out in the open.”

Going up onto my tiptoes, I pressed a kiss to his lips, then got into the SUV. He shut the door behind me and jogged around to get into the driver’s seat.

Overdrive turned around in the front passenger seat and smiled at us. “You ladies ready?”

We all nodded, giving him forced smiles. These men were risking their lives for us. We were all scared for them, but we put on a brave face so that they weren’t thinking about us while they needed to focus on what lay ahead.

The drive didn’t take very long and soon we were parked in front of a house. Before we could get out of the SUV, the door to the house burst open. Roger walked out, his arms open wide as he smiled at us. “Welcome to our home!”

These were the types of people Kilo surrounded himself with. Good people. I laughed as Roger wrapped me in a hug and started moving me toward the house. Looking over my shoulder, I searched for Kilo, but he was getting the bags out of the back of

the vehicle. Relaxing, I followed Roger in.

A woman was standing there, beaming, as if this was a social call instead of what it really was. “Hi, Sweetie,” she said to me. “You can call me Prissy.”

“It’s so nice to meet you,” I told her and went willingly when she pulled me into her own embrace. It was Mama and Carmen’s turns next.

Kilo and Overdrive dropped our bags off inside the house and I went over and hugged Overdrive. I laughed as he wiggled his brows at Kilo. Then I was wrapped up in Kilo’s arms again, like he needed to erase Overdrive’s hug. “Come back to me,” I whispered.

“I will,” he said. “Don’t worry. Just have a good night and try to get some rest. Tomorrow will be a whole new day.”

“I love you, Kilo.”

“Love you, too, Mercy, but stop making it sound like you’re saying goodbye.” He tipped my chin up, forcing me to meet his eyes. “I’ll see you later.”

I nodded, forcing another wavering smile.

“Roger, Prissy, I owe you big time,” he told his friends.

“Psft,” Prissy responded. “You’ve introduced us to new friends. No need to repay that.”

“The Viking’s Rampage crew should be here within the hour, maybe sooner,” Kilo told all of us.

“I’ve already started a feast to feed them all,” Roger told him.

“Oh man, and we’re missing it?” Overdrive groaned.

Roger laughed. “We’ll send you some tomorrow.”

Kilo and Overdrive went over and hugged both Roger and Prissy, though there was a lot of back slapping when they hugged Roger. It looked painful to me, but it seemed to be their way.

“We’ll be back to pick them up as soon as we can.”

“Don’t hurry,” Prissy said with a wave. “We’re going to have a wonderful night.” She met his gaze. “You boys be careful.” She said it in the tone a mother used when her boys were going to ride dirt bikes.

“We will,” Kilo said. He tugged me close and kissed me. He gave me an intense look as he pulled back. “Be careful.”

“ You be careful,” I replied.

“I’ll see you soon.”

I pressed my fingers to my lips as I watched him walk out of the house. My heart was hammering and I was vaguely nauseous. I wished I could just fast forward through the whole night.

An arm dropped over my shoulders, and I looked up at Roger.

“It’s almost dinner time. I’m looking forward to getting to know you.”

“Me too,” I told him, and I meant it. Roger and Prissy were going to help keep my mind off what was happening tonight, and I couldn’t be more appreciative of that. It would be too easy to drive myself crazy with worry. I’d rather have good food and learn more about Kilo’s friends.

CHAPTER 27

Camila

“Can I help?” I asked, peeking in on Roger inside the kitchen.

Mom and Prissy were talking and it was as though they’d been friends for years. My mom didn’t usually open up very easily, but it was like their souls recognized one another and you’d think they’d been friends forever. Carmen was scrolling on her phone, though she knew better than to mention where she was tonight.

Roger looked over at me and grinned. “Do you know how to cook?”

“Yeah,” I replied. “I hope someday to open a restaurant.”

“Really?” he asked, putting his hands on his wide hips. He eyed me like he was determining from sight alone whether I would mess up his feast.

“Don’t mind him. He hardly lets me in the kitchen and I’ve been working alongside him since we were twenty,” Prissy said as she came in and grabbed a pitcher of juice and glasses and brought them back out to the living room.

I laughed. “I get it,” I said in a whisper. “Your kitchen is a sacred space. Mine too, though I have to share it with Mama.”

Roger’s eyes sparkled and he pointed over to where a lump of dough was resting. “You can roll out the bread.”

Going to the sink, I washed my hands before sinking them into the mixture and kneading it. Working helped to settle my nerves, and I had a feeling that was the only reason Roger was allowing me to help. We chatted as we worked, and one by one my muscles started to lose the tension I'd been holding in them for most of the day.

It was only about twenty minutes after Kilo and Overdrive left when the doorbell rang. Roger and I looked at each other.

"Your other friends?" he asked.

"Hopefully," I told him with a weak smile. I wiped my hands on my jeans. "I'll get it."

"No," he replied. "You wait here. I'll answer it."

Going back to the sink, I started to wash my hands again. When screams echoed through the house, I shut the water off and ran into the living room. Skidding to a stop, I stared, confused at the man inside the house. I didn't recognize him. Didn't know him. But Roger was lying in a heap on the floor next to him, a gash on his head from where he'd been hit with a gun.

The man was pointing the handgun at us.

Prissy crossed the room, standing in front of me. "Get out of my house now."

"Sure thing, just as soon as she comes with me." He waved the gun, clearly pointing at me.

"Who are you?" I asked.

He seemed to consider my question for a moment. "I'm with the FBI," he told us.

“Kruzman has found you and we need to get you somewhere safe.”

“Why do you have a gun?” I challenged him. “Why did you hurt Roger?” I was so worried about how still Roger was lying on the floor, but I knew if I made a move toward him I’d put us all in danger.

“I thought your friend here was going to attack me,” he lied. “I thought he was holding you hostage.”

Glancing over, I saw Mama look my way and shake her head. Fear was written all over her face. I knew it was for me. She didn’t want me to go with him. “Why didn’t Brian come get us?” I asked, keeping my voice calm, trying to buy us time.

“Brian’s too busy. He called and asked me to pick you up. He’ll be meeting up with us later.”

I scoffed to myself. This man was so arrogant, he hadn’t even bothered to read much of the information he’d hacked into. If he had, he’d at least know the names of the Marshals protecting us. Looking around the room, I tried to figure out what to do. I didn’t want to go with him, but if I pulled my gun out right now, someone was going to get hurt. Plus, he might not be alone. Better to draw them away where Prissy, Mama and Carmen would be safe. And then they could help Roger. He might need a hospital and the longer I stood here, the longer it would take until he’d get to one. “Okay,” I told him.

“Camila,” Carmen gasped.

“I’ll go with you,” I told him, giving her a pointed look. She needed to stay here. They needed to help Roger. And hopefully with me gone, no one would bother them. Once the Viking’s Rampage got here, they’d be safe. That was all that mattered right now.

Prissy gripped my arm. Even though she didn't know Dustin or Jeremy's names, she knew this wasn't right.

"It's okay," I told her. "I'll be okay."

"We'll send them after you," she whispered.

They wouldn't know where to go. "No. They need to protect you all. Just in case. If Kruzman gets to them..." We both looked over at Mama and Carmen. "Please. Keep them safe."

Prissy looked torn, but she finally nodded.

I stepped around her and walked over to the agent. Bending, I felt for Roger's pulse and let out a sigh of relief when it thrummed steady and strong against my fingers. "You didn't need to hurt him."

"Let's go," he said, voice cold. His blue eyes were dead inside. I wasn't dealing with a man I could appeal to. He'd ignore anything I said because I doubted there was anything he cared about. Except maybe money. I just knew, without having to be told, that was what this was about.

We walked out of the house and I got into the car parked out front. I didn't bother to plead. To warn him that he was going to regret this decision. He'd find out soon enough. I needed to bide my time.

He pulled away from the curb almost as soon as he got into the car. He wasn't wasting any time.

"Are Dustin and Jeremy okay?"

“Who’s that?” He kept his eyes on the road.

“The real U.S. Marshals.”

Now he looked my way. “You knew I was full of shit?” I nodded. “And you came anyway?”

Shrugging, I watched his expression. I couldn’t read much. A man like this wouldn’t understand loyalty or caring about someone else other than himself. That was why he didn’t understand why I’d come with him.

“They’re fine.”

“How did you know where I was?”

“Been watching you since this morning,” he said with a sneer. “Imagine my luck when I found out the girl Kruzman was searching for had landed in my city.”

“So you didn’t tell him about me before this?”

He scoffed. “No. That was my partner. Got himself killed on duty a few months ago.”

The silence was thick and I swallowed hard. My gut was telling me that his partner made the mistake of telling this man about Kruzman. About me. And that his partner’s death was his fault, not an accident. Fear skittered down my spine. “Are you going to kill me?”

“Kruzman doesn’t want you dead.” He glared over at me. “But if you try anything, I’ll pop you between the eyes and he’ll just have to make do with a body. Got it?”

“Got it,” I whispered. I wanted so badly to draw my weapon and shoot him. But that

was hard to do sitting down, and if he died, he'd wreck. Considering how fast he was driving, I wasn't sure how I'd fare in that situation. It was better to wait until he stopped the car. And there was the fact that I'd never so much as slapped a man. Could I shoot him?

"Give me your phone."

Digging into my pocket, I handed it over to him. I gasped when he rolled down the window and tossed it out. "Hey!"

"You won't be needing that," he growled.

Asshole.

I sat back, trying to pay attention to where he was taking me. I wasn't familiar with this part of the city, but I did my best to memorize street names. That would come in handy later when I escaped. There was no way I was letting him take me to Kruzman. I'd do whatever I had to in order to get away.

He pulled up to a house and I wasted no time. As soon as the car slowed enough, I wrenched open my door and ran. I didn't look back. I was too scared to, but it didn't seem like I got very far before I heard footsteps pounding behind me. Screaming bloody murder, I looked around, desperate to find somewhere to go. Someone to help me. No one was around. I ran past a house and down into a wash behind it. This suburb was on the outer edge of the city and the desert lay beyond. There were a few mesquite trees, but I wasn't going to be able to hide from him.

Reaching behind me, I flicked the button on my holster and drew out my gun. I spun, holding it out, ready to fire. My breaths were coming so fast I was worried I might pass out. The fear that I may not be able to pull the trigger was buried beneath a mountain of panic. He'd pushed me to my limits and I was willing to do anything to

protect myself. The fact that Kilo had spent so much time showing me how to shoot gave me confidence. I managed to get one shot off before he slammed into me, taking us both to the ground.

“You stupid bitch!” he roared in my ear.

Everything was muffled anyway from the sound of the gun firing. I didn’t know if I’d hit him, but he was on top of me and I could barely breathe, let alone move. Pain exploded in my face. Now my ears were ringing and my vision was blurry. He’d punched me. I’d never been hit before, but somehow it hurt almost the exact amount I’d always imagined it would—a lot. I was grateful he hadn’t managed to hit me with a full swing since we were on the ground. If he had, I wasn’t sure I’d be able to hold onto consciousness. As it was, my head was spinning.

I kicked my legs, trying to buck him off me, but he weighed too much. My arms were pinned beneath him, but I had to keep fighting. Giving up meant death. If not from him, then from Kruzman, so I struggled with every ounce of strength I had. It was disheartening that he didn’t seem to notice or care. He was poking at his left shoulder. It gave me a sense of grim satisfaction to see that I’d shot him.

Too bad it was down a bit. I wouldn’t even feel bad for shooting him through his black heart. Not anymore. He’d drained any compassion or empathy I might have had for him the moment he’d hurt Roger.

I managed to wiggle enough that I got my right hand loose. My gun was nowhere to be seen. I’d lost my grip on it when he’d tackled me. He was distracted with his wound, and he’d counted me out. I was going to show him why that was a big mistake. I might not be as strong as him, but I was scrappy, and I was desperate. Reaching up, I gouged my thumb into the bullet wound on his shoulder.

His scream of pain and rage was like music to my ears. I had no idea how

bloodthirsty I would become in the face of death, but I wasn't about to stop. I jabbed my thumb into the hole as hard as I could, trying not to think about the feel of it. The textures, the blood... I held back a gag.

As soon as he jerked away from me, I was on my feet. I staggered as I started running, shaking my head to try to clear my vision. Everything hurt, but I forced my body to move. I'd run track in high school, so my body quickly flowed into the motion it knew so well. Though the sand bled away some of my speed, I wasn't stopping. Nothing would keep me from getting away from this man. At least that was what I hoped.

I scrambled up the side of the wash. The houses came into view. I was so close. If I could get back to his car, maybe I could get away from him. Hide out until this was all over.

Hands grabbed me and the sky arced through my vision as we tumbled backward into the wash again. "No!" I gasped, trying to twist so that I could land away from him. I had just enough time to see the ground rushing toward me before I hit and the world went dark.

