



Touching Diablo (Satan's Keepers MC #8)

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Category: Suspense Thriller

Description: The past always has a way of coming back to bite you.

Diablo

One touch is all it takes. That's all it ever took. I knew then and I know now what I want in life. You learn quick living on the streets that it's not where you want to be the rest of your life. I won't go back and I won't let her either.

Years ago, life sucked, but I got the chance to turn it all around and I never looked back. Figured it was for the best. Didn't think anything of it.

Not until I saw her again.

One look and I knew I'd screwed up, but that doesn't mean I'm about to admit it. My brothers named me Diablo for a reason. I've got no problem being the devil in disguise, and she's about to learn this very lesson.

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PROLOGUE

DIABLO

Age 16

“She shouldn’t be out here on the streets,” I mutter, watching the little girl from the shadows next to Jarrett.

“Yeah, she can’t be more than twelve or thirteen tops,” Jarrett agrees. “Makes you wonder what had her decide the streets were better than home.”

I nod, thinking the same thing as my friend. Jarrett hadn’t been on the streets long. I’d met him about seven months ago. The two of us clicked, and we’ve had each other’s backs ever since. No one messes with either of us without the other stepping in. I don’t know his full story, yet, just what he’s told me so far. It’s the same with what little I’ve shared with him about mine.

I don’t talk about my past. It’s not something I like to think about. I prefer being on the streets than being in a place that is worse than hell itself. My folks, they’re some of the worst pieces of shit in the world.

I wouldn’t even call them a mom and dad. To me, they’re just Wayne and Teresa. They’re both alcoholics. Wayne spends his days, or well, he did, on the couch watching TV while Teresa found some way to make some cash. Mostly, they relied on that monthly government check that they used to buy the booze. Teresa also spent her time being knocked around when she didn’t get or do what Wayne needed or

wanted.

I spent the first ten years of my life being subjected to that life. At ten, I finally learned it best to avoid home the best I could. That didn't mean I didn't get my ass handed to me when I was there. They made sure to beat me. I've got the scars on my back to prove they didn't give a damn about me.

When I hit fourteen, I had enough and figured I'd take my chances on the streets. It was better there than at home.

"Let's see what her deal is," I suggest, shoving the thoughts to the back of my head. Thinking of the past isn't something I need to ponder about. The thoughts aren't worth my time.

"You sure we won't scare her off?" Jarrett asks, watching the girl scavenger. "This is the decent area. We scare her off, she could end up in worse areas."

He's right, of course, but the girl needs to know people. She needs to have people that will have her back.

"We gotta look out for her," I say, nodding in her direction. "She probably doesn't have anywhere to sleep at night. We can at least offer her some suggestions of where to go."

"True," Jarrett mutters. "Alright, let's do it."

Moving out of the shadows together, we're cautious not to alarm the girl. The last thing she needs is to be freaked out.

"What's your name, kid?" I ask when we're close enough not to have to shout but keep enough distance between her and us.

She watches us closely and tightly holds the strap of her bookbag while wrapping another arm around it, holding it to her chest. “What do you want?” she asks, her voice trembling and soft.

“We’re not gonna harm you,” Jarrett tells her. “We just wanna make sure you’re okay out here.”

“How long have you been on the streets?” It can’t be long. She’s still got that look about her. That she’s fresh meat. Easy prey for those who want to fuck with her. Out here could be dangerous for her if she doesn’t know how to look out for herself. With one look at those doe eyes of hers, she definitely needs someone to look after her.

“Um, my name’s London.”

London. Who names their kid London?

“I’m Damari,” I tell her and jerk my thumb in Jarrett’s direction. “This is Jarrett.”

“Ugh, okay. Hi.”

“If you’re living on the streets, you need to have a system and somewhere to go. You got a place you can do that?” I watch her closely. Her tangled mess of hair is everywhere, but I’m willing to bet that even brushed, it’s still a mess with the wild ringlets.

“I haven’t, ugh . . .” She licks bottom lip nervously. “Should I be talking to you?”

“London, it’s better you talk to us, than some others on the streets. At least we will watch out for you,” Jarrett remarks and leans against the side of the building.

“Like Jarrett said,” I mutter. “You gotta be able to protect yourself out here. You

don't have to trust us, but it's better to have someone than no one."

"Oh okay, yeah, that sounds like a good idea," London agrees. "I haven't found anywhere to stay yet. I've just been sleeping where I can."

"Dangerous," Jarrett grumbles.

"How about you stay with us?" I offer and look to Jarrett. "We found an extra tent that wasn't broken."

London stares at me for a moment, looking like she is trying to determine what the best course of action is. Finally, she nods and tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. "Okay," she agrees and then narrows her eyes. "But if you think to do something, I'll knee you in the nuts."

At her little threat, I can't help but grin. "Yeah, Chiquita, you don't have to worry about that."

"Good, then you have a deal," London murmurs, sticking her much smaller hand out.

I take it in mine. "Deal."

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CHAPTER 1

LONDON

Ten Years Later . . .

“All right, everyone, make sure to have a good weekend, but don’t forget those projects are due next week,” I say, though I’m sure it’s not meeting any of my students’ ears. They’re more worried about packing up and getting out to the buses so they can head home.

With the end of the year coming, all these kids are thinking about is summer vacation and what they’re going to do during that time. I’m right there with them. I’m looking forward to not having a bunch of hormonal teens driving me crazy. I love teaching, but sometimes these kids can make a girl wanna square up.

My plans for the summer are mostly filled with sleeping and going to the lake as much as possible. I love being outdoors and being at the lake even more. The peace I feel when I’m just floating around is wonderful. It’s my haven.

Where some women go out and do other things on the lake, like jet ski, or water ski, I’m not the type to do it. I prefer floating and relaxing. Sometimes, I enjoy simply reading while sunning next to the water in my chair. Maybe even sitting with my chair in the water close to shore.

I guess you can say my summers are pretty boring to others, and that’s okay. It’s just the way it has to be for me.

Packing the papers I need to grade in my bag, I allow my thoughts to shift to another time and place. Back when I'd just turned thirteen, and my mom had gotten married to my stepfather. I couldn't stand him. I couldn't get a hold of my dad. He'd been deployed at the time. Mom refused me access to the computer to talk to him. I couldn't even get to the library to use the computers there. She monitored everything I did.

I couldn't understand why she did this. It wasn't like she actually cared about me. She was all about her and her wants.

Mom wouldn't listen to me when I told her I wasn't comfortable around her husband. She'd said it was all in my head. But I knew better. I'd learned about it at school during the times when they discussed stranger-danger and what's okay and what's not. Her new husband was creeping me out with the looks he'd give me.

The one time he came into my room and started petting me, talking about how pretty I was, it scared me. Mom wasn't going to believe me. She'd made it blatantly clear. I needed my dad, but with him gone, I had only one choice. To get out of Dodge and take my chances as a runaway.

For six months, I lived on the streets. I wouldn't have been able to survive it if not for two sixteen-year boys who'd taken me under their wing. The only reason I had gotten caught was because I'd decided to go to the library and sign into my email to check it for anything from my dad. I missed him and wanted to be with him.

Evidently, my dad had taken notice of my disappearance and went to his commanders. He managed to get sent home and went straight to the cops after finding out my mom never reported me missing. We'd been living just outside Dallas while my dad was stationed two hours away at Fort Hood.

When I'd gone to the library, I hadn't thought anything of it, but then the cops found

me. I put up a fight, thinking they were going to take me back to my mom. I didn't know it was my dad looking for me.

At first, I hated leaving Damari and Jarrett. I hadn't even told them bye. I didn't have time. Dad ended up getting full custody of me, and I spent the next five years living with him. He decided against re-upping, and started up a security business alongside some of his buddies. This meant he could be home with me every night. I loved he did this.

After graduating high school, I went to college locally, but when I started looking for places to work, I found a job in Palestine. Dad hadn't been thrilled I decided to take it, he wanted me close to home still.

I promised him I'd be okay and if I wasn't, if something happened, I'd tell him immediately.

This was my first-year teaching, and I've loved it. During college, I worked as a teacher's aide to get some experience. Also, I wanted to make sure this was exactly what I wanted to do. The pay sucked, but I loved teaching kids—even the rowdy teenagers who wanted to be on their phones more than taking in the lessons.

I shake off the thoughts and finish gathering the rest of my stuff together. It's a long weekend, and I, for one, intend to enjoy it. Well, I'll enjoy it between grading papers and prepping the rest of next week's lesson plans. School lets out in just a few more weeks so it's mainly about review and testing.

I make my way out of my classroom and down the hall toward the office, my mind going over what to do first.

“Hey, London.”

I twist in the direction of my name being called and smile at my friend, Tamara. “Hey, you heading to your boyfriend’s for the weekend?” I ask, though I already know the answer. Every weekend, she goes to his place. Why he doesn’t come to her, I’ll never understand, but to each their own.

“No, he’s actually coming here.” Tamara grins. “I finally put my foot down and told him I was tired of always being the one going to him.”

“Good for you.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know you keep telling me.”

“Well, you know I’m right.” I shrug and reach up to brush a few strands of hair that had come loose out of my face.

I swear if I don’t keep the unruly locks in check, they’d be all over the place. Dad always tells me I remind him of the girl from the Disney movie Brave . I guess I made him watch it with me one too many times while living with him. I love watching all the Disney movies. I don’t care if they’re for kids.

“You are,” Tamara says as the two of us keep walking. “It’s why we want you to come out with us tonight.”

“Where?”

I’m not big on going out. I’m more of a homebody. Granted, I do like to go to the movies every once in a while. Other times, I’ll go to the mall in Tyler. But if I go anywhere, it’s usually trips down to Killeen where I hang with my dad.

“Keeper’s Pub.”

“Isn’t that a biker bar?”

“It is, but everyone goes there. I went all the time before Paul and I hooked up. Just come. Meet us there at eight,” Tamara says, stepping out of the building and heading for her car, not giving me the chance to decline.

Dang-it. If I don’t show, it’ll be rude.

Sighing, I shake my head and head to my Jeep. I toss everything in the back seat and climb in behind the wheel. Turning the key in the ignition, I shift the gear into reverse, back up, and shift into drive, heading toward home.

My apartment building is only a ten-minute drive from the school, but with afternoon traffic, it feels longer. Mostly because I was allowing myself to become nervous about going out tonight.

If I don’t, Tamara might get mad at me. The bigger question is, can I go and not look for faces I want to see? I want to see them, but how do I face them and not think of the past? Or the crush I had on a boy who I saw as my protector for those months he watched out for me.

It’s an idiotic thought. I’m sure both Damari and Jarrett have moved on, found lives for themselves and forgotten all about the girl who up and vanished.

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CHAPTER 2

DIABLO

“You’re never gonna guess what I just found out.”

I look over at Tombstone as he takes a seat at the table my brothers and I are all sitting around.

“What?” Reaper asks, cocking a brow and tilting his beer to his mouth.

It’s not often he joins us anymore. Most of the time, if he’s out, Ivy’s with him, which means he must have done something to piss her off because he didn’t look pissed. It’s more like amused.

“I just got off the phone with Bethany,” Tombstone announces and motions to one of the waitresses to bring his usual. “She said Ember showed up. Her and Dex ended things, and she’s planning on moving home.”

“The fuck?” Reaper mutters, straightening. “When did that happen? I talked to her the other day, and she didn’t say anything.”

“Bethany said she had to coax it out of her.” Tombstone shrugs. “I’m just glad she’s movin’ back this way.”

“At least here we can keep an eye on her. Find out what the hell happened. I don’t wanna have to kill someone.”

When it comes to Reaper's niece, every last one of us knew he'd kill for her. The same goes for Angel and Tombstone. That girl is the last connection they have to her parents.

Out of the corner of my eye, I notice Cerberus stiffen slightly at this news. I didn't think he knew Ember. He wasn't a prospect when she left for college.

"Isn't she some type of paramedic now or something?" Styxx asks.

"Yeah, she's a medic," Tombstone answers, sounding like the proud uncle he is.

"Cool. So, when's she coming?" Leaning back in my seat, I tilt it back on two legs, balancing while looking around the bar.

"Don't know." Tombstone shifts the conversation to the clubhouse. It was in the middle of being renovated after someone bombed it.

It was at least livable. Otherwise, my ass might be couch-surfing at Beast and Bristol's place.

As my brothers talk, I spot a woman stepping through the doors, eyes scanning, looking for someone. I take her in, getting a good look at her. The jeans she's wearing are molded to her legs. The top is simple yet accentuates all the right places. Her tits were just enough to fill the palm, and she looks lost as hell coming in here.

She also looks damn familiar too. A second later, she smiles, and damn if it doesn't trouble me because I know that smile. She walks toward whoever she smiled at, and it hits me.

I know exactly who the fuck she is.

London.

It's been years since I've seen her, but that smile . . . it's one you never forget. She might have been a kid back then when I got to see it every day for six months, but it doesn't matter. It's not something anyone forgets. At least not me.

Beast and I took care to watch out for her and make sure no one touched her, only for her to vanish on us. We found out from one of the cops that she was safe with her dad. After that, I left it alone. All that mattered was that she was happy and secure.

Now, she's here. For whatever reason that may be.

"Yo, Diablo, you listening?" Ghost asks, bringing through my thoughts.

Blinking, I straighten my chair and clear my throat. "Yeah, you were asking me to come help out at the garage." I had at least been half-assed listening.

"Yeah, we need the help."

"I'll be there," I tell him and get to my feet. "I'll check y'all later."

My brothers all give me a strange look as I leave them to their drinks. I make my way toward the back hall where the bathrooms and the office are located. I parked my bike in the back 'cause I'd come in early to meet with a lawyer who came to discuss some shit about my folks.

It was the last thing I needed to deal with. Seems good old Wayne and Teresa thought they'd try and draw me into their shit. I wasn't gonna let them pull me in. I told the lawyer when he explained he was representing them, I didn't want a damn thing to do with them or whatever had them in a bind. He left looking protruding since he didn't get what he came for. Too bad for him.

I ended up sticking around afterward to have a few beers. Slowly, my brothers had come in one after another. We all sat talking. I didn't fill them in on what happened. They don't need to know about my parents. Only two people know the truth, Reaper and Beast. Probably Scythe because he's always making sure he stays in the know about every damn thing.

I'm just about to pass the bathrooms when someone bumps into me.

"Oops, sorry."

I glance down, and it's none other than London. She tilts her head back, and her eyes widen instantly.

"Damari?" she whispers and takes a step back.

Standing closer to her, I get a better look at her. She can't be more than five and a half feet tall with curves in all the right places.

"Long time," I mutter. "What are you doing here?"

She looks me up and down, eyes stopping on my vest as she answers, "I got a job in town."

"Oh yeah?" Had she moved here?

"Yep, I've been here almost a year now," she says, smiling and looking past me into the bar. "I better get back out there before my friend thinks I left."

"Yeah." I nod.

London goes to step around me but stops, looks back, and smiles. "Maybe we can get

together sometime and catch up.”

I’m not sure if that would be a good idea or not.

“Here, I’ll give you my number,” she says, pulling out a sheet of paper and pen. London quickly scribbles her number and hands it to me. “Call me, and we can . . .”

I take the number with no intention of using it. “I’ll call you,” I lie, shoving it in my pocket and starting to walk toward the back door. I stop and twist my upper body to look back to see her still standing there watching me. “You look good, London. Happy.”

“I am,” she agrees, smiling.

“Good.” Righting myself, I head out into the night, with all intent to forget all about the girl I once knew and the woman she’s become.

CHAPTER 3

DIABLO

Six Months Later . . .

“Mr. Rios, your mother is asking that you speak with her,” Soloman Bell says through the other end of the phone.

“Like I said, more than just a handful of times, I don’t give a fuck what she wants,” I tell the lawyer, more annoyed than pissed.

Every damn week, he contacts me regarding my mother’s wishes. I don’t even want to know how she could afford a lawyer like Soloman Bell unless he’s doing it pro bono. That woman doesn’t have enough money.

“Mr. Rios, please, if you’ll just give her five minutes of your time to?”

“Look, Soloman, I’m not gonna tell you again. I’ve been playing nice. Giving you the time, but you call me again, I ain’t answering. I’m done listening. You can tell that bitch I want nothing to do with her. Contact me again, and you’ll regret it.” Hanging up, I shove the phone in my pocket and glance around the shop, making sure no one has heard my conversation.

I haven’t shared with my brothers about what’s going on, and I don’t intend for them to hear about it now. Hell, I hadn’t even asked Scythe to do me the favor of looking into London for me. I’d gone to his cousin, Finnegan, before he left to go with

Gianna, a woman we'd kept an eye on for the Toxic Warriors MC. Not that we needed to. She was already protected by Finnegan and his men. We just needed to reassure the other club that she had our protection as well.

Before Finnegan left, though, I had him give me the file he put together. I found out that London was a teacher at the middle school. I didn't read much of the rest of the file. I just skimmed it to get the jest of it. She pretty much lived a good and normal life.

A couple of times, I found myself sitting on my bike, watching her from a distance as she came out of the school. In the light of day, she was more beautiful, and I knew not calling her was the right decision.

After school ended for the year, though, she vanished. I could've called or asked Finnegan to look into it, but I didn't. I needed to leave it be. I knew she was happy, and that was that.

I left it alone and moved on.

Shaking off the thoughts, I get back to work. I need to finish this car so I can get out of here. I told Daemon I'd help with something for Hendrik over at the school for some fair thing they were having that Everleigh volunteered us for. Daemon said it was some type of school function they were putting on, and the sets needed to be put together. Why I agreed, I wasn't certain, but it was definitely something I would prefer not to be doing.

But it's for Hendrik, and my brothers and I would do anything for that kid. He's been through enough, having lost his mom the way he did. The club, including his dad and Everleigh, have all done what we could to make it easy on him

I finish up with the car I'm working on and wash up.

Hands clean, I head to the office to find Ghost but I see Ivy sitting behind a desk.

“Didn’t expect to see you here?” I say, stepping over the threshold.

Ivy lifts her head and smiles. “Hey, Diablo, what’s up?”

“Nothing. Was just gonna tell Ghost I was headin’ out.”

“Yeah, he left already,” Ivy murmurs. “I’m just catching up on some things before heading home.”

“I’ll leave you to it.”

Leaving the office, I pull out my cell to text Daemon letting him know I was on the way.

Outside, I straddle my bike, lift the kickstand, and kickstart her. The bike comes to life with a thundering roar that soothes me every time I hear it.

I pull out of the parking lot into traffic, and hit the throttle, speeding out of there.

“You’re shittin’ me, right?” Looking at my brother like he’s grown two heads. “You had me come here for this?”

“Come on, brother, it won’t be that bad.” Daemon smirks, jerking his head in the direction of the booth we’d just set up. “Think of it as you’re doin’ it for Hendrik.”

“Him and his teammates.” Beast snorts, shaking his head.

Daemon hadn’t been entirely truthful about what he needed help with. It seems Everleigh decided to sign the club up to help out at the school fair. Our booth is for

tickets to take a ride around the block on the back of our bikes. The ones with ol' ladies were going to take the kids while those of us that are single take the women.

"And if it's a dude that wants to get a ride?" I throw the question out there.

"Guess it'll be rock, paper, scissors time." Daemon chuckles.

"Fuck that. Leave it to the prospects," Ghost grunts, crossing his arms. "Got nothing against a guy wanting to ride a bike, but I don't wanna feel a hairy-chested man against my back. I much prefer the feel of tits pressing up against me."

I ignore Ghost and meet Daemon's gaze. "You know I'm not one for putting a woman on the back of my bike." It's a rule I've always lived by, and I didn't want to have to break it now.

"I know, but we need the help. Everleigh told me there was a lot of excitement about this being a part of the fair. The money we raise will go toward Hendrik's football team."

"What if I help man the booth," I suggest. "If it's going to be nuts, then you need manpower at the booth as well."

Daemon cocks his head in Beast's direction. "He ain't gonna budge, is he?"

"On putting a bitch on the back of his bike? I told you he wouldn't," Beast answers, shaking his head.

