



Shadow

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Description: Shane “Shadow” Carpenter is a dangerous man with a stone cold heart. He has been a Sin City Enforcer for several years, and he lives by their creed. He does what he wants, when he wants, and to who he wants. He doesn’t suffer fools, and empathy is a foreign concept. However, when he has to collect on a debt owed to him, he is put in a situation he’d never imagined. Teagan Walker is new to Las Vegas. She is a dancer who has finally caught her big break. Her tireless auditioning efforts have paid off, and she is set to be a performer in one of the biggest shows on the strip. However, before she can even start living her dream, her boyfriend owes a debt that she has to help pay. The problem is, neither of them has any money, and now she is thrust into a situation with a gorgeous killer. Shane and Teagan go on a dangerous ride that neither of them expected. But, once it’s over, can they leave their baggage behind, or will they walk away?

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Prologue

POKER PANDEMONIUM

SHADOW

I know this asshole is bluffing. His nervous twitching, shifty eyes, and massive sweating are giving him away. Trey Everett is in over his head, but his ego is too big for him to ever admit that.

That's why when I came to collect Sin City's money, I let him play me in poker instead of paying me his twenty thousand dollar balance. I knew Grimm wouldn't care about me making the bet, and it's not like the club needs the money. It's the principle.

Everett thought he could get away with not paying his debt. But there's no debt too small to collect. I don't give a fuck if you owe me a nickel; when I come to collect your ass better have my money.

"I'm all in," Everett says. He nervously pushes all of his chips into the middle of the table.

I don't show any emotion. My face as usual is a stone mask, it's why I'm so good at cards and being an enforcer for my club.

I slide my chips in, and Everett gulps, "I call."

We flip our cards over, and just as I suspected, Everett's hand is shit. I look up at him with a raised brow. There's no way he has the kind of money needed to cover his bet. I already spotted him the money to enter the game. We both knew he wasn't able to pay. He was hoping winning would get him out of the hole.

The MC makes a lot of money from the back house gambling games we sponsor. We don't have an elaborate setup, and the games move from time to time to keep the law off our trail. Because although we are in Las Vegas, our games are illegal as fuck.

Our buy-ins aren't always monetary, but as long as the value is high and we can flip it to our benefit, it doesn't really matter what the person puts up. Hell, the Sinners own houses, cars, even a damn eighteen-wheeler. There are very few things we won't take as payment.

Depending on the location, we have a more upscale clientele at some of our games, and Everett somehow managed to get himself an invite. However, I knew from the moment I saw him that he was full of shit.

I look around the room and notice the crowd is starting to pick up. I need to make some rounds and start collecting on other debts. Motherfuckers do their best to avoid me because they know I'm not only the collector. I'm the enforcer.

Becoming an enforcer for the Sinners was not an easy task, and it is one that I take seriously. The club looks at me to protect its best interest, and I always do, no matter what.

"Time to pay up. I got shit to handle." I get up from my seat and motion to Everett.

The man has gone pale, and I think he might actually throw up. If I hadn't seen how cocky he was when he got here, I would've thought he was always this nervous.

“Listen, Shadow. I got the twenty grand, but I’ll need a little more time to get the rest.” He stands up and looks around as if somebody is going to come and save his bitchass.

“You owe eighty. Twenty ain’t even half. The fuck am I supposed to do with that?” I quirk my eyebrow at him and fold my arms over my chest. I look down my nose at the sniveling fool and frown.

“I know... I know. Look, you know I’m good for it. I’d be an idiot to cross the Sinners.”

I frown because lets be honest, we both know heisan idiot. But for whatever reason, I’m feeling generous.

“Hand over the twenty grand, and I’ll think about an extension for the rest.”

“Okay. Good... good. I just need a couple of months, and I can get it all to you,” Everett replies, nodding his head.

“I guess you think I’m as stupid as you look. Motherfucker, you have two weeks. And for my generosity, you owe us a hundred.”

Everett shakes his head, and his eyes widen, “I— I can’t get that much in such a short time. What if I...”

I shake my head and deepen my scowl on my face at whatever bullshit he’s about to suggest. Slick assholes like Everett are the first ones to skip town, and I would be the one to chase his ass down. The Sinners road captain, Ice, would not appreciate that shit.

“This ain’t The Price is Right, bitch. I ain’t negotiating shit with your ass. I said two

weeks. If you keep talking, it will be two days.”

“Okay... okay. Two weeks. I’ll have the one hundred grand in two weeks.”

“That’s right, you’ll have my hundred grand in two weeks. And don’t you even think about running. Cause if I have to chase your ass, you’ll regret it.”

Everett nods and scurries away like the rat he is, and I know I’ll have to put a prospect on his ass, so he doesn’t try to take off. He’s definitely the fleeing type.

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“Flyboy,” I call over a prospect on security duty tonight.

Flyboy comes over quickly, “what’s up, Shadow?”

“I need you to keep an eye on Trey Everett. That bitch is down a hundred grand.”

Flyboy nods with a whistle. “Some of these fuckers never learn.”

“Good thing they don’t, or we would be out of business,” I respond, and Flyboy chuckles as he walks off in the same direction as Everett.

Flyboy will make a great addition to our club. The kid is about his business, and he doesn’t fuck around. I took him under my wing because he was quick to jump into a fight that had nothing to do with him. However, he had my back, and we whooped some serious ass that night. As long as he keeps on the right track, he’ll be a patched member within no time.

I frown as I see another asshole who owes us money walk in. If he doesn’t have our money, I’m about to collect it out of his ass.

One

LIVING THE DREAM

TEAGAN

I stretch my legs and try my best to get into the zone. This audition means the world

to me, and I've been waiting to catch this break since I moved here from Texas.

I've worked as a receptionist at a financial planning firm, which is just a temporary job to make ends meet. I've always dreamed of being a professional hip-hop dancer. My body isn't built for ballet, I would've had to starve myself, and I still wouldn't have fit their very unrealistic body goals, and to be honest, being a ballerina seemed boring to me.

However, I've always been a performer and wanted to be like Beyoncé and Janet Jackson. But since I can't sing, dancing was my go to. I just need my big break.

"You got this, Teagan. You're the best. You are living your dream come true," I mumble the affirmations.

There have been a lot of obstacles to even getting this far, and I can't mess it up. Second chances don't come around often in Vegas. I've been here for sixteen months, and this is my first serious audition.

The famous popstar, Bianca, is starting her residency at the Aria Hotel. Her team held open auditions, which is unheard of for a show as big as this one. So, I knew I had to take a chance and come to this audition.

"Numbers 121 through 131, step forward," the main choreographer calls out to the large crowd.

I take a deep breath and straighten from my stretching position. I straighten number 130 that's pinned to my shirt. The choreographer quickly begins giving the group an eight count. We go through the moves a few times before we're expected to execute them for critique.

I don't want to be overconfident, but I know I'm going to absolutely kill this routine.

Dancing is second nature to me. The absolute joy I feel while dancing is like nothing I've ever felt. There's something about how music talks to my soul that makes my body instinctively want to move. As crazy as it sounds, it's a spiritual experience for me.

My dancing has always been the way I express myself. In my daily life, I'm quiet. Most people take that to mean that I'm shy. I'm not. I just don't have a lot to say to people I don't know.

The music starts, and I dance my heart out. I'm not breathing as hard as the other dancers, but I know I gave that eight count my all.

"Great work, guys! I need numbers 125, 126, 129, and 130 to stay. Thank you to the rest of you," the choreographer says with a bright smile.

The other dancers leave, and I do my best not to jump up and down in celebration. It's just the first round, and we have a long day full of cuts. I can't get too excited, but dammit, if I made it this far, there's no reason I can't kill this audition.

"Congratulations, ladies and gentlemen, you've made it to the next round. You all can wait in the hall until we call your number."

I let out a deep breath because my dream will be realized after a few more rounds!

Pulling into my apartment complex, I finally let go of the built-up excitement. I did it! I booked my first job! I was overjoyed when my number was called as a finalist, but when Teagan Walker was announced as booking the job... I was shocked.

I knew I could do it, but to accomplish what many naysayers said I couldn't made me prouder than I have ever been in my life.

I couldn't wait to tell my boyfriend my good news. He's the only support system I have here in Vegas. But unfortunately, my parents and siblings are still back in Texas, convinced I'm out here stripping or working at the Bunny Ranch as a prostitute.

I have never had to strip or hook, so that's good news. I actually found my receptionist position a few weeks after I got here. I didn't even have to dip into my meager savings or call my parents. Which I think they were more upset about than me not having to strip. They were against me moving to "Sin City" because of their church.

My parent's religious beliefs are the main reason I chose to leave for college. I had to get away from the choking effects of having religion stuffed down my throat whenever I disagreed or did something my parents didn't agree with.

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They used their religion as a weapon, so they threw an absolute fit when I decided not to move back home after college. I didn't want to hear that my Bachelor of Dance degree wouldn't get me a "good" job. Or how I wasted money and time on "nonsense" instead of getting some kind of business degree like my brothers. So, I moved into a little apartment in Dallas. I worked for a community center and taught dance. However, that still wasn't good enough for my parents.

They lived in Denton, Texas, which isn't far from Dallas, so they would often pop up at my place uninvited and unannounced. Finally, because they wouldn't respect my space or the fact that I was a grown-ass woman, I picked up and moved without telling them where I was going.

Once I told them I was in Vegas, they threw a fit of all fits. They didn't talk to me for six months. It upset me, but it also made me realize that they would pick their religion over me. No matter how morally wrong it was to stop talking to your child for no good reason.

But now, I have someone that supports me no matter what. I met Trey at the temporary day job I had to get until I landed a dancing gig. He's one of the Junior Financial Analysts at the firm. He was just my type with his gorgeous clean-cut looks and intelligence. We've been dating for the past five months, and I couldn't be happier.

When I open my apartment door, I'm not surprised that Trey is already here. He has been spending more and more time at my apartment lately. I love having him around, so I'm excited when I see him. However, when I look closer, I notice he doesn't look like himself.

Trey has dark circles under his eyes and dullness to his usually tanned skin. Even though his suit is still pressed and there's not a blond lock out of place, I can tell something is wrong.

"Babe? What's going on?" I ask, growing more worried as I watch Trey pace.

"Nothin, sweetie. I'm just extremely tired. You know how it is at the firm, well you don't actually know because you're just a receptionist. But, I'm sure you can imagine." Trey's little dig doesn't go over my head, but I let it slide because I know he's exhausted.

"I'm sorry that you're so tired. You work entirely too hard," I respond, trying to show some empathy.

"Well, if I didn't work hard, sweetie, I wouldn't get to where I want to be."

I nod, "I guess that's true." I smile, trying to comfort my ambitious boyfriend.

Trey has been trying to move up at Lisandro and associates since he started working there. And although he's an analyst and I'm a front desk receptionist, Trey's name is well known around the office.

"I need you to do me a favor," Trey says with a charming smile.

"Okay, what do you need me to do?" I return his smile.

"There's a new club I want to hit up. Will you be my date? I have some friends that I want you to meet. I want to show off my new girlfriend, but it won't be for a couple of weeks. They won't be in town until then."

"I would love to be your date and meet your friends."

I haven't really met anyone in Trey's life since we started dating, but I can't complain too much cause he hasn't met anyone in mine either. Not that I have any friends in Vegas, but still. It's nice to know our relationship might be headed in the right direction.

Two

COLLECTION DAY

SHADOW

"We have a few collections to make for this month, but our books, as usual, are in the black," Caliber, the secretary of the Sinners, says.

We are closing out a meeting at the clubhouse. If there's one thing we keep track of, it's our money. Especially since a few months ago, we were under the scrutiny of the feds.

Well, in actuality, we are always under the scrutiny of law enforcement. The Sin City MC runs shit in Nevada. We are unapologetic about our motherfucking money. Anyone who decides they want to cross us is signing their death warrant.

"I've collected a few already, but I have a hundred grand to collect today from the financial analyst."

I know Trey Everett has been slinking around Vegas pawning any and everything he can get his hands on. Flyboy has been tracking his every move. I'm surprised that the coward hasn't tried to run yet. But I know the little weasel will.

Not only does Everett owe us money, but he also went and got himself caught up with the Russians. But I don't know exactly how much he owes them, and I don't

care as long as he has the money he owes us.

“Once you collect, ban his ass from any future games. There’s too much heat on that motherfucker,” Grimm, our president, says.

I nod in agreement. There’s no way he was going to be back anyway. Everett is a shady little shit; he had the money the first time, so we let him play. It was against my better judgment, but I wouldn’t make that mistake again.

“We’ll talk about future prospects and vote on membership the next time I call church. Sinners all.” Grimm knocks the gavel against the table.

“Sinners all, never fall,” we say in unison as we stand.

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I don't want to let my brothers down, so I will focus on getting the hundred grand from Everett one way or another.

"Shadow... do you need back-up? Those Russians are some unpredictable bastards. I don't want you getting caught out there by yourself," Ice says with a quirked eyebrow.

"I'm good, Cap. You know me."

"Alright."

Ice knows my personality. If I thought I would need reinforcements, I would ask. But I've been doing this shit long enough to know that cocky motherfuckers end up hurt or worse... dead. And since I don't plan on leaving this earth any time soon, I'll keep my guard up.

Most people never see me coming anyway. That's how I got my Sinners name. I blend into the shadows easily, and I often use that to my advantage. Motherfuckers don't see me coming until it's too late.

"I'll make contact when necessary," my words are my way of reassuring my brother.

We're all extremely rough around the edges, but we always make sure to cover each other. The worst feeling in the world is to lose a member of your family, blood-related or chosen.

Ice knows all too well how in the blink of an eye everything can change when it

comes to family. How he got custody of his twins full time is a testament to that.

Ice nods, and I walk away. I normally would stop by the main room of the clubhouse and have a shot before I ride out. But my gut is telling me I need to be in complete control. I always trust my gut. It hasn't let me down yet.

I thought the uneasy feeling would leave me when I got on my bike. Riding my Harley always gives me freedom like I've never felt before. My mind goes blank, and I can completely enjoy the solitude of the ride.

I connected with the road so much that I was a nomad for a while. I was always itching to be on the go, and I never felt comfortable enough to stay in one place until I found myself in Vegas. Out of all the places, I never thought I'd call sin city home. But that's exactly what it is for me. The Sinners are the only family I have left in this world.

I pull up to my store, Sin City Tattoo's and Apparel, to check in on things. I leave the twins, Thomas and Leo, to manage things on a regular basis. My shop runs like a well-oiled machine, so I have plenty of time to focus on my responsibilities for the club.

"Hey, Shadow," the little brunette receptionist calls out with an enthusiastic wave.

I nod with a grunt. She's only been here a few weeks, and I can't remember her name mostly because her perkiness irks my nerves. But the customers seem to like her, and the twins say she's a good employee, so I try not to give her a hard time.

I walk through the store's clothing section and nod at a few shoppers before heading to the tattoo parlor. The rock and roll music is louder, and the atmosphere is livelier. This part of my shop is what I love the most: the needles' buzz, the rock music, and the anticipation of getting new ink. I only wish I could tattoo like my artist, but that's

not my talent. I opened this place to satisfy a need and to help the Sinners wash our money. It's been a win-win for everybody, especially when we added the clothing.

"What's up, Leo." I walk into one of the back offices to see Leo working.

I know he's doing the payroll because his brows are furrowed, and he has on his glasses. Leo is a wiz with numbers, but his focus is terrible.

"Shadow, man, I swear I hate doin' this fuckin' paperwork," Leo grumbles, shaking his head.

"You volunteered to do that shit. Make your brother do it." I shrug away his complaints.

Leo and I know he will never let his twin do anything because he's too fucking controlling.

"It's almost done now," Leo mumbles with a frown.

I shake my head with a smirk. We go through this every damned time he has to do paperwork. But he does a great job, so I entertain his stubborn ass.

"By the way, some slick motherfucker just stopped in looking for you. Thomas took him to the back office."

"Thanks." I head to the back office because I know exactly who he's talking about without asking. And his snake ass better have our fucking money.

When I enter the back office, Thomas and I do a fist bump in greeting, and he leaves without saying anything. He closes the door behind him, leaving me alone with Everett.

“Where’s the money motherfucker?”

“I have some of it, but I won’t get the rest until tonight.”

I narrow my eyes because I know the fucker is up to something, but I don’t know what. “Give me what you have now, and I swear if you’re bullshitting me...”

“I would never do that. Never.” Everett interrupts me.

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“What the fuck ever.” I know the little prick is stalling for whatever reason, but if nothing else, I’m a man of my word. I gave him until tonight, so I’ll give him a chance.

“Listen, we can meet at this new spot. I’ll have the rest of the money then.”

“You won’t have a choice. This will be the last debt you owe the Sinners. You feel me?”

“Ye— yeah, man. I got it.” Everett’s eyes shift from side to side as he nervously looks around.

The motherfucker better be nervous because if he’s lying, his body will never be found.

Three

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

TEAGAN

“Trey has been acting weird for the last two weeks. He’s been moody and snappy with an almost cruel sneer every time I ask him anything. We’ve barely spent any time together, so when he called to say he still wanted me to be his date tonight, I was excited. Although I could tell by his tone of voice that he wasn’t his normal self because he still sounded exhausted.

I thought he might have taken some time off since I had hardly seen him in the office, but he assured me everything was fine and he'd just been out dealing with customers.

I tried to put Trey's unusual behavior and snippy attitude behind me so I could enjoy myself tonight. I know something is wrong, but I do my best not to worry about him. My granny always says, "don't borrow trouble," so I try to focus on being happy about landing my first gig as a professional dancer.

With Trey being MIA and his stress, I didn't get a chance to tell him about the audition, and it's already been two weeks. I'll tell him when we get to the club.