CHAPTER 28

Kilo

I leaned my head back against the door and watched as my brothers joked and scrolled through their phones. Relay was asleep. That fucker could fall asleep anytime, anywhere. Code was looking around, grinning. He was excited for this to all go down. Too bad he didn't know what was going to happen or he wouldn't be so happy about his part to play in tonight's deception. I chuckled to myself.

"What?" Overdrive asked. He was sitting along the wall, under the window. Time was passing too damn slowly. We both wanted this to happen, now.

"Just picturing Code's face when you give him what you brought."

Overdrive chuckled this time. "Maybe I should go get that for him." He shoved to his feet, shooting Code a wicked grin as he walked past and into the dining room.

"What?" Code asked.

"You'll see," I told him. He didn't have a chance to answer because the door I was sitting against rumbled as someone knocked on it.

We all froze, except Overdrive, who stepped further into the kitchen so he wouldn't be spotted. The girls had curtains, so that would hopefully prevent most of us from being seen anyway.

Shoving to my feet, I motioned for the guys to wait and craned my head to look in the gaps between the curtains and the window sill. My eyes narrowed and I muttered under my breath. It was dark outside now, though it hadn't been that long since I'd dropped the girls off with Roger. I was hoping to get a text soon that the Viking's Rampage was there.

It was hard to focus on what I needed to do when all I could do was worry that Camila was safe. Taking my eyes off her at a time like this had my protective instincts up a thousand percent. Even though I trusted my friends to take care of her, Roger was a chef. Not a warrior. Forcing myself to concentrate, I motioned to the others to be ready.

Opening the door, I grabbed the man standing on the porch and yanked him inside the house. I shut the door and slammed him back against it. "Didn't I tell you to leave Camila alone?" I growled.

Shawn's eyes widened as he stared at me, then panic set in as he saw my brothers, who were crowding my back. I didn't need to look over at them to know they weren't happy to see this fucker. Neither was I. And judging on his expression, Shawn hadn't expected to see eleven pissed off bikers inside Camila's house.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Bolo asked.

I'd told them, after the fact, about Shawn the douche. They knew this wasn't a part of what we were here for tonight, but I wasn't about to miss the opportunity to teach this fucker another lesson. Clearly the first hadn't stuck. I slammed my fist into his gut.

Shawn grunted and crumpled at my feet.

"Seriously?" Relay asked. It wasn't hard to tell that he had less than zero respect for this guy.

“My seven-year-old niece can take a better hit than this guy,” Strike said with a grin.

The rest of the guys laughed.

“What do you want to do with him?” Ruck asked. “We probably don’t have much time before this kicks off.” Ruck was always the voice of reason when the rest of us went too far off track with the plan. Corralling us was one of his skills, though he claimed it was more like herding cats.

“We should just kill him,” Relay suggested. There was a glint of excitement in his eyes as he crowded next to me so he could stare down at Shawn.

Overdrive walked into the room and sniffed the air. “What the fuck is that?”

“He pissed his pants,” Bolo replied with a grin.

“Good thing they have tile flooring,” Flir said with a shake of his head. “That would be impossible to get out of carpet.”

“You’re telling me you don’t have something to get stains and odor out of carpet?” Drifter asked, arching a brow.

“Well, yeah, I do,” Flir replied.

“Of course you do,” Bolo said.

“Can we focus on this piece of shit?” Ruck ordered.

“I’m not opposed to killing him,” I said, giving Shawn a menacing look, but I put my arm out to keep Relay from bending down and snatching him up. “I already warned him not to come around again and he didn’t listen.”

“If we do, then we’ll have to leave his body here. Then we’ll come back and get it later,” Ruck said. He motioned toward the door that led into the backyard.

“I’ll fucking scream,” Shawn managed to choke out.

“Of course you will, pussy,” Relay snorted. He folded his arms over his chest and gave me a grim look.

I didn’t need him to say the words. I could read his expressions by now. He was wondering why I wasn’t allowing him to kill this guy that he considered less than a man. Why I was holding him back. I dropped my arm and scowled at him.

Shawn pulled his phone out of his pocket, jabbing his finger at the screen as he tried to dial the cops. He was shaking so hard he was struggling.

It gave me enough time to grab the device out of his hands. Dropping it on the floor, I crunched it with the heel of my boot. “You have one opportunity,” I told him. I squatted down, getting in his face. It wasn’t easy to ignore the stench because he seriously had pissed his pants. The urine was creeping toward the toe of my boot. At least he was smart enough to be taking this seriously now. “You can stay here and die.”

“I’ll take option two,” he said. His face was pale, eyes wide as he stared at me.

“You haven’t even heard it yet,” Flir pointed out.

“What’s worse than option one?” Shawn asked, but he sounded unsure even as he said it.

“I beat the shit out of you, then you leave town. If I ever see you in Phoenix again, I’ll kill you.” Honestly, I wasn’t going to kill him. The guy was an asshole who didn’t

know what the fuck boundaries were, but he wasn't quite bad enough to warrant a death sentence. He clearly wasn't dangerous, just a perpetual annoyance. Not that I was going to tell him that. I wanted him scared shitless. Which judging by the smell, he wasn't far from.

"Option two," Shawn said, looking resigned.

"What did you even come here for?" I asked.

"I just wanted Camila to give me another shot," Shawn admitted. When my eyes narrowed, he stuttered. "To apologize."

"Sure, fucker, sure." I shoved to my feet then kicked out, satisfied when my boot connected with his jaw. The lights went out immediately and he slumped back against the door. It wasn't much of an ass kicking, but I wasn't going to keep beating on this guy when he was unconscious. I might if we had the time, but even from across the room I could sense Ruck's impatience. We had a plan. This wasn't a part of it. Finishing this quickly would ensure that we didn't inadvertently fuck up the plan for Kruzman. That was more important than Shawn.

"Now what do we do with him?" Overdrive asked.

"Tie him up in one of the kitchen chairs," I told Relay. "And gag him. We'll release him later."

Bolo and Relay dragged Shawn off and Overdrive went over to the bag he'd brought inside. He dug around inside and pulled out fabric, grinning at Code. "This is for you." Now that Shawn was taken care of, it was back to business as usual as far as OD was concerned.

Code frowned at it. "For what?"

“Tonight.”

“What is it?”

Ruck snatched a wig out of Overdrive’s hands and tossed it to Code. “You’re playing the part of Camila tonight.”

“What?” Code asked, shocked.

“You had that great idea of a dress and wig,” Overdrive said with a grin.

“Put it on, Kid,” Drifter ordered.

Code looked between us all, for once shocked into silence, and then slowly put the wig on his head. Flir reached over and straightened it until the hair laid flat. Code glared at him. “Leave it alone, man.”

“It wasn’t straight,” Flir replied with a shrug.

“Looks good on you,” Strike said with a snicker.

“Wait until he puts this on.” Overdrive held up the dress.

“Jesus. Where did you get that dress? Your eighty-year-old grandmother?” Code sneered.

“Aw, is it not pretty enough for you, Code?” Bolo joked. “He needs something that shows off his chicken legs.”

“Fuck off,” Code muttered. He looked over at Ruck. “Do I really have to wear that?”

“Yup.”

Code heaved a sigh and scowled at us all as he snatched the dress from Overdrive and marched upstairs. We all pulled our phones out, ready to take pictures as soon as he came back down the stairs. He wasn't going to live this one down. Hype and Merc were unusually quiet, probably so no one suggested they put that shit on. They were too muscular. Code was still lanky, even though he had muscles, he matched Camila's frame a little better, albeit with an extra six inches of height. But they were smart not to push their luck.

Code's scowl deepened when everyone started taking photos of him. “Erase that,” he barked at Bolo.

“Not a chance, Kid,” Bolo replied, tapping against his phone.

“What are you doing?” Code asked, sounding a bit frantic.

“Nothing,” Bolo said with a shit-eating grin.

“Don't send that to anyone!”

“Too late,” Bolo replied,

Though Camila might have been offended to think someone would confuse Code for her. That was what we needed the darkness for. It was going to help us lure Kruzman and his killers out to the desert. We'd do whatever it took, even make Code dress in drag. Whether he liked it or not.

CHAPTER 29

Kilo

“H eads up,” Merc called out to us. He was standing by the window, watching the street. “We’ve got company.”

“Shit, that didn’t take long,” Bolo muttered.

Code had just finished getting into his dress and wig and hiding his pistols.

“Twenty-three minutes and forty-seven seconds,” Flir mumbled to himself.

I stared at him, shaking my head. “What?”

“Oh. Nothing,” he replied.

“That’s why I was so pissed that another asshole showed up,” Ruck said with a sigh. Ruck really wanted to be able to stage up at the spot we chose out in the desert, it would give us a nice leg up, but he wasn’t willing to leave Code and I alone here to deal with the sicarios in case they don’t take the bait. So they were waiting here with us and it was making our president a bit irritable because it meant that later, once Kruzman’s men did take the bait, we’d be on our own for a short time. Now or later, it didn’t matter to me, but Ruck was calculating all the risks and this was the lesser of the two evils.

“At least it kept the guys occupied for a bit,” Overdrive pointed out.

Ruck just gave him a look that said he didn't find that very useful. "Now we're off schedule. Everyone grab your shit. We'll be going out the back as soon as Kilo and Code take off." He looked around at all of us. "Don't let them out of your sight."

"Roger," Bolo said. He and Ruck were going to be driving the SUVs. They had the challenge of keeping close enough, but not being spotted.

I just had to drive. Glancing over at Code, I asked, "You ready, Kid?"

"Yeah," he replied, a determined set to his jaw. He wasn't thrilled about wearing the dress, but he was more than happy to play the rest of this part. He wanted to be included.

"Once you're out of the house, don't talk. No one is going to believe that deep voice came out of Camila," Ruck ordered.

"Sure thing, Prez," Code said with a grin.

Ruck moved over to the window, taking Merc's spot and narrowed his eyes. "On my mark."

My muscles tensed, ready to make the mad dash to my bike outside. I hope like hell these fuckers weren't going to just open fire on us. We had a theory, though. If Kruzman was doing this for money, he wasn't going to want Camila dead. At least not yet. So we were banking on the fact that there would be a no kill order in play here.

"Go."

I shoved Code as he stumbled his way out the door. His legs were getting caught up in the damn dress. I'd told OD to get a shorter one, but he claimed the hairy legs

would give too much away. Grabbing Code by the shoulder, I helped him keep his feet and propelled him forward at the same time.

He let out a muttered curse, but followed orders and didn't speak loud enough for any of the shadowed figures surrounding us to hear him.

A muffled shout went up. Our plan worked. We'd surprised the hell out of them and managed to get on the bike without a single bullet hole, something both Code and I were grateful for. He barely had the chance to set his hands on the tank in front of me before I was gunning the engine and taking off into the night.

"Fuck!" he shouted.

It didn't matter anymore, the wind carried away his voice. I didn't bother to glance over my shoulder as I booked it toward the freeway. His cursing was all I needed to know that they were behind us. Now all we had to do was make an asshole clenching ride out to the spot we'd picked. I doubted very much that they were going to go easy on us. They were probably going to try to force us off the road. I said a silent prayer for my bike. I loved her and the last thing I wanted was even a scratch on her. But I was willing to do whatever it took to make this happen. Even totaling my favorite machine.

"Hold the fuck on," I shouted at Code.

"What?" he yelled over the wind.

"Hang the fuck on, Kid!"

"Shit!"

His arms were wrapped around my waist and he gave up all pretenses of trying to

keep from hugging me as I poured on even more speed. If we passed a fucking cop right now we were goners, but I could see headlights in my mirrors. The faster they caught up to us, the more time they had to fuck us up. The others weren't going to be able to help until we got out to the desert. We couldn't have a shootout on I-10.

A vehicle pulled up on my right and I risked a glance over, then swore as I saw a man in a ski mask. The only reason I was able to even see it is because he was drifting into my lane, side by side with me. There was less than a foot between us. "Subtle," I muttered. Code shifted his head, burying his right cheek against my back and I grinned. He was a smart fucking kid. He was making sure that the sicarios couldn't see his face.

The SUV swerved toward my bike again, and I ground my teeth together as I veered onto the paved shoulder to avoid getting clipped.

"They think splattering us all over the freeway won't kill us?" Code hollered. "Dipshits! If they want her alive this isn't a smart play!"

I agreed. Neither of us were wearing helmets. Shit had happened too quickly to bother. It was a good thing that the guys had stuck a million bobby pins into Code's wig or it probably wouldn't be staying on right now. One of the club bunnies had picked up all the supplies that OD would need for tonight's deception. She'd assured OD that this would work since Code had a bit longer hair. It was sort of floppy on the top, so we'd just rammed the pins into his head, ignoring his cursing and the punches he threw.

We were coming up to a semi. "Duck!" I shouted, then swerved under the trailer and came out on the other side, riding on the far left shoulder. It was a dangerous fucking risk. One wrong move and we could have ended up under the semi's back tires, but it worked. And the fucking SUV wasn't going to be able to get through that big rig to get at us. It gave me a few minutes of relief as I coasted along with the truck. My

eyes narrowed as I saw the exit I needed coming up.