In the six months since his and Bristol's lives settled somewhat, he's seemed to mellow out a bit. That is, unless his little brother came by to piss him off.

Daemon sighs and nods. "Fine, you man the booth with me and Everleigh."

“Great,” I mutter, not wanting to do that either, but I’ll do it. It’s reasonable.

Two hours into the fair, and I was ready to get the hell out of there. Mainly because I’ve had enough of the loud screaming and squealing.

I don’t have anything against kids, but damnit, there’s only so much of it I can take. It wouldn’t be so bad if they knew how to keep the volume down a bit.

“How long is this thing supposed to go on?” I ask, scanning the area and taking in the different booths and those walking around.

“Another three hours,” Everleigh answers. “If you want to head out, I think we’ve got it from here.”

I glance toward Daemon to see him staring at his woman like she’s grown two heads. So, this was his way of making it through the damn thing without losing it himself.

Go figure.

“I’m good,” I tell her, going back to scanning the crowd.

That is, I scanned until I spotted her.

There stood London in all her beauty, and she wasn’t alone. A man was with her, arm wrapped around her shoulder, keeping her at his side. The air was somewhat cool, and she was wearing a pair of jeans with a fitted, ribbed, long-sleeve shirt with the sleeves pushed up just a bit. Her man was wearing similar to what I had on—jeans and a black tee, whereas mine was a gray tee.

Something about the guy rubbed me the wrong way, and I didn’t like the feeling I got. Especially with the way he was holding her next to him.

Daemon nudges me, and I look at him.

“You good?”

“Yeah, just thought I saw someone I recognized,” I tell him. “Can’t put a name to his face, though.”

“Show me who. Maybe I’ll know,” he states, furrowing his brow.

“You see the woman with the curls over by the cotton candy booth? It’s the guy with his arm around her,” I tell him, keeping my back to the couple. I don’t need to see them together again. Not that I didn’t want to look at London, but I didn’t like seeing her out with some guy.

“You talking about Hendrik’s science teacher, Miss Weaver?” Daemon asks, cocking a brow.

“I guess.” I shrug, “She got massive curly hair?” I haven’t seen her since school let out, and I stopped checking in on her.

“Brother, you ain’t foolin’ me. I saw the moment you locked eyes on her,” he says, cocking a brow. “The guy, though, you’re right, he’s familiar. See if you can’t get a picture of him and send it to Scythe. See if he can’t get an ID on him.”

I nod, pull out my phone, lift it, and snap a picture of the couple. I crop London out of it and send the image to Scythe. Hopefully, it won’t take him long to get information on who the guy is.

Throughout the rest of the afternoon, I find myself looking for her, finding her, and wanting to get her away from the guy. By the time the fair is over, I couldn’t be more relieved. Daemon told me to go ahead and head out. The prospects could help break

everything down.

Works for me. I need to get the hell out of there and as far away from London as possible. Seeing her again, it's making me think things I don't need to be thinking about.

Once at my bike, I am about to throw my leg over the back when I spot her once more on the sidewalk in front of her car. This time, though, she didn't look happy. From the looks of it she and the asshat are arguing.

I debated with myself if I should intervene or not. I should ignore it and let her be, but I can't help thinking of the promise I made her when she was thirteen about watching her back.

I let out a harsh breath as I make up my mind.

CHAPTER 4

LONDON

“Why can’t you understand, Taylor?” I mutter, becoming more than just a little frustrated with him.

The day had been good. I’d gotten to see several of my students having a blast at the fair, and I didn’t want it to be ruined.

Taylor and I met right after I got back from spending my summer vacation with my dad. He and I hit it off, and we’d gone on more than just a couple of dates. Not once did he put the pressure on me. Other than making out, we hadn’t done anything else. I told him I didn’t want to rush things. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to. I guess it’s hard to tell him I am a virgin.

He’s been pushing for me to stay at his place, but I’m just not ready.

“Come on, babe, it’s been a few months now.” Taylor sighs frustratedly and brushes a hand through his hair. “You never want to come to my place. It’s always meet up somewhere. Hell, you won’t even let me pick you up from your place.”

It’s true. I always drove myself to meet him. I guess it’s a trust thing with me. I want to be sure about things, and I still have not decided where Taylor’s concerned. I mean, I like him and all, but . . .

I don’t know what’s holding me back.

My dad said I had a great intuition and I just needed to hone it in. This past summer, he asked me to stay with him, and I didn't mind since I loved being able to go to Lake Belton. While I'd been with him, he declared I needed to refresh my self-defense. He didn't want me to forget how to protect myself. Of course, I gave in because he was right. You can never be too careful.

Maybe that's why I'm being cautious. But we'd been dating for a little I should be feeling more comfortable with him, so why haven't I let him to my place or gone to his?

"Taylor—"

"Babe, seriously, I'm tired of the hot-cold act," he snaps, stepping closer as he interrupts me, his hand going to my waist. "It's time to move shit along."

"Hot-cold act?" I shove away from him and zero in on him with a sharp glare. "Excuse me if I'm not a slut who jumps into bed with just anyone."

"I'm not just anyone," Taylor sneers. Shaking my head, I turn to leave, but he catches my arm. "Where are you going?"

"Home," I answer and yank at my arm. Taylor tightens his grip so I can't move away from him.

I open my mouth and tell him to let me go when I find myself free.

"What the fuck?" Taylor snarls and looks to his right.

I glance there as well to see Damari standing there, hand latched to Taylor's wrist.

"Damari," I murmur, lifting my gaze to his. "What are you doing?"

“Who the fuck are you?” Taylor demands at the same time.

“Think she said she was going home,” Damari mutters, letting Taylor go and shoving him back as he steps in front of me.

What in the world is he doing?

I haven’t seen him since that night when I ran into him at the bar where I gave him my number. He never called. It sucked, but more, it was humiliating. I shouldn’t have given him my number. I mean, he probably has someone in his life.

“London, who is this guy? He the reason you don’t want me at your place? Won’t come to mine?” Taylor’s voice grows loud enough to draw attention.

Something I don’t need when some of the people are parents to my students.

“Watch it,” Damari remarks.

“No, buddy, you best watch it,” Taylor snaps.

“Everything good here, Diablo?”

I glance around to see who the newcomer is to find one of my student’s dad standing there wearing the same vest thing Damari is wearing.

Wait, did he call Damari Diablo? Is that his nickname?

“Yeah, Daemon, everything’s good. This guy was just about to be on his way,” Damari says, hands on his hips.

I didn’t have to see his face to sense the rolling anger coming from him.

Why though?

He didn't need to intervene. I could've handled things myself. I didn't need any help.

"We'll see to him, brother," the dad says, eyes coming to me. "Ms. Weaver." He nods curtly.

Damari turns to me. "Go ahead and get in your car, Chiquita."

Coming out of my stupor caused by his closeness, I plant my hands on my hips. "Don't tell me what to do, Damari. I didn't need you to intervene, and I didn't ask you to."

Damari cocks a brow and steps into my space. "You might not have, but I made a promise to you a long time ago that I'd watch your back."

"That was a long time ago." I huff and throw my hands in the air. I don't even know why I'm getting frustrated. Turning away from him, I reach into my cross-body purse and dig my keys out. I unlock my car, the same car I've had since my eighteenth birthday, and get in without so much as a backward glance.

"You've got to be kidding me," I mutter under my breath as I park in front of my apartment building and look to my second spot to see Damari pulling his motorcycle into it.

Turning the ignition off, I snatch the key and get out, glaring at him.

"What are you doing here?"

"Upstairs," he grunts, jerking his chin toward the building.

“No way,” I snap, crossing my arms and taking a stand. “You can leave.”

“London, get upstairs. I’m not doing this out here,” Damari says, stepping closer. He reaches for my wrist and tugs at it, forcing me to drop my arms.

Damari guides the way up to my apartment, not letting me go.

It dawns on me that he knows which door is mine when he stops and takes the keys from my hands.

“How do you know which apartment I live in?”

Damari doesn’t answer me right away as he unlocks the door and shoves it open for both of us to go through.

Once alone behind my apartment door, he lets me go, and I whirl around to face him. “Are you going to answer my question now?”

“I followed you to make sure that asshat didn’t,” he answers.

“Damari—”

”Diablo,” he says, interrupting me.

“What?” I blink.

“Everyone calls me Diablo now.” The way he shares this tells me to leave the subject alone.

“Fine. Diablo,” I insinuate his name with a roll of my eyes. I much prefer Damari. Damari to me was my hero. “I didn’t need you to do anything, let alone follow me

home. And you still haven't told me how you knew not only where I live but which apartment."

"Looked into you," he informs me like it was no big deal.

"Excuse me?" I demand on a breath. "You looked into me?"

"Yeah, wanted to make sure you were doing good after I saw you at the bar."

"And you couldn't do that by just calling me and finding out for yourself, through, um, you know, maybe talking to me?"

I can't believe him. Who does he think he is?

You know what? I'm done. I can't handle this right now. "You need to leave."

"I'm not leaving, Chiquita. We need to talk," Diablo says.

I stare at the man, getting a close look, not seeing any of the boy who protected me. Not even a hint of who I used to know. I guess it's right to call him Diablo. There's no Damari left in him.

"Fine, say what you need to say, then leave. I've got papers to grade, and I need to get ready for next week. With Thanksgiving break coming up, I need to get them done so I can enjoy the break and not worry about anything else but how much turkey and stuffing I'm going to eat." And the corn pudding. And the green bean casserole. Then, of course, the potatoes and gravy. I intend to pig out on as much as I can.

Dad cooks a mean meal. We have dinner together every year, and his team joins us. It's great, and I love being at a table full of people who made a family among each other.

Diablo mutters something under his breath, his head back and his eyes looking to the ceiling while his hands are braced on his hips.

“What was that?” I demand, swearing I heard him say something about putting me over his knee. But that can’t be right.

Bringing his gaze back to mine, his eyes narrow slits, but he doesn’t say anything. Not one word. Instead, he shocks me by moving fully in my space, one arm going around my waist, the other in my hair, holding me in place as he slams his mouth to mine.

Mother of all kisses.

Diablo is kissing me.

Me.

Holy sweet potato pie, I never saw it coming.

Nor did I expect to allow myself to fall into it and kiss him back.

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CHAPTER 5

DIABLO

I didn't intend to kiss her, but the way she stood off with me tempted me too far. I plunge right in the instant her lips part, deepening the kiss.

London moans and relaxes fully into me just as I want her to.

Seeing the way the asshole grabbed for her, it was the last straw. I didn't give a fuck who he was, I wasn't about to let him harm London.

I did mean what I told her when I said we needed to talk. London, though, she just had to go and get mouthy in a way that got my dick hard. I couldn't think of anything other than having my mouth on her. The need to shut her up in a way I want rather than getting pissed with her. I decided it was a damn turn-on.

But I won't let it go any further. Not now. I still gotta talk to her about things.

Reluctantly, I pull away but keep my hands where I have them. No way am I letting her go. She feels good pressed up against me.

"What was that?"

The way she gets all breathlike . . . fuck me, it makes me just want to kiss her again.

"That was me tellin' you to be quiet."

London's gaze narrows marginally. "You could have just said that."

"Could've," I agree. "But I like my way better."

"Whatever," she huffs, plants her hands on my chest and shoves, "let me go."

"Not on your life."

"Why not?" London tilts her head back to meet my gaze head-on. "And why are you doing this at all?"

That's a good question. Why am I? Probably because I like exactly where she is. She's London. The girl I looked after on the streets for those months. The girl I thought was cute, but now, as a woman, she's sinfully sexy as hell.

"Because I decided I fucked up not callin' you," I remark. I knew, though, if I'd called, deep down, this is where she would be. In my arms, probably underneath me.

"You decided?" she scoffs. "Right."

There's no way to hide my amusement.

"Come on, Chiquita, let's sit down, and I'll explain." It's something I've never had to do before. Not with anyone. Not even Beast.

Beast and I have a bond between us. Nothing needs to be said for us to understand each other. We have one another's backs without question. No matter what's happening, we don't have to explain ourselves.

Moving her to the couch, I twirl her around, facing me, hands at her hips, pulling her down as I sit, causing her to straddle my lap.

“You know I can sit on my couch. I don’t need to be on top of you,” she mutters.

Visions of her on top of me in other ways, more pleasurable ways, filter through my mind, and I’d love nothing more than to strip her tight as fuck jeans off and slam her down on top of me.

“For the talk we’re about to have, yeah, we’re gonna sit just like this. I want your full attention on me.”

From the way her cheeks blushed and her eyes darkened marginally, something had just gone through her mind, and I’m willing to bet it was on the same lines of thoughts I was having. But I’m willing to bet her thoughts weren’t near as dirty as my own.

“Well, you have my attention, so what is it?” she demands, crossing her arms, pushing up her perky tits.

I give her waist a squeeze, shift, and let her feel me between her legs.

“First question, why did you move back to town to be a teacher?”

“How did you know I was a teacher?” she asks, eyes widening.

“Looked into you after seeing you again at the bar.” I shrug. “Now, answer the question.”

“I don’t know. There was an opening at the school I’m working at, and I took it,” she says, but the way her eyes shift slightly, not fully looking at me, I know it’s not completely true.

I remember her tells. Back when we lived on the street together, she was a shit liar.

She couldn't lie to me or Beast.

"You moved from Killeen, where they have schools, your dad, and I'm sure someone . . ."

"You really looked into me?" she snaps, blurting out and narrowing her eyes, nostrils flaring.

Yeah, she's pissed I looked into her, but she'll have to get over it.

"I looked into you." I nod. "I wanted to make sure you were good."

"You could have talked to me. It's why I gave you my freaking number in the first place."

"I could've called you. But gotta say, Chiquita, you have shit timing for coming back into my life," I tell her, not missing a slight flinch. "That being said, on the way, followin' you here, I made the decision, I didn't care about the timing."

"And that decision is?" she prompts.

That she was going to be mine. I didn't care how I had to make it happen. Fate put her in my life when she was thirteen, took her away, only to return her to me. I think in the last couple of years, seeing the way my brothers have found the women meant to be theirs, I've learned to take the bull by its horns and take what's meant to be mine.

How to explain that to her, it's not gonna be easy. She'd probably freak the hell out on me and tell me I'm crazy.

I am. Just like I'm also deadly, however, when it comes to her, I'll kill anyone who

dares to fuck her over.

“That I want to see where things can go between the two of us.”

“You what?” she squeaks

“You heard me,” I confirm.

“There’s nothing between us,” she says, stiffening in my arms. “Besides, I have a boyfriend.”

“Yeah, we’ll get to that in a bit about the said boyfriend,” I mutter as there’s a knock at the door.

Fuck me.

“You expectin’ company?” I ask, seeing her head twist, looking at the door.

“No. I don’t know my new neighbors yet. The ones who lived next to me before moved. I haven’t gotten to know the others on the other side of the building,” she explains. “And Dad always calls me before he comes.”

I nod, slide her off my lap, and get to my feet. I cross the living area to the door, look through the peephole and curse. It’s not anyone for her. It’s my damn brothers.

Sighing, I open the door. “What the hell you doing here?” I demand, glaring at Beast and Daemon.

Beast smirks, shakes his head, and steps around me. “London, long time no see,” he states.

“Jarrett?” the damn woman calls, a bright smile on her lips.

“Go by Beast now, only person who calls me that is my ol’ lady.” Even Bristol rarely calls him by his first name.

“Oh, okay.” London smiles. “Beast. It’s different, but I totally see it.”

Beast laughs, shaking his head.

“Sorry to interrupt, but Scythe got the info back to us about who our friend is,” Daemon states, grimacing.

“I’m not gonna like it, am I?” I ask, bracing for him to answer.

“Nope, but don’t worry, he’s already been taken to the cabin for questioning,” Daemon says, looking past me to London then back to me. “Taylor isn’t his real name.”

“What?” London gasps.

Daemon glances in her direction. “The guy who was with you today, Miss Weaver, his name isn’t Taylor, and he was targeting you.” He shifts his gaze to me. “He’s associated with the Scarlet Needles. His name’s Craig Hickman. According to the information Scythe was able to find, he’s a low-level. Lures women.”

“Holy smokes.”

I wish Daemon hadn’t said anything in front of her, but I get why he did.

“That’s why we’re here, rather than callin’,” Beast explains. “Reaper wants you to bring her to the clubhouse until we know what’s going on and why she was targeted.”

“You’ve got to be kiddin’ me,” I mutter.

“I’m not going anywhere,” London states at the same time. “I can take care of myself.”

All three of us turn toward her, Beast and Daemon looking at her with frustrated amusement whereas I know her. She really thinks she can handle herself. She won’t go anywhere without a fight.

Without a word, I move toward her, pull her to me, holding her so she wouldn’t be able to fight me. I lift a hand to stroke the side of her face before doing the one thing I’m gonna hate myself for later and knock her ass out.

She slumps in my arms, and I adjust her to scoop her up as I face my brothers.

“Damnit, Diablo, she’s gonna be pissed you did that to her,” Beast grumbles, shaking his head.

“Yeah, I know it,” I answer, laying her on the couch. “She’s gonna be more than just a little pissed.”

“Best watch yourself when she comes to.” Beast actually laughs. Fucking outright laughs in my face. “The last time you knocked her out to keep her from doing something stupid, London kneed you in the balls for it.”

There’s no way I could forget what she’d done. She kneed me hard enough I felt my balls in the pit of my stomach for a week.

“Y’all want to explain how exactly you know my son’s teacher and why, besides Diablo’s obvious interest, are we involving her? We’ve got the fucker already,” Daemon questions, watching me closely.

But it's Beast who answers. "For six months, when she was thirteen, she was on the streets with us. We protected her then, and we'll protect her now."

Daemon lets out a breath and nods. "Right then, guess we better get her to the clubhouse. At least Hendrik will be glad to see her. She's his favorite teacher this year."

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CHAPTER 6

LONDON

I'm going to kill him.

Slowly.

Very, very slowly.

I can't believe he had the nerve to knock me unconscious. How did I not see it coming? Probably because he had me in his arms, and he already kissed me. My body was reacting to him in ways it's never acted before.

With Taylor, I mean Craig, whatever his name is, I found him cute. He was a good kisser, but my body never hummed like it did when Damari, ugh, Diablo made kissed me.

We didn't get to finish our discussion. I didn't get to lay into him about the decision he made. Like it was his to make in the first place, it's not. Not when it comes to me. I have a say so, and he's not going to take my choice away from me.

Pacing the room, I woke up in not long ago, I struggle to keep my bearings. I should be at home, with a hot cup of cocoa in hand, my e-reader balanced on my lap, and a good book on its screen with me entering the world of whichever book I decided to read. Ever since seeing Damari again, seeing him in what I learned from reading, his cut, I've been on an MC romance kick. Right now, I'm reading a series where the

MC takes on a cult. It's interesting, and I love how strong the female characters are.

But it's just a book. I highly doubt anything like that could be real. Men in books just make life simpler.

The turning of the doorknob catches my attention, and I whirl around to see it's not Diablo coming in the room but rather Everleigh, Hendrik's stepmom.

"Hey," she greets, cradling Hendrik's little brother to her chest. "I was just coming to check on you after Daemon told me what happened. Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not. And neither is that asshole when I get my hands on him," I answer, not meaning to sound like a bitch. She didn't do anything to me.

"He'd deserve it," Everleigh agrees. "I can't believe Diablo actually knocked you out the way he did. What a jerk move."

"Jerk move? More like asshole from hell move," I scoff.

Everleigh laughs, shaking her head. "I knew at the beginning of the school year when I met you I was gonna like you. You're Hendrik's favorite teacher. He enjoys going to science class. Hates going to English, though."

"He has Ms. Marshall?" I ask, not remembering if he has Tamara or not.

"Yeah, he says he doesn't understand the way she's teaching it," she explains.

"Tamara has a unique way of doing things. She likes to have the students write everything out while she's going over it. What she doesn't get is that the way she's doing it, doesn't work for all the students." It's the only thing the two of us really disagree on. I feel if a student isn't getting it one way, then I need to switch things up,

and make it so they understand. “I hate to suggest it, but if he’s struggling with Tamara as a teacher, maybe switch him to Mrs. Lumberton. She’s awesome.”