I take my time getting ready. I pull on the tightest dress I own. The girls here take no prisoners when clubbing; if I'm meeting some of Trey's friends, I want to dress to impress.

I swipe my lips with red lipstick to finish off my make-up. Then I turn in the full-length mirror to inspect myself. The metallic gold dress hugs my frame to perfection. I have an athletic build, and although my boobs are on the itty-bitty side, my ass and hips make up for that.

I know Trey is here when I hear keys jiggling in the door. I smile at myself once more before I slide my hands down my dress and straighten it.

I grab my matching clutch and stick my red gloss inside for touch-ups. My gold strappy heels click against the floor as I hurry to the living room, where I know Trey is waiting. He hates to be kept waiting, and I don't want to get on his bad side by being late.

"What took you so long? I told you to be ready at ten. You haven't done anything all day. The least you could do is be on time," Trey sneers at me.

I take a deep breath because he's under a lot of stress, and I've learned in the past few weeks that when he's stressed, he lashes out. I should've been already waiting. My mother never keeps my father waiting, and even though we're on the outs with my parents right now, I can't help but revert back to how I was raised in situations like this.

My parents have been married for over thirty years, so my mother must know something. So I don't argue with Trey when he's like this. Instead, I do my best to diffuse the situation by being agreeable.

"You're right. I'm sorry. Let's go so we can have a good time." I smile even though I'm as irritated as Trey seems to be.

Trey smiles at me now that he's gotten his way. He kisses my cheek sweetly, and I push his behavior to the back of my mind so we can have a good time tonight.

Trey isn't acting like he wants to parade me around or introduce me to anyone like he claimed. As a matter of fact, he's been in a sour mood all night. Again, I haven't figured out what's going on with my boyfriend, but I push it down and try to relax.

As soon as we got to the club, Trey led me to the VIP section and left me sitting alone. I've been sipping on a glass of champagne while he ignores me to socialize with men I have never seen before. I wonder if those are the friends I'm supposed to meet?

Times like this, I wish I wasn't such a loner. I don't have any real female friends, and the girls at work who are my age give me dirty looks since I started dating Trey. And the female dancers at my practice studio are mostly too busy competing to be friendly. The only two friendly people at the studio are Cameron and his boyfriend, Leon. I wish I knew them better. I would invite them to come hang out because I'm sure they would love to come to a fancy club like this.

I try to put on my happy girlfriend face, but when I see Trey chatting up a woman wearing the tiniest dress that I have ever seen, I can't help but frown. The dress isn't just small. When the lights hit it, it's also see-through. I don't want to jump to conclusions, but the way their heads are bent close together makes it look like an intimate conversation.

I gulp the last of the sparkling liquid, and I make a decision. I don't need this! I'm sitting here watching my boyfriend openly flirt with another woman for what? I can do bad by my damn self.

I get out of my seat to leave, but Trey turns around and makes eye contact with me. The look on his face says he forgot all about me being here, and it hurts my feelings that much more.

Trey hurries over to me, leaving the woman with a confused look on her overly made-up face.

"Baby, are you okay? Do you need another drink?" Trey questions sweetly as he grabs the glass out of my hand and sits it on a nearby table.

"Who is that?" I nod at the woman who is openly staring at us with a frown on her face.

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“Oh, she’s nobody. Don’t worry about her. My friend should be here at any minute. I can’t wait to introduce you to him.” Trey changes the subject as he wraps his arms around me. He gives me a charming smile, and I frown.

The woman looks our way with a little smirk, and I narrow my eyes at her. For some reason, she looks familiar, but I dismiss her as a catty bitch. I’m not here for her. I’m here to meet my boyfriend’s friends and hopefully get to know him better.

“So who is this friend? What’s his name? How did you guys meet?” I ask excitedly now that I have my boyfriend’s undivided attention.

Trey puts his fingers to my lips and stops my questions. “Babe, relax. My friend will just love you. You’re beautiful, talented, and innocent. Believe me. You will impress them without even trying.” Trey’s words are sweet, and I smile at him. But there’s an unnamed emotion that is fluttering through my belly, and it’s not a sunshine and rainbows type of feeling.

Four

WALKING MISTAKES

SHADOW

I look around the fancy nightclub and snarl. I hate places like this, and that asshole Everett is trying to be slick. He thinks I won’t fuck him up in a club full of people. Too bad he doesn’t know me as well as he thinks he does. He should’ve done his research on who he owed money.

If he did, he would've known that this particular club is co-owned by the Sinners. Businesses that deal in cash are good for washing money. And even though I despise Sins, I wouldn't have agreed to meet anywhere else.

It's not the type of place people would associate with a motorcycle club, and that's the way we like it. It's listed under a dummy corporation because the feds have a hard-on for our Prez, so even our legit businesses come under fire.

I nod to the bouncer at the door, who is also a prospect, and he lifts the velvet rope without any hesitation. He knows who I am even though I'm not wearing my cut. I'm dressed in black jeans, a black t-shirt, and a black leather jacket. I also have on black steel-toed boots just in case I have to stomp a motherfucker.

And although we own the place, I'm here to do business, so I don't need to draw any unnecessary attention. I head to the VIP because that's where I'm meeting Everett. I don't know why he wanted to meet me there when I know he made arrangements to meet in the back office. So, again, I have the advantage of knowing his little plan without his knowledge.

I see a few of the brothers working security, and I nod at them. They all know what's about to go down, and everybody has my back. I told Ice I could go alone, but after the little shit came by my place of business, I knew he was up to something.

Always trust your gut, Shadow.

When I reach the VIP section, I scan the crowd for Everett. However, the first person to catch my eyes is a woman with the sexiest pair of legs I have ever seen. They glisten in the flashing lights like she just walked out of the ocean. My greedy eyes start at the gold metallic heels and climb their way up the shiny brown stems to the short hem of her dress. Fuck!

I instinctively lick my lips when I meet her sparkling brown eyes. She's staring at me just as hard as I'm staring at her.

Her cinnamon-brown skin looks so lickable that my mouth almost waters at the sight. Her lips are plump and succulent, and the shape of her mouth has my imagination running wild. My thoughts have my lips forming a smirk. The beautiful goddess quickly looked away, and I knew she felt the electric currents flowing between us.

My mind is made up. As soon as I take care of Everett, this beauty is coming home with me.

"Like what you see?" Even his voice is slimy.

I turn to frown at Everett, and he's grinning like his prized pig just won the county fair. I hate this fucker!

"What's it to you? Where's the money?" I question as I adjust the large ring on my pointer finger.

Everett's eyes zero in on the movement because he knows it will hurt when I punch him in his fucking throat.

"Actually, she's part of why I need to talk. I've made arrangements for us to go to the back office. Follow me."

This asshole really thinks he's some big shot. However, he surprises me when he stops and reaches out a hand for the beauty I was admiring, and she takes it. I hope she's not a call girl, but you could never be too sure in Vegas.

I follow behind the two, slightly confused, but I don't show my unease. I'm glad we're on Sinners turf because this bastard is up to something.

Our little threesome heads to the back office, which is conveniently away from the noise of the crowded club. There's also an exit back here, and it crosses my mind that Everett might actually make a run for it.

When he makes a left into the office, I'm disappointed he didn't try to get away. It would've been fun to chase his ass down and beat the hell outta him.

"Alright, stop stalling. Where's the money?"

The beauty's eyes widen before she looks at me with disgust, and I frown. I don't know what the hell her problem is, but I decide to ignore her before she pisses me off.

"About that. I have another thirty grand, but Teagan is going to be my collateral while I get the rest."

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“What the fuck?!” Both Teagan and I yell at the same time.

“I’m not a fucking flesh dealer. I should kill your slimy ass right the fuck now!” My hand goes to my back, where my Glock is tucked into my pants, but before I can get it out, Teagan starts screaming at Everett.

“Trey, how could you?” Teagan looks at him in disbelief.

I shake my head, I don’t know who she is to him, but she’s obviously living in a fantasy land if she didn’t know what kinda asshole this guy is.

“Teag, baby. You said you wanted to meet my friend. I just need you to go with Shadow until I can work things out.”

Friend, I wouldn’t even admit to being an acquaintance of this motherfucker.

Whatever he told this beauty to get her here is a lie. Everett can’t get the rest of the money, or he would already have it. So he’s trying to stall so he can disappear.

“Of course, I was excited to meet your friends, but you didn’t say anything about going with him. And what money is he asking for? I can’t be collateral. What the hell!” Teagan is going off, and I want to laugh, but I didn’t come here to listen to some chick argue with Everett.

“Teagan, not now! Just shut the fuck up!” Everett shouts.

“Man, listen. We don’t take humans as collateral. The fuck is wrong with you?” I

look at him like he's stupid.

The Sinners take almost anything as collateral, but not living, breathing things. We don't even take pets, and some dogs can be over fifteen grand for the right breed. It's too much and too dangerous. And we're not fucking monsters.

"Just hear me out," Everett places his hands up in a surrendering motion like I actually got the chance to put my gun to his head. "I'm working it out."

"Trey! I am not going with this man!" Teagan argues.

"Teagan! I said shut your fucking mouth!" Everett yells again.

Something comes over me when he yells at her a second time, and I have to stop myself from reaching for my gun again. I don't know what it is about this woman that makes me want to protect her, but I have to fight the urge. She's a fucking stranger for fuck's sake. Still, I take a step closer to them and stand beside Teagan.

"Take the bass outcha voice, motherfucker. I've already told you we don't deal flesh. I want our motherfucking money. All of it," I sneer.

My tolerance for this bitch is gone. I should've shot his ass when he didn't have the money in the first place. I don't know what the hell I was thinking. I don't leave mistakes walking around.

Before Everett has the chance to answer my question, the door to the office bursts open. I hear the familiar puff of air before a picture frame beside my head shatters. I knock Teagan to the floor on my way down. Then, men in masks start shooting up the office.

I pull my gun out and start to return fire. I hit Everett in the shoulder because the

asshole didn't duck. The men grab him and drag him out the door before I can get off any more shots.

"Fuck! Are you okay?" I ask, looking down at a hysterical Teagan.

"What the hell is happening?" She cries.

I wish I knew I had the answer because I have no fucking idea what just happened.

Five

UPSIDE DOWN

TEAGAN

The gorgeous stranger is still lying on top of me as I make an effort to calm down. It's crazy that he was shooting at people, and even though I didn't hear them shooting at us, they were. I saw the picture frame explode before I hit the ground.

"Are you okay?" He asks me again as he looks me over. I assume he's looking for bullet holes.

My adrenaline is rushing, but I think I would feel it if I was shot. My body is trembling, but I take a deep breath to gather the strength not to continue freaking out.

"I'm not shot, but you're heavy." Shadow gets off me and helps me stand on wobbly legs.

I'd probably be dead if it weren't for him knocking me down. Tears continue to pool at the thought, and I try to swallow and push them back down, but they spill out of my eyes without permission.

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“What the fuck just happened?” Shadow runs his hands through his dark brown hair with a grunt.

I feel like I’m in a nightmare. First, Trey tried to trade me like I was on a fucking auction block, he told me to shut the fuck up, so he had to be possessed by the devil. Then to top it all off, I was almost shot. I’ve had some bad days before, but this one takes the cake.

The realization that I have no idea who my boyfriend really is takes me to a dark place. I thought he loved me, but he was willing to give me to some stranger as collateral. So not only is he an asshole, but a lying one. What the hell?!

My thoughts are spiraling out of control, and I can’t get a grip on reality when suddenly a group of burley men comes charging into the office. They’re all heavily armed, and it takes all of my effort not to piss myself. I’m not sure what Trey has me involved in, but these people aren’t ones to be trifled with.

“Shadow! You good?”

“Yeah. Did ya’ll check the back exit?” Shadow’s slow drawl reminds me of back home, but I shouldn’t be focused on that.

I need to get the hell out of here asap!

“Detroit, go check the door,” one of the men hollers. “Is she okay?” The man frowns at me, and I feel myself shrink under his assessment.

When Shadow's dark gaze swings to me, I swallow hard. I don't know these people, and they don't know me. It's obvious that I just witnessed some shit that I shouldn't have. And by the looks of these men, you definitely don't want to be a witness to anything they've done.

Shit! Shit! Shit, a brick!

"She ain't shot, but I'm pretty sure she's in shock," Shadow says, still watching me closely.

"No, no, I—I'm good," I stutter after finally finding my voice. I hastily wipe at my face trying to dry my tears, but I'm pretty sure I just smeared mascara all over the place.

Lord help me! I can't let these men think I'm some basket case. And although I have every right to be frantic, I know I have to pull myself together. I might not have any experience with this kinda thing, but I've watched enough movies to know staying calm is my best way out of this mess. I have to make them see that I know how to keep a cool head and a shut mouth.

"I don't know who Everett was to you, but whoever took him could come after you next," Shadow says with a grim look on his face.

I want to scream that he's wrong, and even though I don't know this man, I have a sinking suspicion that he's telling me the truth.

It's been about an hour since the shooting, and it took me all of that time to stop crying. But I'm still on edge, especially since this Shadow guy won't let me leave. Not that I have anywhere to go anyway. If gun-wielding masked men are out to get me, the last place I want to go is back to my apartment.

“Teagan, right?” Shadow asks me, handing me a bottle of water.

“Yeah.” I take the bottle with gratitude and gulp down half.

For some reason, when he looks at me, I feel a comfort that I probably shouldn’t from a stranger— especially one that’s obviously dangerous.

“Listen, is Everett— is he your boyfriend or something?” Shadow questions with a disgusted sneer.

“Not anymore,” I mumble, embarrassed. Shit, I’m disgusted too.

I thought Trey was someone I could count on, but now I know I was wrong. His actions tonight were appalling, and I feel so stupid. I put too much faith in him. He made me believe that he loved and supported me. At this moment, I have to question everything he has ever said and done.

“Hmm. Well, your ex owes the Sinners a lot of money from gambling. A hundred grand, to be exact.” Shadow raises his eyebrow when I gasp.

I knew that Trey liked to gamble, but I thought it was just a fun thing he did every once in a while. If he owes somebody a hundred thousand dollars, it’s not just for fun.

“How? Why... what?” I can’t even form a coherent question.

“Your boy has a serious gambling problem. And not that you aren’t worth a hundred grand, but he knew I wouldn’t let him off without collateral tonight. He set up the meeting because he said he had the money.”

“I had no idea. I—” I shake my head and frown.

I'm fighting back the tears once again because the realization has hit me that Trey has been lying to me from the start. I was as naïve as my parents said I was.

"I don't know who has him, but not everybody is as generous as us. We don't deal in flesh, but some people would be happy to take you as payment."

I feel the tears coming again, and a sob breaks from the deepest part of my soul. I was supposed to be celebrating the biggest accomplishment of my life. Now, I might have to leave the city because of Trey.

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I feel strong arms go around my body, and it's the most comforting hug I've had in a long time.

"I got you. Don't worry."

Inside of his strong arms, it almost feels like my world didn't just turn upside down.

Six

VIBES

SHADOW

Teagan's body shaking sobs are doing something to me. I'm not an express your feelings type, but damn this woman...

"Listen, doll. Everything will work itself out." I don't know what else to say. Nobody has ever accused me of being a motivational speaker.

"I'm just sc— scared. What am I going to do?" Teagan's big brown eyes bore into me for the answer, and God help me, I want to give her one.

"I mean... Everett might be dead already." I shrug because nobody goes through all that to get a guy they're gonna keep alive.

Hell, he owed us a shit ton of money, but if he didn't pay up, I would've killed him my damn self.

“Trey is an asshole, but I wouldn’t want him dead. Geez, what have I gotten myself mixed up in?” Teagan drops her head into her hands, and her shoulders shake.

If my mama were alive, she’d say, “bless her heart, the child was on a fool’s errand.” Even after Everett has proved to be an untrustworthy bitch, Teagan wants his life spared. It says a lot about her character and even more about mine.

“Yeah, well, crossing the wrong people gets ya dead real fast.” There’s no use in me sugar coating anything, especially after everything she’s just witnessed. And as sweet as she seems to be, and as gorgeous as she is, we don’t like witnesses.

Even though Everett owes us money, Teagan didn’t actually witness me doing anything to him. She also wasn’t at the game itself. So, the fact of the matter is, she didn’t really witness much.

“What if he’s not dead? What if he tries to give me to the people who took him? Like you said... everyone isn’t like you. I have a little money. I can pay you to protect me.” Her face is hopeful, and as much as my instincts are telling me that I need to protect her, it isn’t my job.

“Protection ain’t really my business, doll.” My words are sharp because I need her to understand.

“Okay, umm. But guys like you... you know people, right? People who could protect me.”

I shouldn’t feel offended cause I know what she means by “guys like me,” but what the fuck! I don’t know why I care, but for the first time in a long time, I want to be seen as something more than the scary motherfucker you shouldn’t cross. Well, at least in her view.

“She might be able to help us, Shadow. Let’s see what the Prez has to say.” Bounty’s suggestion makes me raise an eyebrow at him because he’s not the “helpful” type either.

I can’t say that the brother has ever been accommodating to anyone but our club, but he is observant. So, more than likely, he’s seen something that I missed, and Teagan will be able to help us somehow.

“Alright. I’ll talk to the Prez. In the meantime, doll... you need to stay put.”

Teagan quickly nods her pretty head and takes a deep breath. I watch her closely and sigh, but when I turn to Bounty, he’s watching me with a smirk. I narrow my eyes at him.

“Bounty, stay with her while I call Grimm.” I walk out of the office into the hall to make the call.

I have a feeling that this night is about to get longer.