“Kilo,” Code warned.

“I see it,” I said, but not loudly enough for him to hear over the road noise. Focusing on the plan forming in my mind, I waited. I only had one chance to do this right.

“Kilo!”

I gunned it. The bike lurched forward and I swerved in front of the semi, then across three more lanes of traffic and barreled down the exit ramp. The sounds of blaring horns followed us as we sped off into the night. I chuckled as I saw the SUV shoot past the exit. “Stupid fuckers.”

The smile slipped off my face as two more SUVs and a truck took our exit. “Shit.”

“Well, at least you lost one of them,” Code called out.

“They’ll catch up,” I replied in a grim tone.

“Remind me again why our guys were up ahead waiting for us?” Code asked.

Ignoring him, I dug my phone out of my pocket and slapped it onto the mount on my bike. It was dark as fuck out here now that we were racing away from I-10 and our destination was more a set of grid coordinates and not so much a location. The coords were already typed into the app and I was searching for that damn cut off that was going to bring us out onto shitty dirt roads. That was going to slow us down a lot. I needed every minute of our lead to keep ahead of the fuckers following us. I hadn’t even seen our own guys following and hoped to hell they were back there. I didn’t want to take all these fuckers on with just Code.

The phone screen lit up with a phone call. It was Lockout. Shit. Why was the president of the Viking's Rampage calling me now? That couldn't be good. There was the cut off. Glancing at the phone, I made the turn, revving the engine as the tires slipped on the loose sand. I managed to muscle the bike into staying upright as I took the corner too fast.

I went to punch at the phone screen to connect the call when we were rammed from behind. "Dammit!" I growled, gritting my teeth as my bike started the death wobble from hell. There was no saving it. I kept a neutral grip on the bars, eased off the gas, and leaned into the handlebars but between that hit and the sand we were going down.

A shout was pulled from my chest as the heavy ass motorcycle landed on my leg and I slid along with it, trapped. I hoped like fuck that Code had managed to fall clear of the bike and the road. If he got run over because I couldn't keep my bike upright, I was never going to forgive myself. Dust billowed as I slid to a stop. It wasn't even possible to pinpoint what hurt because it was like my body was one big area of road rash. But nothing was broken and I was alive. That was a mercy in itself.

I shoved the bike off my leg and staggered to my feet. Looking around in the dark, I searched for Code. He was running toward me, dress long gone. He'd probably pulled it off the first second he could and dropped it. We hadn't quite made it to the location, but it was close enough. It was dark out here, and there was no one around for miles, which was the whole point. We pulled our weapons and watched as the SUV that had rammed us idled a couple hundred yards up the road. They were assessing us. Just like we were observing them. Only they had the upper hand. For now.

"This is why," I told him, "we didn't have the guys waiting. We didn't even make it to the meet up spot."

Code nodded his head, his gun in his hand. "Yeah. Okay. Never question Ruck. Got it."

I chuckled. “He does have an uncanny ability to sense trouble and see all the damn outcomes of a fight before they even happen.”

Whatever happened next, we’d need to stall until our guys caught up. As much as I wanted to grab my phone and call Lock back, there wasn’t time. All I could do was hope that he was just updating us that they were at Roger’s. I had to trust that this was going to work out. My hand tightened on my gun grip as the SUV started a slow roll toward us.

CHAPTER 30

Camila

There was no holding back the gasp of pain as I came back to consciousness. I should, so the jerk who had me didn't know I was awake, but my head was shattering. I tried to move my hand to feel my temple to make sure it was still there and didn't have a crack slicing through it, but neither hand would move. Peeking open my eyes, I saw that my hands were bound in front of me with a zip tie.

I'd been dumped on the floor and was lying on my side. My cheek was pressed to the floor and my temple was throbbing like a shard of glass was impaling me. I wondered whether I'd hurt myself in the initial fall or if he'd thrown me on the floor so hard I'd hit my head then. Not that it really mattered.

He was on the couch nearby, muttering to himself as he held his phone to his ear. "Useless fucking people. Can't even answer phones. What's the point of instant communication if you won't answer your damn phone when a guy has the fucking thing you want?" He scowled over at me.

I wasn't sure if the dirty look was because I'd shot him, dug my thumb into the bullet wound and hurt him further, ran, or because he somehow was blaming me that my kidnapper wasn't taking his call. Maybe a mix of it all, since his glare was deepening by the minute. Or perhaps he was just hoping I'd never wake back up.

I wiggled my fingers, but there was no give in the zip tie. I grunted as I struggled to get into a sitting position. Yeah, that wasn't a good idea. I didn't want him to panic

and shoot me. “Can I please sit up?”

He’d finally looked away, and now he was ignoring me. He swore again, cocked his hand with the phone back, then blew out a breath and managed to keep from throwing it against the wall. “Fuck off,” he snarled at me when I opened my mouth again.

Okay. He isn’t in the mood to entertain me. Clearly.

“Kruzman, it’s Ashley. I have the package. I don’t know where the fuck you are but call me back as soon as you get this.”

Package? Does this dork think he’s some kind of spy?

I twisted so I was able to see him without having to crane my neck at all. As soon as he ended the call, I snorted out a laugh. It wasn’t smart to torment my captor, but how was I supposed to resist? “Your name is Ashley?”

His eyes whipped to mine and the look in them left no doubt that he wanted to snap my neck. “It’s my last name,” he thundered.

I bit my lips, trying to keep the mirth off my face. No wonder he likes hitting women. The way his expression darkened told me I wasn’t successful. “Ashley,” I asked, “can I sit up?”

I needed to sit up before my brain leaked out my ears, but moving on my own without his permission would give him too much of an excuse to kill me. All the pain was centering in the area where my head was resting on the floor.

Sighing he stood and, not so gently, yanked me into an upright position. “Now shut the fuck up so I can think.”

I'd only been asking for permission. The last thing I'd needed was his hands on me, but I remained quiet. He wasn't doing well. He was close to panicking. It was written all over his face. The last thing I wanted was to enrage him to the point where he followed through on the promise his gaze held. I didn't want to die. Looking around the room, I tried to be discreet as I searched for something to help me escape.

He paced back and forth across the room, tapping his phone against one palm. He was back to muttering, but I kept quiet this time.

This place was barren other than the couch, a worn armchair, and a huge TV. It was obvious that this was his home. This guy wasn't stupid enough to bring a woman he kidnapped to his home...which means he was arrogant enough to do exactly that. It was obvious he thought he was above the law.

I watched him walk back and forth for what seemed like forever as I worked my hands back and forth, trying to loosen the zip tie again. Huffing out an annoyed breath when it didn't budge, I gave up. I jumped when his phone rang, splitting the quiet that surrounded us.

"Kruzman. Took you long enough, I-" He broke off as Kruzman went off. He jerked the phone away from his ear and I could hear screaming and gunfire.

Swallowing, I tried not to worry. It sounded like Kruzman was in a war zone. I listened closely, praying that the guys were okay.

He brought the phone back to his ear when the yelling eased off. "What the fuck are you doing way out there?" He paused, listening, then swore. "I have her here with me." He was cut off again. "What do you mean she's there?" Rolling his eyes, Ashley faced me and held his phone out. The flash blinded me as he took a photo. "Look, I'm sending- Hello?" He stared down at his phone in shocked disgust. "That motherfucker hung up on me." He looked over at me in disbelief.

As if I was going to sympathize with him. I shrugged my shoulders. “Some people’s kids.”

His confusion deepened and he stared at me like he had no idea why the fuck I was agreeing with him.

I was mostly just trying to keep him pacified. What else was I supposed to do? I was tied up and pretty much at his mercy. Keeping on his good side meant I stayed alive. Or at least was delivered to Kruzman with less bruises.

A beep sounded and he tapped at his phone. “You’ve got to be shitting me,” he huffed, exasperated. He paused, considering his options, then sighed. “Alright.” He strode over to me and jerked me to my feet.

I gasped in pain as he wrenched my shoulder. “Ow.” Maybe I wasn’t going to have less bruises after all.

“Let’s go.”

“Where are we going?” I asked as he frog marched me out of his house.

“Gotta see a man about a girl.”

“That’s helpful,” I mumbled to myself as he stuffed me into the car and slammed the door.

This time he wasn’t stupid enough to leave it to chance. Even though I was tied up, he locked the car as he went around the front to get into the driver’s seat. Then he locked the car doors again. His face was a mask of rage and irritation rolled off him in waves as he started the engine.

I looked out the window and watched as the streetlights flashed by as we drove. I didn't know what was going on, or where exactly we were heading. All I could hope was that Kruzman didn't get past the guys so that he could come meet Ashley. If he did, then I was in deep shit. If only there was a way I could warn Kilo that I'd been taken. That Agent Ashley had every intention of handing me off to Kruzman as quickly as he could.

We merged onto the freeway and I almost wished it was daylight so that I could flag down another car somehow and ask for help. But there was no way they were going to notice a girl in the car next to them as they focused on the dark road. It was only lit by the streetlights and the sliver of a moon that was out tonight. It wasn't enough to illuminate me for long. Sighing, I faced forward.

"Don't worry, this won't take long," Ashley said.

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?" I wondered out loud. "You know he's probably going to kill me...right?"

"If he wasn't planning to, I'd ask if I could," he told me, tone flat and cold.

"You're insane," I whispered.

"I'm pissed off," he snapped. "You shot me! Do you have any idea how hard it's going to be for me to explain that at work?"

He'd kidnapped me. I stared at him with an incredulous look. He was blaming me for defending myself when he'd taken me away? Planned to sell me to another madman? He was telling me with a straight face that he wanted to murder me. Why wouldn't I fight back against that? I didn't voice any of this out loud. What was the point? He wasn't sane enough to be rational. The only thing he cared about was handing me over to Kruzman.

I fell into silence as I tried to prepare myself for whatever was about to happen next. If I was lucky the guys would find me. If not... It didn't bear thinking about. Blinking hard against the tears, I tried to remain calm and just stared at the road ahead.

CHAPTER 31

Kilo

“ S hit! Goddamn piece of-” I ducked behind one of the SUVs and waited for the barrage of fire to die down.

My brothers hadn't disappointed. No sooner had the sicarios' vehicles stopped than four men had gotten out. Ruck had driven through two like they were bowling pins. Bolo had followed suit on the other side. That took four out in one clean sweep. That didn't mean that there weren't at least twenty more piled in the SUVs and trucks, but we were off to a good start.

The guys had slid to a stop in front of us, canting the vehicles to provide all of us with some cover. It didn't fucking matter. These guys were moving in, circling around.

“You three,” Ruck ordered, pointing at Bolo, Relay, and Flir, “off to the right. You,” he said to me, OD, Code, and Strike, “take the left. Drifter, Merc, Hype and I will keep them busy here.”

We split up, running through the dark, ducking behind Saguaro cactus for concealment. The moon was out just enough to make it possible to see where we were going, though every damn time I fired my weapon it killed my night vision. I knew I wasn't the only one in this boat. We all were, even Kruzman's men.

We were moving fast, trying to outflank the men creeping through the desert as they tried to get the jump on us, when Code yelped. Spinning, I aimed my Glock at one of

the men who had Code by the back of his shirt. I couldn't really see their faces, but the man plucked at Code's wig—which was still stuck firmly on his head thanks to Diamond and her magical bobby pins.

“¿Qué chingados?” The guy muttered in confusion.

Code let out a chuckle and did his best to point his gun at the asshole holding onto him. “Hasta luego, cock sucker,” he said, then pulled the trigger.

That was how the second round of the firefight started. Something told me that Code had wanted to say something like that for the majority of his life, so I couldn't really blame him.

I dove behind the world's worst cover, a rock that wasn't high enough up to actually protect my back as I laid on my face in the dirt. Spitting sand out of my mouth, I waited to see where the enemy ended up. I could see the shadow of my brothers as they crouched behind rocks and cactus, doing exactly what I was, waiting for the threat to show their asses.

Kruzman's men were whispering back and forth to one another, the sound carrying through the darkness as the others continued fighting in the distance.

“What are they saying?” Strike hissed.

I chuckled. “That Code is a man. The others don't believe it even though the guy he shot is insisting.”

“Too bad I missed his fucking heart,” Code muttered from somewhere off to my left.

“He's belly aching enough that I'm not sure he's going to be in this fight for much longer,” I relayed to them. “I think there's six over here, including the injured guy.”

“Strike, Code, see if you can distract them,” OD ordered. “Kilo, go around to the right. I’ll take the left. See if you can keep up,” he taunted.

"You got it," I said, bellying my way through the sand. I knew what he meant. He thought he was going to kill more of these fuckers than me.

No one was willing to start firing first because it would give away their position, but as soon as we started moving, Strike broke the standoff. He and Code started firing toward where the voices had come from. It wasn’t the most accurate way to target them since sound carried, but it would keep these fuckers busy.