“Thanks, I’ll talk to Daemon about it. See what he thinks. He’s told Hendrik that sometimes he’s going to have teachers that just aren’t easy.”

“It is definitely true,” I agree completely. Every teacher is different, and when it comes to the curriculums, it’s not easy to make sure the students get everything they need to know in a timely manner with the timeline we’re given.

“Anyway, since you’re awake and good, why don’t you come join the rest of us? I’ll introduce you to the other ol’ ladies.”

“Ol’ ladies as in?—”

“The women our men claim,” she states, interrupting me. “It’s what the club members call their wives or girlfriends. But it has to be serious for them when it comes to a girlfriend. If you’re just a piece of ass they’re banging, you won’t get the title. They don’t just claim a woman for shits and giggles. Same when it comes to their protection. They don’t give it for the simple fact of giving it. You have to mean something to a member for the whole club to get involved.”

I get it, yet I don’t.

I’m not anything to Diablo. Not anymore. I had known him for six months when I was still just a child. But even I have to admit, in that time, he marked me. Any guy I dated in high school, I measured up to him. It’s probably why I rarely had a date in high school. Shoot, I didn’t even go with a guy to the prom. I’d gone with a few friends who were also dateless, though it didn’t suck, we had a blast. Afterward, my dad took us all down to Galveston for the weekend.

“Come on,” Everleigh says, breaking through my trip down memory lane.

“Okay.”

Following her down the dimly lit hallway, a loud commotion can be heard before we even step into the main room of the clubhouse. It’s a pretty massive space. By the bar, I see a tall man toe-to-toe with a younger woman standing in front of him. While another blonde woman stands close, hands on her hips, looking ready to intervene at any moment.

“I don’t need you to do anything for me, Uncle Reaper. I can handle myself perfectly fine,” the younger woman snaps. “Just because I’m back home doesn’t mean you can control me. I won’t allow it.”

“Ember, I swear to fuck?—.”

“Language,” the blonde mutters a bit loudly, interrupting him.

“Yeah, language, Uncle Reaper,” the younger woman who Reaper, I’m guessing that’s his name and hers, called Ember, says.

“Oh boy,” Everleigh murmurs next to me. “Reaper’s about to get it from Ivy from the looks of it.”

“Ember, you’re not helping matters with the attitude,” Ivy says and moves in front of her to face off with Reaper. “She’s an adult, and you can’t treat her any other way. You want her to stick around this time now that she’s home, well, knock the overprotective BS off.”

Reaper glares at his woman then looks past her and points at Ember. “We’re not done with this discussion.”

“Ember moved back not long ago. She’s Reaper, Angel, and Tombstone’s niece,” Everleigh explains. “She left to go to school in New York, I believe, ended up moving to Montana, and now she’s back home. The guys have had a hard time leaving her to find her way. They’re a bit protective of her. Can’t blame them either.”

“Why not?” I ask, genuinely curious.

“Daemon told me she’d lost both her parents in a fire. The three guys raised her here at the clubhouse. She was a wild child, but they loved her like their own. Reaper especially.”

“I can see it.” I nod.

“Daddy,” a little girl shouts. She can’t be more than two or three. “Weave Ember awone.”

Ember laughs. So does Ivy and every other woman in the room.

Reaper glowers at the little girl, squats down, and scoops her up as she moves toward him. He stands, eyes on the girl. But he’s got a grin on his face. “You little girl?—”

“Don’t you say it,” Ivy stops him yet again, though she said it through laughter.

“Fine, whatever,” Reaper growls. “Y’all are teaming up on me.”

“What are you doing out here?”

I spin to find Diablo standing behind me, looking a bit perturbed.

“I didn’t know I had to stay confined,” I snap, narrowing my gaze on him.

“I told her she should come out here with us,” Everleigh adds.

“We still need to finish our talk,” Diablo mutters.

“Oh, we have plenty to talk about, mister. One of them being who you think you are to have knocked me out in the first damn place.” Fuming, I step forward and poke at his chest. “You had no right to do that. Or to bring me here without my consent.”

“Damn, I think I like her,” I hear someone say behind me, but the voice was a new one I hadn’t heard before.

“Sutton, quiet,” a deep baritone grumbles.

Diablo looks at the finger I have pressed into his chest and back to my face. His dark eyes glimmer with what, I’m not sure, but deep down, it excites me. Between my legs grows wet, and I didn’t know that was even possible.

“Chiquita, you wanna drop that finger,” he growls.

“No, Diablo ,” I mutter, punctuating every syllable of his name. “I will not. You think it’s okay to knock me out after following me to my apartment. You even looked into me rather than, ugh, I don’t know, calling me . . .”The last word comes out on a squeal ‘cause one second, I’m chastising him, and the next, I’m being thrown over his shoulder.

CHAPTER 7

DIABLO

“What are you doing?” London screams and slaps at my back. “Put me down.”

“Settle down,” I command, slapping her ass as I head back to my room.

I’d gone to look for her in there only to find she wasn’t in my room. I find her in the main room next to Everleigh. The last thing I need right now is for any of those women to encourage her further.

Then she just had to go ahead and poke me in the chest the way she did. That shit doesn’t fly with me. It’s not something I’ll put up with. In my opinion, it’s the move of a high and mighty princess. A princess that needs her ass spanked and taught that she isn’t going to walk over me to get her way or to make a point.

Ignoring her demands to be put down, I carry her the rest of the way to my room. I won’t stop until the door slams closed behind us. It’s then I bump her off my shoulder and toss her back onto the bed.

London is quick to move, bolting off the bed to the other side, hands planted on her waist. “You have some nerve, mister,” she snaps, huffily.

“Mister?” I don’t think anyone has ever called me that.

“Don’t you grin at me, Diablo. None of this is funny.”

Hell, I didn't even realize I'd grinned, though it was amusing as fuck that she'd say that to me.

"London, you're right. None of this shit is funny, except for you callin' me 'mister'." Moving around the edge of my bed, eyes on her. "You and I have a lot to catch up on. But first things first. You need to know why I did what I did," I tell her, stopping directly in front of her, hands going to her hips.

"I know why you did it. You don't think I can protect myself," she mutters. "I'll have you know, my dad made sure I knew how to handle myself against an attack."

"You didn't stop me from knocking you out."

"That's because you're you," she blurts out, only to slap a hand over her mouth and groans. "I can't believe I just said that. I didn't mean that as in you being you affects me?—"

"Chiquita, quiet," I order, squeezing her waist.

"No, I won't be quiet," she says, dropping her hands to my chest to shove.

I let her go, seeing she needs this.

"Why couldn't you just leave things be?" she mutters and starts pacing again. "I was fine. I could have handled things on my own."

"Do you know who Taylor really is?" I demand, not about to let her think she had things under control. There's no way she would've.

"I heard Daemon say his name's really Craig Hickman."

“Yeah, but dear old Craig targeted you because he intended to take you to his friends, who would end up most likely killing you before or after stealing your organs.”

“What?” she whispers, her steps faltering as she turns back to me, face paling.

“You heard me.” I nod.

“You can’t be serious.”

“Deadly.” I look her in the eye, letting her see for herself that I’m not playing games. “This group, London, they’re sick. They take people, steal organs from them. Sometimes those people turn back up, usually though, they’re found dead. Other times, they’re not.”

London stares at me, silently watching for any tells that I could be lying. I’m not, and she knows it. She just doesn’t want to believe it.

“If this is true, why isn’t anyone doing anything about it?” she asks, licking her bottom lip. “I mean, you’d think people would be talking about it. Maybe reporting it to the news.”

“London, this isn’t something governments would allow to be discussed openly. Or allow it to get out to the public. Besides, we’re pretty sure there are some officials in on it all.”

More like we were damn sure some officials were in on it. At least on the payroll to look the other way. London doesn’t need to know this, though. She didn’t need to be freaking out more than she already is.

“Why would I be a target?” London finally asks.

“Good question,” I grumble. “We’re looking into it.” More like I should be back at the cabin questioning the little shit, but I needed to check on her. “Hopefully, we’ll find out why.” I’ve got a theory, but again, I wasn’t about to tell her what it was. It might send her running scared back to her dad.

It’s probably what I should do. Let her go. Let her be safe with him. But I can’t.

London means something to me. No one else would get it. Probably ‘cause no one else touched me in the same way she did. She brought out the protective instincts rather than just my survival ones. I wanted to make sure she stayed safe when she was thirteen. I needed to do it, no matter how much it affected me then and now.

Moving deeper into her space once again, I wrap my arms around her and yank her fully against my chest. I slide a hand up her spine, up farther into her hair, where I thread my fingers through her wild curls.

“Now, for us to finish our earlier conversation before we were interrupted.”

“You mean the one where you said you made a decision?” she snaps breathlessly.

“Yeah,” I grunt, stepping back toward the bed, the backs of my knees hitting the mattress, bringing London with me. I sit, bringing her down onto my lap, her legs straddling either side of me. If the two of us didn’t have shit to sort out, we’d be doing something entirely different, and London would be naked.

“Well, please continue. Explain to me all about the decision you made.” She huffs.

Watching her eyes closely, I see the longing in them. The need she craves.

“You and me, we’re gonna make a go of things,” I tell her, leaving it simple, straight to the point. “There’s something between us worth explorin’. It’s always been there.”

“How do you know I want this?” she questions, brows creasing in the middle.

“Because if you didn’t, you wouldn’t have given me that look the night at the bar that said you wanted me to take you home and fuck you. You also wouldn’t have given me your phone number.”

London opens her mouth to protest, but I don’t give her a chance. I tighten my grip on her hair, pull her head down, and claim her mouth.

Her lips part with a gasp, and I take the opening to sweep inside. A moan leaves her lips. Again, I take it as a sign to take more. Flipping her to her back, I press into her. I’m not going to do more than kiss her, but I want her to feel me. Feel that I want her. That I want to touch her, just as I want her to touch me.

No sooner than she starts to get into it, someone knocks at the damn door. I break the kiss, lifting my head just enough to meet her gaze. The way her eyes have that lustful haze and her heavy breathing, she’d been into it as much as I was.

Another knock comes, and I bite back a curse about to tell whoever the hell it is to fuck off.

“Diablo, brother, we need you out here,” Beast calls out from the other side of the door. “Some lawyer is here with a woman claimin’ to be your mom.”

Fucking, motherfucking, hell.

CHAPTER 8

LONDON

Holy mother of kisses.

I let him kiss me.

Again .

It had to be the best kiss I've ever had. That's saying something cause the one he gave me at my apartment, it'd been spectacular. This kiss I can only put down to eye opening.

Diablo wants to explore things with me. I felt what I did to him as I sat astride his lap, even more, when he laid me down on the bed and kept kissing me. I think, for a make-out session, it was the most intimate thing I've ever done.

Honestly, I was close to begging for more when the knock at the door came.

Diablo hadn't been happy about it. I felt it in the way his body tensed. It grew tighter at Beast's announcement of who was here.

"Fuck," Diablo growls, dropping his head forward, eyes closed.

"Guess you better go see to whatever?—"

“You’re coming with me,” he declares, interrupting me, eyes opening to narrow slits. “Once I’ve got it dealt with, we’re going to my place where the two of us can’t be fuckin’ interrupted again.”

“Ugh, hate to tell you, but they interrupted at my apartment, and I didn’t even know they knew where I lived,” I grumble. “And for the record, who says I want to go to your place?”

Diablo loses the tension in his body as a smirk forms on his kissable lips. “Chiquita, you wanna go to my place as much as I want to take you there. No one is going to bother us there because they all know when I go to my place, I’m not to be disturbed. I take you there, they definitely won’t fuck with me unless it’s an emergency.”

“What exactly do you think we’re going to be doing at your place?” I have to ask. My body hums with needs I don’t understand. I’ve never actually felt such longing like this.

That smirk of his shifts, and his eyes darken. “London, you know what’s going to happen.”

“Ugh, no, I don’t,” I say sheepishly, diverting my gaze. He wants to make something happen between the two of us. If that’s the case, he needs to know the one thing no one knows about me other than my doctor, who put me on birth control, knows. “I’m a virgin, Diablo.”

Diablo’s head jerks back, brows draw together, and he stares at me like I’ve grown two heads. “You’re kiddin’.”

“Is being a virgin something to joke about?”

I wouldn’t joke about it. It’s the truth. I’m not the type who sleeps around with

anyone. I want to think Diablo isn't the type of guy who would take advantage of a woman especially if he knows the truth about them.

It's not something I'm embarrassed about or ashamed of. It was my choice to wait, and if I want to be honest with myself, I know why. Or I think I know why.

Because of this man here.

Because at thirteen, during a small amount of time, I gave my heart to a boy who is now a man.

Regardless of the truth, I'm not about to tell him. Or let him cotton on to him being the very reason I moved back to Palestine in hopes of seeing him once again.

I also won't give in to my feelings for him easily. He needs to learn I won't sit idly by and let him make decisions for me.

Oh, and I can't forget that he hurt me by not calling me after I gave him my number months ago. It took him seeing me with Taylor, Craig, whatever his name is, for him to make a decision .

Diablo reaches up to curve his palm to my cheek. His eyes shifting, yet again. I didn't think it was possible to see such tenderness from a man like him, but there it is.

"Chiquita," is all he murmurs before moving, getting to his feet, bringing me with him.

Standing next to the bed, he keeps one hand on my cheek while he wraps his arm firmly around my waist.

"I know you, though you don't think I do," Diablo whispers. "I looked into you,

watched you at first . . .”

“You what?” I gasp, eyes widening, but he ignores me.

“ . . . then you vanished again. Thought it was for the best, but knowing now that no one else has gotten in there,” his arm tightens around my waist, “there’s no way I’m going to let you go this time.”

“ Diablo .”

I nearly jump out of my skin at the shouting of his name from the other side of the door.

“We’re coming,” Diablo answers, hip lip curling. Eyes never leaving me. “Looks like you’re about to get a look into my past.”

He never told me why he’d been on the streets, neither had Beast. But both men knew the reason I’d been.

Tension rolls off Diablo as he lets me go, takes my hand, and all but drags me to the door. Diablo yanks the door open and Beast is standing right there.

“Why didn’t you tell me your bitch of a mom had been trying to contact you?” From the sounds of it, Beast is pissed with Diablo for not telling him. But is it really any of his business? Anyone’s business, other than Diablo’s?

““Cause it wasn’t something I was sharing. It didn’t concern anyone else,” Diablo answers, shoves past Beast, and heading back to the main area of the clubhouse.

“Get the fuck out.” Diablo doesn’t wait to find out what they’re doing here.

Upon setting eyes on the lawyer and what has to be Diablo's mother, I didn't understand it. The woman was weathered-looking. Hair a mess. Body thin. So thin she looks like a strong wind would knock her on her ass.

"Diablo," Reaper calls.

"Not the club's concern, Prez," Diablo mutters, glancing in Reaper's direction for a split second.

"Damari," the woman murmurs, tears shimmering in her eyes.

"Don't, woman, I've told your lawyer friend here I didn't want nothing to do with you. Now, get the fuck out."

The woman's eyes shimmered with tears, and she looks at me, but Diablo steps in front of me, shielding me from her sight.

"I won't say it again," Diablo grinds out.

"Brother," Beast tries, using a calming voice.

"No, she's out of here."

Slowly, ever so slowly, I reach up to touch Diablo's back as I whisper, "Diablo."

Diablo tenses, his body tight and unwavering.

"Sir, if you'll please just give us a moment," the lawyer pleads.

"I'm dying," the woman says loudly.

“Not my problem,” Diablo growls.

“Please, Damari, please just give me a minute. Let me?—”

“Bitch, you don’t get it, I don’t give a shit what you’re doing here. Or that you’re fuckin’ dyin’. Get the fuck out of my sight,” Diablo snarls, pivots, and looks directly at Reaper. “I don’t care how you gotta do it, but she’s not to come anywhere near me and mine again.”

I study the way Reaper watches Diablo, studying him. Finally, Reaper nods. “I’ll take care of it, brother, don’t worry.”

“Good, I’m heading to my place,” Diablo tells him, pulling me with him as he rounds his mother and the lawyer, not saying another word to either of them. He takes me straight to his bike, which makes me wonder how he got it here and me when he’d had me knocked out. It’s a question I’ll have to ask him later.

Much later.

Maybe after he’s had time to calm down after seeing his mother. I’m not sure when the last time he’d seen her was, but it’s obvious it was something he never wanted to do.

And I want to know why.

CHAPTER 9

REAPER

“I think you heard my brother,” Beast sneers, stepping forward. “You need to leave.”

“But it’s important,” Teresa cries, tears streaming down her face now that her son had turned his back on her and stalked out of there, taking his woman with him.

I can’t blame him either. I know his past history with this bitch. I personally looked into it myself when I first met Diablo. It’s why I have no respect for the woman, but I’ve learned in the past few years to be cautious before making any move.

Beast isn’t thinking clearly because of his connection to Diablo, so he’s not seeing it. He’s too close, and I understand it. I want to kick the bitch to the curb myself. But my job is to protect this club and those within it. Meaning, I need to make sure my brother isn’t going to have any more unexpected drop-ins like this.

Stepping forward, I glance at Angel and jerk my chin up, sending him the silent message of what’s about to happen.

“Before you two leave, you’re both going to tell me why the sudden need to see my brother,” I state.

“We’ve been trying to get him to see his mother for the past six months,” the lawyer states, face red, cheeks puffing out. “He refuses to give us the courtesy of his time. All we’re asking is for five minutes.”

“Why the hell should he do that?” Beast explodes, and I glance at Hellhound and Tombstone, motioning for them to keep Beast in check.

Beast would do anything for this club, but when it comes to his woman, Bristol, or Diablo, who he sees as his brother and not just his club brother, he’d kill anyone on the spot.

“Beast,” I call, his head whipping in my direction. “Trust me.” I hold his gaze for a long moment.

Finally, he nods and steps back between Hellhound and Tombstone.

Nodding myself, I look to my woman. “Do me a favor, Princess, you and the other ol’ ladies go to the kitchen or something.” I’d prefer her to take the twins to our room, but I know she’s not gonna go far from me. She wants to know what the hell is going on.

“Okay,” she says quietly, not arguing with me or giving me any of the dirty looks she’d been giving me lately. I know why she’s doing it too. But she has not said a word about it. She’s knocked up again, and I’m just waiting for her to finally admit it.

I wait for her and the others to file out before shifting my focus to the lawyer and Teresa. “Now, tell me what the fuck it is you wanna tell my brother, other than the fact you’re dying.”

“It has to be Damari,” Teresa whispers, dropping her gaze and shaking her head. “It has to be my son.”

“Diablo ain’t your son,” I tell her. “He ain’t nothing to you nor that dick-for-brains husband of yours.” Neither of them gave two shits about my brother when he’d been growing up. Because of them, he was out on the streets, trying to survive however he

could. He was lucky to have found Beast.

“He’s my blood,” Teresa murmurs.

“We need him to sign some papers,” the lawyer remarks. “For Teresa to be able to get the treatments she needs, she needs him to sign them.”

“Why does she need him to sign anything?” I ask.

“Because when his grandfather passed away, he left everything to his grandson rather than his daughter,” the lawyer explains as he reaches up to loosen his tie. The movement shows me just how nervous he is.

“You wanna elaborate?” Angel demands, shifting closer.

“My father didn’t agree with the man I married,” Teresa says. “He disowned me when he found out I was pregnant and refused to leave my husband. He left everything to Damari. The ranch. The money. All of it.”

“So, you’re here to get money?” I ask, making sure I’m hearing correctly.

“I don’t care about any of it. I just want to get treatment. I don’t want to die.”

“Teresa has been living in a women’s shelter for nearly a year now after leaving her husband,” the lawyer states. “We just want Mr. Rios to sign some papers allowing Teresa to be able to get the medical services she needs and if he would be willing to set an allotted amount for her to get on her feet. Due to the ailment, she’s not been able to seek employment.”

Interesting. She finally left her husband after all these years, yet refused to do so when Diablo needed her to do so, when he’d needed her to protect him.

Fuck this bitch.