I don’t take pleasure in being right about negative shit, but fuck, I was definitely right. After talking to Grimm, he agreed we should keep an eye on Teagan. However, it wasn’t out of the goodness of his heart. No, it was so we could find out if Everett was dead or not, and if he weren’t, we would proceed to get our money by any means necessary.

Now, I’m taking Teagan to a hotel so I can play bodyguard. It wasn’t exactly what I was thinking when I first said she would be going home with me tonight.

Even though my first instinct was to protect Teagan, but I feel resentful that I’m having to babysit instead of bashing in heads. I can say my natural instinct for protection is normally saved for my brothers. Outside of the Sinners, I don’t have any

family, so all of my loyalty belongs to them.

I've never felt anything other than lust for a woman, so this weird vibe of protectiveness for her is making me antsy. I hate feeling out of control, so my usual gruffness has picked up a few notches.

"I know I said that I could pay you, but I don't think I can afford to stay here."

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Teagan's sweet voice brings me out of my thoughts. The Uber had pulled up to the Mandalay Bay hotel, and I hadn't even noticed.

"Don't worry about that. I told you before we left you're under the protection of the Sinners. Your boyfriend owes us the debt, not you."

"He's my ex, by the way," Teagan mumbles with tears lacing her words.

I want to snap that it's only been a few hours since she came to that conclusion, but I don't want her crying all night. The last thing I want or need is to be stuck with an emotional female.

"Whatever, let's go. It's late, and I need some rest." I usher her out of the Ford Explorer and into the hotel lobby.

I head straight to the concierge desk, and I'm greeted by the friendly Latina with a big smile and even bigger breasts.

"Mr. Carpenter. Welcome back to the Mandalay Bay," she purrs seductively. Her tongue runs over her glossed lips, wetting them even more, and I can't help but smirk.

"Hilary. Thanks for this. I know it's short notice." I give her a seductive look of my own.

Hilary waves her hand at me, "I couldn't be happier to help. You know that. Besides, I benefit as much as you." She gives a little wink, and I chuckle.

Hilary is the sister of one of my tattoo artists, and she always gives me the hook-up on rooms when I need them. In turn, she gets all the connections for her VIPs from the Sinners.

“Eehhm,” Teagan clears her throat, effectively gaining my attention.

When I turn to look at her, she’s frowning and looking between Hilary and me like I owe her an explanation. I shake my head because I don’t owe anyone shit.

“You got the key?”

“Sure thing.” Hilary holds up the black key card to a suite, and I nod my head.

“Preciate it, sweetie.” I take the card from her hand and wink.

“Anytime,Shane.” Hilary winks back before sauntering off.

“Let’s go, doll. I’m sure you’re tired.”

And as worn-out as I am, with the way my body is humming with Teagan in the same room, I highly doubt I will get any rest.

Seven

NO SMOKE

TEAGAN

I knew when I went to bed last night that today would be a shock to my system. I’ve slept most of the day away, and it’s already early evening. And although Shadow didn’t tell me exactly what I would be doing today, he did say we would eventually

have a meeting at the clubhouse.

Now, I grew up sheltered, and I can admit that I'm a little naïve, but I'm not slow. I figured out last night when the guys were talking that they belonged to a motorcycle club. They call themselves Sinners, and they're as scary as they look.

While they were trying to figure out what the hell happened with Trey, I'm pretty sure they'd forgotten I was even in the room. I listened intently as they discussed who may have had Trey and why.

Apparently, my ex-boyfriend not only owes the Sinners money but some Russians. I didn't even know Trey knew anybody from Russia. I swear the longer I sat there, the more foolish I felt. I don't know how I missed all the red flags about Trey.

Well, that's not strictly true. I wanted to prove my parents wrong. I wanted to show them that I was an adult who was capable of making her own decisions. So, I ignored a lot of things that I should've questioned Trey about.

There's nothing I can do about that now, but what I won't do is sit around and be a victim. That asshole tried to sell me. Like I was his fucking property. That shit has me fuming. Who the fuck did he think he was? Shit! Who the fuck did he think I am?

I can't say that I slept peacefully even in such a glorious suite. I've been to a few places in life, but never anywhere like this. I was thankful that the suite had two bedrooms and a large living room. It even had a kitchen, not that I'd be using it.

But as soon as we got in, Shadow instructed me to make myself at home and get some rest. Then, as grumpy as he seemed, he made sure I had something to eat from room service before I turned in for the night.

I slept in the plushy hotel robe that felt like heaven. The only problem was that I

didn't feel like pouring myself into the metallic club dress I had on last night. I felt sexy and unstoppable last night, but putting it back on would make me feel like I was doing the walk of shame.

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And as fine as Shadow is, he didn't look interested in me whatsoever. Not that I care. I just broke up with my boyfriend, and I'm not worried about a sexy biker. Nope, not at all.

I sigh because I'm not this girl. I don't go from one guy to the other, especially with a man like Shadow. I think the sexy chick at the front desk called him Shane. I can say Shadow fits his personality. He's dark and mysterious, and although his presence overwhelms me, it's almost like he blends in with the background.

When the men were all talking last night, I noticed that he quietly watched and listened. He only put in his two cents when spoken to directly. However, no matter how quiet Shadow was, my gaze followed him wherever he was in the room.

The man had an animal magnetism to him that made my pulse race. Stay focused, Tea. You don't need another dangerous bad boy in your life. Solve this Trey issue and start your dancing career in two months. Nothing else matters.

The knock on the bedroom door brought me out of my pep talk.

"Come in!" I hollered, and the door crept open.

"We're going to be going to the club later on tonight. So, I got you some gear to wear. You can't ride on the back of my bike in that shit you had on last night."

Shadow comes in and thrusts a bag in my direction. I'm shocked that he even thought of me, but then it hits me what he said.

“What bike?”

“Aaahhhh! Oh, Lord! Shit!!!” I can’t help but scream until my lungs burn because Shadow is obviously trying to kill me.

I knew he was in a motorcycle gang or club or whatever, but we rode in an Uber last night. So I just assumed that’s what we would be doing again tonight. But when this big beast of a machine was waiting for us, I almost swallowed my tongue.

I’m not in a position to demand anything, but now that I’m on the back of this instrument of death, I wish I would’ve made it clear that I’m a four wheels type of chick.

“Good Lord, woman, would you shut the hell up,” Shadow says just loud enough for me to hear over the roaring engine and my screaming.

I snap my lips shut because I don’t wanna get on his bad side. But Lord have mercy, holding in yells and pee is stressing me the fuck out.

I don’t know how long this ride is, but I’m praying to anybody that’ll listen that it’s not far. If I wet myself on the back of this man’s motorcycle, I’m sure I won’t have to worry about the meeting or anything else. Shadow will probably hide my body in the middle of the Vegas desert.

I’m so busy praying with my eyes shut that I don’t realize we’ve stopped until Shadow shifts in front of me. I slowly pry my eyes open and take a look around.

“You can let go now.” Shadow looks down at my arms that are wrapped tightly around his waist, and my face heats in embarrassment.

“Sorry,” I mumble before snatching back quickly.

I swear this man makes me act out of character. I know the ride here was a first, but I've never wanted to cling to a stranger as much as I have with Shadow. Maybe I'm already forming attachments because he saved my life.

Shadow grunts as he swings his long leg over the bike and then helps me off. I nervously adjust the jeans and pull the sleeves down on my new leather jacket. Although I have to say, for a man who acts like my existence irritates his soul, he knew exactly what my sizes were.

I mean, a t-shirt is easy, but the jeans mold to my body just right. And even the combat boots are the correct size. And although I wanted to pepper Shadow with questions on how and why he purchased me an outfit, I swallowed them down. Shadow does not strike me as a man who would appreciate being questioned in any capacity.

"Look, don't say shit when we get in here. The Prez has a reason for this meeting, and we don't usually let outsiders in here." Shadow gives me a stern look, and I quickly nod.

The last thing he has to worry about is me saying anything. Hell, the only reason why I agreed to any of this is because I was shot at last night.

I don't want no smoke!!

Eight

KEEP MY DISTANCE

SHADOW

It's early by our standards, but the party is starting to ramp up. People are already

hanging out and drinking, the music is loud, and I know from experience that it will be only another hour or so before the party is in full swing.

Teagan is quiet as she sticks to me like glue. I'm glad she can follow directions because I really don't feel like knocking one of these rowdy motherfuckers out if they can't keep their hands to themselves.

Anybody can tell with one glimpse at Teagan that she's a lamb amongst wolves. Her mouth is hanging open, and her head is swiveling from side to side like she's watching a tennis match. I know we're just getting started, but to her, she's probably not used to people partying this hard. I chuckle internally at her innocence.

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It's been a long time since we had an outsider in the club, well, at least one that I associated with. My brothers have all had their fair share of women through this joint. However, Teagan is a different breed. I'm not sure how old she is, but the vibes she's giving off isn't "worldly" at all.

"Hey, Shadow. I see you brought some new pussy." Paws licks his lips at Teagan like she's the juiciest of steaks.

"Fuck outta here," I growl as I keep my stride.

Paws is obviously itching for a fight because he steps in the way, and I have to stop. We're a brotherhood, but that doesn't mean I like all of these motherfuckers. I hardly like anybody to be honest, I mostly tolerate people in general.

But, Paws is a different story. He got his club name cause he couldn't keep his hands to himself. I noticed he couldn't keep his mouth shut either. If there's any type of argument going on, you can guarantee that his ass is somewhere in the mix. They should've named his ass, Instigator.

"Aww, come on, Shadow. I know you're used to being in the dark alone, so I know she ain't here for you."

I know this asshole wants the smoke, but I don't have time to deal with his ass. I'm already tired from tossing and turning for most of the night, and then I was up early contacting leads about Everett. I couldn't sleep because I was so wound up by the thought of Teagan's long legs and tight body that I had to keep myself from going into her room and stripping her naked.

My body hadn't been so primed and ready to go in forever. Hell, I don't even remember the last time I wanted a woman so badly.

I managed to get her some clothes sent up from the hotel's boutique courtesy of Hilary, but when I saw Teagan dressed in just a robe, I almost lost my shit.

I've been a grumpy asshole for the better part of my life, but today I can't muster up any patience or even my famous smirk for anybody.

Now, this bitch is about to feel my wrath because he thinks he's fucking funny.

I grab Paws by his throat, and I get right in his face so that he can hear me clearly. I don't want any misunderstandings.

"You don't want me out of the darkness, motherfucker. I told you to get the fuck on, and that's what I meant," I move so close that our noses are almost touching before I continue in my low gravelly voice, "I will fuck you up for fun. And by the way, keep your filthy eyes and hands off of her."

Paws is turning blue, but he nods his head as best he can with my large hand still wrapped around his throat. I let go, and he gasps for air and backs away. I grab Teagan's hand and lead her to the Prez.

We haven't been here for ten minutes, and I'm already about to kill somebody.

The meeting is just a few of us because Grimm didn't call church. It's another reason Teagan is allowed in here with us. We won't discuss anything she isn't already privy to, and if she's smart, she'll stay quiet and out of the way.

"Normally, I wouldn't give a fuck about a piece of shit like Everett." Grimm pauses, and I know he's about to say some shit I really won't like. "But, some of my sources

tell me he's been informing some rivals of ours about shit he has no business. So, we need to find his ass."

I know "finding" means to put Everett to ground. I'm the club's number one enforcer, and it's my job to take care of Everett and any loose ends.

The problem is, Teagan might be one of those ends. And I don't know how I feel about that.

"Flyboy tracked him for a few days, but we still don't know who took him or why. Everett is in so much fucking debt that it could be anybody." I shake my head at the thought of having to chase down his ass. Hopefully, whoever took Everett killed his shifty ass and saved me the trouble. But I doubt I'd have that much good luck.

"Yeah, we're working on that too. We need to be patient, and then you can do what you do best. But, for now, I need you to stay close," Grimm nods at Teagan, and I frown.

"Umm, Mr. Grimm, sir," Teagan speaks up timidly, "I can pay ya'll. I mean, Shadow said my ex owed some bad people money, and they could come after me."

"No worries, sweetheart." Grimm's soft tone has me eyeing him suspiciously.

Since when does he call anybody sweetheart?

"I've already told Shadow to keep an eye on you, and he's gonna do just that."

Again that ominous feeling hits me, and I know that I'm going to regret Grimm's next words.

"I'm not gonna sugarcoat shit for you cause that ain't my way. You might be in deep

shit. We don't protect just anybody, but I think you can help lead us to Everett. Or at least they will come looking for you."

Teagan's eyes get even bigger as she fidgets in her seat.

"So, you want to use me as bait?"

"Nope. We're not gonna dangle you on a string or no shit like that. But we'll be there if a froggy motherfucker feels like jumpin'."

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“O-ookay. I guess whatever works.” Teagan looks to me for reassurance, and I nod.

“Shadow is going to do what he does best, and you’re going to go on leading your life.” Grimm pats Teagan on the back and leads her to the door of the room. “Go have a drink. Shadow will be there in a few.” Grimm waves to one of the bartenders, and she hurries over, “Carla, make sure you take care of our guest.”

Teagan follows Carla to the main part of the clubhouse, where the party is picking up. I shut the door and waited for further instructions because I knew they were coming.

“I need you to keep an eye out for those Russian motherfuckers. I’m pretty sure they had something to do with this. We’ll have Flyboy sticking close to the girl, but I want you in the shadows.”

I nod my head in agreement because that’s my job. But something doesn’t sit right with me. This time I don’t want to be in the shadows. I want to be beside Teagan to protect her, and with that thought, I know without a doubt that I should keep my distance.

Nine

SAFE AND SOUND

TEAGAN

It’s been a few days since this started, and I’ve been staying in the same suite with Shadow. I called my job to take time off, but they acted as if missing a few days was

out of the question, so I quit. I was going to put in my notice anyways since I'll be starting the show in a few months, but it pissed me off that they didn't want to give me some time after I haven't missed a day since I started.

At least now, I don't have to try and act normal or think about how it will be to go about my regular routine. I didn't want to have to go to work and constantly look over my shoulder for an unseen threat. However, I also don't want to leave Vegas now that I have my chance to live my dreams. I don't want to end up as somebody's cautionary tale either. My thoughts make me feel kinda guilty because I don't know if Trey is alive or not, and I'm worried about my career, but then I remember that he tried to use me as collateral, and that guilt fades quickly.

I tighten my grip around Shadow's waist because I am once again on the back of his motorcycle, and I'm trying not to freak out. Finally, after two days at the hotel, I convinced him to let me come home.

When we finally pull up to my apartment, Shadow helps me off his ride, and I have wobbly legs once again. He catches me before I fall, and although he doesn't smile, the twinkle in his hazel gaze is amused.

"Jell-O legs. You'll get used to it," Shadow says.

His raspy voice sends a sexy chill up my spine, which is hard to do in the middle of a Vegas summer.

"Thanks. Do you want to come in? I can get you some coffee or tea or something?" I want to palm my forehead because I just offered this badass, motorcycle riding, gun totting, sex on a stick, some damn tea.

"Yeah, alright. I need to check out your place anyway. Gotta make sure you don't have any unwanted guests."

Shadow is only being straight with me, but now I have chills for a different reason. Somebody could really be in my apartment waiting to kidnap me for payment. The thought has me nauseous.

I lead Shadow to my apartment, and everything looks normal, so I relax a little. It's broad daylight. Tea. There's not a monster under your bed. Chill.

My little pep talk works, and I open my door. When I walk into my apartment and flip on the light, everything looks exactly how I left it. I sigh in relief.

Shadow comes in behind me and shuts the door. As he looks around my place with a blank expression, I can't tell if he likes what he sees or not. I'm not sure why I care, but I want him to feel comfortable in my space.

"You can make yourself at home. I'll be right back." Shadow nods and heads toward the kitchen.

I enter my bedroom and take off my shoes and jacket. Something doesn't feel right, but nothing looks out of place. Then I notice the light in my bathroom is off.

Did I turn it off before I left on Friday? I'm trying my best to remember if I left the light on like I usually do, but so much happened that I honestly can't remember.

Before I can chalk it up to paranoia, a figure dressed in black comes toward me!

"Teagan, get down!" I drop to the floor when I hear Shadow yell.

The fight is on, and it's like watching two brawling giants. The sounds of fists hitting flesh are so loud I know my neighbors have to hear it.

Shadow and the man are going tit for tat, and they're almost the same size, but

Shadow is a little taller. However, the other guy is a little bulkier. And although I'm sure Shadow can handle his own, I remember that I have a stun gun in my nightstand. It isn't a taser, so the electricity doesn't shoot out, but if I can get close enough, maybe I can shock the guy and help Shadow take down the intruder.

I scramble to the drawer and get out my weapon, but when I peek to see what's going on, Shadow is standing over the other man with a gun to his head.

Okay, so I don't need my stun gun.

"Who the fuck are you working for?" Shadow questions the bloodied man.

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I'm standing here like an idiot because I have no idea what I'm supposed to be doing in this situation. Should I even be seeing this right now? Lord! Help me!

"Vete a la mierda!" The man growls.

"Fuck me! No, fuck you!" Shadow answers, then bashes the guy's head with the butt of his gun.

"That didn't sound like Russian," I say because that's the only thing that comes to mind.

I've been hearing that Trey was mixed up with Russians since this started, but this guy is definitely not Russian.

"What made you come to that brilliant conclusion?" Shadow shakes his head at me like he's chastising a child.

I frown at his rudeness, "You don't have to be a dick about it. I just expected Dolph Lundgren."

"You're like twenty... how do you know who Dolph Lundgren is?" Shadow quirks a brow at me.

"I'm twenty-four. And who didn't watch Rocky? Besides, you can't be that much older than me."

"I'm twenty-eight," he replies like that makes him so wise.