As soon as the sicarios started returning fire, I got into a crouch and started making my way faster through the desert. A pained sound came from behind me and I cursed. I was hoping one of the guys wasn’t hit, but none of us had much for cover other than the dark of night, so I aimed in on a shadow hiding behind a cactus to the right of me. I knew it wasn’t OD, because he would be further to the west. I aimed in on the flash of a muzzle and pulled the trigger. The shooter slumped against the Saguaro.

Moving closer, I leaned in until I was almost nose to nose with him, relieved to see that it was one of Kruzman’s men. Theoretically, Strike and Code were behind me and OD was clear of this area for now, but at some point, we were going to meet. I just hoped it was before one of us killed the other.

I’m going to have lean on Flir to buy night vision goggles. He’ll do it if Ruck orders them.

Patting the shooter’s pocket, I shoved full magazines into my pockets. I also took a knife before I continued on. Later, I’d back track—when there was time to clean up the dead bodies and we’d take anything else of value—but for now, I needed to take out five more of these fucks before OD did, or I’d never hear the end of it. He considered himself the better shooter, better killer really. I snorted to myself. He

wasn't. I knew I was.

I inched along, creeping toward the next target. He wasn't shooting at Strike and Code nearly as quickly as the last. It made me wonder if this was the injured man. Fuck. I hoped not. If there were only six of them and I killed an already injured one, OD wasn't going to count that as a full kill, especially since the kid was the one who wounded him. Code might get half a point. I was going to be behind in body count, though. I put my gun down, palming the knife as I moved. It had a nice balance to it. Flicking my wrist, I sent it flipping through the air as soon as fire lit up the fucker's face as he shot at my friends.

The gurgling sound told me I'd stuck the landing. That had to count for something, throwing a knife in darkness like this and hitting him in the throat? Yeah, double points. That has to be worth double the points. I swore to myself as I patted him down. Blood was everywhere. This was definitely the guy who'd grabbed Code before.

Now that I had the knife, I had a way of staying hidden. The guns made us visible everytime we shot them. I grinned to myself, then swore as a shot rang out and dust kicked up next to me. I didn't have time to react before someone tackled me into the sand. Skidding on my face in the dirt, I elbowed the fucker on my back. I was back to spitting dirt out of my mouth as we exchanged blows. His grunts and groans fueled me as we fought. I ignored the blows I received, though I knew I would be feeling them later, once the adrenaline wore off.

"Don't move," someone said from behind me. His voice was unfamiliar.

I waited, staring down at the asshole under me. His face was streaked in blood. It looked black against his skin in the dark.

"You should have just handed over the girl," the man behind me said. "Now you will

die instead.”

The shot rang out and I flinched, then reevaluated.

“Holy shit. Kilo? You good?” OD moved toward me, nothing but a shadow as he walked.

“Yeah. Thanks. Damn.” I took the knife and plunged it into the guy I was sitting on, putting him out of my misery. “Good shot.” Fuck, when this was over OD was going to hold this one over my head, even if I shot more than him.

“Told ya I’d win this one,” he said with a chuckle.

“Oh fuck you. I don’t think you even came- Move!” I bellowed as another shadow came running at OD. He was close enough now that I could see his face and his eyes narrowed, but he ducked and rolled to his right. I let the knife fly.

The breath was knocked out of me as I hit my back, the body limp on top of me. He’d dove at OD, missed thanks to my warning, and hit me instead. I dumped him off me and wheezed as I felt around for a pulse. The knife was sticking out of his chest. He was dead. I flopped back onto the ground.

OD sat down beside me. “Thanks.”

“That’s four,” I said, taunting him. Better still, we were even in the saving each other’s ass department.

“I didn’t kill the asshole who was wounded. Which means you did, so that’s three and a half at most,” he pointed out. “You don’t get four for that.”

“Would you two quit counting shit?” Strike asked as he and Code jogged up. “We

need to get back to the others.”

“Besides, it makes me feel like Flir is here,” Code complained. “If I wanted to hear counting I’d have gone with the other team.”

Laughing, I let Strike drag me to my feet while Code did the same for OD and we started loping back toward the vehicles. I was hoping the other guys had taken care of their guys just as quickly so this could be over and done with. We needed to figure out if Kruzman was actually out here or not.

“Who the fuck is that?”

I looked over at Overdrive’s question and frowned as another set of headlights crept down the dirt road toward us. “Fuck. I don’t know. Better not be more of Kruzman’s damn men.”

“Better not be cops,” Strike said.

“Shit,” OD muttered. “Let’s go.”

We gave up all pretenses of staying quiet and sprinted through the dark toward the road.

CHAPTER 32

Camila

It was so dark out here. We really were in the middle of nowhere and I was starting to get worried that Ashley was just going to kill me and dump my body where it wouldn't be found. I sat up a little straighter as lights came into view. It was hard to say I was relieved though, because I wasn't sure what was going on. There were vehicles parked on and near the little dirt road, doors open, lights shining, but no one was around. "Where are we?"

Ashley didn't answer. He got out of the car, came around to my side and yanked open the door. There was no avoiding him as he pulled me out of the car and started dragging me toward the vehicles. "Kruzman!" he bellowed into the night.

My heart sank just hearing that name. It was like the darkness was pressing in around us. My chest was constricted as I struggled against his hold. I didn't want to go willingly to my own death. I leaned forward and sank my teeth into Ashley's forearm. At least he wasn't coming out of this kidnapping without his own damn scars.

Pain exploded in my face as he backhanded me with his free hand. Then the world spun as he tossed me like a rag doll. I skidded to a stop in a pool of lights.

"There! Proof enough that I've got her?"

Looking over my shoulder, I followed Ashley's gaze and my heart clenched inside my chest.

Kruzman stepped out of the shadows, though he kept to the outer rim of the head lights so he wasn't in full view. Kruzman's eyes narrowed on me. He was exactly as I remembered him from that night. Dark hair slicked back with too much gel, high quality suit—though it looked a little worse for wear now—and a grim expression on his face that bordered on manic. Some would say he was a handsome man, in a severe sort of way, but those people probably hadn't had family killed by him. And they weren't at his feet now, with a gun pointed at their head. He was hideous to me. The epitome of evil.

I shoved to my knees as he studied me. I didn't want to die lying down. Didn't want to die on my knees either, but if I got to my feet, he'd probably shoot me. So I stayed where I was, eyes bouncing between Kruzman and Ashley. More men were appearing out of the darkness.

“Kruzman!”

Sucking in a breath, I looked around. Kilo's voice had echoed so I wasn't sure where it was coming from, but I knew that was him. Relief that he was alive hit me hard. Then fear took back over. I didn't want him to get hurt trying to rescue me. I did want him to hurt Kruzman. And Ashley.

“Let her go.”

Kilo, Ruck, and Overdrive stepped into the light on the opposite side of the circle from Kruzman and his men. They had their own guns pointed at the sicarios.

“Shoot me and you risk her life,” Kruzman said. His voice was rich and cultured. He was good at hiding the monster inside. It was almost believable that he was just some rich businessman. Not a cold blooded killer.

I looked over my shoulder and met Kilo's eyes. I'm sorry. He would get the message,

I knew it.

His gaze softened for a moment, then he focused back on Kruzman. “We have what you want. What you’re looking for.”

I searched Kilo’s face, wondering what he meant. Then I turned my head and watched Kruzman. That was where the danger was, so I didn’t want to turn my back to him.

“Speaking of having what you want,” Ashley said. “I brought you the girl. Give me my money and I’ll leave.”

His fight wasn’t with my bikers. And he didn’t have any loyalty to Kruzman. The man was just a snake and a coward. I shook my head as Kruzman glared at him.

“You’ll have it once I’m done here,” Kruzman told him.

Ashley shook his head. “No way. If you die, I won’t get paid.”

“Then perhaps you should stay and make sure I don’t die,” Kruzman suggested.

I scooted backward a few inches while their attention was trained on each other. The halo of light was like a golden spotlight and it wasn’t safe for me or the guys if I remained in the center of it.

“Ah, ah, ah, don’t move.”

I looked up at Kruzman as I froze. His focus was back on me once more.

He walked toward me, his men keeping their weapons trained on Kilo and the others while his gun was pointed at my head. He shook his head. “You’ve caused me a lot of

trouble over the years, little girl.” His eyes flicked up to Kilo. “And you still are.”

“You killed my father,” I snapped.

“Also a troublemaker. He stole from me.”

I didn’t know what he was talking about, and didn’t care. He was a liar. And a murderer. All I wanted was to make it out of this with my own life and the lives of the men protecting me intact. My hands clenched into fists in the sand at my side.

“We’ll give you what you want,” Ruck told Kruzman. “But we take the girl and walk away.”

I was a wrench in their plans. Kilo had told me they didn’t want Kruzman to leave because he’d always be a threat. That if he got away tonight they’d have to hunt him down afterward. But because I was here, they were willing to make some kind of exchange to protect me. I hated that they were in this position.

“No,” Kruzman snarled. “I’ve been chasing her for too fucking long. She comes with me and if you don’t want her to die in front of you, you’ll let us walk.”

“Mercy.”

I looked over my shoulder. Kilo was staring at me, then his eyes flicked to the right. He wanted me out of the way. I gave the barest of nods, to let him know I understood. This was about to get bad and being in the middle of these two opposing sides was a terrible idea. I faced forward once more, waiting for whatever the signal was going to be. I didn’t want to move before they were ready.

“Not happening,” Ruck told Kruzman.

“Go!” Kilo shouted.

My gaze met Kruzman’s as he looked down at me. I jumped to my feet, tossed the sand in my fists into his eyes, then dove off to the right, rolling under a truck. I bit back a scream as gunfire split the night.

“Please be okay,” I whispered to myself as I hid. Guilt was heavy in my stomach as the men fought for me while I laid here, but I had no weapon and if Kruzman got a hold of me again it would do more harm than good. It was better that I was out of the way so I couldn’t be used to tie their hands again.

I bellied backward, trying to come out on the other side of the truck so that I could find a better hiding spot when something grabbed my ankle. Gasping, I looked over and saw Ashley there. Asshole. I kicked with my free leg and my sneaker hit him in the face. It felt great, but it didn’t stop him from jerking me out from under the truck. I sputtered as dirt flew into my face and mouth.

He yanked me to my feet and once again started dragging me. At least it was away from the battle this time. “He knows I have you. We’re going to let those fuckers fight it out and then I’ll get my money afterward.”

“What if Kruzman dies?” I huffed, trying to get my feet under me so that he wasn’t just dragging me along. His stride was much bigger than mine, so I was having to take more steps just to keep up.

“Then your friends there can pay to get you back.” He scowled down at me. “Either way, I’m getting my money.”

I tugged at the hand holding me, trying to break his grip, but he was too strong. The last thing I wanted was to be in Kruzman’s hands again, but I also didn’t want to go with Ashley. And I really didn’t want him to profit off all this. Denying him his

money was the only way to really hurt him. If I could get away and run off into the desert, he'd have no bargaining chip.

Clasping my hands together, I threw them into his side as hard as I could. The small grunt he gave didn't give me much hope, but I kept hitting him. He must have gotten tired of me because he stopped and threw me over his shoulder. I kicked and hit at any exposed flesh I could find.

He heaved a sigh and I saw his elbow swing toward me too late. It was lights out again.

CHAPTER 33

Kilo

We ducked behind the SUVs once Camila made her move. She'd scrambled under one of the sicario's vehicles and now that she was out of the way it was open season on these assholes once more. Kruzman was staggering back behind his line of men, rubbing at his eyes. My girl had tossed a bunch of dirt in his face. My smile was full of pride as I aimed my rifle and took down one of the bastards.

Our brothers had waited in the shadows, circling around to the sides so that they could take out any who tried to run off on us. We were corralling them in so it would be like shooting rats in a trap.

"Kilo!"

I looked over at Merc's shout and saw that filthy fucking FBI agent dragging Camila away from the fight.

"Go get her," Ruck ordered.

Leaving them to take out the rest of Kruzman's men, I ran around the vehicles and after my target. The headlights lit up the area enough to see that Camila was fighting him, trying to keep from letting him drag her off. When he tossed her over his shoulder, then elbowed her, I growled and poured on more speed. Running through the sand in my boots was something I had years of experience with, but the FBI dick seemed to be struggling, especially with Camila's dead weight. She was limp over his

shoulder and seeing her unmoving made fury build inside me.

As soon as I saw him throw her to the ground earlier, I knew I was going to kill him. He'd touched what was mine. Tried to trade her life away. He was going to pay for that. I didn't dare fire at him. I could hit Camila, so I dropped my rifle and tackled his legs from behind. I hoped Camila would forgive me for the way her body hit the ground, but I couldn't focus on her right now.

He came up swinging, but I blocked the head shot with my arm. Returning the punch, I landed a body blow that had him grunting in pain. Kicking out, I swept his legs out from beneath him and followed him down. He seemed to be favoring his left arm, so I swung my fist there. As soon as I landed a punch to the left side of his chest he let out a cry of pain and started to fight like a wounded animal.