“Here’s what I’m gonna do for you,” I state, stepping toward the two of them. “I’m gonna give y’all two minutes to get the fuck out of my clubhouse and off club property. I’ll also be contacting the club’s attorney,”

“Already on it,” Beast growls behind me. I’m sure he is calling Everett, his brother, and Bristol’s boss.

“I’ll also tell my brother about his inheritance. It’s his to do with as he pleases, but I’ll tell you now. He ain’t gonna sign shit. He ain’t gonna help with anything you need.” I look directly at Teresa and sneer. “You fucked him over when he was just a kid. Didn’t protect him when he needed you to. Now, you’re sick and need him. Fuck you bitch. You deserve to die. You allowed him to be hurt. To be beaten. You turned away from him rather than fight to protect him. You refused to leave that dickface to save him.”

“I couldn’t,” she cried.

“The fuck you couldn’t,” I snarl, curling my lip in disgust. “You’re lucky Diablo didn’t die livin’ on the fuckin’ streets as long as he did. You’re also damn lucky he found us. Found his real family. We have his back. We won’t put up with shit like this. You contact him again,” I glance between the both of them, “either of you, you’ll regret it. Now, get the fuck out of here.”

I turn away from them as Styxx and Thanatos step forward, Cerberus right behind them.

“I’ll see them out,” Styxx mutters.

“I’ll help,” both Thanatos and Cerberus state in unison.

I nod as they pass me, my eyes lock with Beast's.

"We give Diablo the night to calm down, to be with his woman. Tomorrow, I will fill him in on what we found out," I tell him.

"Do y'all know who Diablo's woman is?" Scythe asks as the doors slam behind us.

"Her name's London Weaver," Beast answers. "She was a girl we protected when we lived on the streets."

"I know," Scythe remarks, nodding. "She's also the daughter of a highly respected man in the security business."

"How do you know this?" Beast asks.

"Six months ago, Diablo went to Finnegan asking him to look into her rather than coming to me. Finnegan, however, sent a file on her to me as well. I didn't look at it until after Diablo sent me that picture this afternoon. I looked at the file, saw that, and knew something needed to be said," Scythe explains.

"She's his," Beast announces. "That woman has been his since she was thirteen when he first saw her digging through a dumpster trying to find something to eat."

"We're gonna have to fill her dad in on what's going on," Angel adds. "Don't know who he is . . ."

"You know the name 'Red Phantom Security'?" Scythe asks.

I'd heard of it, but I believe they were a military-contracted group that handles things that others couldn't, not without notice.

“I know it,” Beast mutters through gritted teeth.

“Can they be trusted?” I ask, looking at Scythe.

“Yeah, they can be. Especially when it comes down to his daughter. No man goes to the length’s like he did to find her and get her if he doesn’t love his child.”

“Diablo won’t let him take her from him,” Beast announces.

“No one is going to let him lose her,” I tell him and sigh. “We’ll finish this tomorrow morning. Scythe, you go ahead and give London’s dad a call.”

“I’ll call him first thing in the morning. Call him now, it’ll fuck everyone’s night up,” Scythe retorts.

“Yeah,” I agree, nodding. “Tomorrow then.”

Leaving my brothers, I go in search of my woman. It’s time to take her and the twins home. It’s late enough as it is. We’d been getting ready to head out when Teresa showed.

It’s past the twins’ bedtime, and I’ve got plans with my woman after they’re both out for the night. Which means I need to get them home and get them all settled. Afterward, I can hopefully get Ivy to admit that I knocked her ass up again.

CHAPTER 10

LONDON

I'd never been on the back of a motorcycle before. I hadn't even though it would be something I'd enjoy. But riding behind Diablo, pressing up against his back, arms around him, was exhilarating. I loved every minute of it.

Though I'll admit, not being able to see because of the pitch black of night was a bit freaky. Still, I knew Diablo wouldn't let anything happen to me. He'd make sure I stayed safe, no matter what happened.

Diablo took us out to the middle of nowhere. There was nothing around. Nothing I could see, at least. The only thing visible was the road, brightened by the light on the front of his bike.

After a while, Diablo turns off on to a much bumpier road. I've no choice but to hold on tighter to keep from bouncing off the back of his bike.

Moments later, we come to a stop, and Diablo taps my leg.

"Hop off, baby."

Whoa me, he hasn't called me baby before. Not that I can recount, at least. It's always been my name or Chiquita, which I don't get. Why call me that?

Bracing myself with my hands on either side of his shoulders, I do as he says. My

legs feel wobbly, and Diablo grabs me around the waist as he swings a leg over.

“You like the ride?” he asks, holding me to him.

“It was fun.” I nod and stare at my hands pressed to his chest.

He walks me to a darkened house, and I’m surprised by the size of it. It’s beautiful, even in the dark, I can see the beauty of the farmhouse with a wraparound porch. The only thing missing is the white picket fencing, but who needs that when there’s obviously nothing close?

“This is your place?” I ask him as he makes our way up the steps.

“Yeah,” he answers, pulls his keys out of his pocket, and unlocks the front door.

“Bought this place the first chance I got after the club took me in.”

“You did?”

I blink at the sudden brightness when we step in, and he flicks a light switch.

“Wow,” I whisper before he can even answer as I glance around the entryway.

The whole place was an open floor plan with structured beams positioned throughout the entire downstairs. To the side, you can see a set of stairs leading up to the second floor. On every wall, there were windows. I could only imagine how beautiful this place would be with the sunlight shining through them.

His kitchen had state-of-the-art appliances with black granite tops. There was a small dining table, and another section downstairs was the living area, where he had a large sectional that looked more than a little bit comfortable. I’m willing to bet it could swallow a person whole.

“Come on,” Diablo tugs me toward his kitchen, “we’ll get something to eat then, sleep.”

Sleep?

What about . . .

Nope, I don’t need to think about that. I don’t need to think about how the very thought of it makes me tingle.

Right now, I want to know about what happened back at the clubhouse.

With his mom and the lawyer. Not the kiss we shared in his bed.

“Go ahead, sit,” he says, motioning to the stools situated in front of the island. “You okay with a sandwich?”

“Sure,” I murmur, taking a seat.

Diablo meets my gaze for a split second before digging what he needs out of the fridge.

“You know I could help,” I suggest.

“I’ve got it.”

Setting everything down on his side of the large island, he turns back to the fridge and pulls out a beer and a Sunkist.

Oh my God. How did he remember it’s my favorite? More than just that it’s my favorite, it’s the smaller bottles that always taste so much better.

My heart thumps in my chest, and I have a hard time swallowing past the nerves suddenly threatening to choke me. Why is it this man has been in my life once again for less than twenty-four hours, and already, I'm falling for him?

Probably because I'd already fallen, it might have been a teen's crush. Maybe not. Either way, I knew I was falling for him, and it scared me. I don't understand any of this.

Diablo silently makes us sandwiches; he even cuts them in half rather than leaving them whole. Once both are made, he slides one in front of me while he quickly puts things away. After he finishes, he comes around the island, sits next to me, and digs into his sandwich.

"So, um," I finally whisper moments later.

"That was the bitch who gave birth to me and her lawyer. Don't know how the hell she can afford to have one, don't really care," he says, jumping right to it, not looking at me.

"She said she was dying." I watch the way his body tenses slightly before he relaxes.

Diablo sets his sandwich down on the paper plate, spins on the stool, and reaches out to twist me to face him, his legs encase either side of mine. "Teresa might be dying, it's what she said, but I don't care, I don't give a shit about her. Maybe once a long time ago, I might have, but I haven't thought twice about her since I was a kid. She neglected me, allowed my old man to beat me. Allowed him to beat on her."

"Oh no," I breathe, tears pricking at my senses, ready to fall, but I won't allow it. Diablo wouldn't want me to.

"Yeah," he growls. "So, you see, I'm not feeling happy vibes about seeing her. She

can die for all I give a damn. I had to live on the streets for years. Live only to survive each day in a new hell because it was better than what I had at home. She could've gotten us out of it. She didn't. That's her choice. Mine is she's out of my life and staying that way."

"I don't blame you for your decision," I murmur, reaching out to stroke his cheek. "She was a bitch for what she did. For her to come to you because she was dying." I close my eyes and shake my head. "She doesn't deserve redemption or your forgiveness if that's what she was after."

"Highly doubt she was there for that," Diablo grumbles.

"Why do you say that?" I ask.

"Because her timing of a lawyer contacting me lines up with the death of my grandfather. He left everything to me, though the old bastard didn't know me, he left a letter addressed to me with his will. Explained things clearly. My grandfather didn't want her to see a dime, and I'll honor his wishes."

"What exactly is it he left you that she wants?" I find myself confused. His grandfather left him everything? Why didn't his grandfather take him in when he ran away from home?

"Seems my grandfather was a rancher outside of Lampasas. Cattle and Horses. Was a top breeder. Left it all to me and his money. All eight million of it."

I swear, the way my eyes widen, I'm lucky they don't pop out of the sockets. "That's a lot of money."

"Yeah, it's to keep the ranch running smoothly," he explains.

“So, who’s running the place since you’re not there?”

“The old man wasn’t dumb where his business was concerned. He put everything in order before he died. His foreman is looking after everything. I rode out there a couple times and met with the foreman myself. Pretty reasonable guy. He’s got a good crew working there. Told him that as long as everything keeps running smooth, I won’t step in, but I would be checking.”

I nod, though I don’t understand why he would care.

“Tomorrow, I’m sure I’m gonna have to answer a shit ton of questions about this shit with my brothers, but you need to understand now, I don’t give a shit about the money or anything like that. I’m respecting a dead man’s wishes because we have something in common. Keeping it away from a woman and man who don’t deserve it.”

Ahh, that explains it.

“So, umm, what about me?”

“What do you mean?” he asks, shifting slightly to grab his sandwich and taking a bite without turning totally away from me.

“About, um, what I told you,” I say, feeling sheepishly embarrassed because I’d never told a guy that before.

Diablo finishes chewing, swallows, and takes my hands in his. “What you said, it’s not something I’d expect, but that doesn’t mean that if you give it to me, it won’t mean something to me. You’ve meant something to me since you were thirteen.”

Wow, that was a really good answer.

To show him this, I lean in and kiss him.

He kisses me back, keeping it short and sweet.

Pulling away, Diablo swipes a finger over my lips. “Finish eat, Chiquita. We need to sleep. Tomorrow will be soon enough for anything else. I’m damn wiped.”

CHAPTER 11

DIABLO

Sitting outside, watching the sun rising, my thoughts keep going over the very woman that's in my bed upstairs.

The very fact that she's a virgin should scare the shit out of me, but it doesn't. I like the fact that no one's gotten in there before me. Regardless, it doesn't change the fact I want her. Not taking it further last night before we'd been interrupted wasn't easy. I wanted to take her, feel her squeeze me.

I hated that it was fucked up by Teresa. Her telling me she was sick means nothing. I feel nothing about it. It's going to suck dealing with the headache of explaining all this to my brothers. Teresa doesn't exist to me. That shit-ass husband of hers doesn't exist.

I'm not an idiot. Once she told me that she was sick, it all clicked into place. She was coming to me for a way to help. That wasn't going to happen. It might make me a shitty person to let a sick woman deal without help, but so fucking what. She didn't want to be there for me. Guess you can say karma is a ruthless bitch.

Leaning forward, I brace my elbows on my knees and stare at the rising sun, seeing the new day coming to. With it will be a whole slew of problems.

Telling my brothers about everything, the ones who don't know the truth and the ones who do, it's not going to be easy. Explaining to them about my grandfather isn't

going to be easy. I'd had a hard time understanding it. I also don't like to think about it. In fact, I try not to unless the foreman, Brady, calls.

I should probably crawl back into my bed, curl up around London, and stay there until she wakes. But again, it's not something I can do. Reaper had texted me last night that we needed to call her dad. Fill him in on what's going on. Scythe had said he'd do it; however, it needs to be me.

London's my woman, my responsibility. Telling her dad needs to come from me, not anyone else. I'm sure when London finds out, she's going to be pissed. From the way she acted at her apartment after I followed her, I get she's got a wall of steel and likes to take care of things herself. I can see it in her. That fire she carries within her, it's one of the things that drew me to her so long ago. Draws me to her now.

Pulling my phone out of my pocket, I unlock the screen. The number I need to call is already there. Touching the phone icon, I bring the phone to my ear and wait. It rings twice before someone answers.

"Hello."

"Liam Weaver," I greet the man on the phone using his name.

"Who's this?" he demands, sounding alert and focused even for this time of morning.

"Name's Diablo, but London knows me as Damari." I'm not going to lie or give him shit.

"I know who you are," Liam states. "Guess my daughter finally found you, it seems."

"Found me? Didn't know she was lookin'."

Is that why she moved back here?

“My daughter is hell on wheels in doing what she wants when she puts her mind to it. She could’ve had a teaching position here at any of the schools, but she took one where she thought you might still be. She told me what you and your friend did for her. For that, I thank you, but that doesn’t mean I want her anywhere near you.”

“Because I’m from off the streets?” Not that I care, his daughter is in my bed. She’s mine, and I’m going to keep her.

“Because you’re not good enough for my daughter. I don’t give two shits you were on the streets. Or that your parents were shit at it.”

“Let me guess, because of the club I’m in? Is that it?” Let him think what he wants, it doesn’t matter to me. He can hate me, dislike me, be disgruntled. I’m with his daughter, but that isn’t going to stop me.

“That and the constant danger surrounding you all,” he answers. “Also, it might have to do with me being an overprotective father and not thinking anyone is good enough for her.”

I snort, agreeing with him, but still, it doesn’t change facts. “My club doesn’t go looking for trouble, Liam, but that doesn’t mean when we see it, we don’t do what we have to protect what we see as ours.”

“And you think my daughter belongs to you?”

I can only imagine London’s dad sneering at the very thought.

“She does, in fact, belong to me now. I claimed her,” I tell him. “But that’s not the reason for this call.”

“Then what is the reason for you calling me this damn early. I know it’s definitely not for me to speak to her. My daughter doesn’t get up before six-thirty at any time. Not even to go to work.”

“Have you heard of an organization called Scarlet Needles?” I ask, getting right to the point.

“I’ve heard of the group,” he confirms.

“London had been targeted. The guy she’d been seeing up until yesterday is one of their men.”

“Son of a bitch,” Liam snaps.

“That’s putting it lightly,” I remark and give him the details of what I’d seen after the school event. “We don’t know why she’s been targeted, but we intend to find out. Her mother wouldn’t have anything to do with this, would she?”

“No,” Liam growls. “That bitch knows better after I took care of her dickless husband.”

I don’t even want to know.

“Right,” I mutter.

“It could be because of her blood type,” Liam states.

“Pardon?”

“Her blood type. She’s O negative. Hospitals use it for?—”

“I know what O-negative blood is used for,” I interrupt him. It’s a universal blood type and crucial for emergency transfusions. O-negative blood can be given, but the person who has this blood type can only receive that of the same. Something about it also connects with genetics. I’d seen an article about it not that long ago.

“So, you see, the threat to her is out there. My question is, how would they have found out?”

“Someone had to leak the information to the group,” I’m gonna have to tell my brothers and see if we can’t figure that part out. We hadn’t heard anything about them selecting certain blood types, but it would make sense.

“London wouldn’t take kindly to me coming there and stealing her away.” Liam sigh. “I appreciate you informing me of the situation. I’ll look into things here. You keep her safe or I’ll be coming after you.”

“Thought you said I wasn’t good enough for her?” I smirk, straighten, eyes forward, and look toward the sky.

“You’re not, but I know you’ll keep her safe,” he admits.

I will keep her safe.

“Keep me informed.”

I nod, though he can’t see it. “I will.”

Hanging up, I get to my feet, shove the phone back in my pocket, and make my way back into the house. I’ve got a woman to wake. Then I’ve got to get to the clubhouse. There’s too much that needs to happen. Not with just London but getting to the bottom of this shit once and for all.

CHAPTER 12

LONDON

The bell rings, and I sigh in relief. Normally, I don't mind when my class has its moments of not wanting to listen, but this week hasn't been easy. Mainly because it was the last days before their break for Thanksgiving.

I'm more than happy to get out there myself. I love teaching. I love working with them, however, this week they've been more than a bit rambunctious.

I also had a lot more on my mind than just getting through this past week. Most of that had to do with a certain man who was driving me crazy.

Diablo has nearly driven me mad since waking me up in his bed. We hadn't done anything other than kiss. He kissed me deeply. He kissed me sweetly. It was amazing but maddening all at the same time. His touches alone were enough to cause sparks to ignite all over my body.

Each morning I woke up to him next to me, holding me. He took me to work, picked me up, and we'd spend the evenings together. Sometimes watching a movie and other times making out. Between, we'd talk. It was nice. More than nice. Perfect.

I also had to think about the fact that some organization wanted to use me for whatever they wanted to use me for.

The other thing I had to deal with was the fact my dad informed me I was to bring

Diablo to Thanksgiving dinner with me. Dad explained how Diablo had called him and told him what was happening. I'd lost it on both of them. They had no right to discuss me behind my back. I don't care if they thought it was for my own good. It still wasn't their decision to make. I'm more than capable of doing things for myself. They didn't have to discuss my relationship with Taylor/Craig/Dirtbag. I hadn't even really told my dad about him.

So, now that Diablo intervened, we were heading home to my dad's for a couple days, and I wasn't looking forward to it. Well, I was looking forward to seeing my dad, but I was nervous about the whole ordeal.

A knock on my door pulls me out of my thoughts as I pack up my things and smile at the sight of Tamara. "Hey, what are you doing?"

"I was going to ask you the same thing," she states, cocking a brow, smiling, and moving my way. "This past week you've been . . . well, I don't know how to explain it. You also left nearly as soon as school ended with Mr. Hunk-a-lious. You going to fill me in on him?"

Tamara stops directly in front of me, hands on her hips as she takes on the position that screams she's not backing down.

"Diablo and I just started dating." Dating isn't really the word I'd use. He hasn't actually taken me anywhere other than the clubhouse and his apartment.

"What kind of name is Diablo?" she scoffs, waves a hand, and shakes her head. "Wait, he's part of the Satan's Keepers MC, isn't he?"

"He is," I confirm and grab the strap to my case. "And I happen to like the name Diablo."

“Do you know his real name? Or is he keeping it to himself?” Tamara asks, watching me as I round my desk.

“I know his name, full name if you must know. I also know where he lives. I’ve stayed there every day this week,” I tell her, somewhat annoyed about the inquisition. “What’s with the questions anyway?”

“I’m just worried about you,” Tamara states, walking with me out of the classroom. “You’ve been . . . I don’t know how to explain it. First, you were seeing a guy, just seeing him. Now you’re with another. I mean, what gives?”

“A lot’s been happening,” I tell her. It’s not a lie, but I don’t want to go into detail about it with her. Not right now.

“I see that,” Tamara huffs and shoves through the outside door first. There’s a slight chill in the air. Not enough for a coat, but perfect for a sweater.

Outside, I spot Diablo sitting astride his bike. Arms braced on handles, sunglass-covered eyes pointed in my direction.

“I don’t get why he’s bringing you to work and picking you up. It’s like you’re losing your independence. Or is there something wrong with your car?”

“My car is okay,” I tell her as I look in her direction. “And I like riding on the back of his bike. It’s fun. Freeing.”

Tamara nods. “Whatever you say. Just be careful. I’m heading to my mom’s place for Thanksgiving.”

“I thought you were spending it with your boyfriend?”

“That was until I found out he was a cheating asshole,” she mutters.

And there the problem lies with her.

“What do you mean? He cheated on you?”

“No, he cheated on his wife. With me,” Tamara snaps, pointing at herself. “I was the other woman. His wife came home from a trip early and found us in his bed.”

“Whoa.” Talk about harsh. I don’t blame her for being upset. “I’m sorry, hon,” I murmur, reaching out to take her hand.

“It is what it is,” Tamara says, taking a step back. “I’ll see you after the break. Maybe we can have dinner or something without the added addition.”

I knew she was talking about Diablo. I get she’s in a man-hating mood right now, so I’ll let it slide, but I’ve got a feeling Diablo will be in my life for a good long while, and she can’t hate him forever.