“Four whole years. Wow, oh wise one.” I roll my eyes.

This is one of the most asinine conversations I have ever had, especially considering there’s an unconscious man lying on my bedroom floor.

“Hmmmm,” Shadow makes a noncommittal noise, and I sigh.

“Anyways. Back to my original statement... he’s not Russian. So, who do you think he is?”

“No telling. But one thing is obvious, you won’t be able to stay here.”

“Why not? You got him, so I should be safe and sound... right?” The words taste bitter on my lips cause I know they’re just wishful thinking.

“Nah, doll. That’s not how this works. If the first one don’t succeed...” Shadow lets his sentence end, but I know exactly what he’s not saying.

“Then they’ll try, try, again...” I put my head in my hands, and I do my best to breathe through this anxiety. “I don’t have anywhere else to go,” I brokenly whisper.

I realize that I’m in a lot more trouble than I bargained for. If I can’t stay in my apartment, then I’ll be on the streets. I don’t have any friends or family that I can go to, and I won’t be able to afford to stay in a hotel for an extended amount of time.

“Hey, look at me.” Shadow moved into my space with such stealth-like movements that I didn’t even realize he was standing in front of me. “I told you the Sinners got you. Don’t worry. Grab a bag and get some essential shit. I don’t know if this motherfucker had backup or not.”

I nod my head and rush into my closet to pack. So much for being safe and sound.

Ten

MOVING DAY

SHADOW

There's a bigger chance that Teagan will end up dead if I leave her in this apartment. The guy I knocked out is part of the Costa Oeste, a Mexican gang out of L.A. The tattoos that covered his torso, arms, and face made him easily identifiable. The Oeste's are bad news, and they definitely deal in human trafficking, but from what we found out, Everett didn't have anything to do with them. Out of all the debts Everett had, not once did the Oeste's ever come up.

I called Ice and let him know what was going on, and he sent reinforcements. The Oeste's run deep, so I know this asshole ain't the only one here.

Detroit and Flyboy, along with a few prospects, are already sweeping the neighborhood. I may have this dickhead tied up and ready for torture, but that doesn't mean he'll talk. We need leverage or an incentive for these assholes to talk.

"I know I'm probably not supposed to ask questions, but since you've saved my life twice already, I think I'm entitled." Teagan pauses as she waits for me to give her the go ahead.

For some reason, her questions don't bother me as much as they probably should, which is saying a lot for me because everything bothers me.

"Ask your damned questions, doll." I stare at her, hoping that my demeanor will stop her from being so comfortable and sexy.

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“Oookay. So, are we going to keep this dude tied up, or can we take him to your playhouse. Cause you said there would be more and no offense, but I don’t want to be here when they come.”

I have to suppress my chuckle because Teagan is feisty as all get out. And even though I know she’s not trying, she’s funny as fuck.

“First of all, it’sclubhouse, not playhouse. Second, I can’t just stroll outta your apartment carrying a tied up man over my shoulder. It’s broad daylight.”

“Right, daylight. Shit... so we can’t move him. What about tying him up and leaving until it gets dark? Then we can come back under the cover of darkness and move him.”

I raise my eyebrow in surprise because Teagan has a sound plan, especially for a novice.Maybe she’s not as naive as I first suspected.

“That’s a pretty good plan, doll.” Teagan proudly smiles, and I hate to burst her bubble, but... “I can’t leave him here because his gang might come looking for him. If nobody is here, then our only lead gets away.”

“Dang it! I thought that would work. Sorry.” She looks so disappointed that I want to take her in my arms and comfort her.

I resist because this is only temporary, and no matter how much I’m feeling her, Teagan is not the woman for me.

“No need for apologies, doll. My brothers are making sure we don’t get any more unexpected company. And when they come back, we’ll be taking our friend with us, and we won’t be waiting for the cover of darkness.” I smirk when she dips her head in embarrassment.

I swear she’s so fucking cute it makes my dick hard.

“Okay, so what do I need to do to help?” Teagan asks.

“You’re going to run interference for any nosey neighbors you might have. Because today is moving day, doll.”

The brothers come through with a big refrigerator box to transport our captive. He’s still out cold, so Bounty had to take his pulse to make sure the fucker didn’t die on us. He was alive, so we made sure he was gagged and tied tight when we slipped him into the box.

Teagan was nervous as she pulled her suitcase behind her with a big duffle bag draped over her shoulder. A few of the other brothers came and carried out a few random boxes to make anyone who may have been watching believe Teagan was moving.

I was surprised when the brothers reported back that there weren’t any more Oeste’s hanging around. They’re a gang for a reason, so traveling alone is unusual. Especially coming from L.A. to Vegas. This is Los Muertes territory. And although we don’t fuck with the Los Muertes, and they don’t fuck with us, I know for sure they’d be pissed to know some Oeste’s was here.

I can’t assume why the intruder was here. He may have come to kill Teagan or maybe kidnap her, but he had the necessary items to do either.

We're almost to the moving truck when, as I suspected, a nosey neighbor comes asking questions. The lady with a little rat dog is watching our every move with a keen eye. I see Teagan is getting agitated, but she takes a deep breath and strolls over to the lady.

"Hi, Mrs. Craig. How are you today?" Teagan smiles, and I can see it's fake from a mile away, but the lady waves and teeters closer.

"Hello, dear. Are you moving already?" The woman peers around, trying to get a better look inside the big moving truck we're loading.

"Oh, no, of course not. I finally got that job dancing, so I wanted to clear out space for me to rehearse. Trey's friends are helping me as a favor." I want to scoff at her for calling us that asshole's friends, but the old woman finally stops watching us, and her face softens.

Of course, the old bitty would like a slimy motherfucker like Everett while simultaneously looking down her pointed nose at us.

"Well, isn't he just darling for helping you. He's such a gentleman. You should lock him down while you still have a chance." Mrs. Craig is officially on my bad side with that fucked up statement.

"Sure. Well, I have to get going. Nice chatting with you." Teagan waves, and Mrs. Craig smiles as she takes her little rat dog and carries on minding other people's business.

I'm impressed at how quickly Teagan came up with the cover story, even if it had us being friends with Everett. She didn't buckle under the nosey neighbor's pressure, and she thought quick on her feet.

“Ima have to watch you,” I say as I assess the sexy goddess in front of me.

“Why do you say that?” Teagan ticks her head to the side and puts her hand on her hip.

“Because you’re a fast talker, doll. And slick tongues can get you in trouble.”

“I bet you know all about slick tongues... don’t you...Shane?”

I growl at the sound of my government slipping out of her mouth, and before I can stop myself, I have her pushed up against the truck with my hand in her hair.

“Don’t play with me, doll. You don’t know me like that,” I growl right in her face.

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Teagan licks her lips, and her tongue lightly touches mine, her chest rises quickly, and her pupils dilate.

She's turned on, and it takes all of my self-control not to cup her pussy through the tight-ass jeans she has on.

I back away with a scowl on my face because I know I need to stop this before it even gets started.

"Get in the truck, Teagan." I open the door, and Teagan slides inside without saying anything.

I run my fingers through my hair and take a deep breath to clear my head. The problem is, all I smell is her. Fuck!

Eleven

LESSONS

TEAGAN

I have no idea where we're going, and my heart is pounding entirely too loud in my ears to even ask. The way Shadow pushed me up against the truck with his hard body had my hormones going haywire. Who knew a man so dangerous could be so freaking hot?

I guess that's where the bad boy appeal comes from. I've always been the type of girl

who stayed clear of trouble. With the way I was raised, I damned near had a chastity belt to protect my virtue. I always went for the clean-cut church boys, who ironically tried to get in my panties harder than the average guy.

But, I always stuck to the same type of man, which is why I ended up with a snake in a suit with a pretty face and a gambling habit.

“You’re sure are quiet over there, doll. You alright?” Shadow’s gruff voice warms me all over, and again I have to reprimand myself.

“Uh huh,” I grunt because my voice will give away how turned on I am.

I’m embarrassed that this stranger has me feeling things that I’ve never felt before. I’m ashamed that the most I know about the man driving is that he’s not only a criminal, but he’s a member of a criminal enterprise.

I know I left Texas to get away from the judgment of my family, but I can’t help but to revert back to the way I was raised. However, I tried playing the good guy game, and look where that got me, being protected by the same guy I’m judging. I really should be ashamed of myself for judging somebody who is helping me.

“We’re gonna go to the clubhouse first. Then I’ll take you to somewhere safe.”

Although Shadow is staring at the road, his voice is softer than I’ve heard it since I met him, and I feel a weird comfort.

“Thanks for doing this. I know you have your reasons and whatnot, but still...” I study his profile with my heart in my throat.

With just one glance, I can’t get our almost kiss out of my mind. His lips were so close to mine. I couldn’t help but get a little taste of his plump bottom lip when I

licked out my tongue. And the roughness of his five o'clock shadow...Damn, that's a fine ass man!

I'm doing my best not to be a hussy out here in these streets, but my mind is all goo, and my hormones have taken over.

"Teagan? Teagan— did you hear me?"

"Huh? No, sorry. What'd you say?" I ask, slightly mortified cause I'm sitting here drooling over this man while he's asking me questions.

"I asked you if you were hungry. I gotta drop off our package and handle some business, but I can make sure you have food waiting on you when we get to the clubhouse."

I know it's a small gesture, and it probably doesn't mean anything to him. But Shadow taking care of me without thought makes the butterflies stir in my belly. I'm not an idiot or anything, and small gestures shouldn't have this effect on me, but it's been a long time since someone took the time to make sure I was okay.

At the sobering thought, the butterflies die, and a feeling of sadness and shame wash over me. It's been too long since I felt like someone cared, and forty-eight hours ago, I called myself having a boyfriend.

Once we got to the clubhouse, I was left with Carla, the friendly bartender, again. This time when we walked in, there was no partying going on. The place was so quiet you could probably hear a mouse piss on cotton. I felt like I had to tiptoe and whisper not to break the peace.

What a difference a few days can make; this place went from brothel to church. But at least this time, I wasn't given a warning not to say shit. Shadow almost killed a guy

for making nasty comments as soon as we walked in the last time.

I look around to make sure that I don't see him. Even though my stun gun is in my purse, I don't want any issues with these men.

“So, you must be in some deep shit if you're hanging with Shadow. He's one of the scariest brothers here.”

I sit up and pay attention to what Carla is saying because by the look on her face, she's ready to spill the tea.

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I shrug, playing it cool, “Shadow and I have a mutual interest.”

I don’t want to say too much just in case I’m not supposed to be talking about what’s going on. Carla seems like a cool chick, but she doesn’t owe me any loyalty.

“Well, you’re in good hands with Shadow.” Carla’s cheeks flush a pretty rosy pink like she’s thinking about Shadow’s good hands.

I want to hop over the bar and pop her in the eye, but I have no reason to do that. Just because he saved my life twice, put me up in a swanky hotel, and took care of all my needs, doesn’t make him mine. We spent a few days in a hotel room, and not once did he make a move. He actually left me alone in my room while he was in his. I would’ve thought he’d left if I didn’t periodically hear the channels on the tv change. It was like he was purposely avoiding me.

So, we didn’t have any deep conversations. Hell! I don’t even know the man’s last name. I only know his first name because another chick had been fawning over him once again. I don’t know anything about who Shadow is.

But that doesn’t stop those little balls of green envy from bubbling to the surface whenever I think about Shadow being with someone else.

“That’s good to know,” I respond with a blank face.

Carla flips her long brown hair over her shoulder, and she leans toward me with a twinkle in her light brown eyes. I automatically mirror her posture cause it’s obvious she’s about to spill some more information.

“It was so hot how he fucked up Paws for you the other day. Everybody saw it!” Carla says excitedly. “I know you must be something special cause I ain’t never seen Shadow act like that over a bitch before.”

“Excuse me... bitch?” I lean away from Carla with pursed lips. She doesn’t know me to be calling me a bitch.

“Oh! You’re an outsider... I thought you were one of us.” Carla looks at me like I’m an alien, and then a wide smile breaks out on her face.

“What do you mean? One of you?” I ask cause I feel like this chick is speaking a foreign language.

“I thought you were about the club life. You look like one of us. You seemed awfully comfortable talking to the Prez. It ain’t too many bi— women who can hang with the Sinners. Look, let me say this. Bitch don’t mean nothin’ bad. It’s just another word like any other. If you’re gonna be hanging around here, I’m gonna school you on what to expect. These other bitches ain’t as nice, and they’ll eat your pretty little ass up.”

I nod, impressed. I guess I’ll be getting club bitch lessons today.

Twelve

LIKE GLUE

SHADOW

“Why were you by yourself?” I question the Oeste, who is black and blue and bruised all over.

The asshole is a tough one cause no matter what we've thrown at his ass. He refuses to answer our questions.

My knuckles are bruised, and I'm frustrated as fuck. But I need to know why the fuck an Oeste was in Teagan's apartment, if Everett had anything to do with it, and where the fuck Everett is. But either this motherfucker doesn't know, or he has a death wish.

I have practically beat his face in with my fists. His nose is broken, both eyes are almost completely swollen shut, and his lip is busted. But his ass won't say a word. But I got something for him.

"Okay then. If you don't wanna say shit, I have no use for you." I pull out my phone and my gun.

I place the phone on speaker when the line connects, "Aye, Santino. I would love to give you this motherfucker, but he's useless. So you can have his body instead," I say to the leader of the rival gang of the Oeste's.

"That's fine with me. Fuck thatputa. Their motherfucking asses should be nowhere near Vegas. It's an act of war," Santino says something in Spanish, but whatever he said, the Oeste definitely understood because his swollen eyes go as wide as they can go before he gulps.

"I'm here alone. My crew doesn't know nothin' about this shit. It was a paid gig. Easy kill and make it look like a B and E."

"Santino, I'll give you a rain check."

"Alright. You gave us the heads up when this fucker was in our territory, so you got yo raincheck." Santino disconnects the call because there's nothing left to be said.

I told them about the Oeste's as a courtesy because we don't have any beef with them. Sinners don't owe anybody shit. A raincheck just means the next time we find an Oeste in Vegas, we give them to the Los Muertes.

“Who paid you?” I continue to question my prisoner.

“Ion know man. Some blonde bitch offered me ten g's to eighty-six some black bitch.”

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I shake my head because ten grand for a hit job is insane. People will do anything for a little bit of money. But I guess I'm not one to talk since I kill for free.

"Thanks for the info." I pull the trigger and shoot the motherfucker right between the eyes.

There was nothing else he could tell me, and this was taking too much time. When I searched the guy, I found a set of car keys. The car was parked right outside of Teagan's apartment with the idiot's wallet and personal information. Jason Delacruz was going to be a missing person. They'll never find his body in the desert.

Whoever hired him was as dumb as he was. He was going to do a job in broad daylight, wearing all black, driving a rental car. He could've worn a flashing neon sign, and it wouldn't have been more obvious he was committing a crime.

I had the twins working on the name to make sure it was actually Jason Delacruz and not some fake id. Thomas will also find any street names the dickhead might have.

The twins were pure geniuses when it came to any type of computer. They could find out just about anything with a click of a mouse. That's why they are in charge of my business when I'm not around. They may not be prospects of the Sinners yet, but I know they will soon. They help the club in numerous ways without batting a lash.

They are loyal, unlike the piece of shit Everett, who I'm convinced is behind Teagan's unexpected intruder.

By the time I got finished disposing of Delacruz, it was late evening, and the party

had already started at the clubhouse.

I instantly felt my stomach drop. I'd left Teagan alone without my protection. I know the brothers know who she is by now, and they saw me fuck Paws up behind her. I just hope that was enough to keep everyone away.

I'd especially hate it if Paws was here and didn't heed my warning. I will take another life tonight if he so much as breathes in her direction.

I've spent two days holding myself back from this woman, and I'm at my breaking point. To be fair to her, though, she stayed in her room without any fuss. I didn't want to corrupt the good little dancer, but I know it's just a matter of time.

The thought of not being able to have Teagan the way I want her and the lack of information from the Oeste has my blood boiling when I get to the main floor of the clubhouse. The sea of bodies seems thicker tonight, and it's difficult to find Teagan as quick as I want to.

However, when I see her behind the bar slinging drinks alongside of Carla, I stop dead in my tracks. They look like they've been working together forever. They're laughing, hi-fiving, and flirting with the brothers who are drooling all over my girl.

"How the hell did this happen?" I question out loud as I continue to watch the scene unfold.

Teagan has changed her clothes, and she's dressed in a mini skirt, a Sinners tank top, and the combat boots I gave her.

Her long brown legs look even more delicious than they did last night, and the urge to have them wrapped around my waist is intense.

I can't believe it's only been a few days since all this started. And the attraction I'm feeling for the woman who seamlessly fits right into my world continues to grow.

"Looks like Tiny Dancer is one helluva bartender," Bounty says out of nowhere.

I don't question where he came from anymore because he's just like me. We're always there, but you see us when we want you to see us.

"I'm surprised. She seemed like a stuck-up little cunt at the club the other night," Detroit puts his two cents in. I don't correct his assessment because Teagan ain't my old lady, but him calling her a cunt makes me instantly rub my sore knuckles to remind myself not to fuck my brother up.

"I suggest you keep your comments about Shadow's bitch to yourself dickwad." Caliber slaps Detroit on the back of his neck, leaving a huge red mark.

I smirk at Caliber, but I don't comment. No sense in arguing what everybody with eyes can see is true. I'm gonna make Teagan Walker mine.

It's no longer just about finding Everett and getting the club's money back. Now, it's about a woman that intrigued me from the moment I laid eyes on her. She doesn't know it yet, but she's about to be stuck to my side like glue. Especially since when I leave her alone, she draws a fucking fan club.