He managed to pin my leg and roll us in the dirt. "I'll fucking kill her for this," he snarled as we grappled for the dominant position.

This wasn't Shawn. It was more like the fight with Dustin from before. This man was trained, just like me, and he knew how to fight. It wasn't a clean sweep that I was going to win easily. But I had more I was fighting for. Camila was lying unconscious, sprawled out, nearby and I wasn't going to let him get his hands on her again.

Blocking another blow with my left arm, I grabbed the Glock I had holstered at my back but he managed to knock it out of my hand before I could use it. The agent ended up on top, and he'd managed to grab his pistol. My arms made an x as I tried to keep him from pointing that fucking gun at my face. If he pointed it at me, this was all going to be over and Camila would be in danger again.

Our muscles strained as we fought for control of the gun. We were silent, other than harsh breathing, eyes locked, faces pulled back in grimaces while locked in this battle to the death. He had the upper hand, for now. But I wasn't giving up and I was a

stubborn bastard. Releasing my right arm, I held his gun away with one hand on his wrist and hit him in the side as hard as I could. The gun slipped closer to my head.

Planting my feet, I prepared to try to flip him, when a familiar voice started screaming.

“Get off him!”

I stared in amazement as Camila’s head appeared next to the agent’s. She’d jumped on his back and had her bound hands around his neck. There was blood all over her temple and face, but here she was riding this asshole around like a bucking bronco.

He shoved off of me, trying to pull her from his back. It gave me the opening I needed to rip the gun out of his hand, but with Camila directly behind him, I couldn’t use it. Dropping the gun, I pulled out the knife I’d taken off the sicario. This damn thing had just become my lucky weapon.

The FBI agent froze when my knife plunged into the side of his neck then yanked right back out. Shock spread over his face as he stopped reaching for Camila and grabbed the gushing wound.

Wanting to make sure he was dead, I stuck him again, this time through his hand into his throat, and twisted the blade. He dropped like a rock.

Reaching out, I grabbed Camila to steady her, cut the zip-ties from her hands, then pulled her into my arms. “You okay?” I asked, breathing heavily.

“Yes. Are you?” Her hands were roaming over me.

I grabbed them and pulled them up to my lips, kissing them before leaning down and kissing her. “I’m fine,” I said once I pulled away. “Sounds like it’s almost over.”

“How can you tell?”

“There’s only occasional shots now,” I explained. “They’re tracking down any of Kruzman’s men who tried to escape.”

I wrapped an arm around her shoulders as we walked back toward the vehicles. Drifter had been a field medic in the Army and I wanted him to take a look at Camila the first chance he got. I wasn’t worried about what we were walking back into. We’d outnumbered Kruzman and his men since we’d already killed a bunch of them before the FBI agent showed up with Camila. She’d been the only thing stopping us from killing them outright the minute they’d showed back up at the vehicles.

Still, I held my finger to my lips and had Camila wait by the outermost vehicle while I walked around. I wasn’t about to bring her into a dangerous situation. Grinning at what I saw, I motioned for her to join me again.

She crept around the side of the SUV and gasped when she saw Kruzman kneeling in the middle of the lights. Ruck and Hype had their guns trained on him. “It’s over?” she whispered.

“Almost,” I replied.

It was silent now. My brothers began materializing from the darkness like ghosts. Kruzman had brought these particular demons on by threatening what belonged to me. I didn’t feel an ounce of sympathy for what was about to happen to him. That didn’t mean I wanted my girl watching it though.

“Drifter,” I called out. He walked over, eyes already zeroed in on the wound on Camila’s head. When the agent had elbowed her it had split open her skin and she was still bleeding. “Can you take care of her?”

“Yeah, I brought my bag with me.”

His bag was this magical fucking thing that seemed to have any necessary medical supply known to man inside.

“Can you do it away from here?” I muttered.

He grinned over at me. “Yeah. We’ll be back at the SUVs.” He led Camila away.

As much as I didn’t want to let her out of my sight, I knew she’d be safe. “Merc, Flir, go with them.”

Neither said a word, just fell in line behind Drifter, guns out and ready in case there were any sicarios left.

I stepped into the light.

Ruck glanced over. “She alright?”

“Yeah, Drifter’s looking her over.”

“Good.”

“We alright?” I asked.

“Some minor wounds,” Overdrive answered. “Nothing bad.”

“Anyone left?” I asked.

“Just him,” Ruck said, motioning with his weapon.

I met Ruck's gaze. "I'd like to be the one to kill him."

"I figured as much," my president said with a dark smile. "We saved him for you."

"Thanks, Prez," I said, clasping hands with him in a firm shake. He knew from that move alone what I couldn't say in that moment. That I owed them. They were my brothers. My family. And still, I owed them more than I could ever repay. Not for my life, but for the life of my old lady.

He jerked his head toward Kruzman. "Let's get this done. Just in case, by some run of bad luck, someone has heard all this."

I walked around to the front of Kruzman. He glared up at me, belligerent in the face of his own death. "You should have taken my offer," I told him.

"I don't take deals," he said, spitting on the toe of my boot.

"And I don't let fuckers live who mess with my family."

"This had nothing to do with you," he replied.

"Camila is mine," I growled. "So it had everything to do with me."

He narrowed his eyes. "I'll never stop coming for her."

I chuckled, looking up at my brothers as we stood in a half circle around him. They were laughing along with me, knowing what was about to happen. "What the fuck makes you think you're going to get out of this alive? You tried to kill my old lady. You'll pay for that with your life."

He shook his head. "I have money-"

“I thought you didn’t make deals?” Overdrive taunted.

“The time for deals is gone,” I told him. Even if he hadn’t promised to keep coming after her, I was never letting him live. He was always going to die here tonight. Holding up my gun—it hadn’t taken me long to find it near the agent’s body—I paused, enjoying the panic that flared to life in his eyes. He opened his mouth to beg and I pulled the trigger.

The bullet went right between his eyes and a frozen expression of shock and panic remained on his face. Now it was over.

CHAPTER 34

Camila

Kilo's arms wrapped around me and I buried my face in his chest. The shaking had stopped somewhere between Drifter bandaging up my head and us eventually loading into the SUVs. Most of the guys had stayed behind to get rid of the evidence that anyone had been out there. I didn't ask Kilo what that meant because I didn't need the specifics. I knew it meant getting rid of the bodies.

Kruzman was dead. So was Ashley. And despite the fact that I'd never been a violent person before all this, I was glad. So relieved. We were safe. In fact, I was a bit numb. It seemed strange that after four years of fear and running, it was over. It would sink in eventually, but for now, I was just glad that Kilo was holding me.

I was clinging to him, but not because I was scared or traumatized. I was just so glad he was safe. Drifter had patched up a couple of others. Code had a bullet graze his leg. And Flir had been shot in the arm, but neither seemed worse for wear. Overdrive and Flir were in the SUV with us as Ruck drove us back toward the city.

No one was speaking, but I caught them giving me glances. "I'm fine," I said, looking up at Kilo and smiling. "Thanks for the rescue."

He chuckled and brushed his hand over my hair, being careful not to hit my bandage. "Anytime, Mercy. Never felt much like a white knight, but I won the prettiest princess anyway."

I shook my head. His smile was infectious, so I returned it. A loud noise made me jump in his arms.

“Sorry,” Ruck muttered, tapping the phone that was secured to the dash of the SUV.
“Yeah?”

“Oh shit, wasn’t actually expecting you to answer-”

“Give me the phone, Toxic,” another voice said. “Ruck? It’s Lockout.”

“What’s going on?” Ruck asked.

“We’ve been trying to call you. I’ve got my men out searching for Camila. Some fucking asshole showed up ten minutes before us, took her from Roger’s place,” Lock told him. “I’ve had Riptide trying to track the car he put her in through different cameras around the city. Found a house we think he had her in, but they’re not here.”

“Don’t touch anything in that house,” Ruck told him, “or if you have, wipe it all down. That asshole was an FBI Agent.”

There was a pause, then Lock asked, “Was?”

“Yeah, he brought Camila out to the desert to Kruzman.”

“He dead?”

“Yeah. They both are. We have Camila and are heading back to Roger’s.”

“Good. So will we. Her family will be relieved.”

“My gun,” I said, grabbing Kilo’s arm. “It’s somewhere in the wash behind Ashley’s

house. I shot him.”

Kilo grinned and ran his fingers over my cheek. “Good girl.”

“We’ll find the gun,” Lockout said, before Ruck even had a chance to ask.

“Is Roger okay?” I asked. Everyone looked at me and I gave Ruck an apologetic look for interrupting again. “Ashley hit him pretty hard in the head with his gun.”

“Yeah,” Lock said, answering my question. “Got a nasty bump, but otherwise he’s going to be fine.”

“We’ll see you back there,” Ruck told him and hung up the phone.

“Who the fuck is Ashley?” Overdrive asked the moment the call ended.

“That was the FBI Agent’s name,” I told them.

Silence descended, then they began laughing.

“His name was Ashley?” Kilo asked.

“It was his last name, apparently,” I said with my own laugh.

“Fucking stupid name,” Ruck said with a chuckle. “No wonder he was a little bitch.”

“And you got your ass handed to you by a bitch man named Ashley,” Overdrive taunted Kilo.

“I didn’t get my ass handed to me,” Kilo replied, scowling at his friend. “You’re just pissed that I won this round.”

“Won?” I asked.

“Little game we play sometimes,” Overdrive told me. “And you didn’t win.”

“The fuck I didn’t.”

“Kruzman doesn’t count in your favor. Ruck saved him for you. And a man named Ashley counts for negative one. I win.”

“Bullshit! You don’t get to count someone as a negative. I still won without Kruzman,” Kilo declared, squeezing me close. It was as though he somehow knew I needed comfort at just hearing Kruzman’s name.

I was determined to rid myself of the stain Kruzman had left on my life, but it was going to take some time. When a man hunted you, and tried to kill you multiple times, over four years, he inspired a good amount of fear.

The drive didn’t seem to take nearly as long as it had when Ashley had been taking me out to the desert to my demise. Crazy how fear seemed to slow things down. Kissing Kilo’s lips with a quick peck, I jumped out of the SUV and ran toward the house.

“Mercy! Wait! There could still be a threat!” He cursed and followed after me.

Pausing at the door, I considered my options. If I burst through, the bikers on the other side could kill me. They didn’t know who I was and even though I looked like Mama and Carmen, they may not recognize that fast enough. I looked up as Kilo caught up and wrapped an arm around my shoulders.

“Good choice,” he told me. “We’re going to have to have a talk about safety, Woman.” He knocked on the door. “Friendlies incoming!”

“What does that mean?” I asked.

“Just letting them know it’s us,” Kilo replied with a wink, but he still stepped in front of me as he opened the door.

The fact that this man was shielding me from harm with his body was profoundly humbling. That he and his family had put themselves on the line was mind blowing. It was the ultimate declaration of love. Why else would he do any of this?

“Kilo, doing good?” One of the men inside the house asked.

“All good, Hellfire. Thanks for watching out for them.”

Stepping inside the house, I placed my hand on Kilo’s arm. When he looked down at me, I swallowed back the tears that wanted to burst free. “I love you.”

His lips kicked up at one corner. “Love you, too, Mercy.”

“Whoa, hang on a minute,” a man with a heavy southern drawl said. A grin was spreading over his face.

“Did he just say love, Hush?” A third man asked, looking perplexed.

“Sure did, Butcher. You know, that thing you feel for Isla? That’s what he’s talkin’ about,” Hush told him.

“Fuck off. I know what love is.”

“Sure, now you do,” the man who’d originally answered the phone said, folding his arms over his chest. “Thanks to us. The man has more than one feeling now. Who ever thought it possible?”

“I like to think I had something to do with it,” the woman Butcher had an arm wrapped around said.

I was guessing that was Isla. Looking around at all the new faces, I tried to take it all in. “Thank you so much,” I said. My voice caused them all to stop their bickering—which sounded exactly like Kilo and his brothers when they were all poking at each other—and stare at me. I twisted my hands together, trying to hold back the waves of emotions that were battering at me. I didn’t want to cry in front of all these tough looking men, and the bad ass woman who was holding a rifle in one hand.

Eyeing the weapon, I gave her a weak smile. “Thank you,” I repeated, “for coming to help us. For protecting my family and searching for me. I... I honestly don’t know how to tell you how grateful I am.”

“Jesus,” Hush drawled, eyes softening as he stared at me.

“She’s too damn sweet for you, Kilo,” the second voice from the phone call said. That was Lockout, the president of the Tucson Chapter of the Viking’s Rampage. Not only did I recognize the voice, but he had the same authority that Ruck wore like armor. Invisible, but everyone here knew the two men standing side by side were in charge of their respective groups.

The men all started agreeing and teasing Kilo, which he took with his signature grin. He nudged me and then jerked his head a little. I looked over and saw my family there, behind the wall of muscles and tattoos the bikers made.