Leaving her to go to her car, I make my way toward Diablo. He straightens from his slouch and grins as I get closer.

“What was that about?” he asks, reaching an arm out to wrap around my waist, pulling me into him as much as he could.

“That’s Tamara, and she’s in a little bit of a foul mood at the moment. Don’t worry about it,” I tell him, wrapping my arms around his shoulders. “Where we heading to?”

I know where I want to go.

“We’re headin’ to the clubhouse,” he announces. “Change of plan for location this year. Your dad and his men are coming here rather than us going there. Reaper’s ol’ lady wanted you to be able to experience Thanksgiving with us. Let him see that you’re in good hands.” He smirks. “He agreed to this without argument.”

Who could argue with Ivy? She and the others, they’re all a force to be reckoned with. You don’t mess with them or their kids. You do, and you heed a heap of trouble.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea. Having all of them at the clubhouse,” I advise.

“It’s happenin’, Chiquita. Now, climb on so we can get the fuck out of here. They’re not comin’ until tomorrow, and the club’s having a party tonight.”

“They are?” I didn’t know if I’d want to go to a party. I just wanted to go home and relax.

“Yeah,” he answers, swats my rear, and waits for me to swing a leg over and adjust myself behind him.

I situate my case behind me and wrap my arms around him. “Ready.”

“Good.” He starts his bike, and it rumbles to life.

I squeeze my thighs around his, the vibration of the bike feeling good between my legs.

Diablo takes off, and I hold tight. I wish we were going to his place. I’d much prefer it to be a night for the two of us. Mainly because I made a decision and wanted to see it through. I couldn’t do what I wanted when there were so many people around. I’d read the books. I’d done the research. I wanted this, and I wanted it with this man.

Unfortunately, it seems my plans are on hold 'cause there's no way I could do what I want at the clubhouse.

CHAPTER 13

DIABLO

Keeping my eyes on London, I watch her closely. I didn't miss the look of disappointment when I told London about the party. But it's important that she comes to this one. She sees what happens and what to expect.

I also have plans of my own for later on. I want her to be as relaxed as possible, not tense. Not on the lookout for what's happening.

This past week, I've touched her and kissed her, but I didn't take it as far as I wanted. I'm trying to give her time. Get used to me.

Fuck, she's a damn virgin, and I haven't ever touched someone so innocent, and I wanna do it right. Tonight, I have to prioritize. First, letting her see how wild things can get. Second, get relaxed enough so she'd let me show her how much I want her. I don't plan to fuck her. Not tonight, that's something I'll wait for. My only plan is to pleasure that sweet body of hers. To finally get my mouth between those legs and taste her pussy.

I've been walking around with a hard-on for her all-damn week. Waking with her in my arms, her pert ass tucked against my dick, yeah, it's been a struggle not to tell her to say fuck work so I could fuck her.

I couldn't do that. She didn't deserve that. I needed inside her, but not enough to force it on her. Even if I knew she wanted it too.

“Looks like London’s having a good time,” Beast says, taking a seat next to me, pulling me from my thoughts.

“Yeah, she does,” I tell him, not missing Reaper, Scythe, Thanatos, and Cerberus taking a seat around the table.

When we’d redesigned the main room after it got blown up, we’d gotten different tables that were big enough to fit six chairs around. But they were overly so, meaning we didn’t have to yell over the music to be able to hear each other.

“Her dad’s coming to Thanksgiving,” Reaper said, though we all know this. “Big deal there, brother.”

Yeah, it was a damn huge deal. Not only was it a meet of the parent type of deal, but he was coming to give intel he’d gathered along with size me up.

“You going to finally claim her as yours?” Scythe asks cocking his brow.

“Already have,” I tell him. I put the order in for her cut and patches. I was waiting on it before I explained things further to her. Right now, it’s about her getting to know me again.

People say it takes time to know what you want, but that isn’t always true. I’ve seen how quickly things work for my brothers. That is when they get their heads straight and go after what they want.

Reaper sits forward, pinning his gaze on me. “We need to discuss your mother.”

Thankfully, they hadn’t brought up what happened with her after I left. They’d given me space and let me deal with Craig. The bastard had been pushing to get London to go with him. He had no intention of taking her to his place. The plan had been for

him to take her straight to his bosses. It seems Liam was right about her blood type. Not only did they want her for the blood they could steal from her, but their friends who deal in genetics were curious to test a few things with her.

After we found this out, the club made it a mission to make sure London was protected at all times. Scythe hacked into the school's security system to keep an eye on her that way, but Reaper put Minion and Gizmo on her. They'd meet me at the school and stay there until I got back to pick her up.

While she was teaching in class, I followed leads on where they might be holding up. Dusan, the guy who we handle the cars for, found a bit on the genetics group but nothing solid. Reaper tasked Cerberus, Azrael, and me with the task of looking into it further to see if we couldn't find any more details.

We haven't gotten much. We already know Everleigh's uncle was a top leader, but he's not the top dog. We'd learned that not long after we got her back when they'd taken her. Luckily, she survived without getting hurt more than she did.

"What's there to talk about? I don't want anything to do with that bitch," I mutter, not wanting to get into it. Still, I knew my brothers weren't going to let it go. They wanted to know what was going on, and I guess it's time I tell them.

"Brother, ain't gonna go into your past," Reaper states. "That's your business to share if you want. What we need to know is why the fuck she wants you to give her money your granddad left to you?"

"Because she knows he left every dime he had to me," I lean forward, "it ain't just a little bit either." I glance around the table before locking gazes with Reaper once again. "We're talking millions."

"Shit," Scythe grunts. "You're a damn millionaire and didn't say anything?"

“Not my money.” I shrug. “That money is used to run the ranch my granddad had. I don’t touch it.”

They all nod. They know the type of man I am.

“Why didn’t you tell us before that she’d been trying to get in touch with you?” Beast asks and tips his beer to his lips.

“Wasn’t something I was getting you all involved in. Club’s got enough issues. I didn’t need to tack this headache on top.” It was true, but there was more to it. The more people who know means the more people who want to cause problems for us.

Cerberus opens his mouth to say something, but a loud commotion across the room catches our attention.

“Fuck,” I mutter and get to my feet when I realize the commotion is between my woman and two of the pocket pussies. The two that were my typical go-to girls when I was looking for a party, Chops and Poppers. Great.

Poppers moves into London’s space, but my woman isn’t letting her intimidate her.

“Let her handle it, brother,” Reaper remarks, having also gotten to his feet along with the rest of the brothers. “Bitches need to learn their place.”

“Bitch,” Chops screeches, raising her hand to slap London.

London mutters something as she grabs Chops’s wrist, stopping her. To my surprise, along with every other person in the room, London twists Chops around, her arm behind her, and makes her cry out in pain. Poppers goes in, ready to attack London. My woman doesn’t let her get close. She shoves Chops away and blocks Poppers’s fist. Twirls around the bitch, grips the back of her head, and slams the side of

Poppers's head into the side of the bar.

"Oh shit," Beast mutters next to me. "Looks like . . ."

I don't hear the rest of what he is saying because I'm on the move, stalking across the distance to get to my woman. Not to get her away from the two whores to keep her from hurting them, but rather, seeing her like that . . . it was hot.

CHAPTER 14

LONDON

I knew it. I totally knew better than to let him bring me to this party.

Okay, so I was having fun. At first, I'd been having a blast. That is until those two horrible women, I don't even think I can call them women with the way they acted. They had no respect for themselves and acted like the skanky hoes they are.

I didn't need them to come up to me and tell me about what Diablo likes and doesn't. I definitely didn't want to know just how good he was with his tongue and how big he was down below. Or how they wanted me to leave him alone because I didn't have what he needed.

I'd done my best to be patient with them. Ivy and Josephine both warned me earlier to brace for this kind of thing. That the PPs as they called them would test me. They didn't like it when the guys found someone.

When neither of them refused to back off, it pissed me off. It pissed me off more when they goaded me into violence.

“What the hell is going on here?”

I let the skank's head go as she falls and look to see not just Diablo looking at me, one eyebrow cocked, while Reaper is the one demanding answers.

“I’m sorry,” I tell him, stepping away from the women.

“She’s crazy is what’s going on,” the other skanky hoe cries, stepping closer to Reaper and Diablo. Tears streaming down her cheeks. Totally fake. Well, maybe. One hand gripping her wrist, holding it to her chest.

I may have squeezed a bit too hard as I twisted it. But it’s the way my dad taught me to. He said you don’t stop until you know they’ll stop. If that means you break something, you break it. So, her wrist is probably sprained if not broken.

“I didn’t ask you,” Reaper snaps, glaring at the woman.

“But it’s true,” she cries. “I think she broke my wrist.”

“Really?” Cerberus asks, looking at me. “London doesn’t look like she could do that.”

It’s my turn to snort at the accusation. It’s not exactly an accusation per se but rather an assumption.

I don’t really care about the fact everyone was demanding to know what was happening because all of this is Diablo’s fault.

Shooting a glare in his direction, I whirl around and leave, noticing another of the scantily dressed women moving in to help the one who I’d bashed the head of. I barely get two steps away when I find myself pulled up short.

“Where are you going, London?” Diablo asks, his body right behind mine.

“I’m leaving,” I tell him and yank away or try to.

“You’re not leaving, Chiquita.” Turning me in his arms, he wraps them around me, securing me to him. “Tell me what happened.”

“No.” There’s no way I’m telling him what they’d said to me. I want to forget what they told me about him. I want to go home and do my best not to think about the fact he’d been with both those women, at the same time . Yet, he won’t even have sex with me.

Am I that hideous? What’s wrong with me? Do they have something I don’t?

“I’m going home,” I inform him and shove away. It’s pointless to do so, he doesn’t let me go.

“London, you ain’t leavin’,” he states, tightening his arms around my waist.

“Yes, I am,” I snap, glaring at him.

He gives me a look that goes straight between my legs. It’s hot.

Diablo dips his head down until we’re nearly nose to nose. “Chiquita, this is the last time I’m saying it, you ain’t leavin’.”

“You can’t make me stay if I don’t want to,” I protest.

“Watch me,” he growls.

Huff, I wrench myself out of his grip, turning to leave, and the next second, I find myself thrown over his shoulder, his hand coming down on my rear. I scream at his back, slapping at his ass, ignoring the fact it’s firm, muscular, and looked really, really good in jeans.

“Put me down,” I shout, kicking my legs wildly.

“Settle down,” he commands and brings his hand down on my bottom once again.

“Stop slapping my butt, Diablo,” I snap. I refuse to let him get away with it. “I swear to God, I’m going to hurt you.”

I doubt I could do anything to hurt this man. He’s solid muscle, and he knows it.

Diablo makes a sharp turn, opens a door, kicks it shut, and only then does he bump me off his shoulder. I go sailing backward, arms flapping, then I’m bouncing on the bed, his body coming over mine.

“Told you, you ain’t leave, London,” he growls just before claiming my lips with his.

It’s a different kind of kiss. It’s not the sweet and slow kisses he’s given me. It’s not the long-wet kisses we’ve shared while lying in his bed at his house. Nor was it the punishing ones he’d given me, like at my apartment when he’d kissed me to shut me up.

No, this one was commanding, demanding, and far more intense than I’d ever experienced before. It’s powerful and marks something deep inside me. Sears my soul like a binding spell that links two souls together.

Diablo slips between my legs, and his much bigger body presses into me. There’s no missing the thickness in his jeans. He’s huge. I’d felt it plenty of times, as it were. But he’d never been in this position before. He’d never pressed into me like this. He never positioned himself so intimately.

Grinding himself against me, it’s a good feeling. One that sends shivers along my spine and brings a moan to my lips. A moan that he captures, keeping from fully

escaping.

With every thrust of his tongue in my mouth, he moves his body against me. If he weren't kissing me, I'd be begging him to do something. Anything. Find a way to extinguish this fire he's caused within my body.

The way he's making me feel, if he doesn't do something soon, I might just perish from it.

Diablo jerks his head back, ripping his lips away from mine. The both of us breathing heavily from his kiss. But he doesn't move away; instead, he peppers kisses across my cheek and down my neck. His fingers work the buttons of my blouse. I was still in the outfit I'd worn to work.

He makes quick work of getting my top off the best he can. Mostly, he just opens it and unclasps my bra. His lips find my nipple . . .

Holy mother of all things remarkable.

Having his mouth on me, his tongue flickering and teasing one, his fingers playing with the other, it's absolutely amazing. I tighten my thighs around him and moan when he rolls his hips into me.

Sweet, sweet, heaven.

I'm going to die before anything else can happen, and it's going to be death by orgasm.

Crying out his name, I tighten my thighs around him and grind myself against him, going crazy with his mouth at my breasts, his body pressing into where I need him most. I never had an orgasm before, not by anyone else besides my hand and the little

toy I'd bought for myself.

Diablo releases my nipple and, without a word, trails kisses down my stomach, his body moving downward. His fingers curl into the band of my slacks and jerks them down. With quick movements, Diablo jerks up, taking my pants and panties with him. The instant they clear my feet, he falls back into place. His body coming over me, lips crashing down on mine.

He kisses me soundly. He kisses me deeply.

Moaning into the kiss, I arch into him, pressing into him, pleading with him with my body, begging for more. Needing so much more.

Suddenly, Diablo jerks away, his eyes coming to mine, his chest rising rapidly. "Was trying to do things differently, Chiquita, give you time . . ."

"Who says I needed time?" I demand breathlessly.

Diablo's eyes flash then darken. Lust filled.

"I didn't want to come to this blasted party because I wanted to go home and have sex with you. I didn't want to come here 'cause I'd planned to jump you when we got in the doo?—"

Diablo's lips seal over mine, stopping me from finishing my sentence. His tongue dives right in, twining with mine, dominating.

Everything seems to happen at once, yet in slow motion. Diablo jerks back long enough to strip his cut and shirt off. My shirt is torn the rest of the way off along with my bra. His jeans and boots go next, and I don't know how he manages to do so without moving far from me.

Diablo kisses me, his cock rubs against me, and I wish he'd do something other than just rub. I want him inside me. Need him there. I ache for him to be moving inside of me.

Reaching between us, Diablo runs his fingers through the slick wetness. He slides first one finger, then another inside me, stretching me, filling me. The way he moves them, touching just the right spot, it draws whimpers from my lips. Whimpers that Diablo kisses away.

I thought he might slide inside me, but he doesn't. Instead, he kisses his way down and settles between my legs, hands on the inside of my thighs, pushing them wider.

The first swipe of his tongue causes me to jump, and the second I hiss. On the third, fourth, and fifth, I moan. By the sixth, he has me panting. I'm unsure of what else to do with my hands, but I reach down and curl them in the back of his head, wrapping my fingers around his dark black hair. It's the color of a raven's feathers and so thick where he keeps it long.

He licks and flicks his tongue along my entrance, driving me crazy. A cry of pleasure leaves my lips when he clamps down on the tiny bud as he pumps his two fingers inside me. With the addition of his tongue to his fingers, it's marvelous. I never thought that it could be anything like what Diablo is making me feel.

Holy hell.

Soon, he has me arching off the bed, my back bowed I thought it might snap. But I didn't care. I was in the throes of an abyss. Nothing I've read in my books could ever prepare me for what he's doing to me.

Before I realize it, Diablo is moving again, his body coming over mine, his cock inside me, pushing inch by slow inch. Suddenly, he stops and pulls back, eyes locked

on mine as he rasps, “After this, Chiquita, there’s no going back. No talking about leaving. No saying you ain’t mine.” He plunges forward, pushing through the barrier of my virginity. A cry leaves my lips, and he groans. “Fuckin’ beautiful, London. Mine. All fuckin’ mine.”

Diablo brings his lips back to mine, and with his mouth devouring mine, he moves inside me. He keeps a slow rhythm at first, building a burn inside me, unlike anything I thought possible.

Time seems to stand still, and he breaks his kiss, eyes locking with mine. When he comes, it’s with him inside me. It’s a good thing I’m on birth control, otherwise, it might freak me out. It still probably will, but not now. Now, all I want to think about and feel is the experience of my first time with Diablo.

CHAPTER 15

DIABLO

“You didn’t use a condom.” The breathing comment is whispered long moments after I pull out of her.

I hadn’t wanted to. I could’ve stayed inside London, taken her again, but instead, I pulled from her and rolled off her to my back. I brought her into my arms, holding her tight.

I hadn’t planned to fuck her tonight. I wasn’t going to take her the first time here at the clubhouse. But hearing those words from her lips after the shit downstairs, there was no way I couldn’t.

I knew she wanted it. It was written all over her. There’s a difference, though, in knowing it, reading it on her, and voicing it.

“I know I didn’t.” I grunt, trailing my fingers along her spine. I hadn’t wanted anything between us.

“Why not?” she asks, annoyance in her voice.

“‘Cause I didn’t. I’m clean. I know you’re clean. We didn’t need anything between us.” If we had, I wouldn’t have been able to feel her as well as I had. I never once have taken a woman without a condom. Hell, I didn’t even let them suck me off without one. I knew better than to let a woman try and trick me. That wasn’t going to

happen. I'd seen several of my brothers get played. I wasn't about to let it happen to me.

"How am I to know you're clean? For that matter, how could you know I was? You didn't even know I was on birth control, which, by the way, I am," she insinuates that last bit with a matter-of-fact tone.

"Chiquita," I call, amused. I curl her tighter to me. "I know you're clean because I'm the only one who's been inside you, and I know you ain't done shit with another man before."

"And you know this how? I mean, I told you I was a virgin, but I didn't tell you anything else," she asks, lifting her head off my chest. "You think you know me so well, but you don't."

"London, I know everything I need to know about you that I need to. What I don't, I'll find out as we go. We'll learn about each other every day because no one actually knows everything."

"That doesn't make sense. How can you know everything you need to know that you need to?"

I see I've got her confused.

Grinning, I drag her fully over, her legs falling to either side of me. I bite back a groan at the feel of her slick pussy against my dick. She's already ready for me. I curl my hand along the span of her neck, pulling her downward. "What I mean, London, is that for now, I know what I need to. I don't need to know every detail to know I want everything that is you." I brush my lips across hers, and she sucks in a breath. "For the record, baby, I wouldn't have taken you if I didn't know I was clean. I had Stella do the tests to make sure. But, so you know, never, and I mean never, have I

touched a woman the way I did you. I always made sure to wrap up.”

“Well, that’s comforting to know,” she mutters. “Doesn’t mean I’m not still annoyed with you.”

“What else has you bristling?” I ask, at the same time dropping my hands to her hips and grinding her down on me.

London gasps, eyes darken, and her cheeks get that flush look I’d gotten to enjoy not but a few minutes ago while I was taking her for the first time. Shifting beneath her, I slide inside her entrance, drawing a moan from her.

“You gonna answer me?”

“How can you be ready to go so quickly? We just did it,” she pants, her hips rolling with my guidance.

“Because I’m with you, London. Been hard for you since the moment I saw you in the bar months ago,” I tell her, not bullshitting her. “Now, tell me what the hell else got up your ass.” I shift under her, thrusting upward, enjoying the feel of her walls tightening around me.

“Oh, God, Damari.” She gasps, nails digging into my shoulders.

“Talk to me, baby,” I don’t let the fact she called me my name affect me. To her, in this room, I can be Damari. To her, I’ll be him. I hadn’t realized that part of me was still alive inside until this past week, spending time with London again.

“It’s nothing,” she finally murmurs, shaking her head, eyes squeezing shut.

It’s something, and I’m not about to let it go. For now, though, I’m gonna focus on

her. On giving her this.

Flipping London over to her back without dislodging, I hold myself over her and thrust deep inside, holding back the urge to come. She's tight and has me ready to blow within minutes. That can't happen, not until after I help her find her release.

Taking her, filling her with me, is what I want. Seeing how beautiful she is beneath me does something to my chest. Forces down the barrier I'd built a long time ago. Only she can and ever has penetrated through it once when she'd been thirteen and now.