Thirteen

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

TEAGAN

After a few drinks, Carla had me feeling myself. She was absolutely right when she

told me I had a stick up my ass, and if I didn't want to stand out around here, I had to conform.

I can admit that I slipped into my comfort zone of judgment from the time I walked in the door, and again I don't have any room to turn my nose up at the people that are helping me to stay alive.

Carla wasn't exaggerating about the women around here either. As soon as they walked in, some I received some glares of death. If looks could kill, I wouldn't have to worry about gangbangers trying to kill me cause I'd be dead. These ladies didn't hold back when it came to their words either. I had a drink thrown on me, and I was all kinds of hoes, cunts, and one even called me a slag. What the hell is a slag?

I took Carla's advice and gave as good as I got. I'd never been called a slag, but I bet that chick had never been called a bald-headed scallywag either. It definitely broke the ice, and most left me alone after that, a few of them actually laughed.

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I almost had to fight the chick that threw the drink, but the other women didn't like her either, so they used it as an excuse to jump on her. Now, I could've held my own because I've taken a few self-defense classes, and I have my stun gun, but I don't think anybody here would appreciate me shocking the hell outta somebody. I was still pissed about being an unwilling contestant in a wet t-shirt contest, but Carla gave me a Sinners tank and a mini skirt to wear, so I calmed down a little.

When the clubhouse became packed, and Carla was left high and dry to work the bar by herself, I felt it was only fair to help her out. I may not have any formal bartending experience, but most of these guys wanted beer or straight liquor. So, since I wasn't mixing cocktails, I was happy to help.

I was having a ball, slanging beers and flirting with men that scared the hell outta me. Some were actually quite nice guys if you looked past the tats, scowling faces, and the overall I'll kill you vibe. Plus, they were great tippers. I've made almost eight hundred bucks tonight. Shit! This is more than I made at my regular job.

"Girl! I know you said you and Shadow ain't together, but the way he's lookin' at you says somethin' different." Carla nods toward the right side of the bar where Shadow is standing.

The look on his face is a mix between lust and fury, and I can't figure out which one is sexier. The man is dangerous to my libido, and he's a good distraction from what's happening in my fucked up life right now. Live and let live, Teagan. When will you get another chance to walk on the wild side?

I'm trying to pretend that Shadow isn't staring a hole in me, but every time I look up,

our eyes connect. The glow in his hazel gaze is almost otherworldly. I have never had a man look at me the way he is right now.

This thin ass tank-top is great for getting big tips because it's showing off all my assets which means it's also showing my hard as ice nipples. I would feel embarrassed if I wasn't so turned on and also a little tipsy from the shots Carla gave me to relax.

"So, are you the new sweet butt? Cause we need some new pussy around here."

I know I can't react like I normally would because that would end in disaster, so I paste a flirty smile on my face.

"My butt is sweet, however... this new pussy is not for you, sir. Now, what can I get you to drink?" I wink at him, and he bursts out laughing.

I'm relieved to hand him a drink and scurry to the other end of the bar. He might think my response was cute, but it's a few members that are a little more aggressive. I don't want any problems.

"New pussy! Give me a shot of Jack."

I really don't want to serve the asshole that tried to manhandle me, but Carla is busy, and I promised her I could handle this. So, I take a deep breath, grab a bottle of Jack Daniels, pour the shot and slide it to Paws without looking him in the eye.

Paws takes the shot glass, throws it back, and slams it down on the bar.

"You're slow as fuck, bitch! Who let you behind the bar?" Paws yells, and I try to move away, but like he said, I'm too slow.

Paws reaches over the bar and grabs me by the arm roughly. My instinct is to fight his ass, but I don't get the chance.

Paws is ripped away from me so quick that my arm is damned near dislocated. Shadow has the man up against the bar pounding his face like it's his personal punching bag. All I can do is watch on as Shadow whoops the shit out of him with an eerie calm.

Shadow doesn't say a word. He doesn't yell, or cuss, or talk shit. He barely makes a sound. The shit is creepy as fuck. So why am I wet?

"That's enough, Shadow!" Preacher shouts.

I'm shocked because the man who introduced himself as Preacher was mostly quiet even with all the debauchery that was happening. I didn't think he had it in him to yell.

"I already told this motherfucker what would happen, Preach. He didn't listen," Shadow says in a monotone.

"He's out cold, Shane. We got it from here," a man they call Ice with a VP patch on his leather vest says calmly.

Shadow nods and lets go of Paws. The man drops to the floor in a heap, and two men pull his limp body up and carry him out. Everyone continues like nothing happened, and I'm left staring at Shadow while he's staring back at me.

"Thanks, I'm sorry you had to do that." I approach Shadow carefully.

"Don't be sorry. You're going to repay me right now!"

Fourteen

PAYMENT

SHADOW

Logically, I know that Teagan wasn't in any real danger when Paws grabbed her because I was standing close enough to protect her. But something inside of me snapped. I've been spending so much time with this woman, and now my self-control is nonexistent.

The painful hours and days of hard cock straining against my jeans because I wanted to do the right thing for once. Stay in the shadows like I'm expected to when I'm on the job, but I can't— not this time.

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This time the light is calling my name, and I don't want to ignore it. I've tried. Lord knows I've tried. Teagan doesn't deserve to be in this lifestyle. She didn't deserve to be given as collateral, and she didn't deserve to be shot at, she didn't deserve to lose her job, she didn't deserve any of the shit she's been put through in the past few days.

But I'm a selfish bastard and none of that matters. Even though it crosses my mind, it doesn't matter. I'll ask for forgiveness... not permission.

I grab Teagan by the back of her neck and pull her flush against my body. Her nipples are poking through the tiny ass top she has on, and I want to suck them and soak the fabric with my mouth.

But she's not ready for all of that, at least in front of all these people.

"How do you want me to repay you?" Teagan's breathy question draws my attention to her pouty lips that are painted red.

"Oh, I think you know—" I let the statement hang as I trace her lips with the tip of my finger.

The naughty vixen licks the tip of my finger with a mischievous glint in her brown eyes. I know we're on the same page when she bites her bottom lip.

"I thought you said you didn't want my money," Teagan smirks.

"I want your pussy, doll. I want you to rub it all over my face when you sit on your throne. Then, I want you to shower me with your juices until I drown. Then I want

you to resurrect me by sitting on my dick.”

“Fuck, that’s hot!” I hear Carla say, and I realize we have somewhat of an audience.

But I don’t have any fucks to give. What I’m doing is tame compared to what goes on around here. Me and Teagan have been dancing around each other since we met.

“You staking your claim, brother, cause Tiny Dancer is hot as fuck!” Zee hollers out, and loud laughter ensues.

“Nobody in this motherfucker worry about Tiny Dancer. Ya’ll feel me…” It was a rhetorical question that these assholes know the answer already. Other than a few chuckles, everybody resumes their partying.

“Let’s go,” I say, looking into Teagan’s beautiful face.

“But, I promised Carla I would help.” Teagan doesn’t take her eyes off my lips, and her breathing is ragged like she just ran a marathon.

“Larissa!” I holler over the loud music. “Come help, Carla!”

“Sure thing, Shadow!” The sweet butt almost breaks her neck to get behind the bar to help.

“No more stalling, doll.” I tug Teagan behind me before she has a chance to change her mind.

We get to my designated room in the clubhouse, and I make sure the door is locked when I close it behind us. I don’t want any interruptions when I’m balls deep.

“I would’ve never guessed you would want a woman like me.” Teagan looks me in

the eyes as she says the crazy shit.

I have to give it to her, she doesn't cower away from me or act timid when she speaks to me. I respect that because I have grown men who are afraid to look me in my eyes.

"The better question is, who wouldn't want you?" I shake my head because Everett did a number on this beauty that he so obviously didn't deserve. "Do you have panties on under that little ass skirt?" I ask, changing the subject.

"Ummm."

"You don't do you... umm umm umm. I can see you're not wearing a bra through that thin ass top." I circle Teagan as she stands wide-eyed in the middle of my room.

I run my finger over her shoulder and across her back then I stop behind her. I grind my hard dick against her ass, and Teagan shivers. I lean down, move her hair out of the way, and run my tongue down the back of her neck.

I wrap my arms around her from behind and tweak her nipples as she rolls her ass on my hard dick. Teagan moans when I tighten my grip on her hard little bud.

"You like it rough, doll? I never would've guessed a prim little thing like you would like kinky shit," I whisper in her ear as I continue to play her body like an instrument.

Her moans of desire are the music that fills the room, and I can't get enough of the sweet, sweet melody.

I hike the itty-bitty skirt up, and when the air kisses her bare lips, Teagan hisses. I slip my finger over her shaved mound down to the prize between her toned brown thighs. I slide my finger back and forth, gathering her juices with each pass.

“Your slit is weeping for me, doll.”

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Teagan groans louder when I push two fingers inside her tight wet pussy. The feel of her hot cunt makes me want to blow my load in my pants.

“Oh God, Shadow!” Teagan squeals when I speed up my pace.

“My name is Shane when I’m giving you pleasure,” I growl in her ear, but all she can do is whimper as she rides my fingers.

“Sh—Shane! I need more! Please!”

Teagan’s begging is all I need to hear to snap the little restraint that I have left. Faster than I’ve ever moved before, I have Teagan bent over the bed, a condom out of my wallet, unwrapped, and on my stiff dick. I’m so eager to get inside of her that I don’t even pull my pants all the way down.

We groan in unison when I push my way inside my new heaven on earth. Damn! Her pussy has to be the tightest I’ve ever had!

I start to move slowly at first because I don’t want to hurt her. Teagan is so tight, but her pussy is so wet it’s coating my dick before I’m all the way inside of her.

I work my hips thrusting in and out in a steady rhythm until Teagan starts to move with me. She pushes her ass back, and her cheeks clap against my stomach. Fuck! That’s hot!

“Play with your clit,” I groan as I continue to move.

Teagan hesitates at first, but I guide her hand to her bud and help her. Once she finds the right pace, I move my hand to her shirt and push it up to expose her breasts. Her nipples are waiting for my attention again, so I oblige.

I pluck and pull them to the tempo of my strokes, and before long, Teagan's body is seizing as she calls out my name. I follow soon after, spilling my seed inside the condom as my body feels a relief that I've never felt before.

I know she doesn't belong in my world, but after tonight, I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to let her go.

Fifteen

JUDGMENTAL

TEAGAN

I've never had sex before. Let me rephrase my thoughts because I'm no virgin. I've never had sex like THAT before.

I don't know if Shadow was trying to blow out my back or blow my mind, but he managed to do both. It was as if he was trying to claim my soul through my vagina. And he damned near succeeded.

Truth be told, I have been fighting my attraction for Shadow since I laid eyes on him. I'm not sure why I tried to fight it. It's not like I owe anyone my loyalty. I guess I just let the guilt of not being the "good girl" follow me into adulthood.

I can't keep falling back into the habits of my childhood. I'm a grown-ass woman who loves to do grown-ass woman things. I can't keep holding myself back from living life based on the rules of my parents.

I'm not some teenager rebelling any more. It's time for me to grow the hell up. My life experiences may be limited, but these people who are considered outlaws took me in and protected me. Now, their reason may not have been the most morally correct, but they didn't leave me to the wolves.

"Hey... you're up already. I thought I put your little ass to sleep," Shadow's deep sultry voice draws my attention to the bathroom doorway.

The glow from the bathroom light illuminates Shadow's silhouette. When he turns to flip off the light, I notice that he is still stark naked.

The man is a beautiful specimen. His six-pack is still defined even though they're decorated in tattoos. The large eagle on his upper right ab and the rose on his right peck just adds to the beauty of his body. I tried to run my hands all over him. I only wish I got the chance to run my lips and tongue over him too. Next time Tea.

"I heard you get up and couldn't get back to sleep. What time is it?" I question trying to change the subject. Truth is, I've been having nightmares since all this started, so sleeping hasn't been my favorite thing to do.

Shadow walks back toward the bed, his slow stride showing off all the muscles in his legs as they flex with each step.

"It's around three. You weren't asleep that long." Shadow flips on a lamp that I didn't see when we came in.

I didn't see much of the room. Actually, my eyes were trained on something much more important. Shadow's gloriously long dick, for one. I only saw the big bulge, and then I felt it against my ass before he slipped it inside of me, but the second time I got a nice view up close and personal. Glorious!

“We can go back out to the party if you want,” I say, unsure how these things go.

For all of my self-talk about being a grown woman, I have never in my life had a one-night stand. I’ve only had two serious boyfriends, and it took them months to get to where Shadow and I just went.

“I told you what I wanted. Your pussy on my face. Now, come have a seat.” Shadow crawls on the bed beside me, and excitement rolls through my entire body!

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I tentatively climb on and hover my naked pussy over Shadow's handsome face.

"Don't be shy, Tiny Dancer. Press that sweet kitty against my lips."

I take a deep breath and slide gently down onto Shadow's plump lips. Ecstasy!

"What are you doing on the floor, doll?" Shadow's deep voice sounds behind me, and I turn around and smile up at him.

From what I can gather about Shadow, he is a man of very few words. He's mysterious by nature, and he's completely dangerous to my libido.

Shadow snaps his fingers in front of my face to stop my ogling, but after all the shit we've done, I can't even be embarrassed.

"I'm stretching. My rehearsals with Bianca start in two months." I continue to stretch, but I notice the heated look in Shadow's gaze.

"I like your outfit. Where'd you get it?" His hazel eyes take a leisurely stroll over my tight biker shorts and fitted sports bra.

"Flyboy brought in my bag for me. Since it didn't look like we were going wherever you were taking me after this."

I don't want to ask the question straight out, but I would like for Shadow to let me know what the plan is. I have no idea what the gang member told him or what happens now.

It's obvious someone is trying to kill me. I just don't know why. Is it because Trey promised them money? Is someone trying to get to Trey by killing me? Does someone think I know something? Who the hell knows, but I can't continue living like this.

"I'm gonna take you to my place. There's more room and privacy there."

"Okay, great." I smile because I don't know what else to say.

Shadow's answer actually shocked me. The way this room is decorated, I thought he lived here. This man continues to surprise me.

"We need to get a move on. I need to stop by my shop for a few minutes."

I nod as I get up from my stretching. I try not to let on how Shadow owning some type of business shocks me once again. I didn't think he was the kind of man who would work a regular job. I thought men who ran in motorcycle gangs and shot at people didn't have a nine-to-five.

Then again, I really don't know much about this man who just made me rethink my entire life with one stroke of his tongue. But I guess there's no time like the present to find out.

"So, Shadow..."

"I told you to call me Shane when it's just you and me, or do you need a reminder?" That wicked gleam in his eyes almost makes me want to keep calling him Shadow just to get the delicious reminder, but I'll leave that for later.

"Shane... what kind of shop do you own?"

“Tattoo and clothing store,” Shadow answers with a little smirk.

“What? Why are you smirking at me like that?”

“Because I can see on your pretty little face how shocked you are. I know you don’t know much about me, but on paper, I’m definitely a man you can take home to mama.”

I doubt that. My mama would have a hissy fit because he’s covered in tats and rides a motorcycle. It doesn’t matter that he owns a business.

“Well, before we make those plans, I should at least know your birthdate and last name.” I almost feel ashamed of myself for sleeping with a man before I know the basic things about him, but hey... who here at the Sinners M. C. is gonna judge?

Sixteen

DISCLOSURES

SHADOW

Driving a cage is my least favorite thing to do, but since I have an excitable passenger along for the ride, my nerves could only take so much. So, I’m driving my vintage mustang until I can get Teagan settled at my place.

I don’t want to think about all of my rules I’ve broken by being with this chic, but there’s something that draws me to her that I just can’t ignore.

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“So, your last name is Carpenter, and you’re from Texas like me,” Teagan says like she reading off a resume.

I get why she’s so inquisitive. The twins did a deep dive into her background for me. I needed to make sure she wasn’t some scammer who was helping Everett. I found out she was the exact opposite. I learned that Teagan was a church girl who did almost everything her parents wanted her to. She’s definitely not the type who would be living in sin city and hanging out with gambling addicts.

I’d bet my last dollar that she’s feeling guilty because I fucked her every which way, and she didn’t know shit about me. I would laugh at her, but it’s kinda cute that she’s so innocent. It’s been a long time since I could describe a woman I wanted as innocent.

“Yeah, I’m from Fort Worth. Graduated from TCU.”

“What? You were a Horned Frog? No way! I can’t picture you at a Christian college.” Teagan turns in her seat, so she facing me.

The look on her face is hilarious because her eyes are wide, and she’s smiling from ear to ear.

“Why not? I was once a good Christian boy. Made you go to heaven last night, didn’t I?” I wink at her, and by the way she dips her head and tucks her bottom lip into her mouth, I know I’ve embarrassed her. So fucking cute.

“Annnnyyyway,” Teagan draws out the word as she rolls her eyes playfully.

I continue to stare her down, and I lick my lips until she visibly swallows and shyly looks away.

I pull around to the back of my shop and park in one of the reserved spots. I motion for Teagan to follow me inside. I type in my code on the keypad and then grab Teagan's hand as I lead her through the back door.

Leo is in the back office when I enter, and he sits up straight in the chair when he sees Teagan. I want to scowl at him, but the little asshole would just fuck with me even more if I showed any emotion. If there's one thing the twins know how to do, it's push my motherfucking buttons.

They're almost the only two people in the world that I joke around with and take shit from. I've adopted them as my younger brothers, and besides the Sinners, they're the only family that I have in this world.

"And who do we have here?" Leo questions with a wicked smile.

I roll my eyes, "Teagan, this is Leo. Pretend he's invisible like I do."

"Hi, Leo. It's nice to meet you," Teagan giggles making Leo blush like a preteen.