Skirting past a man who was even bigger than Bolo—Kilo had called him Hellfire—though not by much, I threw myself into the waiting arms of my mother and sister. The sound of the men talking as everyone came inside the house was muffled though, because both Prissy and Roger draped themselves over my back,

creating a circular embrace with me at the center.

I couldn't believe that not only were we safe, but now our family had grown by leaps and bounds, and in such a short amount of time. The length of time we'd known these men, and this woman, was insignificant, though. Not when they'd gone to bat for us in such a monumental way. I'd always owe them my gratitude. I'd love them all until I was nothing but dust. Sinking into the hugs, I let the fear and unease I'd known for four years float away.

CHAPTER 35

Camila

We were at Roger's for what felt like hours, but was probably less than one. It was nice getting to know the Tucson guys, well, those who'd come tonight to help. Lockout had mentioned that a few had stayed behind with their families. But they were all too happy to tell me all about them. I was hoping one of these days I'd get to meet their wives. Mary was the only friend I'd made here, besides those Kilo had introduced me to, and now that I knew I wouldn't have to leave this city, I was eager to meet new people. To make friends again.

At some point, Drifter and Strike showed up, but somewhere between one of Toxic's stories about drinking and women, Overdrive and Strike disappeared again. There was probably a lot to do and though I wanted to personally thank each of the Saint's Outlaws men, I knew it would have to wait. I focused back on Toxic again. He was very handsome, but seemed a little wild. "Is that story true?" I whispered to Kilo. I was once again perched on his lap.

"I'd bet my store on it," Kilo muttered. He narrowed his eyes on me in a playful scowl. "Don't go falling in love with him, Mercy. He's a player."

I shook my head, giving him a soft smile. "How could I do that when I've already fallen for you?"

Both arms wrapped around me as he squeezed me close. "Good. It better stay that way."

Leaning my head against his chest, I listened to the men catch up. It sounded like they were all long lost friends who hadn't seen each other in years as they joked and laughed. I was beginning to realize that Kilo's family extended so much further than his club brothers. It included other men in other clubs. They were all bound by not only the biker lifestyle, but by their military backgrounds. Each of them had biological families out there, yet this was the one they chose. The one they'd always choose. I was honored to now be included in that.

"Time to go home and get some sleep, Baby."

I lifted my head, looking up at my biker. I must have started dozing off in his lap because he was carrying me out the door. "No," I sighed.

"Yes."

I didn't fight him after that. He put me in the SUV and I yawned as he drove us back to our houses. By the time we got there, I was more alert.

"We'll sleep at my house," he said.

I figured we would because we'd been doing that for weeks now. "Okay, but I want to get some of my own pajamas."

"I'll give you one of my shirts," he replied, tugging on my hand as we walked toward his house.

Pausing, I looked over at him. "I want my own clothes." His eyes flicked toward my house. "What's going on?" I asked, finally cluing into the fact that he didn't want me to go over there.

"Nothing, it's just- Wait!"

I tugged my hand out of his and hurried into my home. What I found inside made me screech to a halt.

Overdrive and Strike both looked up when I came through the door. A sheepish smile spread over Overdrive's face as he held the front legs of one of our dining room chairs. Strike had the back of the seat. And Shawn was tied up in the chair. All three were staring over at me with shocked expressions, like I just caught them in the middle of hiding a body. Which is exactly what they were doing. Only this body was alive and moving.

"Mmm hhhmmm mmm," Shawn said from behind his gag. His eyes were wide, begging me for help.

"What in the..." I trailed off, mouth hanging open.

"I was going to tell you about that," Kilo said from behind me. He grabbed me by the shoulders and I turned my head to keep the three in my line of view as he walked me back toward the front door. "I'll explain."

"O-kay," I whispered. Tonight had been really long. And ending it with Shawn tied up in my home was just...a lot. I let him lead me away.

"At least they cleaned the piss up first," Kilo muttered.

"What?"

"Nothing. Come on. Good girl," Kilo said in a soothing voice as we walked into his house. He brought me back to his bedroom and sat me on the bed while he started the shower in the adjoining bathroom.

"What was that?" I finally asked.

“He showed up right before the sicarios did.”

My eyes widened. “Why?”

“Claimed he wanted to apologize for being an asshole.”

“You didn’t believe him?”

Kilo shrugged, then tapped the underside of my elbows to get me to lift my arms. He stripped me so fast and efficiently it made my head spin. “Doesn’t matter either way. This was a warning to stay away from you.”

I searched his gaze. It didn’t bother me that I was sitting on his bed naked. Especially since he was beginning to strip his own clothes off. There were blood spatters on his shirt. I knew none of it was from him, otherwise Drifter would have insisted on examining him. “Wait...” I said, realization hitting. “Are they going to kill him?” I stood up off the bed, horror dawning. Kruzman and Ashley deserved what they got. I believed that with every inch of my being. I wasn’t sure what Shawn did or didn’t deserve, so the idea that Overdrive and Strike were hauling him off somewhere to kill him made me pause to ponder that moral dilemma.

“No,” Kilo said, taking my face in his hands. My shoulders relaxed because I believed him. “They’re just going to be taking him to the bus station.”

“The bus... Why?”

“He’s leaving town,” Kilo said with a determined glint in his eyes.

Thinking about that, I accepted the answer. It was better than any alternative I could think of. I wrapped my arms around Kilo and let out a heavy sigh.

“You’re tired. Come on. Let’s get you cleaned up so you can sleep.”

“I don’t know if I can,” I admitted.

“I do,” Kilo replied. “You were half asleep at Roger’s. You missed him bringing out dinner.”

“Aw,” I complained. “I was looking forward to that meal he made.”

“It’s gone now, Baby,” he said, bringing me into the bathroom and guiding me into the shower.

My muscles relaxed under the hot water. And he was right. My eyes were getting heavy as he soaped me up and rinsed me down. When his strong fingers massaged shampoo into my hair, I moaned out loud. I couldn’t help myself, it felt too good. It was nice to be clean after everything that had happened. It was like all the horrors and terror washed down the drain with the soap suds.

I leaned against Kilo’s back as we switched positions and he washed himself. Being close was nice, but mostly I was cuddled up to him so I didn’t freeze to death. His huge body didn’t allow any of the hot water to escape past and my teeth were starting to chatter. Right as I began to consider getting out and drying off so I wasn’t so cold, he turned off the water.

“Next time we do that I’ll turn off the damn AC,” he told me with a grin as he dried me off. He was gentle and attentive, and it made me fall even deeper for him. What woman didn’t dream about a man who was a dangerous killer to those who threatened her, but a huge teddy bear when they were alone? I didn’t know that was what I wanted, but he was everything I needed. I was sure of that.

By the time we were dry and cuddled up together in bed, my mind was getting fuzzy.

“Kilo?”

“Hmmm?” he rumbled. He was brushing his fingers along my arm while I was tucked up against his side.

“Is it really over?” I asked. “Or...do you think someone...else...will come after me?”

He squeezed me close, leaning over and brushing a kiss against my forehead. “It’s over,” he promised me.

I heard the words he didn’t say out loud. I’ll make sure of it. There was no way to head off sleep. I was warm and safe. Nothing would ever hurt me again because I knew Kilo would be there with me to face whatever came our way. Smiling, I rested in his arms.

CHAPTER 36

Kilo

I t had taken me a long time to fall asleep, despite the fact that I'd been exhausted. Every time I closed my eyes, I watched Ashley shove Camila down to the ground inside that circle of headlights. I saw the gleam on the barrel of the gun that Kruzman had pointed at her head. The terror and apology in her eyes when she looked back at me.

Fuck me. That could have gone so badly.

I was grateful it had worked out. That my brothers had been there to back me up. That my woman was lying in my arms right now as the sun shone through the window. The AC kicked into gear, telling me it was later in the afternoon as the machine struggled to keep up with the heat outside the house.

Stretching, I opened my eyes and looked down at Camila. Her dark lashes rested on her cheeks and her soft lips curved into a little smile. I was glad she seemed to be having good dreams. She deserved them after what she went through yesterday. She'd given us a little rundown on how Ashley had come to Roger's home.

There was no way for us to know he'd already been watching Camila's house. Or that he'd followed us. I guess in a way it worked out for the best because we killed two birds with one stone. Now there was no one left who would come for my old lady. All we had to do was wait for the FBI to realize that Kruzman was in the wind. Or that was what they would think. They'd assume he'd disappeared in order to avoid

being prosecuted and sent to prison. The guys made sure no one would find the bodies out there in the desert.

“Morning,” Camila said, her eyes still closed. Her voice was soft and groggy.

“Afternoon,” I told her.

“Mmmm.” Her smile widened. “It’s Friday. That means we can stay in bed all day.”

I was pretty sure she didn’t mean it like that, but my dick stirred anyway. “Good point.” Rolling, I placed my hands on either side of her head.

Her eyes fluttered open and she smiled up at me. She reached up and cupped my face. “Should I say thank you again?”

“No,” I growled. “But you can show me.” I gave her a cocky grin before I leaned down and kissed her. She softened under me, opening so that my tongue could tangle with hers.

Fuck, she tasted good.

I pulled back and she was breathless. “Was that enough of a thank you?”

“Nope.”

She laughed and pushed on my chest. “I want to brush my teeth.”

“Nope. I’m about to have my breakfast.” I shoved the t-shirt she was wearing up and sucked her nipple into my mouth.

She gasped, her back arching, and her fingers threading into my hair. “Kilo!”

I switched to her other nipple, tugging on it with my teeth before I released her and continued kissing down her stomach.

“This seems a little backward. Wasn’t I supposed to be thanking you?” she asked as I pushed the blankets out of the way.

“You’ll get over it.”

Her breathy laugh ended in a gasp as my mouth latched onto her pussy. She tasted sweet and my dick throbbed, begging to sink into her, but this wasn’t about me. Not yet. This was about Camila. I wanted her to feel alive. To know that this was what she’d have to look forward to from now on. I wanted her life to be nothing but fun and light. She’d had enough heavy shit weighing her down.

Circling her clit with my tongue, I smiled as she grasped my head. I didn’t know if she was hanging on, or trying to urge me to give her more, all I knew was she wasn’t pulling me away. Not that I’d let her. I was going to make her come over and over. I wanted her limp and satisfied. Wanted to wash away all the bad shit she’d seen last night.

I slid a finger into her tight, wet pussy. She clenched around me, moaning as she arched her hips. Fuck, she was so responsive.

Her gasps and groans were so damn sexy, I had to try to focus on something else or I was going to fuck her before I was ready. I wanted her mindless. Lost in pleasure and bliss. That was going to require more than one orgasm to achieve.

My tongue flicked across her clit and she cried out, her thighs tightening around my head as I drove her closer to her orgasm. My finger pumped inside her, then I added a second.

“Oh God, Kilo!”

Hearing my name fall from her lips as she came was the best sound in the world. She was shaking and shuddering. Her thighs trembled in a way that filled me with smug satisfaction, but I didn't stop. Even when her body relaxed and her gasps softened, I didn't stop. She tried to bat at my head, so I captured her wrist, pinning it to the bed.

“I'm sensitive.”

I eased the pressure on her clit, but I didn't stop swirling my tongue. Easing my fingers from her soaked little pussy, I grabbed her other wrist and pinned that to the bed as I started eating her out like a man possessed. I was still soft with it but there wasn't an inch of her drenched pussy that wasn't going to get attention.

“Oh!” she cried out and her hips arched into me. “It's too much.”

It wasn't, or her hips wouldn't be moving with me the way they were. She wouldn't be starting to moan again. I lapped at her, figuring out all the places that made her groan.

I slid my fingers back into her body, groaning against her clit. She was so fucking sexy. Her pussy was soaking wet and the sounds it made as I continued to finger fuck her were loud in the quiet room.

She left her hands where I'd pinned them to the bed, even though I wasn't holding them there anymore. She was twisting the blankets up in her grasp. And she was breathing like she'd just run a mile.

“You're going to come for me again, Mercy,” I growled against her wet flesh. “And then I'm going to fuck you until you come a third time.”

“Oh,” she gasped. “I don’t... I can’t.”

She could. I’d make sure of it. She was already on the verge of another orgasm.

“Please, Kilo. I can’t,” she sobbed.

I licked her clit and curled my fingers inside her body, searching out that sensitive spot. She gasped and bucked into me. I draped my free arm over her hips, forcing her to stay where I wanted her. She was mine to drive as wild as I wanted. Mine to take pleasure from. To give multiple orgasms to. I was going to spend the rest of my life reminding her why she’d chosen me. Why she loved me.

I sucked her clit into my mouth and she came, screaming my name. Hearing her say my name like that, made my cock leak. I didn’t give her time to come down from the high this time. Grabbing her by the hips, I flipped her and smacked her ass. Her gasp was like music to my ears as I jerked her hips back, lined up, and sank my aching dick into her soft, wet cunt. “Fuck,” I breathed.

Her upper body sank down until she had her tits and cheek pressed to the sheets. Her arms were stretched out above her head to help her balance.