The need to feel her release soaking me becomes imperative, and I reach between us and flick my thumb over her clit. No sooner I do this, and she's crying out, her walls clamp down on me, and damn, it doesn't suck the release right out of me. There's no holding back my own. All I can do is fill her with my cum and know that she's mine.

All fucking mine.

"Were you really with both those women at the same time?" she asks sleepily.

I stare up at the dark ceiling, biting back a curse. Here, I thought she'd been asleep. I'd taken her once again before allowing her to lapse into sleep from exhaustion for a small nap. I wasn't done with her tonight. I was just giving a small reprieve before we go another round.

"Doesn't matter if I were," I tell her, not wanting to discuss it.

"So you were," London remarks, tensing slightly. "They told me all about it."

"I figured they told you something." They wouldn't have gone near her for any other reason than to try and scare her away from me. "You don't have to worry about those

bitches. I think they learned their lesson when you smashed Poppers's head against the bar."

"Well, she had it coming." London jerks her head up and looks in my direction. Even in the dark, I can see the scowling glare she's directing my way. "She told me that I wasn't going to be able to hold on to a man who had the appetite for sex you have. One woman would never be enough for you. Then she made the next to attempt to hit me. I'm not sorry I did what I did. My daddy always taught me to protect myself, it's all I did."

"Glad he taught you, baby." I have to fight back the urge to laugh, even pissed, finding out what those bitches said to her. "You have nothing to worry about when it comes to them or anyone else. I don't want them. I don't want anyone." Reaching for her, I cup either side of her face as I lift up enough to meet her lips with a brush of my own. "Only one woman I want and she's in this bed with me right now. Don't let them get you to, Chiquita. They fuck with your head if they think it'll work to get rid of you. Telling you now, you let them, I'm gonna be pissed."

"Why's that?" she whispers, her lips brushing mine.

"Cause, London, I finally got you exactly where I want you. I'm not about to lose you."

And I wasn't. I had no intention of letting her get away from me. I'd die before letting her get away from me again.

CHAPTER 16

LONDON

Never did I think sex would be so good. Maybe it wouldn't be if I'd had it with someone other than Diablo. With him, it's totally amazing. It is more than just amazing. It's otherworldly. Unimaginable.

I didn't think he'd be able to fit, considering the girth of that thing, but he did. He rocked my world in so many ways. It freaked me out that he didn't care he didn't use a condom. However, him telling me he'd been tested before we had sex put a part of me at ease. He admitted that he'd never taken a woman without one helped. What really helped was him telling me he didn't want anything between us. That I was his, the whole thing melted my heart.

Throughout the rest of the night, he'd taken me repeatedly. In between rounds, he'd held me close while we'd slept.

Same with this morning. Only he added the shower into the mix.

Now, the two of us were heading to his place since I didn't have a change of clothes at the clubhouse, but I did at his place. He packed up half my wardrobe and brought it to his place. When I'm not even certain other than it had to have been sometime within the week.

The plan is to get changed and get back to the clubhouse. My dad was heading up, and I wanted to be there when he arrived. It'd been a little while since I'd seen him,

and I miss him.

I'll admit, though, I'm nervous. I'd never done the dad meet the boyfriend thing before. I'm hoping everything goes smoothly. I want him to like Diablo. If he doesn't, things could get unnerving, and I don't want that. If I had time, I'd call him and ask him to please be nice. But with all that Diablo and I did the night before, I didn't have time. I needed to get back to the clubhouse and help Ivy and the others where I could. Thanksgiving isn't technically until tomorrow, but they're doing something tonight and then again tomorrow. I don't know what exactly, but I was going to help.

I hope they didn't think I was crazy for what I did to those two women last night. Diablo informed me that Chops's wrist was fractured from, his words, whatever the fuck I did to it. Poppers just had a nasty bump on her head. Maybe I should feel sorry for what I did to both of them, but they had it coming.

Diablo stops directly in front of his house, tension radiating from him. I lift my gaze to the porch and blink, seeing his reason for tensing.

"Daddy," I call out, surprised at seeing him here so early. "What are you doing here?" I didn't know he knew where Diablo lived.

Diablo helps me climb off the back of the bike, and I rush toward my dad, meeting him at the bottom of the steps leading to the front porch.

"Wanted to meet Diablo in person before going to the clubhouse and being surrounded by everyone," my dad states, wrapping his arms around me and lifting me off my feet. "Damn good to see my baby girl again." He spins me around slightly before finally setting me back on my feet.

I go back a step, but Diablo's there, his hands going to my hips.

My dad takes the two of us in and gets an expression on his face that I'm unable to read. It's like a mixture of stoic, grief, anger, and relief. All of which I don't get.

"Diablo," Dad greets, stretching his hand out toward Diablo.

"Liam," Diablo grunts, taking Dad's hand. "You're early."

"Yeah, like I said, I wanted time before going to the clubhouse," Dad states, eyes directed at Diablo, not even glancing in my direction.

I get the sense that he wants to talk to Diablo without me. I know when he does this at home with his guys that's exactly what it means. But what would they need to talk about without me around?

"London, why don't you go get ready?" Diablo suggests, dropping his arm from around my waist.

"Not until you two tell me what's going on," I tell him, everything clicking into place why they want to talk. Whatever it is, it's got to be about that group Diablo told me about. The one Taylor/Craig, whatever his name is, wanted me for.

"London, this is something between the two of us, it doesn't have anything to do with you," my dad states, not looking at me. "Diablo and I just need a minute to talk about something. If he wants to talk to you after about it, it's his choice."

I glance between the two of them for a moment before finally nodding. "Fine, but if it at all has anything to do with me, I won't be happy. You think what I did to those two skanks last night was something, it'll be nothing compared to what I do to you two."

Dad's brow cocks as I stomp past him, stopping when Diablo calls my name. "What?" I demand, spinning on my heel to face him.

“Keys,” he answers, a smirk twitching at the edges of his lips.

Stomping back to him, I snatch the key from his hand with every intention of stomping back to the door with a huff. However, Diablo seems to have other things in mind.

Diablo grabs my wrists, jerks me forward, and wraps his arms around me. “Don’t be getting pissy,” he murmurs, dipping his face downward to brush a kiss to my lips. Letting me go once again, he turns me toward the door and gives me a gentle push. “We’ll be right behind you. Change and get ready.”

Losing the attitude, not completely, but just enough to stop getting upset. I unlock the house, head inside, and go straight to Diablo’s room to get ready. My mind stays on the fact that my dad wanted to talk to Diablo with me not around. If it wasn’t anything to do with me, which I’m not sure if that was true, then what else could it be?

I know about Diablo’s mom, could it be about her? He hadn’t said much about his dad, could it be about him? It has to be related to them. My dad wouldn’t leave me out of something that deals with me. He knows me. He knows I can handle it. Knows that I refuse to be left out of anything that involves me in any way.

CHAPTER 17

DIABLO

“What’s this about that it couldn’t wait until the clubhouse later?”

Pulling up to my house, the last thing I wanted to see or expected was to find London’s dad standing on my porch.

“What did London do last night?” Liam asks, cocking a brow.

“Fractured the wrist of one woman and knocked the other’s head against the bar top,” I tell him.

“I take it one of the club women tried messing with her?” Liam snorts, shaking his head.

“Yeah, both ‘em were.” Shrugging, I cross my arms, taking the other man in. He’s nearly as tall as me but broader. More like Beast and Hellhound in size. Maybe even close to Thanatos. “Now, you wanna answer me?”

Liam takes a long look at me, assessing up and down. “You love her, don’t you?”

“Not answering that.” There’s no way I’m going to tell this man my plans for his daughter. No way in hell I’m gonna tell him that when she was thirteen, I had fallen for her. I sure as hell wasn’t going to tell him that I loved her before telling her those words myself.

Liam chuckles, wags a finger in my direction, and grins. “That right there, as well as the expression on your face, is answer enough.”

“How about you get to the point of what you’re doing here?” I grind out, my teeth clenched together.

“You know I looked into you,” Liam announces, shoving his hands in his pockets.

“You made that clear the first time I called you about London.” I grunt, watching him closely. “Find something else out you don’t like?”

“No, but I know about the inheritance, that your mother tried asking you for money. Did you know she went back to your father?”

Of course, she did. Teresa didn’t have the backbone to stay away from him. “I don’t care if she did or didn’t. It’s her choice.”

“The lawyer also has been by the house several times in the past few days,” Liam states with a matter-of-fact tone. “Did you know your grandfather had a clause in his will?”

“What clause?”

“That if something were to happen to you and you weren’t married, everything reverts to your mother under the stipulation that the money is allotted to her in an allowance and the law firm would appoint a trustee over the rest to ensure she didn’t ruin his ranch business.”

“And if I were married?” I find myself asking as the rest of what he said rolls around in my head. It’s weird that he would do that. In the letter he left me, he stated he didn’t want her to see a penny. Maybe he didn’t think anything would happen to me.

“Everything would then go to her. If something were to happen to her and you had no child, the inheritance was to then go to a charity. If you had a child, it would go to them, and the guardian of said child would then be in charge until the child turned twenty-five.”

“Interesting,” I mutter. “So, why you tellin’ me this?”

“Because the lawyer works for the firm your grandfather set his will with,” Liam answers. “I had one of my men follow and check them out. You need to watch out and keep London close. Richmond, the man I put on it, said London could be a way to get you to cooperate. If not, then they’ll do what it takes to get you out of the way. Allotted money is better than none.”

“Right.” I nod. A plan formed in my head, calculating the risks. The pros and cons of it, if I were to put it in action could weigh out on either side heavier than the other. Still, it’s a risk I think needs to be taken. I don’t want them coming after London. She doesn’t need the bullshit they’d bring to the doorstep. “Anything else?”

Liam watches me closely, his eyes darting, calculating. Finally, he answers with a shake of his head. “Not on that front, no. But it looks like you’re planning something in that head of yours regarding the information I just shared with you.”

“Don’t worry about what I’m planning,” I tell him and start up the steps toward the door. “I gotta check on London. That is unless you got anything else you wanna share.”

“The rest can wait until later,” Liam remarks. “Is there anything I need to know about being at the clubhouse around your brothers and their women?”

From the sounds of it, he seems a bit apprehensive.

Laughing, I glance at him over my shoulder, stopping at the front door. “Yeah, brace yourself. My brothers might be ruthless and have the don’t fuck with me attitude, but it’s their women you gotta watch out for.”

I don’t wait to hear his reply. I have a need to set eyes on my woman. If I didn’t know she was sore from the night before, I’d be taking my time to bend her over the bed and sink inside her from behind. But she’s going to need the day for her body to rest.

Inside, I head for my room, hearing her in there mumbling to herself. With her being off until next week, I’m gonna take the time to enjoy every minute I have with her.

However, I have one thing I intend to take care of first thing. I don’t want to involve my brothers. If I had it my way, I wouldn’t have to bring what I’m planning to their attention, but to make it work, I’m going to need them. Otherwise, it could all go to shit real quick.

Stepping just inside my room, eyes on the panty-covered ass. I lean against the dresser situated next to me and cross my arms and legs as I listen.

“If he thinks he can get away with sending me inside, he’s got another thing coming.” Grabbing a pair of jeans, she jerks them out of the bag on the other side of the room. She shakes them out, bends, and puts one leg then the other before pulling them up on over those sexy ass legs of hers. London mumbles something else. This time, I don’t catch all of it except a bit about how she’s sore, and I better not think of touching her again anytime soon.

“You weren’t complainin’ when I was fuckin’ you in the shower.”

London whirls around, eyes wide, mouth parted at the sound of my voice. “How long have you been standing there?”

“Long enough to know you think I’ve got another thing comin’ for sending you inside,” I tell her and straighten. Moving toward her, I drop my arms. “Tell me, Chiquita, what do I have comin’.”

London’s cheeks blush bright red.

Interesting.

“You weren’t supposed to hear that,” she grumbles.

“I probably wasn’t supposed to hear the part about me not touching you again.” Grinning, I reach for her and yank her toward me. “For the record, London,” I start and dip down to kiss her lips. “I might not fuck you later, but that doesn’t mean I’m not touching you. I plan to eat your pussy. Lap up all those juices and feel you coming on my tongue.” I press another kiss to her lips. “I intend to show you all the damn ways I want you including you suckin’ me off while I play with your pussy. Maybe we’ll make it interesting and see who can make who come first.”

London’s lip’s part, and her breathing becomes shallow. Without her saying a word, I know she likes the idea.

Letting her go, I step back. “Go ahead and finish getting ready. We gotta get back to the clubhouse.”

I leave her to get ready, stepping out of the room and pulling my phone out of my pocket. I unlock it, find Reaper’s number, and touch the little phone icon.

“What’s up, brother?” he asks, answering the phone.

“Gotta talk when I get back. Can you have everyone there in twenty minutes?” I don’t have to tell him my reason for asking this. He knows me. He knows I don’t ask shit of

anyone.

“I’ll put the message out. Church in twenty minutes,” Reaper states without hesitation. He doesn’t bother waiting for my response and hangs up.

I pull the cell phone away from my ear, shove it back in my pocket, and release a heavy sigh.

A few minutes later, London emerges from the bedroom, dressed and ready to go. Her wild head of hair was contained in a braid going down her back.

Later on tonight, I’m going to enjoy releasing those wild strands of hair. Having her hair tangled in my fingers while she’s going down on me is a vision I’m looking forward to finally happening. It’s something I’ve thought of plenty of times since the night I saw her again months ago.

First things first, meet with my brothers and explain what Liam shared. Tell them what I’m planning. Then, finding out what else Liam knows about the Scarlet Needles. There’s far too much going on, and we need to focus on one area at a time. Right now, the threat we’re looking at is that of Teresa and Wayne.

CHAPTER 18

DIABLO

“We’re all here now, Diablo. What is it you wanna talk about?” Reaper asks once the door closes behind Azrael.

Glancing around the table, I lean forward, brace my elbows on the edge of it, and interlace my fingers. “You all know about my parents now.”

“Brother, you ain’t gotta tell us this shit if you don’t want to,” Styxx remarks, stopping me from going further.

“I know I don’t.” I nod. “I’m not gonna go on about the past, but I’ll say this. Living on the streets was better than living with them. If I’d stayed, I wouldn’t be here today. Wayne would’ve killed me a long time ago.”

A silent tension fills the room. The good thing is none of them show a sign of pity in their expressions. They didn’t think anything less of me for my decision to run away as a kid or that I lived on the streets. They all knew this part of my life just not the reason behind it.

I give them a brief explanation before leaning back in my seat. It’s only then that I get to the reason for the meeting. “London’s dad, you all know, was coming for Thanksgiving.”

“Yeah, we know he’s coming. He should be here any time now, thanks to my

woman's invite," Reaper grumbles, knowing good and well he'd give Ivy whatever she wanted.

In Ivy's eyes, we're all family. It's the first Thanksgiving London would be with me, and she wanted me to have my family around me. I get it and appreciate it. It's why she made the call herself to Liam and asked him and those he'd have at his place to come up.

"Yeah, well, he was at the house when London and I went for her to get a change of clothes," I tell them.

"Thought he was coming here, didn't know he knew where you lived," Beast remarks, brows furrowed.

"Man knows everything when it comes to his daughter." I grunt, shaking my head. "Anyway, he had something he wanted to share personally with me.

"What's that?" Angel asks, tapping his fingers on the edge of the table, his body seeming relaxed, but the man is nothing if not on alert at all times.

"That Teresa went back to Wayne. As well as the lawyer has paid them a visit at the house." I explain the rest of it. Telling them about my grandfather's will and the clause within it. Everything they need to know, I give it to them. I am not leaving anything out. "Reason I'm sharin' all this is, I don't intend to give them the chance to come at me. I won't let them get their hands on London. I'm not about to give them a chance to strike."

"You plan to strike first," Hellhound states.

"I plan to kill 'em and put an end to all of this." I give it to them straight. "I'm telling you this because I'm not just going for them, I'm going for the lawyer too. He's in on

whatever it is they're gonna do. Teresa might be sick and dying, but she'll do anything Wayne tells her. That's exactly what I think was behind her coming here. Thinking maybe I'd have heart enough to take care of my momma." Those words leave a bad taste in my mouth. I hate thinking of either of them more than an egg and sperm donor. I raised myself. I took care of who I am.

"Give us the plan, we've got your back," Reaper states as each of my brothers nods in agreement.

Taking a breath, I do just that. I tell them what I have in mind. What I'd need from them and how I didn't want London to know any of what's about to happen. She doesn't need to know I'm capable of taking out the two people who brought me into this world. I don't want her to look at me any differently than the way she does now. If she were to find out, she'd probably think I was crazy and want to leave me. I can't let that happen.

For the next two hours, we go over every detail of what I've planned so far. They like it. Thought it was a damn good plan, and it didn't take too much change to perfect it.

"We'll head out tonight. Get it done. The sooner it's taken care, the less time they have to try and pull anything on us," Reaper mutters, nodding and banging the gavel down. "We better get out there before Ivy decides to storm in here and demand we march our asses out there."

"Prez, you knock that woman up or something?" Tombstone asks. "She's been going nuts. Sutton said Ivy was going crazy."

"Woman hasn't admitted it yet, but she's knocked up," Reaper answers, grinning. "I know my woman's body, and she thinks she can hide the truth of it from me."

Laughter fills the room, and I can't help but join them. Ivy pregnant again, we can

only brace. Who knows what to expect from her. We'll just have to wait and see. It's going to be interesting for sure.

"Maybe she's got something planned for you." Angel snorts and gets to his feet.

The rest of us follow, leaving the room. Later, after we finish this dinner thing, we'll head out. For now, the focus needs to switch to the women and family. My attention needs to be on London . . . on making sure she has a good time. I'll deal with the rest later after she's gone to bed.

Once this is all over, then I'll switch complete focus to what I intend to do to her body and show her once again how much I want that sweet body of hers. I crave to touch her, just as much as I need her to touch me.

Her touch is everything to me. It calms a part of me I didn't think was possible. I refuse to lose that touch. It's why I've got to do what I gotta do to keep it. I'll do what it takes, no matter the consequences in the end. Bringing my brothers in on it is what's going to keep everything from going to hell. Or I hope it will. If it doesn't, we're all fucked.

CHAPTER 19

LONDON

“I don’t think I could eat anymore,” I mumble, pushing my plate away. “I think my eyes were bigger than my stomach.”

“You think?” Diablo smirks, reaching over to slide my plate toward him and forking up a large bite of the chocolate pie still on the plate, along with a piece of cheesecake and banana pudding. I’d already eaten the pumpkin pie, pecan pie, and a slice of chocolate cake. All of it was so good, I wanted to have all of it, but I couldn’t help it.

I was starving while smelling all the delicious food while helping the other women out in the kitchen.

I’d been nervous at first about being alone with them all after the party last night. I thought they’d treat me differently and look at me strangely, but they didn’t. In fact, Sutton dropped an arm over my shoulder and said, ‘Welcome to the family,’ like beating up a skank was an initiation or something. It surprised me, and I didn’t know what else to say.

I was also slightly reeling still from what Diablo said to me at the house about him touching me. The very thought of it has my body humming with anticipation. I want to be able to take him in my mouth and pleasure him. Have him show me what he wants. I’d never done it, so like everything else that goes hand in hand with sex, I don’t know what I’m doing. The only experience I had in any of it was making out and what I’ve read in books.

Reading can't be counted as experience, can it?

"Diablo, one thing to learn now about London is she's always got eyes bigger than her stomach," my dad says, pointing a fork in my direction, chuckling. "Every time she's home, and we have cookouts, she piles her plate full and eats maybe half of it."

"I try to make sure I don't have to get up and go for seconds," I mutter quietly, glaring in my dad's direction.

There's one thing Liam Weaver loves to do is to tease his daughter. I usually don't mind it, but I didn't want him to say something that would make me out to be a dork when I'm just getting to know these people. People who are very important to Diablo. They're his family. The men are his brothers. The women his brothers claim are just as much his family but in different ways.

Diablo doesn't have to explain it for me to see he has claimed family in the men. They're the ones he chooses to be family to. The women I know they're the ones who claim him. He's their family whether he wants them to be or not.