"Enough of making googly eyes at my woman. What info did you get on Delacruz?"

Leo nods as he begins to type on the computer, "It was a real id. He has a rap sheet a mile long. But I don't see that he was part of the Oeste crew. Hell, from what I can tell, he wasn't even Oeste affiliated."

"Great, so we got a wannabe gang member and still no Everett," I say, frustrated.

"Hey! Turn that up!" Teagan interrupts out of nowhere, pointing at the television.

“Why? What’s up?”

“That’s the girl I saw talking to Trey right before you got to the club.” Teagan is staring at the T.V. with narrowed eyes.

“Are you sure? The Caliente Claims lady?”

“I hate that stupid commercial. I knew I recognized her ass when she was talking to Trey. That was definitely her. They were real cozy at the club.”

“Why would Everett be talking to an insurance agent?” Leo asks.

“Knowing Everett, he was probably trying to buy some pus—” I stop what I was going to say when Teagan scowls in my direction.

But it’s a well-known fact that Stefani McDonald’s employees look and act more like call girls than insurance agents. It just makes me wonder if Everett was just flirting or if it is more to it than that...

It took longer than I expected to handle my business at the shop, so it was late afternoon by the time we were getting ready to leave. The shop was quiet, but there were still a few people here shopping.

The beeping sound of the door chime draws my attention to the front of the shop. I still can’t remember the girl’s name that works up front, but Thomas had just let her go to break when I hear loud accented voices.

“Where the fuck is Shadow? He’s been all around town spreading bullshit, and I want to know where the fuck he is before I kill you!”

I know that annoying ass voice anywhere. The bitch doesn’t go anywhere without

causing a disturbance.

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“You won’t be killing anybody motherfucker. Why the fuck are you here?”

“I heard you were looking for me.” The big Russian bastard narrows his eyes at me.

My hand is instantly itching to grab my nine and put a bullet in his head. But I can’t do that... at least not yet.

“If I were looking for you, Ivan, believe me, you wouldn’t be here now. Come to the back, so you don’t scare my customers away.” I walk away, knowing his ass will follow.

The Sinners are surrounding this place because we’re on high alert. All of our businesses have had extra security since Everett got away and someone shot up our club. So, I know I have backup even though I don’t need it when dealing with the Russian enforcer.

I make sure to lead him to my office, which is away from the break room and where Thomas and Leo are with Teagan. If these assholes did have anything to do with Everett, they would be looking for Teagan. I texted Leo to keep Teagan out of sight and put away my phone.

“Alright, what the fuck do you want, Ivan?” I close the door behind us and cross my arms over my chest.

“The little bitch that owes my boss money. Where the fuck is Trey Everett?”

Ivan’s question shocks the shit outta me. Hell, I thought the Russians had something

to do with his disappearance. Until the Oeste showed up, I thought it was them who would try to kidnap Teagan for their human trafficking ring.

“I thought you fuckers had him. I was hoping you killed him for all the money he owes.” I raise my eyebrow to mock his ass.

The Russians think their business is so hush-hush. They got more leaks than the Titanic. I don’t trust not one of those backstabbing motherfuckers.

“So, if you don’t have him, where’s the girl he promised us? She was last seen at Sin. She’s owed to us, and we want her. Now!”

I look at this motherfucker like he has lost what little mind he had. The Sinners ain’t ever been friends or even associated with the Petrov family. They are some bottle of the barrel, grimy, disrespectful, kill their own mother for a penny motherfuckers. There was no way I was giving Teagan to them even if she wasn’t my woman.

“There’s no woman. Everett lied to you. The Sinners don’t owe you flesh-peddling motherfuckers a damn thing. Now, get the fuck outta my business.”

“I know you know something about the woman I’m looking for. But I hope you’re lying so I can finally have a reason to kill you.” Ivan leaves the threat hanging.

“You ain’t killing shit. Get the fuck outta my shop.”

Ivan scowls but doesn’t reply as he leaves my office, slamming my door behind him.

As much as I hate to admit it, the Russians are far too unpredictable. I need to find Everett and put an end to all of this fast!

Seventeen

BROKEN GLASS

TEAGAN

We have fallen into some sort of weird routine. Shadow takes me to the dance studio where I normally practice and drops me off. Of course, I'm never alone. There's always a couple of Sinners hanging out for protection.

At first, it was weird seeing these bikers amongst leotards and Lululemon's, but like everyone else here, we've gotten used to the sight.

Although the Sinners are imposing, they pretty much stay in the shadows. But I always know they're there. They make me feel safe, especially since the break-in.

"Hey, Tiny Dancer," Shadow calls out.

I'm surprised to see him here, he drops me off, but he never picks me up. My heart is in my throat, and the flutters are kicking up in my belly. No man should make me this heated by a look.

"Hey! I wasn't expecting you." I smile as I grab my bag and start his way.

"Bye, Teagan. See ya Thursday." Marjorie flutters her fingers at me as she brushes up against Shadow on her way out.

I like Marjorie, she's one of the first people I met when I started working out here, but I feel myself heating for an entirely different reason when she bites her lip and gives Shadow the fuck-me-stare.

"Uh-hem," I clear my throat when Shadow's eyes follow her switching ass through the door.

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“So, you ready?” Shadow smiles at me, and my lip automatically curls up in disgust.

I already lived that life of a foolish girlfriend. I won’t be doing that shit ever again. Not with Shadow or any other man. I don’t care how much my body responds to him.

“I’ve been ready, Shadow. If you weren’t so busy drooling after some twit, you don’t know you would’ve recognized that.” I brush past him like Marjorie did, except I give him a death glare. Asshole.

I hear Shadow’s deep chuckle, but I don’t turn around to acknowledge him. If he wants to be childish, I can play in the sandbox too.

“Hey, Tea. Are you coming to Leon’s show on Friday? He invited everyone.” Cameron gives me a bright, hopeful smile that you can’t help to return.

“I hope I can make it. I’m so excited for Leon!”

“I hope you can too. Maybe we can get a drink or something before the show?” He licks his lips and winks, and I raise my brow curiously.

I have no idea why Cameron is flirting with me. We both know that I’m definitely not his type.

But he continues to smile his cute dimpled smile, and when he lifts up his shirt to wipe his forehead and exposes his tight abs and flawless tan skin, I almost forget that I’m not his type.

“Do you not see me standing here while you ask my woman on a fucking date? Are you crazy, or do you have a death wish?” Shadow growls, and instead of being afraid, like he should be, Cameron smirks.

“No disrespect man.” Cameron raises his hands, “I didn’t know she had a man. I guess I can tell Marjorie she was wrong, and I was right.” Cameron shrugs and winks at me again.

I smile because Cameron knew Marjorie was flirting, and now she would back off without me saying anything.

Shadow starts toward Cameron, but I pull his arm. “Don’t bother. Cameron is gay. He’s just messing with you.”

Shadow squints his eyes at me like he’s trying to decipher if I’m telling the truth or not, but I just shrug and walk away.

I’m glad Cameron helped me out in his crazy Cameron way, but if he knew that Shadow is not the one to fuck around with, he most definitely would’ve stayed out of it. Now, Shadow will look at him sideways until the end of time.

“I need to stop by the shop before we go home.” Shadow helps me on the back of his bike and starts it up smoothly.

I don’t have time to think about how thrilling and scary the ride is because I’m thinking about the fact that he called his place my home.

When we get to the shop, I’m still in my head. I know I shouldn’t get all wrapped up in Shadow or his world, but I find myself falling deeper and deeper. He lures me in like a moth to a flame, and I want to feel the heat so badly.

There is still so much I don't know about Shadow, but the little parts of himself that he shares with me are like gems in a treasure chest. I want to keep them safe and only for me because I know he doesn't open up to many people.

"Hi, Tea!"

"Hey, Sam. Girl, do you ever get a day off?" I tease the talkative little brunette.

Sam giggles and waves her hand, "I love working here. Oh, we got some new stuff. You would look so cute!"

"I'll be in the back. Pick out whatever you want, it's on me." Shadow bends down and kisses my lips before swaggering to the back where they do the tats.

"You guys are so freaking cute. I never thought Shadow would be all warm and fuzzy until I watched him with you," Sam says with a dreamy expression on her face.

"I wouldn't actually call that warm and fuzzy, but we are talking about Shadow." We both giggle as Sam comes around the counter to show me the new stock.

The store seems more crowded than usual, especially for a Tuesday. They normally don't see a rush like this until the weekend.

"We have some great new platforms too! With your killer legs, they will look awesome!" Sam is so enthusiastic that I smile as she drags me to the far back of the store where they keep the shoes.

When my cell rings, I frown. The only people with my new number are Shadow, my new job, which hasn't started yet, and my parents.

The number isn't one I recognize, but I know I need to answer it if it's my new job.

“Sam, I need to take this. I’m gonna step outside cause reception is shit in here.”

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“Okay, girlie.”

“Hello?” The voice isn’t one I recognize.

“Hello? Who is this?”

“I called to inquire about your car’s extended warranty. We have many offers...”

I hang up the phone and roll my eyes. “These damned cold calls are getting out of control. How the hell did they even get this number in the first place?” I grumble to myself.

I place the phone in my back pocket and turn to head back inside when I see a blacked-out SUV roll down the street. Something about the car has my nerves bad, so I rush inside.

Just as I get inside the door, I look back to see where the SUV went, and I see the window roll down and a gun stick out.

“Get down! Get down!” I push Sam to the ground just as the windows shatter around us and the building fills with smoke.

Eighteen

HELP

SHADOW

“Get down! Get down!” I hear Teagan screaming in the front of the store and then glass shattering.

My feet are moving before my brain can catch on to what’s happening. I draw my gun while hollering for the brothers to secure the back of the shop and call for reinforcements. I pass customers running from the front of the store to get away from whatever the fuck is happening.

When I make it to the apparel section, all hell is breaking loose. The front is foggy with some kind of smoke. People are screaming and fleeing the scene while others are hiding under overturned shoe racks coughing.

“Teagan! Teagan!” I shout as I desperately look for her. I pull a shirt off a hanger and tie it around my face.

My heart is beating out of control because if something happens to Teagan, especially on my watch, I will send everyone involved to hell.

“Shadow! Over here!” I hear a voice calling me.

I move as best I can to where the voice is coming from, but it’s hard to navigate through the mess.

When I see Teagan and Sam, my heart nearly stops. Sam is on the floor, and Teagan is beside her, but there’s glass on top of her.

“Teagan! Sam! Fuck!” I yell, moving as fast as my legs will carry me.

“Shadow,” Teagan moans before coughing.

At the sound of her weak voice, I feel both relief and enraged. Somebody tried to kill

her in my store on my watch!

“Baby, fuck! Tea, are you hurt, honey?” I move as much of the glass off of her as I can.

“They were shooting at me.” Teagan coughs before trying to continue, “I...”

“Shhhh. Baby, don’t try to talk. Sam, are you alright?” I check on my talkative sales clerk.

It’s the first time I’ve heard her quiet since she was hired, and even though she used to annoy me, her and Teagan have been pretty close since the first time I brought her to the store. The twins were right, and she is an asset to the business, so I would hate to see her hurt.

“I’m good. Teagan saved my life.” Sam has tears streaming down her face, and she is rightfully shaken up.

“Come on, let’s get you guys to safety. Can you walk?” I ask Sam, and she nods. I pick up Teagan off the floor.

The brothers come hauling ass from what seems like all sides. A prospect helps Sam while I take Teagan out the back.

If it weren’t obvious somebody was trying to kill Teagan, it for sure as fuck clear now. Now, I need to figure out why and who is behind this shit.

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We still don't have a clue where Everett is, and the bastard hadn't shown up to work since this whole thing started. As a matter of fact, Thomas found out that Everett had quit the investment firm a week before all this shit popped off. Thomas is still working on finding any banking accounts that could be linked to Everett because there's one thing I know, if you follow the money, you'll find the reason.

Teagan was fine after being checked over by our resident doctor for the Sinners. I left her in my room at the clubhouse to rest. I wanted her to be somewhere I trusted, and my brothers are the people I trust most in this world.

"So, do we have any clue as to who shot up the store?" Aries, our V.P asks.

"This shit is gettin' out of hand. Motherfuckers are taken liberties. This is our second place of business somebody has shot up, and we don't know who the fuck it is!" Grimm is seething.

Our whole club is pissed. Somebody is bold enough to go against us not once but twice. That's unheard of and something we definitely aren't going to stand for.

"You said you could handle this." Ice gives me an accusatory stare.

My anger rises before I can control it. "I'm working on it," I growl.

"Work faster. This involves every one of us. Don't get stuck in the shadows trying to do this shit alone. We have your back, brother. You know this." Ice looks me in the eyes, and my anger diminishes.

He's right. Even though I have Thomas working on finding Everett, he needs more help.

"I can use some help. Starting with who shot up the store."

"We'll put Gates and Tech on tracking." Gates is short for Bill Gates, which we call Benji because he's a technology guru with a lot of cash flow, and Tech is a brother who talks nonstop about technology. To have two brothers with their skills is unheard of, but I'm thankful they are on our side.

"Thanks, Prez." I nod.

"No thanks needed. This is a problem not a your problem. You'll learn that eventually, youngin'. Alright. We got a plan of action. Everybody stay alert and vigilant. Sinners all!"

"Sinners all, never fall," we cry in unison.

I walk back to my room feeling a thousand times better. However, the weight of Teagan being the target of some unnamed bullshit has me stressed. I won't feel completely at ease until she's safe.

I unlock the door to my room and enter quietly, but Teagan is already awake.

"Hey, baby. How are you feeling?" I sit down beside her and push her hair behind her ear.

"I'm doing okay. A little shaken up." Teagan shrugs like it's no big deal, but I know all this shit scares her.

I rub my hand down her soft cheek, and she sighs. I'm not an affectionate man, but

Teagan brings out things in me that I never thought existed, at least since my parents died.

I've lived in the darkness and shadows so long that I forgot what it was like to live in the light.

"I'm glad I got that cold call and went outside. Otherwise, I would've never seen that gun," Teagan says, looking me in my eyes.

I'm glad that she saw them too. Anybody could've been killed, but I hate that she was that close to dying, and I wasn't there. It infuriates me that somebody tried to hurt my woman... again.

"I'm not glad that you went outside without me, but I'm glad you were able to save Sam and yourself. I'm sorry I wasn't there, baby."

Today will haunt me for a long time to come. I can't imagine what would've happened if Teagan didn't think as fast as she did.

"You're here now, and that's all that matters." Teagan yawns, and I know that the adrenaline rush is finally leaving her.

I stand up, strip down to my briefs, pull the covers back, and slide in beside Teagan. I pull her soft body into my chest, and she melts against me.

"Go to sleep, Tiny Dancer. I'll always be here."

Nineteen

PROPER THANKS

TEAGAN

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The way Shadow held me all night was so unfamiliar to me, but it was also needed. The fear of being hunted down by some unknown faceless killers has me knocked completely off kilter. How does anybody live like this? Not knowing if the next time you step outside will be your last.

I thought the only thing I wanted to do in life was dance. Now, I know that's not true. All I want is safety.

And as crazy as it sounds, Shadow is the only person in this world that's made me feel safe in a very long time.

"You know, you squirm when you're thinking too hard." Shadow pulls me closer to him and kisses the top of my head.

I turn over in his strong, tatted up arms to face him. I smile at the sleepy look in his hazel eyes. Shadow's strong jaw is covered in thick stubble, and his usually gelled back hair is all over his head. He looks so sexy that I can't help but lean over and bite his bottom lip.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you." I smile at him, and to my surprise, he narrows his eyes at me.

"You want to tell me why you're dancing in my bed instead of sleeping? Cause I know your little ass is tired as fuck. You had a long day." Shadow throws the covers back, and his intelligent gaze flits over me from head to toe.

I know it's not his usual sexual perusal because his full lips are pursed as he squints

at the scrapes and bruises on my once smooth brown skin.

Shadow has shown his protectiveness since I met him. But after yesterday, I can tell he's bothered because he wasn't with me when I got hurt. And although I only sustained minor injuries, he's been moody since the doc looked me over.

"I promise I'm okay, Shane. At least physically." I blow out a deep breath and do my best to hold back the tears. "I'm just out of my element here. Every time I turn around, someone is trying to kill me, and I don't know why." I run my hands over my messy bun and take it down.

Shadow sits up and pulls me with him. He kisses my tender shoulder, where a purple bruise colors my skin.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there to protect you, Teagan. I'm working on finding out what the fuck is going on so your life isn't in danger. It's just taking a lot more time than I'm used to."

I grab Shadow's face and kiss his lips. The worry drips from his words and tenses his muscles. The way that he cares for me in such a short time has my heart melting. This is the most dangerous person I have ever known, but instead of hightailing it to the nearest exit, I'm ready to give him everything.

"You don't owe me an apology, Shane. I'm alive and well because of you." I poke his muscled chest right where a large red rose decorates his skin.

"Still..." Shadow begins, but I put my finger over his lips and shake my head.

"No. You are the reason that I am alive." I don't want to hear anything else.

If he wouldn't have knocked me down at the club, I would've been dead. If he

wouldn't have been in my apartment to restrain my attacker, I would've been dead. I owe this man my life.

"Thank you," Shane says quietly while staring into my eyes.

"For what?"

He shakes his head, "I've never had anyone look at me the way you do. You make me want to be the man you see."

My gaze softens at his whispered confession. Shadow is a hard nut to crack, but I can tell that I'm slowly breaking down his walls.

"You are the man I see. I don't want you to be anyone else but who you are." I know that Shadow thinks I'm naïve, but I'm not.

I know that he's a killer. I know that he lives on the wrong side of the law. I also know that he keeps me safe. And that's what matters.