Goddamn she was sexy. That sweet ass was a dream to look at as I fucked her from behind.

She didn’t try to hold back. Not her moans. Or her orgasms. She let me drive her out of her mind with lust. The sounds she was making were going to be my undoing.

Reaching around, I grabbed her throat, squeezing a little, but not cutting off her air supply.

She cried out and her pussy clenched around me. “Oh God!”

I tightened my hold on her throat and leaned over, biting her shoulder. “You like that?”

She nodded, looking at me from the corner of her eye.

We’d have to play with that a little later because I was putting a lot of weight onto her and I didn’t want to hurt her. Raising back up, I grabbed both her hips and pounded into her. The slap of our bodies was loud, but it was nothing compared to her cries and the sound of the headboard thumping against the wall. It was a damn good thing I didn’t live in an apartment with neighbors or we’d be getting complaints.

“I’m going to come,” she cried out. I slowed a bit and the little growl of frustration she gave was so sexy, I grinned. “I didn’t say stop!” she snapped.

Chuckling, I smacked her ass. “Maybe I don’t want you coming yet,” I told her. She felt too damn good. Hot and wet and I loved having my cock inside her.

“What happened to fucking me until I came?” she countered.

My eyebrows shot up and I leaned over her again, bringing my face close to hers. “My woman gets a bit angry when I don’t give her what she wants. Interesting.”

“Kilo,” she said, her voice a plea.

“What do you want, Mercy?”

“Make me come!”

“Ask nicely.”

She grumbled something under her breath, sounding pissed. “Please, make me

come.”

“I love you,” I whispered, then straightened up and drove back into her, fucking her hard and fast. Reaching around, I toyed with her slippery clit, adding to the sensations I knew were battering at her. Within minutes, she was screaming my name as her body convulsed around me, squeezing me tightly. My thrusts became jerky as I tried to fight back my own orgasm. I didn’t want this to end, but it was too damn good to resist. My cum exploded inside her body and a few more thrusts had me seeing stars.

Bracing my weight with one hand on the mattress, I gripped her hip with the other while I rode through my own pleasure. Fuck. If we kept this kind of sex up she was going to end up killing me when I was an old man. But what a way to go. Death by orgasm. My chest was heaving as I laid back down, pulling her close.

My eyes were just about to close when a thought occurred. “Shit.”

“What?” she mumbled. There was a smile on her face again.

I didn’t want to ruin the moment, but she had the right to know. “Forgot the condom.”

Her lashes lifted and she looked up at me. Sighing, she rested her cheek back on my chest. “We’ll figure it out later.”

Chuckling, I shook my head. I didn’t know what that meant, but she was too tired and satiated to deal with it now, so I relaxed. She was right. We’d deal with it, and anything else, later. Together.

CHAPTER 37

Camila

We'd slept through the day and night and had been woken this morning by Dustin banging on the door. He'd told us that he'd continued to do some digging and had figured out who had gotten into the Marshal's system. That if an Agent Ashley came around, I wasn't to go with him, or even open the door for him.

Keeping the guilt off my face wasn't easy, as Dustin explained that they were looking into him and the recent death of his partner. They'd found connections between Ashley and Kruzman. I looked over at Kilo and he squeezed me against his side.

Dustin must have taken the move as me being upset about the news and Kilo comforting me, because he gave me reassurances that they would find him.

No. They wouldn't. Kilo had assured me afterward that the FBI would assume that Ashley disappeared when Kruzman did to avoid being caught and tried for any wrongdoings that law enforcement uncovered. Somehow, we'd gotten away with what had happened out in the desert. Which I appreciated, because I didn't want anyone to get into trouble for me. Thankfully, the gash on my temple from where Ashley had elbowed me had been easy enough to hide from Dustin. Between my hair and Kilo pressing my bruised cheek against his chest, Dustin hadn't noticed a thing.

We'd sent him on his way with Kilo promising to keep an eye out and watch over me. Dustin had seemed a little reluctant, but had finally left.

“I have a surprise for you,” Kilo told me. “Let’s get a shower and then we’ll go.”

The shower took twice as long because he insisted on washing me, which turned into sex. I loved making love with Kilo. I never thought I was a very sexual woman, but he brought that side out in me. I was looking forward to exploring all the ways we could give each other pleasure, but once the shower was over he turned all serious. He had something on his mind, so I got dressed and then got into the SUV with him.

“Give me a hint?” I pleaded with him as we drove.

“I wouldn’t even know how to,” he said with a chuckle as he looked over at me.

I turned in the seat, facing him, and laid my head against the seat. He was such a gorgeous man. His eyes drew me in. And that smile. “What does that mean?”

He shook his head. “You’re going to have to wait, Woman.”

Sticking my lower lip out, I pouted at him. It was fun to tease him. I didn’t know how long it was going to take to get back to normal. Or even what normal looked like anymore, but I finally had that opportunity. There wasn’t anyone out there trying to kill me anymore. It was so...freeing.

Kilo pulled into the motorcycle club compound and we walked hand in hand into the clubhouse. “Flir!” he called out. “You here?” He smiled over at me and squeezed my hand.

I had no idea what was going on, but after a minute or two Flir came out, holding a file.

We sat down at the tables and Flir handed me the file. They were both smiling at me, encouraging me, so I opened it. I stared down at the rows and columns of numbers.

“O-kay,” I said after a few minutes. I looked up and Flir was watching me with a hopeful look. “What am I looking at?”

The hope in his expression turned to irritation. I was beginning to understand why the guys gave Flir such a hard time. He really was a robot alien. And apparently one who was a whiz with numbers. My father had been the same way.

“Told you she wouldn’t see it, Bro,” Kilo said with a chuckle. “Only your warped mind looks at those numbers and sees a pattern.”

“There’s a pattern?” I asked, looking between them.

“Apparently,” Kilo said, tone dry. “So he says.”

“It’s right here,” Flir said, stabbing a finger onto the page.

Then he started explaining the pattern and my eyes nearly crossed. I held up a hand and he fell quiet. “I’ll take your word for it,” I told him.

“Smart girl,” Kilo murmured, wrapping his fingers around the back of my neck and squeezing. I melted in his grip.

“What does the pattern mean?” I asked.

Now the men were grinning at each other.

“It means you’re a millionaire, Baby.”

“What?” I asked, looking over at Kilo.

His eyes softened. “Your father stole money from Kruzman.” He squeezed a little

tighter, comforting me as my mouth dropped open in shock.

“He...what?”

“We think he was trying to get out of Kruzman’s employ,” Flir explained. “Or, maybe he knew there was no way out and this was his way of making it up to your family.”

“Trying to get you and your family away from him,” Kilo added.

I shook my head in disbelief. “How?”

“He-” Flir started, then glared when Kilo interrupted him.

“Small amounts at a time,” Kilo said, scowling at Flir as though he didn’t want a long winded explanation. “We have a theory that he figured out pretty quickly he didn’t want anything to do with Kruzman. But Kruzman doesn’t let people go. He was into too much shit to let people see what he was doing, then just let them leave.”

“So your father gathered enough money that he could make your whole family disappear. So Kruzman wouldn’t be a threat again,” Flir continued.

“Something must have tipped him off to what your father was doing. Or maybe your father made him suspicious. We don’t know everything, these are all just theories,” Kilo added. “But it made Kruzman look closer at his books.”

“And he killed him,” I finished, words soft. I wasn’t sure how to feel. We’d spent so long wondering what had happened. To know—or at least have a good idea—was overwhelming. I swallowed back tears and gave them a smile. “Thank you.”

“For what, Baby?”

“For telling me. For letting us know that our father was trying to protect us in the best way he knew how.”

“He was between a rock and a shit sandwich,” Kilo said with a shrug. “The minute he tried to leave, Kruzman was going to hunt him down and kill him anyway. Taking the money at least would have given you all a chance. Can’t blame a man for doing his best in that situation.”

I shook my head. I didn’t blame him for anything. Not anymore. It was nice to have that put to rest. Now we could look back on his memories knowing he loved us. That he’d died trying to protect us from a monster.

“Can I tell her?” Flir asked, grinning from ear to ear.

Kilo chuckled. “It’s over four million dollars, Mercy.”

My jaw dropped.

Flir scowled at him. “I wanted to tell her.”

“It would take you a week to finish saying all the numbers, fucker. This was faster.”

“It’s not accurate. It’s four million-”

Kilo dragged me to my feet and out the door while Flir continued to rattle off numbers that hardly made sense to my frazzled mind.

“That’s closer to five million,” I whispered, pointing back to the door that slammed shut behind us.

“I know,” he replied with a grin. “How does it feel?”

“How does what feel?”

“To be a millionaire? Multi-millionaire.”

I shook my head, no sound coming out of my mouth. “I-I’m not though. That money isn’t mine.”

“Yes, it is,” he insisted. He cupped my cheeks, looking into my eyes. “Consider it payment for everything Kruzman put you through.”

“But...won’t the FBI-”

“They’re not going to find shit,” he said, cutting me off. “Only Flir, or your father, could have found that. The Feds? Never. Trust me. You and your family deserve this money.”

“We should give the club some-”

“Nope,” he said, shaking his head. “That money is yours. Do whatever you want with it.”

I didn’t know what to say. What to do. The idea of having that amount of money was...staggering. It meant we could do whatever we wanted. Mama wouldn’t have to work two jobs. I could open my restaurant. Anything, really. And we no longer had to hide. Wrapping my arms around Kilo, I hugged him. “You’ve changed my life. How will I ever repay you?”

“You are my life. Just stay here, with me. Spend the rest of our lives making it up to me,” he told me with a cocky grin.

When I nodded, he kissed me breathless.

Kilo

Four years later

“Hey, Little Man,” Ruck said, giving the son riding my shoulders a high five.

Ravi giggled. “Hi, Uncle Ruck.”

“You excited for your mom’s grand opening?” My son nodded and leaned down so he could see into my face. I grasped his legs tighter so he wouldn’t slide off. “When is mommy coming out?”

“In a few minutes, Rav,” I told him. Patience wasn’t his strong suit, but he had a heart of gold. He got that from Camila.

“How’s it going?” Ruck asked, raising a brow.

“Good. She’s been stressed, but she’s really happy,” I replied.

“Well, we can’t wait,” Ruck said with a chuckle. “OD is ready to eat until he busts. The Tucson guys should be here anytime with their families.”

Camila had spent a couple years working closely with Roger and Prissy, learning the ins and outs of running a restaurant. Then she’d gotten started on building her own from the ground up. She’d rented one of the buildings in the same complex as Double Tap and reconstructed it until it was the perfect space for her new business.

Noise drew my attention and I grinned as our Tucson and Wyoming friends walked through the door. Going over, I shook Cynic's hand. "Hey, Man, good to see you."

"You too, Kilo. Thanks for inviting us down for this."

"Glad you guys could make it. She's really excited." I glanced over toward the double doors that led back to the kitchen.

This was a soft opening, only for family and friends. Mary, Camila's friend, was busy seating people, and her staff was already gathering orders from the different families. Camila wanted to share this with all the people she loved. She'd spent so much time and effort making this perfect and to her, this was the most important day for the restaurant. She wanted our families to be spoiled and waited upon like they were royalty.

Everyone was going to love it. I just knew it. "I better go check on her," I told Cynic. We bumped fists as I walked away from him.

"Give me my nephew," OD said as he walked up behind me and pulled Ravi off my shoulders.

"Uncle Overdrive!" Ravi giggled manically as OD tickled him mercilessly.

I looked at my best friend with raised brows. "You got him?"

"Always. Now go away," Overdrive ordered as he carted Ravi off to the tables filled with my brothers.

Shaking my head, I went back into the kitchen.

Camila looked up, her eyes wide. "I'm running behind. I-"

Crossing the room, I pulled her into my arms. I ignored the chefs running around as they completed whatever last minute tasks they had. I put my hand on Camila's hugely pregnant belly. "It's okay, Mercy. No one even knows that you're behind. They could sit out there for hours and bullshit and not even realize the food wasn't out yet. Well, Hellfire and Overdrive might, but everyone else is just excited to be here to support you."

She put her hands over mine and sucked in a breath. "You're right. Thank you."

"How are my girls doing today?" I asked, looking down at where my daughter was resting within her belly.

"Good," she said with a smile. "We're good."

I kissed her, cupping her cheek with my free hand. "This is going to go off without a hitch," I told her. "Everyone is dying to eat your delicious food again."

Camila had cooked for every person out in that dining room many times over the years. They loved it as much as they loved her. This was a new, fancy place but the food was going to be the same and it was always fucking amazing. Just like she was. She'd once told me that I'd changed her life, but it was her who made mine better. She'd given me her heart, then she'd given me my children. There wasn't one fucking day that I wasn't grateful she'd moved in next door to me. There wasn't one damn day that would go by where she wondered about how much I loved her.

"Need any help?" I asked.

She smiled, face calm once again and shook her head. "No. You've helped enough just by reminding me that I have this."