Beast I know welcomes me. I've known him since I was thirteen. Granted, I don't actually know him anymore, but six months of my life was spent with him helping Diablo look out for me.

Next to my dad sits four of his men, two on either side of him. Mark Jessup and Reed Masters are to his left. Gray and Cyan O'Neil to his right. There were four more guys, but they weren't here. My dad said they were working on a job trying to finish it so they could be done with them.

Knowing my dad as well as I do, I knew he wasn't telling the complete truth and that it's probably hush-hush stuff he doesn't want to talk to me about. There's a lot in his line of work he doesn't talk to me about, which I get. It's a dirty business to be in.

He's just trying to protect me.

"It's alright, she don't eat but half," Diablo states, reaching for another bite. His other arm goes around my shoulders as he tucks me into his side. "Means I don't have to get up to get dessert."

My toes curl at the words, mainly because he'd told me at the house what he intended to 'eat' later. It's hard to keep myself from blushing, hopefully no one notices.

The rest of the evening goes well. Laughter fills the room, and it was amazing seeing how my dad interacted with those of the club. I was even introduced to Beast's brother and Bristol's dad and her brother.

Josephine's parents and brother joined us as well. I was shocked that my dad knew her brother, though I shouldn't have been. It seems he knows everyone.

"London, would you give us a few minutes alone with Diablo and his brothers?" my dad asks shortly after everything has been cleaned up.

Stiffening, I narrow my eyes, glaring at my dad. "Is this something else you think you can't talk about in front of me? Or does it involve me somehow?" I huff out both questions as I step toward him, hands planted on my hips. "I'll tell you now, Daddy, if it has anything to do with me, I swear if you don't tell me as well, I'm going to be upset, and I might just kick you."

"It wouldn't be the first time she kicked you, bossman." Reed snorts, shaking his head. He had a huge grin on his face.

"London, sweetheart." Dad sighs, hands on his hips, and he tilts his head back. "You're a pain in my ass, girl."

“But you love me anyway. Now, does this have anything to do with me?” I demand, watching my dad but feeling Diablo wrap his arms around me from behind.

He lowers his head to my ear. “Chiquita, calm down. It’s club business he needs to talk to us about.”

Whirling around in his arms, I narrow my gaze on him. “If it has anything to do with Taylor, then I have a right to know.”

“London, it ain’t got anything to do with that fucker. He doesn’t equate in to this any longer. Your dad’s got business to discuss with the club about shit that doesn’t involve you, so quit arguing and drop it,” Diablo says a bit harshly and drops his arms from around me.

I stare up at him for a few moments longer before taking a breath. “Fine. But if I find out that you’re hiding something from me, I won’t be happy, and just so you know, what you said earlier, it definitely won’t be happening.”

I barely spin to walk away from him when he snags me around the waist and yanks me back to him, my body flush against his. Diablo dips his head down and brushes the hair away from my ear. Against the shell of my ear, he whispers only for me to hear, “The threats don’t work on me, baby. You think to keep me from touching you, think again. I’ll make sure you’re begging me to by the time I’m done with you as punishment for even thinking you can.” He lets me go and lifts his head enough to meet my gaze.

There’s no missing the retribution in his gaze. Okay, so maybe using a threat against him like that isn’t the best idea.

Regardless, I’m getting sick of them hiding stuff from me. I know they’re going to be talking about that group. The one Taylor supposedly was going to take me to.

With a huff, I pivot on my toes and storm off in the direction heading for the back of the clubhouse. I didn't even notice the other women had already disappeared. They probably went to clean up the kitchen. I should help them, but I'm too frustrated to be around anyone right now.

The fact my dad, and even Diablo, thought they could keep me out stings more than I want to admit. Sure, I'm used to Dad asking me to step out, but this is different. It's both men who I care more about than anyone else. People would think I was crazy if they knew I didn't just care about Diablo. That I was in love with him, but to me, he's always been my white knight in shining armor. Granted, he doesn't come on a horse or is in shining armor. No, my knight, he comes brash, in a cut, and rides a motorcycle.

All of which I love most about him. Those things are who he is.

Still, I wish they'd let me stay and find out what's going on.

Sighing, I find myself outside Diablo's room. I twist the doorknob. I push through, thinking to myself how I hate being on the outside of everything and thinking how I should go back in there and demand they include me.

But what good will that do? They won't listen, and it'll cause strife when there doesn't need to be any.

CHAPTER 20

DIABLO

“Brother, you’re fucked,” Reaper states once we’re in the clear of London hearing anything.

“London holds a mean grudge,” Liam says, nodding. “She finds out this has got to do with anything involving her, and she’s going to lose her shit.”

“Brace, my friend,” Gray O’Neil snorts, shaking his head, “we know what she’s capable of.”

“We trained her,” his brother finishes for him, smirking. “Prepare to get your ass kicked by that little thing.”

“I can take care of myself,” I mutter, knowing I can handle London. They might have trained her to defend herself, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to let her use that shit against me. I know how to get to her that doesn’t involve fighting with her.

Turning toward Liam, I meet his gaze. “Now, what did you need to share?”

Liam glances at Mark Jessup and nods.

For the next fifteen minutes, he fills us all in on the information they’ve gathered on the Scarlet Needles, including the name of the other organization, The Society of the Prime Genetics Council. Talk about some long-ass name for a group that mutilates

genes. Word is the two have joined together to make things easier on them.

This isn't good news. This means once those of one group are done causing harm, they'll throw them to the other to finish the job.

"They managed to get London's name off a list for those who donate blood to the blood banks," Liam announces. "That's how they knew to target her. She's wanted not for the Scarlett Needles but for the genetic group. They'll make sure to bleed her every so often until they can't no more. They get their hands on her, they could destroy my daughter, and that isn't going to happen."

"We're not going to let them get their hands on her," I grind out through gritted teeth. There's no way I'm gonna let them get their hands on her. I'll make sure of it. Even if it means burning the world down around us to make sure it doesn't happen.

"She'll be protected," Reaper adds, nodding and looking to Liam. "We've got other things we've got to take care of. You all mind sticking around while we go and do that?"

I shouldn't be surprised he'd ask Liam to watch over the clubhouse while we're out.

Liam holds Reaper's gaze for a long moment and shifts to look at me before nodding. "Yeah, we'll stick around til y'all get back before heading to our hotel."

I open my mouth to say something when I spot London running in our direction, her hand clutching her phone and her face pale.

"What's wrong?" I ask when she makes it to me.

"I'm sorry," she utters, not meeting my gaze. "I know you guys didn't want me to hear, and I didn't, I swear. I just came from your room." I don't think I've seen her

shaken up like this. I also know she doesn't lie.

"What happened?" I reach up, grip her chin between two fingers, and force her to meet my gaze. "What's got you upset?"

"I got a call from Tamara. She went by my place and said it looked like someone broke in," London murmurs. "She said the whole place is trashed."

"Not possible," Cyan O'Neil mutters, but I doubt London heard him.

"Reed, Gray, you two go check it out," Liam orders, coming up behind his daughter. "We'll take care of this. Don't you worry."

I pull London in my arms. "It's gonna be okay, Chiquita." It's not, but it will be for her. "You stay here with your dad. I'll go check everything out and let you know when I get back."

I thought she might argue and demand to go with me, but instead, she nods which doesn't sit right with me. Something else had to have happened, something she's not telling me.

However, right now, I don't have time to find out. I've got things to take care of. Important things that I need to be to do ensure she stays safe.

"You sure you wanna do this? Last chance to change your mind." Angel looks up from checking his gun to meet my gaze.

"I'm not gonna change my mind." This has been a long time coming.

"Then we best get it done and get back to the clubhouse," Reaper states.

As much as I would like to prolong this, I don't have the time. I have to get back to London. On the way out, we stopped by her apartment, and it hadn't been broken into. No one had been there. Inside, looked as it had the last time I'd been there with her. There was something off about that, and I didn't want anyone to say anything else to London yet. Not until I figured out what Tamara's game is. Why she called London and freaked her out by lying, saying someone had broken into her place.

"Let's get it done," I agree, nodding.

Together, we all move surrounding the little rundown house that's no more than a shack. It wasn't a pleasant place when I was a kid, and it looks worse now. The shutters were hanging, some of them having fallen years ago. The fence surrounding the entirety of it was overgrown with weeds and leaning, looking ready to collapse.

Stepping on the rickety porch, I watch my footing. Part of the damn thing was rotting away just like the rest of the damn place. Inside I can hear Wayne bitching at Teresa about how lousy of a lay she is. I didn't need to hear it, but it isn't something I hadn't heard before.

Beast taps my shoulder from his position right behind me. Him Reaper, Angel, and Styxx were going in with us, Thanatos and Ghost were setting everything up for when we were done inside. Hellhound, Tombstone, and the others went to the lawyer's house to do things in the same manner as what we're about to do.

On the count of three, I kick the door with enough force to splinter the damn thing.

"The hell is goin' . . ." Wayne shouts, only to stop when I step through the entryway.

"Damari," Teresa cries, tears welling in her eyes.

"What the hell you think you're doin' here?" Wayne steps forward. His step

wavering, eyes glassy. He looks just as he did years back. Only difference is, I'm bigger than him and definitely don't look a damn thing like him.

Cocking my head slightly, I take both Teresa and Wayne in closely. Where with Teresa, I share similarities with her, I don't when it comes to Wayne. He might be five eight, five nine, and I'm six foot three. I have naturally tan skin, and his is pasty white. It doesn't take a genius to figure it out.

"Teresa, were you ever gonna say a word if you didn't know who the real father of your kid is?" I ask, slicing a glance her way. "Cause gotta say, I definitely don't look like him."

"You look just like your father," she cries, tears spilling down her cheeks. "Just like him."

I twist and look over my shoulder toward Beast. "She thinks I look like him."

"Brother, she's gotta be blind," Beast snorts, and his lip curls in disgust as he keeps his gaze locked on my parents.

"I didn't say him," Teresa whispers, visibly shaking.

"Shut the hell up, woman," Wayne shouts and backhands Teresa so she stumbles.

"Touch her again, Wayne, and you won't like what's gonna happen," I sneer. I might plan on killing her, but it doesn't mean I'm gonna let him keep doing what he's doing.

"What are you gonna do, boy." Wayne puffs out his chest and takes a step toward me, slapping a hand over his heart. "You brought men here with you. What, don't think you can take me on your own?"

“I don’t need anyone to take your ass down.” I step into space, give him a shove back, and he falls to the floor. “Stay down, I’ll get to you in a minute.”

I turn to Teresa and cock my head. “So, tell me what the hell you meant.”

“I named you after him.” She sobs, wraps her arms around herself, and shakes her head. “I wanted to give you the one thing I could of him.”

I don’t give a shit about any of this. “So what, you cared about a man that you claim is my dad, yet you’re with this dickhead?”

“I had to.”

I barely make out what she says as she falls to her knees, bending forward, pressing her forehead to the dirty ass floor, sobbing like that’s going to save her now. Nothing will save her.

Pulling my knife from its stealth, I close the distance between her and me. I squat down behind her, gripping her hair and forcing her to lift her head. She cocks her head in my direction, tears shimmering in her eyes, a knowledge of what’s to come. She knows she’s about to die, and there’s no wavering my decision.

“He’d have loved you, Damari. He would have.”

“Doesn’t matter if he would’ve or not,” I tell her, reaching around with my blade, bringing it up to her throat. It goes through easily.

Her eyes hold mine until I finish and let her go. She collapses to the floor, blood pouring out beneath her. I don’t feel anything as I straighten. Nothing. There’s no remorse for killing her. Nor is there empathy for her. She might be free from her hell now, but being the one to end the bullshit life she had, it felt good. A part of me

wonders what London would think if she knew I killed a woman tonight.

I shove the thought back. She isn't going to find out. I'm not telling her what I've done here. London needs to be protected from this part of my life, and I intend to make sure she stays innocent in it all.

Turning my attention to Wayne, I take in his dawning expression. If I'm willing to kill the woman who gave birth to me, I've no problem taking his life either.

"You can't kill me," Wayne blurts out.

"Who says I'm just gonna kill ya?" I ask, cocking a brow as Beast shoves Wayne into a chair.

Beast keeps Wayne still while Angel duct tapes his ass to a chair. Reaper moves in next, getting in Wayne's space, draws his fist back, and slams it into Wayne's jaw.

Wayne cries out, and his chair falls to the side.

"Beast, set him back up," Reaper orders, voice changing. Beast does as told, and Reaper gets in Wayne's face. "You think it makes you a man to hit women? Kids? Diablo was just a fuckin' kid, and you beat the shit out of him."

"He deserved it," Wayne shouts, fighting against the tape.

"Bullshit," Angel snarls.

Reaper slams another fist to Wayne's face. This time, Beast was ready and kept the chair from toppling. "You're going to burn for what you did to my brother."

He moves back, and Angel moves in, gripping Wayne's jaw as he leans in. "Wanna

know a secret, Wayne? Reaper and I know who you are. We know the truth of what you did. We didn't for a long time, but we know what you did twenty-six years ago."

This is news to me. What do they know?

Reaper meets my gaze. "Didn't want to disrupt the life you finally had for yourself, brother," he states and glares at Wayne.

"What did he do?" I ask.

"He killed your dad," Angel answers, releasing Wayne's face only to slam his fist into the side of his head. "He took the life of our uncle. This fucker thought he'd have an in with an enemy if he killed a member of the club."

Head spinning, Angel's words play on repeat.

"Your dad is our dad's brother. He was a member of this club until the day Wayne here killed him. Nothing was done back then because no one knew exactly what happened. But we figured it out not long after meeting you."

"As Reaper said, we didn't want to disrupt a life you finally had," Angel states, finishing for Reaper.

That's why Reaper and Angel declared when I explained my plan they were going to be with me—retribution for a member of the club as well as blood.

Emotions I don't want to think about push through, and I move toward Wayne. Angel moves out of my way, and I take the bloody knife still in my hand and cut through the tape. Gripping Wayne's shirt, I jerk him up and slam my fist into his face. He would have fallen if I hadn't had a grip on his shirt. With a sucker punch to the stomach, I let him go to watch him crumple to the floor.

Wayne tries to curl in on himself, but it doesn't stop me from kicking him in the gut repeatedly. I want him to feel all the pain tenfold of what he caused me growing up before I killed him. I keep going until Beast pulls me back.

"It's time, brother," he remarks.

Nodding, I let out a heavy breath, and I kick Wayne to his back. I draw my gun and aim it at Wayne's face. I glance over my shoulder at Reaper and Angel and jerk my chin. I might not know what to think of them not telling me sooner, but they deserve this as well. Together, they step forward, guns aimed at Wayne as well. Together, the three of us pull the trigger, simultaneously putting three bullets in the bastard.

Once done, I look at them. "Anything else I should know? You knew Wayne wasn't nothing more than a S-O-B who beat me. How'd you know I was your uncle's kid?"

"'Cause Teresa's right about one thing. You look just like him. When you're ready, we'll tell you about him and show you pictures," Reaper states.

"We didn't want to bring up a subject we knew you weren't ready for," Angel explains.

"I get it." I did. That doesn't mean it's not fucking with me.

"Come on, Thanatos and Ghost are ready to get shit done," Reaper urges me toward the door.

I nod and look between the two men. "I'm not pissed with you, but next time, just fuckin' tell me if shit comes up like this. I don't want to be taken by surprise again. I fuckin' well hate surprises."

"Won't be a next time," Angel agrees. "Now, let's get you back to the clubhouse to

your woman. Let her comfort you.”

“We still gotta find out what the fuck is up with her friend callin’ and tellin’ her that someone broke into the apartment,” I remind them.

“Tomorrow, brother, we’ll get on it. For tonight, just go to your woman. We’ll deal with the rest tomorrow,” Beast states, claspin’ a hand on my shoulder as we all make our way out of the house.

“I’ve already given the order to Cerberus and Azrael to go find the lying bitch. They’re to bring her to the clubhouse when they find her,” Reaper announces.

Good.

At least knowing we’re already looking for her eases some of the tension inside me. The rest I intend to ease by touchin’ my woman and havin’ her hands on me. Only she can do when nothing else works. London has a way of puttin’ to sleep the anger and rage that swirls inside me. She’s the only one that, without a doubt, I know I need in my life besides my brothers.

The club is my family, but London, she’s my life.

CHAPTER 21

LONDON

The clamoring of boots hitting the floor wakes me from a sleep I didn't think I'd ever find.

"Diablo?" I whisper, leaning up on an elbow to look in the direction of where the sound came from.

"Go back to sleep, Chiquita," he murmurs, his shadow moving toward the bathroom. "I'll be right out in a few minutes." He closes the door behind him, and only then does he turn the light on.

Blinking, I come fully awake, thinking something is wrong. Very wrong. He didn't even come near me. He just took his boots off and went straight to the bathroom. He hadn't even looked in my direction when he spoke.

Hearing the shower come on, I throw the blanket back and get to my feet. I quietly make my way to the closed door, place both hands on it, and turn my head to press my ear to the cool wood. I listen as he gets in the shower, the curtain swishing closed behind him.

I suck in a breath and make a decision that could go very wrong if it's not the right choice, but it's one I'm willing to take. Slowly, I reach for the doorknob, twist it, and push it open. Quietly, I step into the steaming bathroom, and strip off Diablo's shirt, which I'd put on before lying down.

Diablo doesn't say anything, but I know he hears me in the room. I step into the shower behind him and see the tension visible in his body.

"Damari," I call, reaching out to press a hand to his shoulder blade.

"Told you to go back to sleep, London." His gruff voice becomes more than a little harsh, yet there's something else in it. His eyes hold a clouded look of unease. It's like he doesn't know what to do.

"Well, too bad. I decided to follow you in here." I shove my nerves back and trail my fingers along his back, keeping my eyes locked with his. I'm not going to back down. Nor let his unease and harsh voice push me away.

Diablo turns completely to me and pushes me against the tiled wall. "You decided to follow me in here," he growls. "You ever think I needed a moment alone to fuckin' shower?"

"Like you leave me alone to do anything," I state, narrowing my gaze defiantly. No way am I going to let him try to scare me. Not now. "You might as well get used to it. You wanted me. You got me. I'm not going anywhere, so you can lose the intimidation act. It's not going to work."

That's a lie, but I'm not about to let him know it is.

Diablo stares at me for a long moment before tangling his hands in my hair, his mouth coming down on mine.

Oh my.

This is a different kind of kiss. It's completely different from the other ones he's given me. It's almost desperate. Still, it ignites something inside me. I wrap my arms

around Diablo's neck and hold tight to him as he commands the kiss.

As suddenly as he kisses me, he wrenches his mouth from mine. "Chiquita, you don't get out of this shower, I'm gonna fuck you. You already complained about her your body being sore. I don't want to hurt you, and that's what I'll do if I get inside you now. I won't be easy. I won't be gentle. I'll fuck you hard. I'll take you rough. Say it now and get the fuck out otherwise, brace for what I'm gonna give you."

He loosens his grip marginally but doesn't let me go.

It doesn't take me but a split second to make my decision. I don't want to leave him. He doesn't want me to leave him in here alone. He needs to fuck me, and I want him to. So what if I'm sore later? Diablo's touch is always worth it. I'll take whatever way he wants to take me. Touch me. Because it means in the end I get to touch him as well.

I reach up on my toes and press my lips to his, giving him my answer. Diablo takes it for the answer it is and crushes me to him. His tongue shoves into my mouth, claiming the kiss, showing me the power he has over me with just his lips on mine, his tongue dueling with mine.

Diablo kisses me dizzily, only to yank his mouth from mine once again. This time, though, he spins me to the wall and orders, "Hands against the wall, baby,"

My hands move of their own accord. Diablo presses a hand to the middle of my back, the other at my hip as he pushes and adjusts me how he wants me. The next thing he does is slide his cock through my juices, already spilling from my entrance. He's got me more than ready for him, and he knows it. In a split second, without warning, he thrusts inside, taking me, filling me in a way I didn't think possible. With his hand at my back, he keeps me from arching as I cry out. The pain of the intrusion mixes with undeniable pleasure.