"Now, let me thank you properly." I climb on top of his big body, and the seriousness of our conversation is forgotten.

"Baby, no. You're hurt, and the way your plump ass was pressed against me all night, I don't know how gentle I can be." It's probably the first time Shadow has denied me sex since we became intimate.

I don't know whether to swoon because he's being so sweet or frown because he's denying me that good dick. I choose the latter.

"So you're saying you don't want this sweet pussy that you claimed was yours?" I lick my lips and rub my hands over my breasts.

I begin to tweak my nipples as my hips begin to rotate back and forth, round and round, picking up a steady rhythm that has Shadow's hands tightly gripping my waist.

"Come on, sweetheart. I'm only a man. You know it's hard as fuck to resist you," Shadow groans, but his hips begin to thrust upwards, meeting my wet lower lips.

I slide my juicy sweetness all over his hard dick. The feeling is exquisite. My mind is mush, but my body knows exactly what to do.

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I mindlessly twist and twirl my hips, making myself slippery with need. The friction on my clit has me closing my eyes and losing my breath.

“Does that feel good, baby?” Shadow’s voice is as hard as his dick, and it turns me on even more.

“Yes,” I breathlessly whisper.

“You want to feel more of me? Be sure of your answer, doll.”

“I do...”

Before I can get the answer completely out of my mouth, I’m lifted and impaled onto heaven. We both groan and move like our life depends on it. The slapping sound of our bodies serves to make me wetter.

“Fuck, doll. You’re gonna make me cum.” Shadow squeezes his eyes closed tightly like he’s holding himself back.

The sight of this strong, dangerous man unraveling before my eyes gives me a feminine power that I didn’t realize I had.

“No, baby. You’re gonna make me cum.” I smile seductively as I continue to swirl my hips.

Shadow sits up and wraps his arms around my back, and holds me to his chest. He picks up the speed, and I can feel my control leaving my body.

“Fuck!”

“Yes!”

“Right there!”

“Don’t stop!”

Our words blend together like our bodies, and before long, we are both releasing into the abyss of pleasure.

I will never get enough of this man!

Twenty

DOWNLOAD

SHADOW

Seeing Teagan hurt gave me a wake-up call I didn’t know I needed. I’m used to living my life in the Shadows, being an enforcer for the Sinners and running my business is all that I have. Well, it’s all that I thought I’d have. Teagan has made me want more out of my life.

After my parents died in a car wreck my senior year in college, my entire life trajectory changed. I was a restless orphan without direction. I had no idea what the world had in store for me.

I wasn’t always living on the wrong side of the law. As a matter of fact, my family was pretty straight-laced.

My lawyer father and stay-at-home mother doted on me, their only child. I had a life that most people dream about growing up. However, losing them broke something inside of me.

I was on a mission to destroy everything when I met Preacher. He's the wise man of the Sin City MC, and he listened to the drunken musings of a lost soul. I was doing my best to blow through the money that my parents left me, but the amount that I had was an exercise in futility.

I didn't realize just how loaded my folks were until my twenty-fifth birthday when I received an unexpected stipend that was left in a trust. I knew then that I had to get myself together, or I would be dead and no good to anyone.

Finding my way to the Sin City MC was the best thing that could've happened to me at just the right moment. The Sinners gave me the family that I no longer had and something to believe in again.

I never expected to want to protect anyone but my brothers, but a little petite dancer has changed my feelings almost overnight.

Having Teagan in my arms and looking at me with those beautiful brown hopeful eyes, it's like all of my fantasies have come to life.

She's everything I shouldn't be with and everything I didn't know that I needed. The woman is a walking conundrum. Teagan's innocence is both alluring and dangerous in a world like mine, but her strength and courage make her a fierce partner to have by my side.

It's too early to say I love her, but it's too late to ever let her go. Who am I kidding? I love the fuck outta her feisty little ass.

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I love her so much that my usual protectiveness is turned up a million times more. It's driving me crazy that I can't find who the fuck is after her and why.

But I've finally swallowed my pride and asked my brothers for help. And now it seems that lady luck, that unfaithful bitch, has finally turned in my favor.

We're still at the clubhouse, and Teagan is working out with a few of the girls in a space in the clubhouse while I meet with Gates and Tech.

Apparently, the two have been working their asses off to find any trace of Everett and whoever shot up my store. Thomas sent over all of the surrounding surveillance videos he could hack from the day of the attack to help as well.

When I walk into the room, I can feel the excitement of Gates and Tech as they work. There are monitors everywhere you look with information and videos playing on them all. It looks like a futuristic movie scene in here.

"What do you guys have for me?" I ask, pulling up a chair to scrutinize all of the monitors more closely.

"Oh, let me tell you. We have a lot to download," Tech says as he clicks away on a keyboard.

I settle in because the kid is long-winded, but I know what he has to say is important.

"So you're telling me Everett took out an insurance policy on Teagan?" I question, pacing back and forth.

“Yep. It seems to be his M.O. from what I can tell.” Gates says, pulling up the image of the paperwork.

It’s crazy the amount of fraud this man has committed, and he’s still fucking broke. Trey Everett should be a fucking billionaire by now, but he’s still stealing women and gambling his money away.

“So, where’s he at?” I ask what I really want to know.

The fact that Everett has been luring young women into sex trafficking is an evil that I didn’t think he could beat until I found out he’s also had women killed for insurance payouts. The payouts are normally large, and he goes through the same insurance person. Stefani McDonald.

I guess it makes it easier when the names are completely fake, shit when everything but the dead is completely made up. I guess they couldn’t just fake a death certificate.

“We haven’t found his exact location, but we have some idea. He probably would’ve left already, but he’s most likely still recovering from his gunshot wound,” Tech responds, but it isn’t what I want to hear.

“That’s not good enough. I need to know where this motherfucker is... today!”

“Calm down, Shadow. Damn. We’ve been working our asses off. We know he owes us money,” Gates grumbles, scratching his beard.

“Fuck that money. He tried to kill my woman. He owes me more than money. He owes me his motherfucking life. And I intend to collect,” I ground out my words through clenched teeth.

It hasn’t been about collecting the debt since I held Teagan in my arms for the first

time. It wasn't just about the money anyway, it was the principle. Trey Everett tried to get over on the Sinners, and nobody lives to do that type of shit twice.

“We did get a hit on the car that pulled the drive by. But you're not going to like this. Or maybe you will. Hell, how should I know? I mean, I think this is probably the most you've ever said to me since I've known you. I thought for the first year you were a scary ass mute. I...”

“Tech! Shut the fuck up and get to the point. All that fucking rambling.” I frown.

“My bad.” Tech looks away but mumbles, “how am I supposed to shut the fuck up and get to the point?”

“What Tech is trying to say is the drive-by was linked back to somebody we don't particularly want to deal with. But they're neck deep in this shit. And if we find them, we find Everett.” Gate gets to the point like I wanted Tech to do.

“Fuck. Is it the Oeste's?”

“Nope... it's not.”

Twenty-One

AFRAID

TEAGAN

It's been forever since all of this mess started, and as far as I can tell, we're no closer to finding out who was behind who took Trey, the break-in at my apartment, or whoever shot up Shadow's store.

Well, as far as I know. It's not like Shane ever tells me anything. As a matter of fact, he's been acting distant since we left the clubhouse and came back to his place. He's been treating me like I was a fragile doll instead of the capable woman that I've proven to him that I am.

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I don't know what I should do in this situation. Shane... no, he's definitely acting like Shadow. I know we have a connection. We finally had a breakthrough after I was hurt. We spent hours talking and getting to know one another.

And as much as I love Shadow's place, I'm feeling restless. We only go from here to the clubhouse. He says I'm safest here, and I trust that. But I still want to know what's going on.

The first time Shadow brought me here, I figured out why it was safe. The building is exclusive here in Vegas. Only the rich and famous have places here. It's definitely not somewhere I would think Shadow would want to live.

The high-rise building houses luxury units and has a doorman, floor-to-ceiling windows, chrome accents, and modern furniture. It screams business suit, not biker. But Shadow surprises me at every turn.

When I think about it, it actually looks like a place Trey was looking at not long ago when he wanted us to move in together. He also wanted me to quit my job. I'm glad I was smart enough to decline that offer. Even though I quit the investment firm anyway, I would've completely depended on him for months. And now that I know how he is, there's no telling where I'd be right now if I had agreed to live with Trey.

Shadow wouldn't let me sleep anywhere but in his master suite. So even though I can feel him pulling away, we still sleep together every night. The room is beautiful with its king-sized bed, a spa-worthy ensuite bathroom, and the closet looks bigger than my entire apartment.

It also has a large open space where I can practice and stretch. It's much needed, especially since Shadow won't let me go to the studio to practice. I don't want to go anyway because the last thing I want is for someone at the dance studio to get hurt because of me.

However, I keep up my practice here because my upcoming job with Bianca is keeping my hopes high. It's the only thing I have to look forward to now. But I hope this shit is over by the time my job starts.

I don't know what I will do if I have to quit the residency before I even get started.

I continue warming up with some basic shoulder rolls, high kicks and splits when a knock on the door brings me out of my thoughts.

"Come in."

"Hey, I'm leaving. Flyboy will be here if you need anything," Shadow says from the door.

I want to just nod and smile like I usually do, but my thoughts have me irritated. As much as I appreciate the Sinners looking out for me, I've been locked away for weeks without any information on what's going on. I deserve to know something, anything.

"Actually, I need to know what's going on. Did the insurance hooker have anything to do with Trey? Did you figure out who shot up the shop? What happened to the guy who broke into my apartment? What the hell is going on?" I shoot the questions out rapidly before he can interrupt me.

"You don't need to know all that. Just know I'm working on it and stay put until I tell you otherwise." Shadow crosses his arms over his chest like that's the final word.

I look at him like he's lost his mind. It's not in my nature to be ungrateful or confrontational, but the way he dismisses me is unacceptable.

I'm in this mess because I let Trey walk all over me. I can't do that anymore.

"I've been staying put. I don't want to stay put any fucking more! I want you to tell me what the hell is happening!" I yell out my anger and frustrations like a crazy woman.

As soon as the words are out of my mouth, I know I've made a mistake. Shadow's face transforms from blank to an emotion I can't describe. Uh oh!

"Who the fuck are you yelling at?" Shadow growls the question as he prowls closer to me.

I back up slowly until my back hits the window I was just admiring. I look everywhere but at Shadow's face.

"Um. I— I shouldn't have yelled." I take a deep breath before continuing, "I still want to know what's happening, Shadow."

Shadow stops in front of me and presses his imposing frame into mine. My back is plastered against the window, and my hands instantly go against his chest. Shadow hasn't touched me intimately except for cuddling since we got here two weeks ago, and my body instantly heats with desire at his sudden nearness.

"I told you to call me, Shane." His finger traces my lips, and his eyes soften. "I am trying to protect you."

"You keep saying that. And I know it, I appreciate it. But I still have the right to know what's going on... please."

“There are dangerous people after you, Teagan. I know you don’t want to be locked up, but besides the clubhouse, this is the securest place you can be.”

“But if I’m with you...”

“Do you think I’m not dangerous?” Shadow continues to run his finger across my lips, then down my body between the valley of my breasts and around my nipple.

My thin sports bra doesn’t do anything to hide my hardening nipples. I’m so turned on that I don’t even remember what he was saying.

“I... what did you say?” My breathing is shallow, and I can’t think straight.

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Shadow smirks and runs that wonderful digit down my belly and between my legs. He circles my clit through my leggings, and the motion has me closing my eyes.

“I said— do you think I’m dangerous? Aren’t you afraid of me, Tiny Dancer? Do you think I’m this soft with everyone?” Shadow’s deep voice isn’t soothing or seductive, it’s the opposite. His voice is harsh and rough. But his caress is what has me lulled into a trance.

“No...” I gulp.

“No, I’m not dangerous. No, you’re not afraid. Or no, you think I’m a big softy. What is it, Teagan?” There’s a hint of laughter in his voice, but I know there’s nothing funny about his question.

However, I still reach down to the depths of my soul for my bravery when I answer, “No, I’m not afraid of you. No, you’re most definitely not a softy. But yes, Shadow, you are a dangerous man.”

I hope he doesn’t see through the lie I just told him. Because no matter what I just said, I am afraid of Shane Carpenter. Afraid that I’m already addicted to his touch. Afraid of what will happen once this is over. Afraid of losing the realest thing I’ve ever had. Afraid that all of this happened too soon. Afraid that my heart will be lost to a man who sees me as temporary. Yes. I am very afraid.

Twenty-Two

DISTRACTION

SHADOW

I'm doing my best to keep Teagan from danger, and I know she's fed up with being locked up in my apartment like a princess in an ivory tower. The only place we go is to the clubhouse and back. I blame myself for not protecting her like I promised I would. I left her vulnerable, and she got hurt. I refuse to let that happen again, so I need to do the only thing I can do right now, create a distraction. And the best way to do that is with my hands, mouth, and best of all, my dick.

I promised myself that I would have more control and not bring her even more into my world than necessary. I was doing a great job distracting myself when I was looking for Everett, but with her questions and the look of trust that she gives me... I can't hold on any longer.

I second guessed myself. I claimed Teagan without thought to what that meant, and for once in my life, I tried to be a decent man. I tried to let my big head lead, but it's more than sex with Teagan. Her light pulls me in and makes me want to bask in its glory.

The more time we spend together, the more we get to know one another, and the more chemistry we share. She's perfect for me.

"So, you're not afraid of me, huh..." I continue to trace my finger down her body, then I grip her hips and bring her flush with my chest.

I can see when she gulps down the lie that she's not scared. Because, of course, a sweet little thing like her has never been up close and personal to a man like me. And no matter how well she slid into my life, hanging out with men who she should never cross paths with, Teagan Walker doesn't belong in my world. But I can't let her go. I won't sacrifice my love for her anymore.

“Umm,” Teagan says with wide brown eyes.

I stick my nose in the crook of her neck and take a whiff of her heady scent—the light sheen of sweat that makes her skin glisten calls to my tongue. I lick a trail from the base of her throat to the tip of her ear. I suck her lobe into my mouth, and I know her toes curl. It’s something I figured out by closely watching her reactions to me.

“You know you shouldn’t yell at a dangerous man. Now, how should I punish you?” I’ve been sweet to Teagan. Something I didn’t think I was capable of. But now, I want to show her more of who I am.

I stick my hand down the front of her tights and rub her clit until it’s hard. I split her lips with two fingers and rub back and forth until my fingers are sticky with her essence. Teagan begins to rock her body to the pace I set.

I’ve seen her dance before, and I can tell by the way she fucks her gracefulness transfers to the bedroom. Her movements are sensual without trying, and she has me rock hard anytime I’m near her.

The need to touch Teagan overrides my need to be the good guy. I’ve never been the type of man who gave a damn about what people thought of me, and for a second, I cared what people might think about Teagan being with me. She’s an outsider, but she’s mine now and will be forever.

“You look so pretty when you ride my fingers, baby,” I growl in Teagan’s ear, and she gasps.

Teagan speeds up her movements, and I know she’s close to orgasming. I continue talking dirty cause as prim and proper as my girl is, she loves when I say nasty shit to her.

She's everything I never knew I wanted in a woman. Sweet and classy with a twist of naughty. Everett did me a favor by bringing her into my life. I'll be sure to repay him with a bullet in his ass.

Teagan groans and I know she's chasing euphoria, but this is her punishment for talking crazy, so I keep my fingers at a steady tempo to keep her close to the edge without pushing her over.

"What's wrong, baby?" I kiss her lips and suck on her tongue before pulling back to look into her eyes.

"Let me cum. Please, Shadow," her pleas should bring out some sort of compassion in me, but they don't.

"What did I tell you? What the fuck is my name?" I growl, stopping my fingers.

"Shane. Please, Shane..." Teagan's words are desperate.

I rip her tights down and press her against the floor-to-ceiling windows. I grab a condom from my wallet and pull my jeans down.

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“You begged me for this,” I say as I roll the latex down my length.

I have to take a deep breath because I’ve been waiting two weeks to feel Teagan’s tight pussy wrapped around me again.

I shove my dick into her dripping wet core with a grunt. Teagan’s hands slam against the window, and I’m glad they’re reinforced, or we might’ve gone through it. I pump into her like a madman because that’s what the hell I am. Mad. This woman drives me crazy.

“Shhhhanne! Oh shit!” Teagan squeals as she backs her ass up.

The jiggle of her delicious cheeks and her passionate cries has me going even harder. I love when she curses. Corrupting her is my new goal.

“Take this dick.” I pull her by the messy bun at the top of her head so that I can kiss her from behind.

Teagan easily bends as I take her lips passionately while pumping into her. Our bodies slap against one another, and our combined moans makes the heat rise in me.

“Cum for me. I want to feel your juices drip down my dick.”

Teagan begins to shake, and her pussy clenches around my dick so tight I almost drop to my knees. We both orgasm so hard that my eyes cross.

I have successfully distracted Teagan from what I don’t want to tell her. I already

found Trey Everett.

I left Teagan at my place with Flyboy while I went to question our prisoners. It's funny how things come together. There's a saying that you should always follow the money, and in Vegas, that's easier said than done. But when you have multiple computer geniuses on your side, it makes things a helluva lot easier.

"So, how does this little scheme work? If you're paying out millions of dollars each time Everett makes a claim, how are you still in business?"

"I— I don't know what you're talking about," Stefani McDonald, the Caliente insurance cunt cries.

The mascara staining her pale cheeks and her smeared make-up could make you believe that she was telling the truth. She could make you think that she had nothing to do with trying to get rid of Teagan. However, the money never lies.

"You're also running a human trafficking ring."

"Is this about money? I can pay you. But I'm not involved in any human trafficking or insurance fraud."