"You do."

“I know. Go out, sit with the guys. Make sure Mama isn’t too nervous, please.”

Camila and her mother had created this business together and Lucia was just as nervous as my wife had been a few minutes ago. I kissed Camila again. “See you in a bit.”

She waved me away, her mind already diving back into whatever she needed to do in order to finish up in the kitchen.

Walking back into the dining room, I looked around. I went over to Lucia to check in on her, but she was already sitting down with Prissy, having a glass of wine.

“Don’t worry, we’re fine,” Prissy said with a grin as she lifted the bottle.

“They’ll be three sheets in about thirty minutes,” Roger predicted, though he said it under his breath so his wife wouldn’t hear.

Laughing, I went over and sat down at the tables the guys had shoved together. The waitstaff looked a little frazzled that a bunch of bikers had taken the romantic atmosphere and ruined it by sliding the heavy wooden tables together so that Phoenix, Tucson, and Wyoming brothers could all sit together.

Bolo was talking with some of the Wyoming guys, telling them about one of our latest run-ins, while Ruck, Lockout, and Cypher commiserated on running their clubs and keeping men like us in line. I was pretty sure we weren’t that bad. Then again, I watched as Butcher, Toxic, and Relay all downed a line of shots together. It probably was about to be a wild night. It always was when any of us were involved. Add all three clubs? Phew. I felt bad for whoever had to clean up after tonight’s festivities.

I scowled when I realized it would probably be me. “Put that down,” I snapped as Toxic picked up the candle in the middle of one of the tables. “You burn my wife’s

restaurant down on night one and I'll have to beat your ass."

Toxic chuckled. "I could use some practice," he taunted.

"Not tonight," Lockout sighed, then looked at the other presidents like, see? This is what I put up with.

"You took him into your club," Cypher said with a shrug. "I tried to warn you."

"I'm not so bad," Toxic said, an offended look on his face.

All the old ladies were sitting at their own tables and Toxic's wife looked over at him and shook her head. "You're the best of them, Sweetie."

Toxic winked at her, smiling from ear to ear.

"Bro, I think she just called you the best of the worst," OD pointed out. "Or the best at being the worst." Ravi was already asleep in his arms. Turned out OD was amazing with kids. Who knew?

The grin slipped off Toxic's face. "Hey."

We all laughed and Drifter brought over a pitcher of beer.

"Where did you get that?" I asked. Camila didn't have options for pitchers of beer. It came by the glass.

"From the keg," Drifter replied.

My jaw dropped. "What keg?"

“The one in the back of our truck,” Hellfire offered. “To help celebrate.”

“Help who celebrate?” I growled.

“Camila,” Scythe, the Wyoming vice president said.

“She’s pregnant,” I reminded him. “She can’t even drink.” I pointed at all of them, scowling as I told them, “You fuck this up for her tonight and there will be hell to pay.”

“We wouldn’t do that,” Code said.

They nodded in agreement so I started to relax, but I knew better than to take my eye off them. My family had grown by leaps and bounds. I had the club to thank for that. And the military. But most of all my wife was the catalyst for the biggest changes. We had so many people in our life who loved and supported us and I’d do whatever it took to protect them all.

We’d all done fucking crazy ass shit over the last few years to keep everything running smooth, and we’d probably continue it into the future, but I knew that no matter what, my brothers would have my back. My wife would support me fully. And we’d teach our kids what it meant to be loyal to family. With Camila by my side, this was going to be a fun ride.

Thanks for reading!

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The tires screeched as I pulled up to the curb between Kilo and Mercy's houses. I saw her sitting there, her head in her hands, shoulders shaking as she cried. Disconnecting the call, I jumped out of the SUV and locked it.

She looked up as I approached. Tears tracked down her face. "I'm so scared, OD."

Shit. This was so out of my wheelhouse. I patted her shoulder as I sat next to her. I didn't want to move her in case it...jostled...anything. I wasn't a medic in the Army. I'd been in charge of killing things, not fixing anyone who'd been hurt. They'd made us go through basic CPR shit, but I hadn't paid any attention.

My job had been to point and shoot. It was guys like Drifter who would know what to do in this situation. But I wasn't about to call him or I'd end up with those fuckers driving at break neck speed, led by Kilo, as they tried to get back here. I'd tell Kilo, of course, but after someone who knew what they were doing checked on Mercy.

"You and the baby will be fine," I told her, feeling lame as fuck. Like I knew that. The inner workings of girl junk was not my forte. I did everything in my power to make sure any woman I fucked didn't end up in Mercy's...condition. So I knew nothing about what would or wouldn't be okay.

The ambulance pulled up, the sirens shutting off abruptly as the EMTs ran toward us. They were lucky because another minute of staring into Mercy's tortured gaze and I was going to go find them and drag them here by the hair. Anything to get them here faster.

I met them a few steps from the porch. Pointing at her belly, I said, "She's got a kid

up in there. Fell onto the steps,” I said in a low voice. She didn’t need to rehash this shit again.

The male EMT bit the insides of his lips, clearly trying to contain a laugh.

I glared at him. “Something fucking funny?” I barked.

His partner put her hand on my bicep, which was what made me realize I’d reached out and grabbed the front of his uniform shirt, and made a soothing noise.

“Easy,” she said, looking between me and her partner.”

I looked over at her and all the anger drained out of me. She had light brown hair that was pulled up into some kind of messy knot on the top of her head. Those green eyes drew me right in and I forgot about killing the EMT in front of me for being a douche.

“He was only laughing because you said she had a kid up in there,” the woman explained gently. “It’s a weird way to tell us she’s pregnant. We don’t have time for this though.”

Mercy. Damn it.

The gorgeous woman in front of me was right. Mercy was all that mattered right now. I let the EMT go.

“Sorry,” he muttered. “I forget not everyone gets the whole dark humor thing,” he said as the woman bent down and started speaking with Mercy. “They’re horrified if you crack a smile in this kind of situation, not realizing sometimes you have to or you’ll lose it.”

I glanced over at him. Why was he talking to me? I didn’t need him to talk to me. I

needed him to fix her . Even though his partner was already working on her I wanted them both focusing there. She was taking Mercy's vitals. I knew that much thanks to Drifter, and having it done enough times to myself. Then it clicked why this guy was here with me and not down there with them. He thought Mercy and that baby were mine. He was trying to keep the panicked father under control so his partner could work.

"I get dark humor," I told him. Shit, he had no idea how much I got it. I remember once Kilo and I were on base, joking around while we waited in line in the chow hall. I was recounting one of my stories and how the blood and brain matter sprayed all over the wall when I was done with the job. Told him all about how it looked just like a baby elephant. I may have said a few other things. Darker things. We were laughing. The poor lady behind the counter was watching us with horror on her face.

This guy was right. Most civilians didn't get it. You see so many fucking atrocities that you either develop a seriously disturbed sense of humor, drank, or offed yourself. Those were the most popular options anyway.

"Was in the military," I told him when he arched a brow. "She's a friend," I added. "You don't have to hover over me, just help her." I reached out and shoved the guy closer to his partner and my best friend's girl.

Folding my arms over my chest, I watched as they worked on her. The worry was distracting me from anything else, so when the female EMT got up and motioned for me to follow her back toward the ambulance, I almost missed it when she stopped and frowned at the back of my SUV.

The windows were tinted, but not heavy enough that she wouldn't see the crates back there if she looked hard enough. I stepped between her and my ride. I didn't need that kind of trouble right now. "What's up?" I prompted.

She blinked at me. My question seemed to snap her focus back onto me. Her gaze

turned wary as she watched me, probably because of the aggression I'd shown to her partner. "I think she's going to be just fine. Sounds like she caught the brunt of the fall on one of her wrists, which may be broken, but I think her cramping is from stress. We need to get her back to the hospital and let one of the doctors make that call though and let them take a look at that wrist. That alright?"

"Yeah," I told her, relief thick inside my chest. I wasn't going to have to give Kilo bad news while he was on the road. "What do you need from me?"

"Nothing," she said, walking to the back of the ambulance, "just grabbing a gurney. Are you riding with us to the hospital?"

"Yes." Fuck. Relay needed to hurry or I was going to have to leave these guns here in plain sight. There was no way I was leaving Mercy alone though.

"Good." I arched a brow at her. "For your wife," she added.

"That's my best friend's wife and kid," I told her, then grabbed the gurney from her and pulled it out of the ambulance myself. It was her job, but I wasn't going to let her heft heavy awkward shit while I stood there like an asshole.

She gave me a look of disbelief as I set the gurney down in front of her. "You can't do that," she told me.

"Do what?"

"Touch the medical equipment. I-"

"Can we please just get my friend in the ambulance?" I asked, staring intently into her eyes. I didn't miss the spark of interest in the jade depths, but she took a quick step back. I had to bite back a smile at the look of indecision on her face. I was a cocky bastard pretty much every day of the week so it wasn't hard for me to see that

she was attracted to me and trying to fight it. “Then you can keep yelling at me all you want.”

Her mouth dropped open and now she looked offended, but she kept her mouth shut and brought the gurney over to where Mercy was sitting and they loaded her up.

I knew Miss you-can’t-touch-that would bite my head off if I just picked Mercy up and put her in the ambulance, so I let them do their thing and just stood back and watched the way green eyes’ uniform pants stretched over a deliciously fat ass while I waited.

Kilo would skin me alive if he found out I was hitting on the woman who was helping to save his old lady and son—and I wasn’t going to stop worrying until some asshole doctor confirmed she and the baby were fine—so I planned to wait until after Mercy was okay to see how fast I could get this EMT naked.

Judging by the dark looks she was tossing my way now, it wasn’t going to be as easy as I was hoping. But a girl with an ass like that? She was worth trying for. I gave her a toothy smile as she glared at me over her shoulder when I fell into step behind her. Probably a bit too close for her comfort, but allowed me to catch the scent of one of those girly flower scents women liked so much. I was pretty sure it was coming from her hair, but a thorough inspection was going to be warranted.

Relay pulled up as they were loading Mercy into the ambulance. “Shit. What happened?” he asked, looking worried. We all loved Kilo’s old lady like a sister. And what was even more important was Kilo was completely gone over her. So we didn’t want a damn thing to happen to her.

“She fell. Take the SUV to the address I texted. Warrant will take those weapons off your hands. Keep your phone on. I’m going to stay with her so I’m going to need you to take over for now.” Everyone else was busy today. None of the other guys were even close enough to take over, so it was going to fall on our Chaplain to run some

shit today.

Wasn't like he couldn't handle it. The fucker had been a pararescuer in the Air Force. Most of us made fun of the Air Force for being soft, but pararescuers were bat shit crazy. PJs went into places that would make Green Berets and Navy Seals nervous in order to rescue and help other military members. All without a second thought. And though I knew Relay had almost as much medical knowledge and ability as Drifter, I hadn't sent him here to stay with Mercy because the fucker didn't do that shit anymore.

Ruck and I, as well as the rest of our brothers, respected his request not to have to patch people up anymore. He'd gone through enough that we didn't want to send him spiraling back down a dark fucking rabbit hole again. He'd barely made it out the last time. And the psycho son of a bitch was forever changed because of it.

Drifter was happy enough—and even more capable as a combat surgeon—of taking care of whatever the fuck we needed as a club most of the time. Which left Relay to help us put people in the dirt versus pulling them back from the brink. Somehow the switch from one to the other helped him.

I had no doubt that Relay would step in if he needed to save one of our lives, but he had some dark shit swirling around inside of him because of whatever had happened while he served. Saving people's lives wasn't his mission anymore.

A muscle in his jaw clenched. "I'll get it handled." He paused, then looked at me. "She bleeding?"

He wanted to help. For Kilo. For Mercy. But I saw the agony there in his dark eyes. Shit he usually kept under lock and key and far away from the rest of us as he could.

"I don't know," I said, hesitating. "She said something about cramping." Looking down, I saw his fingers flexing into a fist. "They've got this, Brother," I told him.

“Those medics know what they’re doing, and we’re on our way to some good doctors.”

“Doubtful,” he scoffed. “You’re right,” he said after a minute. “I’ll let you know once Warrant’s on his way back to Wyoming.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re going to owe me a beer for leaving my fucking door unlocked.”

“It’ll be fine for a bit,” I told him with a chuckle. I didn’t have time to deal with both his demons and Mercy so I was glad to see him chain them back up and go back to his usual asshole self instead of the tortured soul I knew resided somewhere in there.

“You coming?”

I glanced over my shoulder and a slow smile spread over my face. “Yeah, I am,” I told the woman I had a feeling would become my current obsession. At least until she let me fuck her brains out. That was the way I worked.

Her cheeks went pink at the dark promise in my words. If I had my way we’d both be coming later. Once Mercy was safe and resting of course. I wondered if this woman knew of any secluded spots in the hospital? I just needed about twenty minutes. Then we could go our separate ways, both a lot happier.

She rolled her eyes at me as I raked my own over her body as I climbed up into the ambulance. This was going to be fun.