“Fuckin’ so damn tight,” he grinds out, his hips working, hammering into me, filling me each time with his cock. “You’re mine, London, do you hear me? No matter fuckin’ what, you’re mine, and I’m not letting you leave me.”

Why would he think I’d leave him?

I don’t get to voice my question with the way he’s taking me. It’s hard enough even to think.

Diablo’s hand at my back moves and his fingers slide upward until he tangles them in my hair, tight and pulls. “Tell me you’re mine.”

“Yours,” I pant and push back into his thrust.

“Again,” he orders, pulling harder.

The pain of him pulling my hair mixes with the pleasure, and I find myself crying out my response, “Yours, Damari. I’m yours.”

“Damn right, you are.” His voice is nearly animalistic as he lets my hair go and starts plowing into me even harder. Both hands gripping my hips, holding me in place. “Fuck, baby, I’m gonna come.”

I don’t bother giving him words. Instead, my body answers that for me as my orgasm washes over me. The only thing I manage to do is moan, pant, and cry out. The release is overwhelming, and I don’t know how to handle the raking shudders consuming me.

Diablo snarls my name, his cock thrusting, pumping into me, twitching as his release spurts from the tip filling me.

I know the moment he's done because he yanks from my depths. He turns me, one arm around my waist, the other sinks back into my hair, twisting tight enough, forcing me to look up, though he didn't have to.

"Swear to fuck, Chiquita. You even think to leave me, and I'll cuff your ass to the bed," he growls.

"Why do you keep saying that?" I whisper, eyes assessing, taking in his expression, though it's hard to read.

"Because you don't know the man I am. What I'm capable of," he answers.

"And what is it you're capable of?"

Something tonight must've brought this on.

"More than you want to know." With that, Diablo lets me go, turns, grabs the soap, and finishes up his shower. I step into his space, pressing myself to his back, my arms going around his waist, palms flat to his stomach.

"I don't know what happened tonight. You don't intend to tell me, but for the record, I'm a good listener, and I'd never judge you." I press a kiss between his shoulder blades, turn my head, and lean into him, cheek to his back. "Besides, no matter what you do, Damari, you always do it for a reason. One that means something to you. Right or wrong."

Diablo's muscles bunch beneath my touch, but I don't wait for him to say anything. I step away from him, moving to step out of the shower, only for Diablo to stop me from doing so.

His eyes lock with mine, and he pulls me back. "You best mean that, London."

“I do mean it,” I tell him, sliding a hand over his slick chest.

Diablo nods and kisses me, this time sweet and soft. He twists long enough to shut the water off. Soaking wet, he scoops me up and carries me to the bed.

“We’re getting the sheets wet.”

“Don’t give a shit,” he says just before slanting his mouth down on mine once again.

CHAPTER 22

LONDON

“You wanna tell me what you didn’t last night?” Diablo asks, holding me to him.

After he finished with me for the night, he’d gotten out of bed, got new sheets out of the closet, and put them on the bed, shifting me as he did this. I would’ve helped; however, I hadn’t been able to feel my legs. Diablo didn’t seem to mind. In fact, if I’m not mistaken, he’d been chuckling.

Once the new sheets were on, he laid back down, pulled me into his arms, and I drifted off.

This morning, Diablo woke me in the same manner as he’s done nearly every other morning. His body over mine, his cock sliding inside me. It was a good feeling, the best. I loved it and wanted more. So much more. I wanted to be able to wake up every morning with him next to me, if not inside me.

Lifting on an elbow, I blink, meeting his gaze. “What are you talking about?”

I do know, but I really don’t want to talk about it.

Diablo shifts upright, leans back against the headboard, and takes me with him. He adjusts me in his lap with me straddling him. “I know you didn’t tell us everything when Tamara called you, Chiquita. What else did she say to you?”

I didn't want to think about it. She sounded completely out of it. I'm not sure if she was drunk or on something. Either way, she didn't seem like herself on the phone. I want to put it down to her maybe being freaked out about my apartment, but that didn't jive with what all she'd said.

Last night, I told them about my apartment and how she claimed on the phone that it had been broken into. I hadn't thought about the security system. Just that my personal space had been invaded and trashed. The rest of the stuff she spewed didn't make sense to me.

"London," he calls gently and gives my thighs a squeeze. "You need to tell me. Your apartment hadn't been broken into like she said. It was still the same as it was the last time we were there."

I nod, suck in a breath, and tell him. "She had been hysterical over the phone," I explain how she sounded off and that I thought maybe she'd been on something, drunk maybe. "I've never known her to do either. Sure, she'd have a few drinks when we were out together, but never have I heard her like that before."

This time, it's Diablo's turn to nod. "We've got Cerberus and Azrael out looking for her. When they find her, they're bringing her here. I'm tellin' you this, Chiquita, 'cause when they do, you don't go anywhere near her until we know what's up."

"But she's my friend," I protest. Or I thought she was. Friends didn't call each other bitches, did they?

"She might be, baby, but 'til we know what she's up to, innocent or not, you don't go near her."

The sharp look he gives me tells me not to argue with him. Thinking of the way he was in the shower last night, the unease I'd seen in him, I decided to agree. I don't

know what happened, but it couldn't be good. I simply have to trust him even if it's blindly.

"Okay, I won't go near her until you say she's clear or not."

"Thank you," he murmurs, sliding his fingers up my spine into my hair. Holding me still, he moves in and kisses me deeply.

Though that's all he does. He just kisses me, no fooling around. Nothing. I feel him between my legs and feel myself growing wetter, but he doesn't take it farther.

I open my mouth to ask him, only for him to get there first. "Last night and this morning, I took you. Fucked you hard. Fucked you rough. Want to give you a little while to rest. I didn't want to hurt you, and I know you've got to be tender."

I can't say he's wrong. I'm a bit sore but in a good way. I don't mind it in the least. "Okay." I nod and lean into him, sliding my arms around his shoulders. "Maybe tonight you can show me what you meant yesterday about . . . well, you know." I lick my lips, blushing at the last part of what I say.

"With pleasure," he says, grinning.

A knock sounds at the door, interrupting the moment, and Diablo shouts, "Yeah?"

"Need you out here, brother," I recognize the voice as Beast's and want to groan. Why does it seem he's always the one to spoil our moments?

"Give me a minute, and I'll be out," Diablo says, not moving. Though, I'm still on top of him, so he really can't.

"Gotcha," Beast calls.

“I gotta get out there,” Diablo announces.

“Okay.” I sigh, nodding. I let his neck go and start to move off his lap, only to have him stop me.

“London, last night,” he starts.

“You don’t have to explain anything,” I tell him, giving him a small smile. “I get it and trust that you’ll tell me if it’s something I need to know.” I might not like it, but it’s the truth. Sometime in the middle of the night, after what we did in the shower, I came to terms with it. To be with him, I have to accept everything about him, including the fact he’s not exactly on the right side of the law. Still, he’s a good person and does what he needs to do, what he deems best for him and those around him.

“Right,” Diablo utters, eyeing me closely. Probably looking for any part of deceit in my words.

He won’t find anything but the truth.

Diablo nods, kisses me, and shifts, rolling us so that I’m beneath him. “You get there’s shit I can’t tell you. What I can tell you is I got information last night that shocked the hell out of me. Something I didn’t expect. It’d been like taking a sucker punch at the same time, it eased a part of me that I didn’t know wasn’t just right inside me. But a part of me should have known.”

“What did you find out?” The question comes out before I can stop it.

“Found out that the man who was my real dad was a member of this club, but that he was also Reaper and Angel’s uncle,” he answers, eyes still on me, watching closely. “What I found out, baby, was the family I felt I belonged to was always my family.”

“That’s a lot to process,” I whisper, feeling for him, but I’m happy for him as well. “You okay with it? How did you find out? Did they know?”

“They knew,” he confirms. “I’m good with it. They explained, and honestly, I appreciate them not telling me. I don’t think I’d have believed them. When I first joined the club, I didn’t trust anyone, they showed me the way. Taught me what brotherhood was about. It was more than just me and Beast against the world.”

“I’m glad you had that.”

“Me too,” he says and leans in to brush his lips against mine. “Now, I gotta get out there and find out what’s goin’ on. You’re coming with me, so get dressed, baby.”

Diablo jumps to his feet, pulls me up, and lets me go. The both of us get dressed. Once done, he takes my hand in his and guides me out of the room. I’m honestly nervous. Why does he want me to go with him for this?

I hope he’ll let me get coffee because I’m going to need it. Between the sex last night and this morning and our long talk, I didn’t get much sleep, and I’m exhausted.

Hand in hand, we make our way to the main room of the clubhouse. The closer we get, I can hear shouting. A woman screaming in rage, and I instantly recognize the voice. It’s Tamara. They found her.

CHAPTER 23

DIABLO

Walking into the room with a woman screeching at the top of her lungs isn't the way I want to start the day. Granted, I started it off right by enjoying London's sweet, sweet body, but regardless, it wasn't long enough for my liking. If I could, I'd stay inside London all damn day. However, with how I ended up taking her last night, I knew she needed me to take it easy on her body.

After the shower, I'd taken her three other times, all rough, all how I needed to. She didn't complain. She had been into it and even got off on it. I slapped her ass, held it tight, even fucked while teasing that little hole of hers. I'd gripped her hair in my hands more than once, tugging on it. Her pussy gushed around me each time.

This morning, I'd taken her sweet-like, keeping it nice and slow, letting it burn inside. I watched her the entire time, enjoying the way she reacted to me. I don't think I could ever forget, even if I wanted to.

"Tamara." London gasps, next to me, her body going tense.

"Remember what I said, Chiquita," I tell her quietly, letting her go. "Go get us some coffee, then it's right back to my side, got me?"

London tilts her head back, looks me in the eye, and nods. Just like last night in the shower, she agrees to something she's unsure of. But she's trusting me. Her giving me that, I needed it. Her blind trust is something I'll never let her regret.

It's why I'd given her the information I did this morning. She didn't need to know all of it, but she'd eventually find out about my relationship with my Prez and VP. It's probably news that my other brothers now know as well.

I let London go, move closer to my brothers, and look at the woman shouting down the place.

"You can't do this to me. I'm callin' the cops the first chance I get. You're all going to jail for kidnapping," Tamara screeches and jerks around in the chair someone had confined her to.

"Who's to say you're goin' anywhere?" I ask and look toward Reaper. Next to him, with his men behind him, stands Liam. "What do we know?"

"Cerberus and Azrael found her first thing this morning. She'd been on her way out of town," Reaper explains. "Sent them two to get some shut-eye after dealing with this bitch."

"While they were looking for her, we looked into Tamara here," Liam added with a sneer, pulling at his lip. "Seems she's related to that fuckwad my ex-wife married. And she was out for retaliation for my takin' the bastard out."

"You did what you thought was the best thing, Dad," London whispers, surprising me with her words. I glance down at her as she steps next to me and hands me a mug. Her eyes, full of knowledge, meet mine as she gives me a sad smile. "He was protecting me."

"Bastard got what he deserved," Liam growls.

"He didn't do a damn thing," Tamara screeches, thrashing around, eyes narrowing on London. "Unlike you all. She deserves what's coming for her. You all deserve it for

what you've done. You ruin everything."

"How did I do that?" London asks, stepping toward the woman, her voice filled with confusion. "I thought we were friends. Why would you do this? What did I do to you?"

"By breathing," Tamara spits.

"I don't understand," London states. "Why pretend to be my friend if you hate me so much?"

"Because it was all a part of the plan. It would have been easier if you'd just gone with Craig like planned. You might have been able to stay alive if you had, but now, now they'll want you dead," Tamara seethes.

"From what we pulled on her," Liam speaks up, "she had information on her uncle and how he'd been a part of the genetic group. I knew he was a piece of shit, but he was a doctor." He looks toward his daughter and grimaces. "This is on me, sweetheart, I'm sorry."

"You don't have anything to be sorry about, Dad." The man had done what he had to for his daughter, and I can't blame the guy for what he did. I'd have done the same thing.

"What do you mean they'll want you dead?" Daemon asks.

I tense at his question, not thinking good thoughts. His woman is at risk as well. We all know it. Hell, this is the same group who had stolen Scythe and Styxx's sister when she was just a baby. Luck had brought her back to them, and in doing so, she found Hellhound, who would and will do whatever it takes to make her feel safe.

“Exactly what I said,” Tamara states, looking toward Daemon. “They haven’t forgotten about Everleigh. How do you think they got the list of names for the blood donation? They have someone at the hospital watching her. They’re just waiting for the right time to strike.”

My blood turns to ice in my veins.

“And where do we find them? They want to kill us so badly. Where are they?” London snaps, stretching her hand out to hand over her coffee.

“London,” I call her name warningly.

“Don’t,” Liam remarks. I look in his direction, but his eyes are glued on his daughter.

Beast takes the mug from her, and she moves even closer to Tamara.

“Well?” London demands.

“Shit, you shouldn’t have trained her so well, Cyan,” Reed grumbles. “She’s gonna flip.”

“That trigger is already flipped.” Cyan grunts.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Reaper growls.

“She’s been military trained by all of us,” Cyan answers. “Liam wanted her to be able to defend herself, but we taught her more than just self-defense.”

Great.

Here, I thought my woman was just a schoolteacher. Come to find out, she’s a hell of

a lot more than that.

“They’re here. They’re there. They’re everywhere. You won’t know it’s them until they want you to,” Tamara answers, glaring at London. “Go ahead and kill me. They’ll just send someone else. They’ll wear you down until you wish they’d just kill you.”

Before any of us can stop her, London strikes out and punches Tamara right in the nose.

“Oh shit,” Hellhound mutters.

I jump forward and pull London back in my arms, securing her to my front. “Easy, baby.”

“Tombstone, Thanatos, take our guest here to join the others. We’ll deal with her at a later date,” Reaper orders and looks at me. “We need to talk.” His eyes shift to London, then back to me.

He’s silently asking if I want her to hear what we’ve got to talk about. I don’t. Not really, but hearing that she knew her dad killed, I know she’ll trust in me and not run.

“Talk,” I state, nodding.

“Lawyer last night kept pleading for his life.”

“Lawyer?” London utters, head jerking back to look up at me. “What lawyer? The one who came here with your mom?”

“Yeah,” I answer and focus on Reaper, not really looking at her. If I do, I might change my decision about her being here for this. “What did he say?”

“Kept talking about how it was strictly business. He was doing what he was paid to do,” Hellhound remarks. “Said Wayne owed his bosses a lot of money, and they were going to use you to pay the debt.”

London tenses, and I feel her gaze burning into me.

“Can’t pay a debt when you’re dead,” Beast states, exactly what I’m thinking.

“According to the lawyer, his bosses didn’t care if Wayne lived or died. Long as the debt was paid.” Hellhound grimaces and shakes his head. “Lawyer’s bosses are a group called ‘The Nameless Militia’.”

“You’re kidding.” I blink, staring at Hellhound in surprise before shifting my gaze to Beast’s with a knowing look.

“What do you two know?” Reaper asks, looking between the two of us, seeing the silent communication.

“That we’re fucked.” Beast growls, hands clenching into fists. “We need to lock this place down.”

“Who are they? How do you know them?” Angel demands.

“The group itself isn’t what you need to worry about. It’s the leader who you have to look out for,” I answer and suck in a heavy breath. “The problems we have with the Scarlet Needles and this genetic group are nothing compared to ‘The Nameless’.”

“We know of them and their leader because they wanted us to join,” Beast adds. “They recruit off the streets. Hence their name. The leader goes by the name Dead Eyes, real name Samir Byrd. He’s known for being ruthless and doesn’t hesitate to kill. His favorite way of doing so is by execution, bullet right between the eyes.”

“If they’re the ones wanting the money, then the lawyer was right, they’ll be coming for us,” I state tersely.

“Then they come for us,” Reaper growls, rage burning in his eyes. “We won’t back down to them. Let them come at us, they will regret it.”

I nod and look down at London as she turns in my arms to face me. “I remember who you’re talking about,” she says. “He’s who you two protected me from most.”

I remember. I hadn’t been about to let him get her. She’d been a kid, and he’d wanted her for something her body wasn’t ready for. If he finds out she’s mine now, he might try and take her again. Hell, that sick bastard might even try and take . . . oh shit . . . fuck, jerking my gaze back to Reaper and Angel, I dread the question I have to ask. “When was the last time you heard from Ember?”

CHAPTER 24

LONDON

No sooner Diablo asks about Reaper and Angel's niece, the air turns volatile. I don't remember seeing her yesterday for the dinner Ivy and the others put together.

"She had a shift yesterday," Angel answers as he pulls his phone. I'm sure he's going to try calling her.

Reaper takes off out of the room toward the bedrooms. Over his shoulder, he shouts, "Lockdown. Get all the fuckin' women and the kids here if they're not already."

Daemon takes off for the front doors. "Everleigh had a shift, I'm going to get her."

"I'll come with you." Ghost follows.

"I'm coming too, Stella had to go in," Angel says, shoving his phone in his pocket and moving for the doors. "Ember's phone's going to voicemail."

"I'll get on it," Scythe yells, turning away and heading in the same direction Reaper went.

"Chiquita," Diablo calls.

I tilt my head to meet his gaze. "You want me to go to your room, don't you?"

“Yeah,” he answers.

I nod, understanding. How can I not? I remember the man he and Beast just told the club about. Dead Eyes is the right name for him. He was younger then. Maybe twenty, but he freaked me out. Totally and completely scared me with the way he stared at me whenever he came around.

I start to pull away, but he stops me as he’s done any other time I’ve done so and kisses me.

“Thank you, baby,” he whispers against my lips.

“You’re welcome,” I say back just as quietly. My lips brushed his.

Diablo lets me go and steps back. He turns toward his brothers, and they all gather around each other. My dad and his men joined in.

Leaving them to it, I make my way to his room. My chest was heavy with the thought of Ember missing and everything else that was happening, but I also felt a sense of ease that Diablo had trusted me to be in there with them as they discussed things.

I understood what they were talking about when they mentioned the lawyer. I don’t know what all happened, but I can put the pieces together. They killed the man, and from how they spoke, I’m betting they killed his father, well, the man his mother married, as well. I kinda hope they took his mother out as well. It sounds bad, but she wasn’t a mother at all. A woman who lets her child be beaten and doesn’t protect them shouldn’t be allowed to live.

My dad took out my stepfather. He didn’t tell me what he did. I overheard it one night while he was talking to his men. I questioned him, and he told me the truth. None of it scared me. I know the world isn’t full of rainbows. That the judicial system is screwed up in a lot of ways. Most places stick to the good ol’ boy way of things.

I'm not a political person, but I'm also not a liberal. Things need to change. People need to change it, but I doubt it's going to happen any time soon.

If men like my dad and Diablo have to take lives, I know they have reasons behind it, and in my heart, I know it's never innocent blood.

Hours pass before Diablo comes to find me. One look at him, and I know he doesn't have good news.

"Ember's missing," I say as he closes the door.

"Yeah," he confirms and releases a ragged breath. "Scythe tracked her phone. It was abandoned on the side of the road. Her car was found in the opposite direction."

"You'll find her," I whisper, moving to him, wrapping my arms around his waist. I press my cheek to his chest and hold on. "You all will find her. I know it."

"We'll find her," he states, arms going tight around me. "We won't stop until we do." He squeezes me and lets me go, just enough so we can meet gazes. "I'm heading out to help them look for her. I need you to stay here. Don't go anywhere. I need to know you're safe and you being here, you're safe."

"I won't go anywhere."

"Thank you, baby." Reaching up, he palms the side of my face and strokes my cheek. "I don't know what I'd do without you, London. When you were thirteen, you touched a part of me that I forgot about until you came back into my life. If something happens to you, I lose that touch, and no way I'd survive without it."

I suck in a breath at those sweet words. I know what it means, and it is worth more to me than those three words behind it. "I love you too, Damari."

“Good, ‘cause when this is over, I’m making sure you can’t leave me.”

“I won’t want to ever do that.” I smile and lean back into him. I hold him close before letting him go. Reaching up on my tip toes, I cup either side of his face and pull him in for a kiss. One that speaks volumes for me and tells him that he’ll never lose me. As much as he needs my touch, I need his.