The bitch is lying through her big fake white teeth. And she's pretending to be scared. I know when someone is afraid, and she thinks someone will come in and rescue her deceitful ass.

"Bring him in," I say to Detroit. He nods and goes to do my bidding.

Santino is brought into the room handcuffed and gagged. Detroit ties him to a chair, and I watch as Stefani's bravado leaves her. I see it in her eyes when the fear takes over.

It never sat right with me that only one Oeste member was sent to do a job all the way from California, especially since they were in the Los Muertes territory. Santino was also way too cool about me handling their enemy in their territory. That shit never happens.

I had to take a long look at the evidence. And what I found is that in my haste, I mistook the intruder's fresh ink as him being a newbie or a wannabe Oeste. But really, the new tats were a disguise. Jason Delacruz was indeed telling the truth about being approached by a woman. He just didn't tell the complete truth. He was a decoy to throw us off the trail.

"I will kill you, mothafuckas. You think the Los Muertes will let the Sinners get away with crossing us!" Santino spits once the gag is removed.

"How do you think you got here, genius? You think the Los Muertes don't know about you being here? You think we're dumb enough to start a war?" I shake my head at how stupid the ex-leader of the gang is.

"My hermanos would never give me up." Santino scowls.

I nod to Ice, and he opens the door and leaves. When he comes back in, Santino's eyes almost bulge out of his head.

"Manny? What the fuck? I'm yo brother, man! We don't bow down to no mothafucka." Santino rocks back and forth in the chair like he will be able to get out of it.

Manny steps forward, punches Santino in the face, and spits at his feet, "You sold my little cousin to the cartel. Did you think I wouldn't find out? Fuck you, puta. You are dead to the Los Muertes. We will never speak yo name after today. We will erase you completely, and it will be like you were neva here." Manny snaps his fingers, and

each crew member in the room raises their gun and pulls the trigger. The puffs of air and the jerking of Santino's body in the chair are the only sounds.

"You found my cousin and the traitor behind her kidnapping. Now, I give you Everett." Manny pulls out his phone, and three minutes later, a knock sounds on the door.

When Ice opens the door, Everett is led inside. The man is blindfolded with his hands tied in front of him. His arm is in a sling, but other than that, the asshole looks like he's been on vacation.

The Los Muertes were working with Everett because of Stefani McDonald. They were the ones who rushed into our club and took Everett. Santino was the one who shot at me, and even though I wanted to kill the son-of-a-bitch myself, I let his crew do it because it was a sacrifice I was willing to make.

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The Los Muertes take their dead ex-leader and leave the asshole without another word. I don't particularly like them, but that's a problem for another day.

Now, it's time to deal with Trey Everett.

Twenty-Three

PAID IN FULL

SHADOW

"Why go through all of this?" I ask Everett the question because none of this shit was necessary.

He should've been a man and paid his debts instead of luring unsuspecting women and girls into sex trafficking and death.

Trey Everett is a connoisseur of crudeness and dishonesty. He would do any and everything he could to be the high man on the totem pole, but really he was just an errand boy.

"It was just a job. I had to pay off my debts. They were going to kill me!"

I know he's not talking about the Los Muertes. I know he's talking about the Russians. The fucking Russians.

Stefani may have hooked him up with the Santino for this latest scheme, but the

Russians are really who Everett owes everything to.

The fake kidnapping was orchestrated so Everett could flee from his debt to the Russians. The idea was to kill Teagan in the process, and he'd have plenty of money to start life off the radar anywhere in the world. He never intended to give her to me as collateral, hell, I was supposed to be collateral. Teagan wasn't the only one that was supposed to be killed that night.

If they had taken me out at our club, all roads would've led to the Russians. They would've effectively started a war, leaving Santino to rule Vegas.

We still have issues with the Los Muertes. They are disloyal and turn on one another without a second thought. We figured that out when we found Manny's cousin was given to a cartel in Los Rios, Chile. Manny was the second in command and all too willing to take over as leader. In the long run, his greed will fuck up everything for their crew, but like I said before, that's a problem for another day.

"You weren't worried about being killed. You worried about making your pockets fatter. You and this cunt bitch will burn in the deepest parts of hell."

When I mention Stefani, she begins blubbering and begging to spare her worthless life. I don't know why she thinks I would give a thought of mercy when it comes to her. She may not have pulled the trigger, but she's just as responsible for the deaths of those young women and girls as Everett is.

Just looking at her makes my blood boil, so instead of prolonging the inevitable, I pull out my nine and shoot her in the heart. A perfect way to kill a heartless bitch.

It's Everett's turn to start crying. He already knows that his life is over. The bastard doesn't bother begging for his life. He just sits crying hysterically like the bitch he is.

“You don’t even have the decency to die like a fucking man. All of the shit you’ve done. All of the lives you’ve senselessly ruined for your greed.” I shake my head in disgust.

Trey Everett doesn’t deserve a quick death. He deserves to be tortured for years, but I want to give my doll the solace in knowing the devil who started all this shit is dead. But I will beat his ass before I put the bullet I promised him in his goddamned head!

After I beat Everett damned near to death, I finished helping the bastard meet the devil with a bullet. We dropped his body off to the Russians with a note naming the Los Muertes as his accomplices.

Petrov and his minions didn’t appreciate that Everett was working with their meat market competitors, and they were so busy killing off the Los Muertes crew that they didn’t bother trying to figure out who killed Everett. But, of course, they wouldn’t have been able to figure it out anyway. Tech and Gates covered our tracks. It’s like Everett never had any association with us.

Now, it’s time to take out the Russians while they’re vulnerable. They lost a lot of men and support while warring with the gang. Making the Petrov’s kill off the disloyal Muertes was easier than us going to war with both of them at once.

Thomas and Leo found that the Russians shot up my store in retaliation for not giving them Teagan. So, both Grimm and Aries let me take the lead on taking them down because not only do they know how important this is to me, they know I’ve been itching to kill Ivan Petrov since I’ve met him.

I normally take my commands from Ice, and I am happy to do so. Leadership has never been my thing, but in this case, I couldn’t let anyone else do my job. The instant I saved Teagan from that bullet, she became my responsibility. Mine to protect, just like my brothers.

“You ready for this?” Preacher asks.

“You know that I am, Preach.” He knows more than anybody how ready I am.

“Only thing I wanted to hear.” He slaps me on the back and walks away.

It’s late, and the Russians have just closed their seedy nightclub on the even seedier side of town. We have prospects casing the joint, and we know the important members of the Petrov family are inside.

We load up in vans because blacked-out SUVs are too noticeable. And we definitely can’t ride our motorcycles; they would hear us coming from a mile away. We want the element of surprise on our side.

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We know we outnumber the Petrov's five to one at this point, and we gotta strike while the iron is hot. These human shit stains need to be free of breathing. The world will be a much safer place with them gone.

The vans are strategically surrounding the club. We waited until closing, so there wouldn't be any unnecessary deaths. But honestly, anybody who would come to this place should probably die anyway.

It's where the scumbags come to buy and sell girls, and I don't mean hookers. This entire establishment will no longer exist once we're finished.

"Lock and load motherfuckers! Sinners all!" I call out.

"Sinners all, never fall!"

We hit the club from every access point there is. Our ambush is uncivilized and downright dirty. But in our world, fairness is subjective. These bitches deserve everything we have for them.

The first gunshots are silent when we take out the motherfuckers at the front and back doors. We took a page out of our enemy's books and used silencers. The bastards in the office don't even know they're under attack until it's too late.

A sneak attack isn't really the Sinners style, but loud and reckless wasn't the way to go. We can't be connected to any of this shit. I refuse to give the law any reason to bring Grimm or our club to its knees. I fucking refuse to be the downfall of the Sin City MC!

“You underhanded bastard,” Ivan coughs up blood as he sneers in my direction.

“You sell little girls. I’m pretty sure you don’t have any room to call me underhanded.” I smirk because Ivan knows that I’ve bested him at last.

We’ve threatened each other every time we come into contact. It was inescapable that this was how our meetings would eventually end. One of us is coughing up blood. Who am I kidding? I always knew it would be him doing the coughing.

“??? !” Petrov spews Russian as his life drains from his body.

“Pretty sure that means go fuck yourself,” Gates says out of nowhere.

I raise my eyebrow because, of course, he knows that.

“Well, you can go fuck yourself motherfucker.” I light his ass up until my clip is empty.

“Torch this bitch!” Grimm hollers before we leave out the back.

We see the flames flare high in the rearview mirror. We used an accelerant that would burn everything to ash. By the time they put the fire out, there won’t be anything left, including bodies.

Good riddance!

Twenty-Four

TRUTH

TEAGAN

Flyboy has been pacing and checking his phone since he's been here. I'm worried because the only communication I've had with Shadow in the last thirty-six hours is a couple of text messages.

We haven't gone this long without seeing each other since we met. I feel like I've developed this codependency with him, and he's somehow broken our circle of need with his absence.

I know logically that I sound crazy as fuck because I've only known this man for a little over a month and a half, and I feel like I can't breathe without him.

"Flyboy! Can you sit your ass down? You're making me nervous."

Flyboy stops pacing with a frown and pinched brows. "My bad, Tiny Dancer."

I chuckle at the nickname. It's always amusing when these mean looking, dangerous men call me an Elton John song.

Before Flyboy can take a seat, the door to the apartment opens, and Shadow walks in. His hair is damp and slicked back from his face like he just got out of the shower. He's wearing a white t-shirt, his cut, and jeans. He's dressed like he usually is, but he looks better than ever for some reason.

I hop up from the couch and throw myself at him. And just like I knew he would, Shadow catches me. I wrap my arms and legs around him and hold on to him as tightly as I physically can.

The relief I feel seeing and touching him is so overwhelming that I can't stop the tears from flowing freely down my cheeks.

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“Come on now, crybaby. I know you didn’t miss me that much,” Shadow chuckles, squeezing me.

I lean back so he can see my face and the proof that I absolutely did miss him this much. I know he was out killing somebody. I overheard Flyboy when he was on a call. And although he didn’t mention the word killing, I can read between the lines.

“I did. Don’t ever leave me for that long again,” I sniffle, and his eyes soften like they always do when he’s dealing with me.

His tenderness when it comes to me is why I fell in love with him so fast. No man has ever handled me with as much care as Shadow does.

“I promise, doll.” He leans in and kisses my lips softly.

“Glad everything is settled. I’m a head out.” Flyboy is just as relieved as I am.

I know he wanted to be in the mix with whatever the Sinners were doing, but he’s just a prospect, and from what I can tell, they aren’t involved in anything big.

“I appreciate you, brother. Church is tomorrow. Don’t be fucking late,” Shadow gives him a stern look but Flyboy grins widely.

Shadow puts me down to give Flyboy a bro hug. Shadow gives my unofficial bodyguard a heavy slap on the back that looks like it hurts, but Flyboy continues to smile.

“Thanks, brother. I can’t believe it. Are you sure?” Flyboy asks.

“You took care of the most important person in my life. You deserve to be a member of the Sinners. You earned your place, brother.” Shadow and Flyboy have another significant moment before Flyboy smiles and gives me a salute before leaving.

I don’t know why I feel proud of him. Although he was essentially my babysitter, and we spent a lot of time together, Flyboy isn’t a big talker. But his presence became comforting, almost like a little brother.

“Are you okay?” I question Shadow when he turns back to me.

“I am now. We got a lot to talk about, baby. Why don’t you have a seat.”

The feeling of relief leaves me, and dread replaces it.

I can’t believe everything that Shadow told me. Trey wasn’t trying to sell me to a human trafficking ring; he was trying to kill me for insurance money. What in the actual hell? We were together for months, and while I thought he was getting to know me so we could become more, he was busy planning my demise.

Apparently, I wasn’t the only victim of his sick and twisted ways either. At least ten other women have been casualties of Trey Everett. I feel bad that those women suffered at his hands, but at least he got what he deserved.

When Shadow revealed that he had killed Trey, I could see in his eyes that he thought it would change things between us. And it did. It made me trust and love him even more.

Shane Carpenter is a man of his word. Yes, he’s dangerous. Yes, he’s a killer. Yes, he’s everything my mama ever warned me against. But he’s mine.

The things he did to make sure I was safe is a forever type of love that I will never give up. No matter what life throws at us, I know we can survive.

“I’m no longer in danger. That’s a relief,” I say after what seems like hours of silence.

It took me a minute to process everything Shadow told me, but I knew that everything he told me was the truth. He didn’t go into much detail on how or when he killed Trey. As a matter of fact, he didn’t actually say he killed him. Shadow said that breathing wasn’t something that Trey had to worry about any longer.

He didn’t tell me about who took Trey or why. Shadow just assured me that there was nobody living that had any reason to hurt me. Like I said before, I can read between the lines.

“Nope, nothing dangerous can touch but me...” Shadow stares at me intently, and I know what he’s asking without him saying the words.

Now that I no longer need his protection, will I walk away from him? Was my walk on the wild side just a phase? Will I leave all this behind me? My answer is simple... no!

“Hmmm. But you, the most dangerous man of them all, can touch me whenever you want. Shadow,” I purr.

“Oh, so you not only missed me... you missed my punishments.” His smile is wicked, and I lick my lips in preparation.

“You call it punishments, I call it spicy pleasure.” My squeal is loud when he scoops me up and throws me over his shoulder, and heads to his bedroom.

Epilogue

TINY DANCER

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SHADOW

I'm in the front row of a pop concert with loud fans singing and dancing along to one of the most popular entertainers of our generation, and although I can feel myself scowling, there's no other place I would rather be.

"Man, damn, it's a lot of hot pieces of ass in here," Flyboy yells over the loud music and screaming fans. His face is lit up like the lights at the Bellagio water show.

Although Flyboy and Tech are the only ones who came with me tonight, all the boys wished my baby a great debut. But the three of us stand out enough without the whole Sin City MC showing up. Everybody at the clubhouse is proud of my woman and will eventually come to see her perform.

However, I didn't want Teagan to be nervous seeing everybody here at her very first show. Hell, she doesn't even know that I'm here. It pissed me off that she didn't expect me to be here for her tonight, even though she only mentioned it in passing. It showed me that she lacked support in her past, and it wasn't an expectation of hers.

I now have to let her know she should expect the world from me because I will do everything in my fucking power to give it to her.

"I told you it would be! And they love fucking a rough son-of-a-bitch like me. Tourists love to come live out their fantasies in Vegas," Tech rubs his hands together deviously.

I shake my head at the two of them, but I don't comment because they're right.

Women in here had already approached us several times before the show even started. I can't imagine how much pussy those two will be swimming in before the night is over.

My eyes drift back up to the stage, and I drown out Flyboy and Tech's chatter. Bianca has already performed two songs, and I know Teagan has yet to see me. However, when the lights go down on the stage for another song, and bright lights hit the audience, I know she sees me.

I can tell Teagan is surprised when her smile slips and her mouth forms an "o" before she can catch herself. However, she doesn't miss a step as she keeps her body doing the choreography.

I must admit that Teagan is mesmerizing on stage. I watch her every move as she gives her all for the excited audience. After seeing her perform, I can't believe this is her first professional gig.

Before long, it's the end of the show, and Bianca takes the time to introduce her band as well as give each of her dancers a solo introduction.

When it's Teagan's turn, we make fools of ourselves, hooting and hollering like lunatics with no home training.

But I know it was the right thing to do when my baby blows me a kiss and mouths I love you. I can't wait to get her home and show her how much I love her too.

"I heard you were the star of the show." Grimm greets Teagan with a side hug as we make our rounds in the clubhouse.

The old ladies insisted that we celebrate Teagan's first performance with a party, and I agreed. I mean, hell, it's not like we need a reason to party. But Teagan definitely needs to be celebrated. She deserves to know she has us because her parents and

siblings don't support her. She deserves to know that the Sinners are her family now.

"Who told you that?" Teagan asks Grimm, but she smiles up at me.

"I'm proud of you, Tiny Dancer. I couldn't wait to brag." I kiss her lips, and Grimm chuckles as he moves on.

"Thanks for surprising me tonight, babe." Teagan is glowing like I moved the moon and stars just so she could see them better. The way she's looking at me, I might try.

"Doll, I'm your man. Supporting you is the least of my husbandly duties," I declare with another kiss on her lips.

"Husband? That's a pretty big declaration, sir."

"Just making sure you know my plans, baby. You're it for me. I'm your family now, and you're a part of mine."

Teagan told me about how her family disowned her after she let them know about me and her job dancing. They cut off all communications with her, and she was devastated. I say good riddance, but I tried to be understanding.

Teagan has a soft heart and a need for love and acceptance just like everyone else, and for her own family to cast her aside because some church says that women should always follow what their parents tell them to do is nonsense. But that's a problem for another day.

Teagan knows she has the Sinners and me, and even though we don't replace her biological family, we will love her like they never did.

"Well, alright then, future husband. Why don't we take this celebration somewhere private so I can really show you my appreciation." Teagan gets on her tiptoes and

nuzzles the side of my neck before dragging her tongue up to my ear.

Before she can even finish turning me on, I'm dragging her little ass back to our room at the clubhouse. She's stripped bare and thrown on the bed in an instant.

Teagan's giggles turn into moans when my mouth finds her clit and my fingers find her nipples. I'm starving for the taste of my sweet Tiny Dancer, and I will never get enough of her. Ever.

"Ummm,Shadow.Don't stop," Teagan moans, and I know what she's doing.

She only calls me Shadow when she wants me to pound her tight pussy into oblivion. Her wish is my command.

"I love you, but you asked for this." I slide my dick home, thrusting into heaven on earth.

I bask in her light for the rest of the night with the only woman that could ever bring me out of the shadows.

THE END.